

The Herm Chitterne Connection

Imagine Chitterne with no traffic. Imagine our busy, dangerous roads replaced by meandering sandy paths where you may occasionally meet a quad bike or a small tractor. Imagine the fields of waving corn that surround us here replaced by azure blue sea and white breakers and then imagine the squawking of jackdaws and rooks replaced by the cries of seagulls. This is Herm, my holiday destination, an island the size of Chitterne one and a half miles long by half a mile wide.



A chance remark about how the size of the island matched that of our home village triggered my investigative streak and from that moment I was on the case. Holiday reading included a book on life on the island by a former tenant and another on the “Hidden Treasures of Herm”. However, from these I soon discovered the differences between Herm and Chitterne.

First, Herm is not a part of the UK and it does not belong to the EU, but as one of the Channel Islands it is part of the British Isles. The island is governed from Guernsey, and there is no VAT charged. Herm has two shops whereas Chitterne lost its last shop in 2000. Neither Herm nor Chitterne have a Post Office, but both have post boxes. On Herm the post box is painted blue.



Second, the number of permanent residents on the island is only 60 compared to Chitterne’s 300. But the population must roughly equal that of Chitterne in the summer months when additional staff and holidaymakers live on the island. Unlike Chitterne, where many village residents are retired, there are no retired people living on Herm, due to the unusual arrangement where right of residence goes with the job. This also means there are no unemployed on the island.



Third, Herm’s economy depends on tourism; Chitterne has no accommodation for tourists. Our economy is much more diverse, although Chitterne and Herm have farming in common, albeit on different scales. On the island I saw two goats and Herm’s one Guernsey bull playing host to several Guernsey and Aberdeen Angus bullocks over from Guernsey to feast on Herm’s lush grass. In past years Herm had a herd of dairy cows and a milking parlour, but this area of the island now houses the self-catering log cabins I believe. Chitterne has two herds of beef cattle, including some Aberdeen Angus, and many pigs.

So where do the two places match apart from size and Aberdeen Angus? Well, surprise, surprise, in the matter of game! I was astounded to see very tame pheasants pecking at the bladderwrack seaweed on the beach and cavorting about amongst the bracken on the clifftops. They weren’t shy at all so I suppose they are no longer hunted as they once were in the 16th



and 17th centuries. Chitterne pheasants are bred for sport and are much more wary of humans!



Rabbits abound on Herm too. The Elizabethans stocked Herm with pheasants, partridges, swans, rabbits and deer as a game reserve for the governors of Guernsey in 1570. Only the pheasants and rabbits remain.

Chitterne and Herm are both isolated. We are surrounded by the Salisbury Plain, Herm by the English Channel. Our nearest neighbour is Codford 3 miles away, Herm's nearest neighbour is Guernsey 3 miles away. But Chitterne is not isolated in quite the same sense as Herm, because people constantly pass through Chitterne to a destination elsewhere, whereas Herm has no through traffic. Herm *is* the destination.

In the matter of history, briefly, Herm and Chitterne share ancient and monastic history. Both landscapes feature ancient archeological sites, but whereas Chitterne's sites are grassy humps and bumps of chalk, Herm has Neolithic tombs built of granite.

Herm has St Tugal's chapel, Chitterne once had a chapel dedicated to St Andrew, which no longer exists. St Tugal's Chapel was built by Norman Benedictine monks between 1028 and 1035. The date of St Andrew's Chapel is not known but it was given to the Priory of Bradenstoke in 1142 by Walter of Salisbury. Monks ruled in Herm from 900 to 1542. Nuns held most of Chitterne from 1248 until 1543.



William the Conqueror gave both Herm and Chitterne away. He gave Herm to the Augustinians of Cherbourg, who established a religious house there and he gave Chitterne to Walter, one of his followers, ancestor of the Walter of Salisbury already mentioned. Most of Chitterne was ruled by Augustinians too, when Walter's descendant Ela of Salisbury gave her lands here to the Augustinian house she had founded at Lacock, Wiltshire.



Herm has a granite quarry, Chitterne has a chalk pit and a clay pit. Again not quite on the same scale, but nevertheless a match and both are no longer in use. Herm's granite was quarried from 1815 to 1870 and can be seen in London today. It was used to build the steps in front of Carlton House Terrace and the base of the Duke of York's column in Pall Mall. Chitterne's chalk was used to build the cob walls that feature in the village, and the clay was carted to Amesbury for the manufacture of tobacco pipes in the 17th century.



I felt quite at home when I spotted the tile-topped stone walls on Herm and again on seeing the cricket pitch. Their wicket looks to be as well kept as ours



although I think overall we in Chitterne have the better pitch. On

the other hand we can't boast that we have hosted a match with such famous opponents as the Lord's Taverners as Herm did in 2011.

The Herm books provided me with two jolts of excitement. One happened on reading that a bailiff called Henry West "from a small village near Stonehenge" had been employed on the island in the 19th century. However, on returning home some investigation by my researcher friends showed that Henry hailed from the other side of Stonehenge, from Wilsford, near Amesbury. Well, at least it is in Wiltshire.



1 Staff of Jefferies' Glove Factory Warminster c1930, circled – my mother and Alfie Jefferies.

The second jolt turned out to be spot on, but more personal to me rather than to Chitterne. It concerned one of Herm's previous tenants, a Mr. A. G. Jefferies. He took on Herm in 1946 when the German occupiers had left after the war. The book said he had been a retired glove manufacturer who had employed 1000 people in seven factories in the UK. My mother started her working life as a glover for A. L. Jefferies Limited, in Warminster. So you can see why I was jolted. My mother always referred to her boss as Alfie Jefferies, but I didn't know his second initial, and I wondered if there was a connection. There was! Again my good friends provided the answer: Alfred Graham Jefferies was the son of A. L. Jefferies, he was born in Westbury in 1893 and he lived with his wife at Oxbarn, Codford in 1946. Sadly his project on Herm proved to be too much for him and he died in 1949 at Lansdown Nursing Home in Bath.

Connections! I love them.

Sue Robinson with thanks to H & W

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