

The Tombs Family of Wheatley

The name is variously spelt: Tombs, Tombes, Tommes, Tomms, and Toms - but recent generations have agreed on Tombs. However, it is pronounced Toms!

The earliest note in the Cuddesdon Parish Records (where all Wheatley births, deaths and marriages were recorded until 1845) is of the marriage of William Tombes with Jane Holsworth, followed in 1599 by the birth of a son, Steven. The name occurs during the seventeenth century and references became increasingly common after the middle of the eighteenth century.

An inventory of the Household Goods of William Tombs in 1750 has survived (see Hassall: Wheatley Records, p.76) He must have been fairly prosperous, for he had '5 Pewter dishis & 10 Pewter Plates' as well as 13 delft plates, a glass decanter and 3 drinking glasses, a small looking glass & other od things'. In addition to normal household furnishings he had a paire of Crickett Batts'. In 1791, however, a William had fallen on bad times, for he was granted 2/- a week from the Poor Rate and was buried in the next year by the parish for the sum of £1. 4s. 3d.

In the early nineteenth century Thomas Tombes is recorded as being paid for repairing spinning wheels for the use of the women inmates of the workhouse and, in 1831, the family of John Tombes must have been in danger of becoming inmates, as they complained in vain to the Vestry that their allowance from the Parish was inadequate - it was a loaf and three pence per head.

In 1860 Christopher Tombs, labourer, was one of the six Wheatley *Morris Men*, who practised all the year round in

Munt's Hovel. In 1870 three members of the family were among the men charged with riotous assembly when they took part in a violent protest against the withdrawal of traditional common rights.

Many members of the family are described as labourers but several in the nineteenth century were sawyers, and two were licensees: John, born 1813, of the King and Queen, and William, born 1860, of The Crown.

The homes of the various branches of the family were scattered about the village: Blenheim, The Green, near the Church, High Street, and Littleworth are all mentioned, and a number lived in the Manor House when it was divided into several dwellings and also in the Breach cottages.

The marriage registers show that the Tombs family intermarried with many of the other large well-established village families, for example Summers, Goodin, Shepherd, Shorter and Shirley. Certain unusual Christian names were passed down - for example Roland Francis and Christopher, though the traditional names, John, James, Thomas and Richard are much more common, as is William. Among the girls Mary and Elizabeth predominate, though Keziah and Charlotte appear.

When school records become available we have glimpses of a procession of Tombs children but few of them stand out from the average. MARY Tombs achieved the status of Monitress in 1871 and, in the school year ending in March 1892, Edwin made the maximum possible attendances.

Re-typed from an earlier document by Susan Prest (03/05/06)