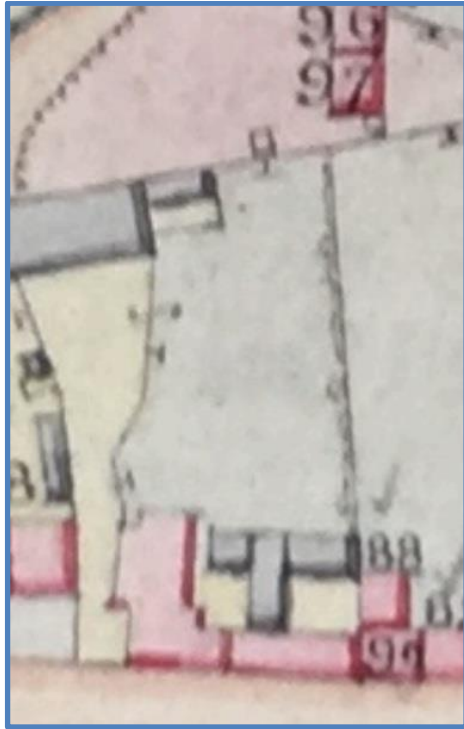


50 High Street, Shrivenham

Researched & collated by Neil B. Maw

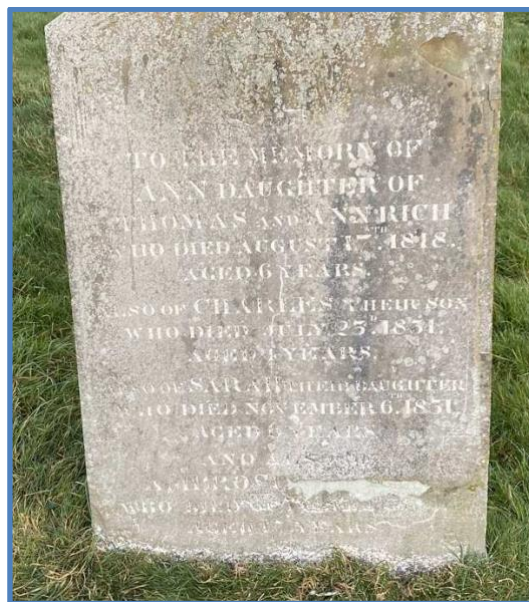


The property that is the subject of this listing, in the picture above, extends from the wall by the gates in the far left, down to the conveniently placed telegraph pole. The gable end of the next cottage roof also defines the boundary. Modern day the property is number 50 High Street but it is now four separate premises. In its entirety it was a considerable estate in the middle of the high street. If the next two pictures are studied the size of it becomes clear. The first picture shows the whole property as it was in 1866. It belonged to the Barrington Estate and was listed on the inventory as a Dwellinghouse, Slaughterhouse, Yard and Garden. The second picture shows its position within the high street. The Tithe Map of 20 years earlier showed it exactly the same.



It's known from family documentation that the Rich family occupied this property from at least the early part of the 19th century. The census of 1841 confirmed that Thomas Rich was at Shrivenham with his wife Ann. He was 50 and she 52 years of age. They had a son Thomas and young members of the Hicks family as servants. Thomas was born in 1775 in Christian Malford, Wilts and the Shrivenham census for 1851 described him as a Butcher and Farmer of 54 acres. Ann died in 1849. We don't know where the 54 acres were located, but it's likely that it was somewhere close by in Shrivenham. The property is described as a Slaughterhouse so the animals must have been reared and then brought into the rear of the premises to the grey T shaped buildings shown on the map clip above.

The census of 1861 confirmed that Thomas senior had retired as he was then 86. His son Thomas had taken over the business and he was aged 40. He married Sarah Humphries in 1846 at Cookham and by the time of this census they had ten children. Thomas senior and Ann his wife also had a lot of children, but tragically four of them died young. In the churchyard at St Andrews is a memorial stone that displays all the details (See photo below).



Thomas junior had many daughters and there are numerous instances of wedding announcements in the local newspaper of their marriages. The census of 1871 confirmed that Mary Ann and Maria Rich were both looking after the Victoria Hotel at Shrivenham Station. Their older sister Sarah was married to Charles Canfield who had taken over the hotel after the death of his father George. But it had been a sad time for Sarah as her husband Charles had died in April 1870 and their 10-month-old son died the following month. Maria was to become the licensee for a short period.

What is today the Estate Agent's shop was for many years the Butcher's shop and there was a display window facing the street. At Christmas, it was common practice for butchers to display their produce and it's possible that the window could have been there as early as 1878 as the advert below might suggest. (North Wilts Herald 28th December 1878).

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1878.

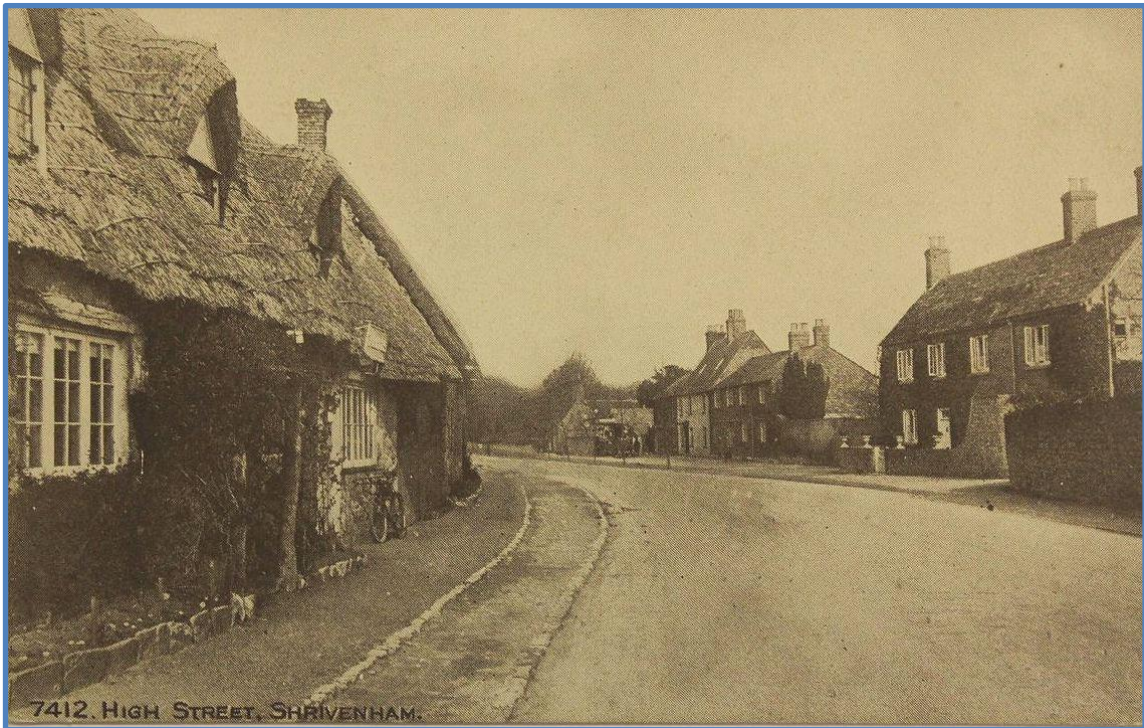
SHRIVENHAM.

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW of meat of Mr. Rich took place on Thursday in last week. The meat was of excellent quality, and comprised one splendid heifer, two years old, fed by Mr. W. Edmonds, of Southerop House, weighing 42 score; one good heifer, bought at Messrs. Dore and Smith's sale, Swindon; two prize sheep fed by Mr. Robert Jacobs, Burford, Oxon; two excellent sheep and five splendid fat lambs bought at Mr. Walker's sale, Lechlade; eight prime down sheep fed by Mr. Hickman, Longcote; one extraordinary, six-tooth wether sheep, fed by Mr. Thomas Rich, Manor Farm, Rodbourn, and bought at Messrs. Deacon and Liddiard's sale, Swindon.

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These two photos are from circa 1920s and both show the window with the sign above it. (Above courtesy Paul Williams Collection - below Catherine Gould collection)





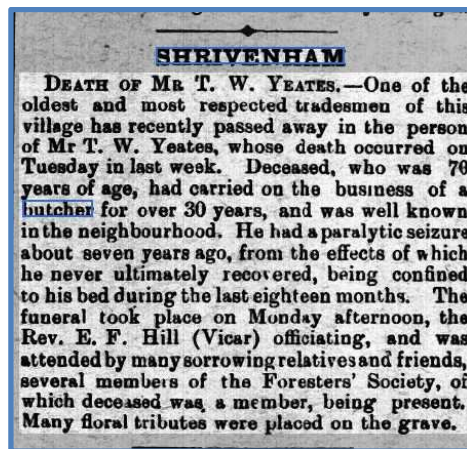
For the historical reference the above photo is useful to point out some features. From the gates on the left, just after the white section of wall there is a door. Even as late as the latter 1960s, the door was rarely opened, because there was nothing in it – just a loose earth floor, no window, bare stone walls, no ceiling, the rafters holding up the thatch were branches from trees. Further down past the shop window were the ‘*cutting rooms*.’ This was where the carcasses were cut up ready for sale. The top half of the wooden doors were open slats for ventilation. There was no fireplace or form of heating, purposely to keep the rooms as cold as possible for the preservation of the meat. (Photo circa 1910 from the Les Judd Collection SHS).

According to Rich family documents, Thomas Rich retired in 1888 and moved into a house nearby called Japonica Villa which he had enlarged. Sarah died in 1894 and Thomas in 1897. They are both buried in St Andrew’s churchyard and their children erected a memorial stone to their memory. (See below).



A court case from the latter part of 1883 related to the accusation that Thomas Rich had falsely obtained a licence to move his cattle. There were regulations in place to prevent the spread of disease and in this particular instance, the local farmers watched the events with much interest. Thomas Rich's lawyer seemed confident that he had proved it to be no more than mistaken confusion between a man and his son and that the accused man had not signed the declaration. But the magistrates still found Thomas Rich guilty and he was fined £4 including costs. (Wilts & Glos Gaz 17th Nov 1883).

Thomas Yeates was described by a newspaper article as, *'butcher of this village,'* so he seems to have been well at home in the place of Thomas Rich. (Swindon Adver 18th June 1887). And another article at the end of that year confirmed it with details of his Christmas display. (Marlborough Times 24th Dec 1887). The census of 1901 confirmed that Thomas was 56 years of age and his son Frank 21. In 1911 Thomas died after a long illness (See below Faringdon Adver 29th July 1911).



Frank Yeates had been running the business of slaughtering and selling meat from the premises for at least 2 years before his father died. During the years of the first world war his name cropped up in the newspapers for exemption applications for his staff. All young men were drafted into the military for the war effort, so any not doing so had to be accounted for. There were exemptions for Frank's staff in 1916 and 1918. He married Mary Tombs in 1913 and the registration included the information that she came from Hankerton in Wiltshire. It was probably around this time that the property was sold to Frank Yeates taking it out of the Barrington Estate. There were three public sales, 1917, 1922 & 1927. However, as yet we have no documentary evidence of this.

The Electoral Registers give an indication of the years that followed. Frank and Mary continued to be listed up to the years of the second world war. Unfortunately, Frank did not see the war out and died in 1943. He was buried in St Andrew's churchyard but there is no memorial stone. Although Mary Lucy's name appeared in the Electoral Register until 1947, her record indicated that she had returned home to her birthplace and died at Yew Tree Farm, Hankerton.

However, she was buried in St Andrew's with husband Frank on 26th September 1947.

There is a gap of about 13 years from the tenure of the Yeates and Jack and Mary Hurst. The Electoral Register confirmed the Hursts were in the Butcher's shop (No 50 High St) in 1965, but memory of a local makes it certain they were there circa 1960 at least. His birth name was John but he was known by everyone as Jack and he came from Yorkshire. He not only ran a shop but also did rounds twice a week among the nearby villages in a Bedford van. By this time the regulations had long since changed that allowed the slaughter of animals on the premises. The buildings to the rear that was the slaughterhouse were turned into general outhouses, washhouse and privy. There was also a well just outside the rear of middle part of the premises. There was a large back garden and an old stable for a cart, gig and at least two horses. When Jack retired circa 1970, he obtained planning permission to build a house in the back garden that was accessed via Manor Lane and this removed a considerable chunk of the land from the premises. He sold the business around that time to Derek Alan Woolford who had been a Butcher with the Co-operative in Swindon. (Below. The red line showing the former ancient boundary of this estate).



The main change that then took place at this location was caused by the devastating fire of the 24th July 1976. The fire started in the attic at the rear part of the building, caused by ancient electrical wiring. It had also been a particularly hot summer (the summer of 76 referred to by many people over a certain age). Smoke was seen leaching through the thatch at the back of the house and the fire service was summoned. They arrived in minutes and upon poking a hole in the ceiling from below to look at the extent of the fire, it was clear that it was very serious. It took the fire service several hours to get control and stop it spreading along the row of cottages and they stopped it just short of the butcher's shop.





Through the rest of the 1970s and in to the 80s, the premises was put back together, with the living accommodation on the west end, a hairdressing salon in the middle and the butcher's shop on the east end. After much wrangling with the district council, the west end and middle were fitted with a tiled roof whilst the butcher's shop remained thatched.

The Woolford's left the business circa 1990 having sold it to their son, whilst they moved on to South Africa. It was then sold again and eventually broken up into four separate premises being from west to east: domestic, chemist, estate agents, domestic as it now is (2023).

We know from the research of Joan Dils and Deidre Schwartz that from the early 17th century until the first half of the 18th that the Lewis's were Shrivenham Butchers. (Tudor & Stuart Shrivenham P.67). We also know from a Deed within the Barrington Documents at the British Library (BL ADD MS 73763) dated 1727, that Francis Lewis was a Butcher in Shrivenham. It is therefore quite feasible that the Lewis family had occupied 50 High Street previous to the Rich family. However, we have yet to discover any documentary evidence to confirm it.



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