

Hesba Stretton and Cloverley

For the benefit of our "1891 Day" in June, we prepared a number of "potted" house histories. Among them was one, dealing with "Cloverley", halfway down Farm Lane. We looked into the persistent story that Hesba Stretton lived there, and we came to the conclusion that she did not, the main reason being that she never showed up in any of the censuses. It has since become necessary to adjust this view somewhat.

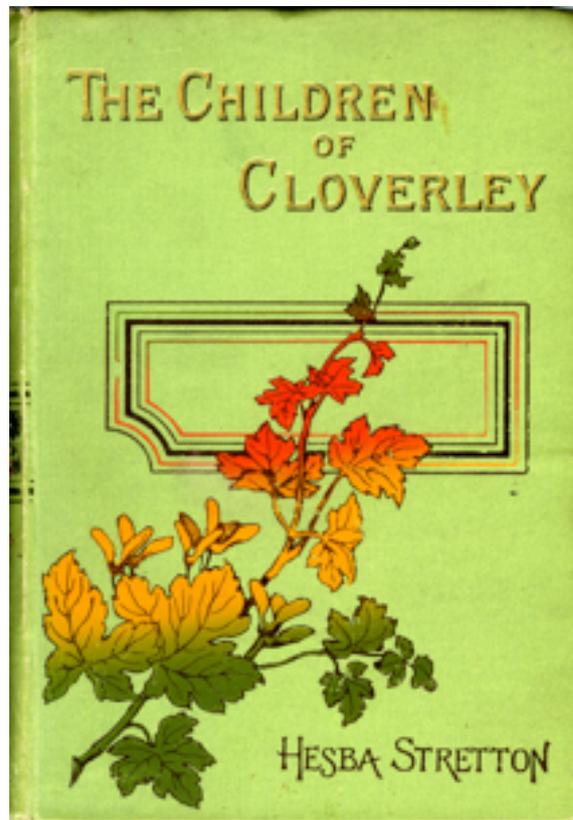
If the name Hesba Stretton does not ring a bell with you, here are a few words about who she was and how she came to be connected with our village. Born Sarah Smith in Wellington, she was brought up within the strict Methodist ethos of her outlook to writing stories Charles Dickens, she rose to considerable fame. Stretton, presumably as a Leebotwood coal master property here and who was neighbourhood, although One way or another, when "Stretton" came to mind. acronym of the initials of siblings, whence "Hesba". "The Children of

Her connection more specific when uncle we now know as "Caradoc there with her family bought the property in and consisted of a house garden and a smithy. Among other property in at the time of his death in Ann, was "Cloverley".

So when was "Cloverley" map of 1840, when the belonged to the Wilding will in August, 1854, this "four cottages and gardens near Star's Lane". We have a map of Wilding property that was put up for sale by auction in 1855, and curiously, "Cloverley" is not on it. We have to take this as proof that surveyors are not always to be trusted. In other words, "Cloverley" was built between the years 1840 and 1854.

Hesba Stretton was a restless soul who did not settle down until well into middle age, when she bought a house in Surrey. She travelled around and lived for short periods at a number of locations. One of these was "Cloverley", and we finally arrive at the reason for writing this article. In her will of 1911, Hesba Stretton gave "all my furniture and household effects at Cloverley, All Stretton" to her niece, Hesba Dora Webb. The conclusion must be that she kept this house, which belonged to her sister, for her own use from time to time.

Of course, the real question is, what is the connection between the house name and the book title? In the book, which was published in 1865, when the author was 33 years old and had been living in Manchester for two years, the name of "Cloverley" denotes the magical place of one's childhood, and it could be that Hesba Stretton based it on her own early memories of the Stretton hills. Since she had no childhood memories of the cottage in Farm Lane, and since her sister's children were babies and toddlers at the time, we must assume that the house was named after the book rather than the other way around, just like the coincidence of names of people in the book and names given to younger members of her own family. Hesba Stretton was a celebrity: one of her nephews changed his surname to Stretton, and, as we have seen, Hesba the acronym turned into a bona fide Christian name.



In her youth she had spent time in All visitor to her uncle James, a and brick manufacturer who owned active as a lay preacher in the other relations lived in the area, too. it came to choosing a pen-name, For a first name, Sarah made up an her own name and those of her And one of her novels was called Cloverley".

with All Stretton was to become James in his will gave the property Lodge" to her sister Ann, who settled around 1860. When James Smith 1852, it was known as the Red Lion that functioned as an alehouse, a "Caradoc Lodge" was built in 1854. All Stretton that James Smith owned 1855, and that he gave to his niece

built? It does not appear on the title land on that side of Farm Lane all family trustees. When he wrote his property was presumably one of his

Village history in the making...



The village shop having been given a new lease of life is a good reason for showing you this picture of the Stores as the building appeared during the first world war. The postcard was sent in 1918, when All Stretton had not yet seen the introduction of the kerb. The size and position of the building appear to be as they were in 1840.



This is the same view in December 2005. Note that the perimeter wall of the Grove estate remains unaltered, as does the Yew Tree's outbuilding and the shop 'shed'. But the main building seems to have grown shorter over the decades. Is that right? We hope that Whinberries of All Stretton will continue the tradition of this building for many years to come.

Another successful History Group event

On Saturday, November 26th, the Group arranged an evening at the Village Hall for the purpose of giving everybody an update of our activities since June. The event was very well attended, and we like to think that the promise of wine and nibbles was not the only reason for the impressive turnout.

Eric Huff opened the evening with a spirited account of his struggles as the Group's web editor. There's more on this topic on the back page of this newsletter.

Ivar Romo followed up with an account of the joys and frustrations of tracing the histories of houses in the area when the only source of information lies in the brief minutes of transactions in the manorial court. It is possible to follow a particular property in terms of who owned it, and sometimes, who lived there, in some cases ever since the middle of the 17th century. On the other hand, it may not be possible to identify the property with one that exists today with any certainty. This is because the court minutes tend to refer to a property in terms of previous owners. The system relied on old men with good memory, and that tradition was broken many decades ago.

The star attraction of the evening was Mary McKenzie, the county archivist, who gave an illustrated presentation of the many and varied kinds of sources for historical research that are available to users of Shropshire Archives in Shrewsbury.

A reminder of “1891” and warmer days

Back in June this year we all had a lovely day, reliving some aspects of All Stretton at the end of the 19th century. The attendance was in the hundreds and everybody enjoyed the displays and activities and, not least, the glorious weather. It was especially pleasing to see so many children dressed up and eagerly exploring the past.

Now that winter is all around us we feel certain that you will not mind being reminded of that day with its long hours of brilliant sunshine and cheerful faces. So, here are a handful of the photographs that were taken on that day for you to enjoy without any further comment from us.



Advance notice: We are planning one more event before our book launch in April. Sunday afternoon, 26 February 2006, we would like you to join us for a walk around the village to find out more about the history of the houses, finishing up with tea and cakes at the village hall. Look out for further details to be announced in the village newsletter.

History group website

The website was set up earlier this year, as part of the community project to research the history of our village of All Stretton. A small web design company with connections to the village, was employed to undertake the initial design, set-up and hosting of the website. This has resulted in an attractive and user-friendly site, containing many photographs as well as descriptive material, which it is hoped will be viewed by many with an interest in the locale. Why not visit it now, it can be found at www.allstrettonhistory.org.uk Take your time and visit each page savouring the atmospheric content.

The plan is that the site will be developed further, not just to produce an attractive site for “advertising” the village but to become a source of information, complementary to our intended publication, on the history of the village. It is hoped that both these resources will be valuable in future to people wishing to research local history

and act as a stimulus for such investigation. We have currently only scratched the surface and this has shown that there is still so much more to uncover. Let us know what you know about the history of your home so that our efforts can be even more comprehensive.

Editing of the website will be undertaken by members of the group, assisting in minimising future costs and ensuring that it is regularly maintained, and does not stagnate as many tend to do. August was the peak month for people viewing the site with nearly 900 requests being made to visit the home page. After your visit, let us know what you think of the site and its content, and more importantly what you would like to see on it.

Eric Huff would be pleased to receive your comments and advice concerning the website. His phone number is 01694 723706.

Planned All Stretton publication

One of the most important results of the All Stretton project will be a history of the village produced by the group. Work on this is already well in hand and it is planned to publish the book in the Spring of 2006.

The book will run to about 150 pages and be a softback with plentiful illustrations. The content will include:

- An introduction and general history of the village
- 8 in depth features on the history of the following buildings illustrated with drawings by Derek Thompson:

- ◇ Old Hall Farm
- ◇ Roseleigh
- ◇ The Hall
- ◇ The Yew Tree
- ◇ 1603
- ◇ Minton cottage
- ◇ The Church

- The history of the following houses will also to be covered

- ◇ Dugley Mill
- ◇ Dugley Farm
- ◇ The Grove
- ◇ Chapels
- ◇ Plush Hill/Jinlye
- ◇ Essex Lodge
- ◇ Buxton House
- ◇ Brooklyn Cottage
- ◇ White Horse Cottage

The volume will be edited by Ivar Romo (tel 723804). If you have any suggestions or comments please get in touch as soon as possible. A launch for the book will be held in the Village Hall in April 2006 to which all will be invited.



Local Heritage *initiative*

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