

Strete's Most Recently Found Treasure

By Kate Gill

Recently whilst turning out Cousin Jean's treasure hoard of historic items, I found to my delight a piece of precious Strete history. It could so easily have been overlooked. It was a sheet of badly folded yellowed paper in a bag of scruffy bits and pieces.

It is a pencil drawn plan of - **'The Thatched House. Strete. South Devon.'** - which stood on what is now the Kings Arms carpark. The very building which was bombed and burnt out during the Evacuation by the resident American Soldiers!

One of the things that intrigues me most

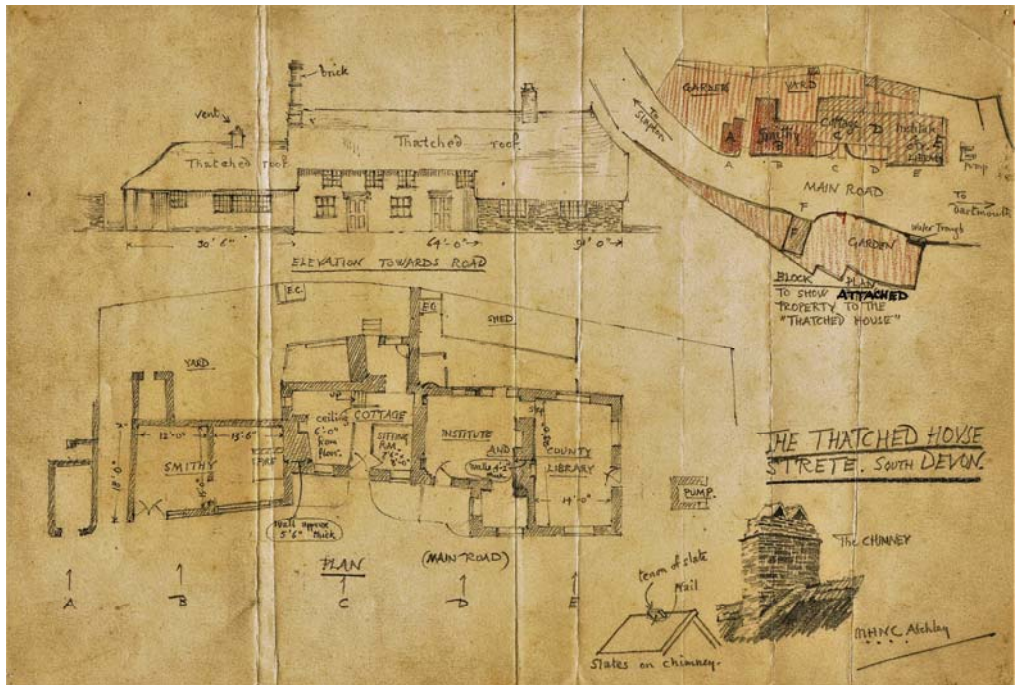
is why did Jean have it, indeed where did she get it!

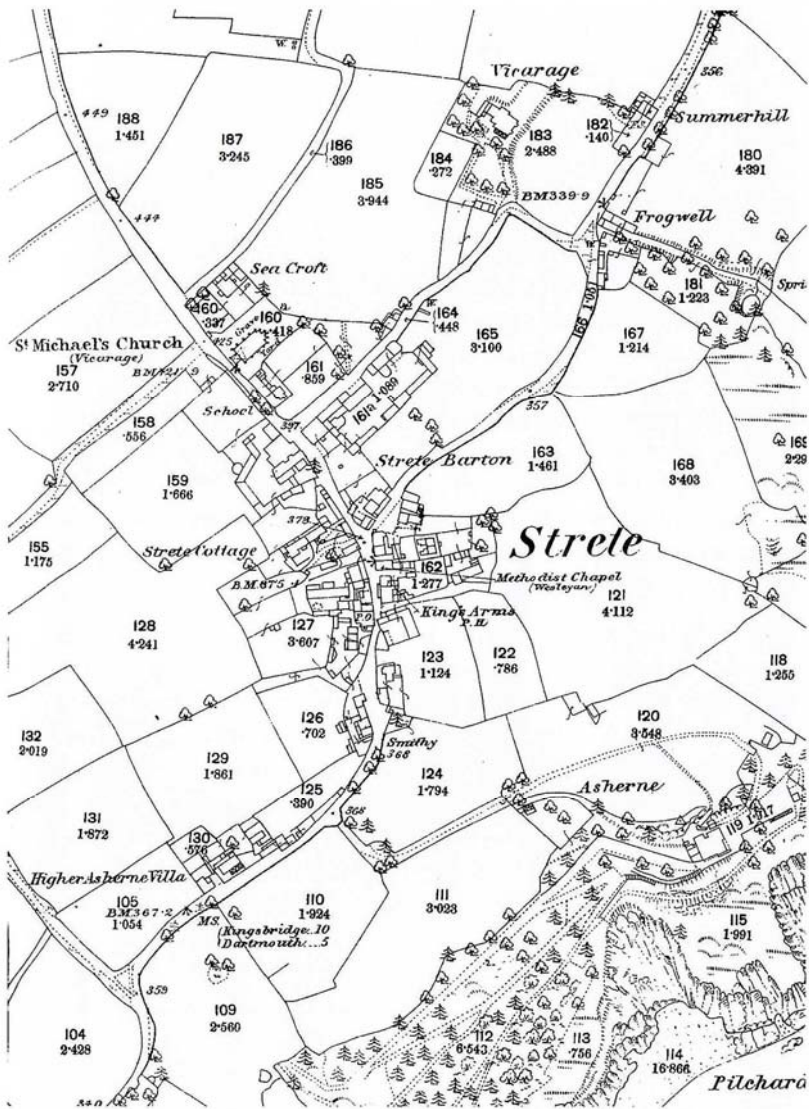
The answer to that will never be solved.

I asked myself a great many other questions only to some of which have I discovered the answer. The simplest ones were:-

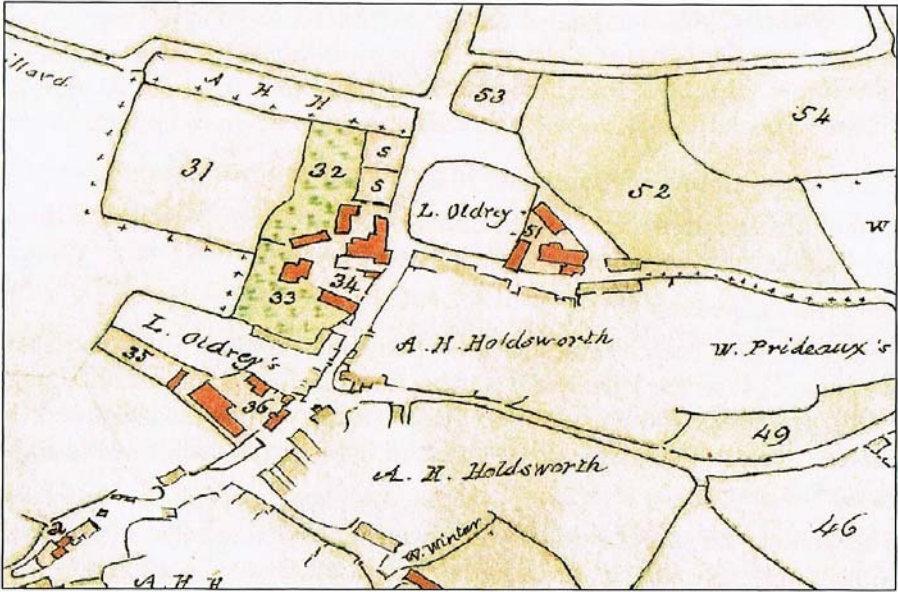
1. Who is M. H. N. C. Atchley
2. When was the property built?
3. Who occupied it?

In 1943 the year of the evacuation Jean was 11 years old. surgeon – the family had links to the West country.





The village as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1886



1816

1886 Map

Let's leap forward 70 years to the second map - to the O.S. map of 1886. The profiles on the maps are almost identical.

Photo of original Picture

Therefore we must assume that our newly discovered document might have been drawn as an exercise as part of Max Atchley's studies – he clearly had access as his measurements seem to be very accurate.





Photo of the Thatched House Photo pre 1942

The drawing must have been done whilst it was still standing. It was a beautiful building, it was photographed and post-cards were made of it. A water colour picture of it was painted which was used to illustrate a book. It was also a very practical building. It housed the Institute and County Library, as well as a cottage and Smithy. It also hosted the Boy's Club. It was Strete's only secular communal building! Its destruction was a huge loss to the community.

Let's look at question one – a search on the internet followed.

The artist was Max Heriot Nevil Cuthbert Atchley.

He was born on 6th March 1898 in Barton Regis, Bristol. He was baptised on 13th May that year in Clifton. He was aged 3 in the 1901 census. Aged 13 in the 1911 census his occupation was 'scholar'

and he was living at 23 John's Road, Clifton, Bristol. He married in 1934 and on 29th September 1939 he became a registered architect. His father was a surgeon – the family had links to the Westcountry. He died 24th June 1941 aged 43.

1816 Map

Max Atchley therefore died before the Evacuation. Clearly he had nothing to do with the building of the cottages as they show on two early maps. The first is a map belonging to Mr Michael Toll dated 1816. This map was discovered when we were researching the early history of Strete Farms for BaSH. On close inspection you can see the profile of the buildings and site in the bottom left-hand corner. Properties/buildings coloured in red at this time belong to the Strete Estate as do holdings with numbers. (see map on next page)



Old thatched cottages at Strete, South Devon, once popular with visitors, were burnt out during the pre-invasion exercises by American forces. (Story and another picture in Page 5.)

Western Morning News Picture

have a letter F on the site plan. Close inspection of the two maps does not include shed F. This was clearly added in more recent times – that building does still exist, but it is in pretty poor shape.

Let's not forget the last item 'the pump' that still stands complete with its memorial plaque but minus the hand pump. Someone or something has recently given the structure a nasty knock – but fear

not - plans are afoot to rectify the damage.

Thank you again Jean for providing us with a bit more Strete history.

This record is officially closed.					
Strete	1	Jeffery Albert	M	5 June 1880	M Gardener private serv.
"	2	Jeffery Amelia M.	F	11 Mar 1892	M Unpaid domestic dut
Jorge Edgcombe	1	* Wills Hubert L.	M	15 Aug 1911	M Jobing Gardener
John Wills	1	Edgcombe Archibald	M	16 Nov 1890	M Mason
"	2	Edgcombe Florence M.	F	1 Nov 1894	M Unpaid domestic duties

A section of a page from the 1939 National Register for Strete Village

Question two – who occupied it?

Recent research has given me access to the National Register of 1939. This was taken on 5th October, a shade over one month after WW11 was declared on 1st September; it helpfully shows most of the residents. It was occupied by Hubert Wills and we are lucky enough to have one of his sons still living and working in Strete. John has clearly followed in his father's footsteps – as a gardener. John was not born at the time but he recalls tales handed down by his family.

I feel we have to accept we shall never know all the answers; and simply enjoy the information contained in our new found drawing – marvel even that we have discovered so much intimate information.

We have a site plan, a ground floor plan, and a front elevation. The sheds are included and fine detail of the construction of the slates on top of the double chimney for the Institute and Library – complete with 'tenon' of

slate with 'Nail'.

The measurements of the building and rooms are amazing – the walls so thick the ceiling so low. The building itself is 91 feet long, carefully marked out in increments per section.

It shows the double door access to the smithy with the walled off section where the forge/fire is and the massive height of the two fire chimney which includes the cottage fireplace. In the cottage it shows windows with their window seats and also in the Institute and County Library.

Conveniences were not to be left out – two earth closets are shown against the back walls of their respective properties.

Each section is labelled with a letter A – E on the ground floor plan, but we have a letter F on the site plan. Close inspection of the two maps does not include shed F. This was clearly added in more recent times – that building does still exist, but it is in pretty poor shape.