

SOCIAL HISTORY

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Medieval Wilton consisted mainly of farms and cottages. Fons George, Wilton village, was much poorer than Galmington and Sherford. Farmers were the wealthiest inhabitants and most houses were modest before the 19th century.¹ Of 81 men recorded in the 1641 protestation only seven occur among 37 taxpayers that year, the others were presumably non-resident.² Similarly some hearth taxpayers in 1664—65 were not resident. Apart from Fullands with its 13 hearths six houses had four or more but Ames Blinman registered only one for his large house. The 21 exemptions rose to 29 in 1674 when three houses were void.³ Even the prosperous might have few luxuries. George Browne, clerk of the castle, had added a three-storey extension to his five-bedroomed house in Sherford by 1679. His only luxuries were two viols, a landscape and two portraits.⁴ In 1696 George Wood Powell received from the estate of his deceased younger brother 41 gold rings and other gold, diamond and coral jewellery, many historic gold coins, silver boxes, and other valuables.⁵ Clothiers put their money into wool, cloth or loans rather than possessions although clocks were common. William King (d. 1686) had a harpsichord, virginals and some plate. Ames Blinman (d. 1685) had a large well-furnished house but a second inventory describes his furniture as rotten and his curtains as moth-eaten.⁶ Pike's house in 1814 was generously furnished with largely inherited 18th-century mahogany furniture, four-poster beds, pewter and china. The Winslow family's Mount Nebo house in 1847 was furnished with many works of art.⁷ A potential

¹ Above, landownership, econ, hist.

² Howard and Stoate, *Protestation Returns*, 120, 260.

³ R. Holworthy, R. and E. Dwelly (ed.), *I Hearth Tax for Som. 1664—5*, 36—7; *II. Dir. Som. XVIIth century [Hearth Tax Exemptions]* 165—6, 314.

⁴ SHC, DD/SP/1679/48, 1680/3.

⁵ SHC, DD/SF/12/14/47.

⁶ SHC, DD/SP/1688/54; TNA, PROB 4/13151, 16060, 19467.

⁷ SHC, DD/HC/70/16/3; *Taunton Courier*, 21 July 1847; BNA accessed 9 Jan. 2024.

Sherford tenant in 1831 expected improvements including larger windows, preferably sashes, a china cupboard, a wine cellar, bells, papered or stencilled walls and an inside water closet.⁸

The building of large mansions in the early 19th century followed by increasing housing for professional families diminished the role of farmers. At the same time large cottages were replaced by small terraces and courts of poor houses. Thereafter until mid 20th-century mass housing development the parish was divided between wealthy retirees and professional families in large houses and poor families in courts.⁹ There were 79 female domestic servants and 12 men in 1851, nearly a quarter of the population, rising to 147 women in 1881 and it remained around that figure until 1911. At the same time the number of labourers fell from 67 in 1851 to 12 in 1901.¹⁰ The arrival of modest middle-class and local-authority housing ensured a more balanced social structure by 1939, a trend that continued.¹¹

In 1871 typhoid in Turkey Court was ascribed to bedrooms being built over closets, which did not drain well. In one affected house a family of seven had three militia men lodging. In 1884 diphtheria cases at Galmington coincided with a need to remove foul cesspits and in 1889 a shocking case of child neglect revealed poor housing conditions there.¹² Pressure on housing meant that homes with four rooms or less rose from 40 in 1891 to 57 in 1911.¹³ In 1918 Taunton council proposed buying Turkey Court with adjoining houses and land to the east to erect 44 workmen's dwelling but nothing was done.¹⁴ Between July 1934 and April 1938 six slum clearance areas were designated for demolition covering 52 houses occupied by 141 people in Galmington, including the Row or Rank, Sherford, Middleway, Wilton Street and the Turkey Court area. Most had washhouses and water closets

⁸ SHC, DD/ES/1/13 (1831).

⁹ SHC, tithe award; TNA, HO 107/959, 1922; RG 9/1617; RG 10/2372; RG 11/2367; RG 12/1876; RG 13/2278; RG 14/14242.

¹⁰ TNA, HO 107/1922; RG 11/2367; RG 13/2278; RG 14/14242.

¹¹ TNA, RG 305/1/WOOT, WOOV.

¹² SHC, D/B/ta/2/1/5; *Taunton Courier* 7 May 1884, 11 May 1889; accessed 30 Nov. 2023.

¹³ TNA, RG 12/1876; RG 14/14242.

¹⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/3/16/2

sometimes shared by four households. Some Wilton Street residents had none, presumably those in back courts.¹⁵

Although the local authority built a housing estate north of Galmington in the 1930s shortages led to squatting in former army huts near Musgrove Park hospital in the late 1940s. In 1946 the council converted 12 Nissen huts into 48 dwellings called Belmont Place and agreed to upgrade 22 used by squatters if they paid rent but the facilities were vandalised.¹⁶ By 1953 all squatters were rehomed and Belmont Place was gradually vacated, only six of 48 being occupied by 1956.¹⁷ Shortage of housing also led to the division of large houses like those on Trull Road into flats.¹⁸

MIGRATION

In the 1620s John Duston migrated to Massachusetts, USA.¹⁹ Thomas Slocombe, merchant had settled in St Michael's, Barbados and his legacies in 1674 included 37,000 lb. of muscovado sugar.²⁰ Harry Smith merchant lived in Savanna La Mar, Jamaica by 1765.²¹ Wilton, Connecticut was said to be named for Wilton, Somerset.²² Most migration was local but in the early 18th century Wilton people were found begging as far afield as Nottinghamshire.²³ Wilton's popularity with retired army officers and others probably accounts for one per cent of the population being Indian-born in the mid to late 19th century and houses named Bengal Lodge, Dunedin or Ardennes. In 1921 there were residents born in India, Malaysia, Singapore and Kenya.²⁴

¹⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/3/8/12, 4/2/3; D/DC/tau.d (M/13881).

¹⁶ SHC, D/B/ta/3/22/4—7; 24/1/107/3243.

¹⁷ SHC, D/B/ta/3/22/8, pp. 2, 272, 366.

¹⁸ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/107/3260, 24/1/107/3243.

¹⁹ C. E. Banks, *Topographical Dict. of Emigrants to New England 1620—50* (Baltimore, USA, 1976), 146.

²⁰ SHC, DD/SP/423.

²¹ SHC, DD/AY/321; DD/SP/319/85.

²² SHC, D/P/wilt/9/1/1.

²³ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/PR/460/6—7, 9.

²⁴ TNA, HO 107/1922, RG 10/2372, RG 11/2367; RG 15/11244—6, 11248—50.

EDUCATION

A Sunday school opened between 1818 and 1825 with 20 boys and 16 girls.²⁵ By 1833 there were 45 pupils and two day schools taught 20 children at their parents' expense.²⁶ In 1838 only the Sunday school was recorded with a paid mistress and assistants. The school was not affiliated to the National Society and taught 18 boys and 14 girls supported by subscriptions and donations. There was a dissenting school of which no details were given.²⁷ By 1846 85 children attended Sunday school with six voluntary teachers and 29 Wilton children were taught elsewhere. There were two dame schools with three teachers and 43 pupils, one possibly the infant school recorded in 1842.²⁸

In 1850 the vicar wanted a day school and by 1855 had advertised for a schoolmistress to run the day and Sunday school. An evening school was proposed and a literate woman was needed to teach in the gaol. By 1863 up to 80 children reputedly attended but the parish was given notice to quit the premises.²⁹ A new school was built north-west of the church c. 1866 but by 1874 was short of 83 places, new classrooms were planned in 1878 and some children went to Trull school.³⁰ In 1886 the children were given hot dinners from the Taunton Coffee Hotel supported by subscription.³¹ There was accommodation for 125 children but average attendance was only 63 in 1892, rising to 93 with five teachers by 1905.³² The Sunday school had 106 children and 18 unpaid teachers in 1898.³³ In 1904 the building was condemned although the education provided had been good. In 1907 it closed

²⁵ *Educ. of Poor Digest* (1819), 801; *10th Ann. Ep. Bath and Wells Dioc. Assoc, SPCK* (1825—6), 80.

²⁶ *Educ. Enq. Abstract* (1835), 828.

²⁷ SHC, DD/S/AM/131.

²⁸ *Pigot. Dir. Som.* (1842); *Nat. Soc., Schs Inquiry*, 1846—7 (1849), 18—19.

²⁹ SHC, DD/TBL/49; D/B/ta/2/1/3; D/P/wilt/3/5/4.

³⁰ SHC, D/P/wilt/18/8/1; DD/DP/199/6; *Taunton Courier*, 11 Mar. 1874, 6 Nov. 1978; BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023.

³¹ *Taunton Courier*, 23 Nov. 1887; BNA accessed 1 Dec. 2023.

³² *Taunton Courier*, 14 Sep. 1892; BNA accessed 1 Dec. 2023; SHC, D/P/tau.a/18/7/1; A/DSG/1; D/P/wilt/2/8/2.

³³ SHC, D/P/wilt/2/5/2.

and pupils transferred elsewhere.³⁴ It was rebuilt further north to the designs of George Strawbridge in 1908 as a Sunday school.³⁵ In 1914 and 1940 it was requisitioned as a military dormitory and remained in use as a church hall in 2024.³⁶

In 1859 a cottage day school for infants was started by Octavius Walter in Galmington and a couple taught over 40 children with the emphasis on religious education.³⁷ In 1865 Walter sold land on which he held a mortgage to trustees and a schoolroom was built for c. 60 children with a house for the mistress and in 1869 it was placed in a trust.³⁸ As the site was a detached field of Bishops Hull parish two of its parishioners were trustees.³⁹ By 1890 the school was in disrepair, lacking appropriate furniture or books and was said to be used as a nursery with little attempt at education. The day school closed but it remained in use for Sunday school, missions and temperance meetings and was bought for the parish in 1901.⁴⁰ In 1921 it was vested in the Diocesan Board of Finance. The garden was sold in 1929 and the Sunday school with its cottage was retained for the church caretaker. During the Second World War she took in evacuees and RAF personnel occupied the schoolroom between 1941 and 1945. In 1962 it was sold and is now a private house, 2 Comeytrowe Lane.⁴¹ In 1905 the proceeds of the sale were invested in a charitable trust for school prizes and exhibitions but by the later 20th century income had not been distributed and a new scheme with wider educational benefits was drawn up in 1976. In 1996 the charity ceased and the funds were divided between three local schools.⁴²

The proliferation of housing in the later 20th century led to the creation of two primary schools. Parkfield school opened in a purpose-built block with a large playing field

³⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 22 June 1904; BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023; SHC, D/P/wilt/18/11/1; A/EZI/2/1; TNA, ED 49/6694.

³⁵ SHC, D/D/Ri/1; D/B/ta/24/1/39/474.

³⁶ *Taunton Courier*, 2, 16 Sep. 1914; BNA accessed 18 Jan. 2024; SHC, D/P/wilt/23/2—3. 33.

³⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 11 July 1827, 6 Jan. 1830; BNA accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

³⁸ SHC, D/P/wilt/18/11/1; VCH office, abstract of deeds in private hands 1980.

³⁹ SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22.

⁴⁰ SHC, D/P/wilt/2/8/6 (1911); 9/3/2, p. 28; 18/11/1.

⁴¹ VCH office, abstr. of deeds in private hands 1980; SHC, D/P/wilt/4/1/2, 9/3/4 (1962), 18/11/1.

⁴² SHC, D/PC/b.hl/2/22; DD/X/GET; D/P/wilt/5/1/1.

on Parkfield Road in 1968 and by 2000 had 418 children in 14 classes.⁴³ By the 21st century it had many pupils for whom English was not their first language.⁴⁴ Bishop Henderson Church of England school opened in 1974 on a large site south of Galmington Road.⁴⁵ It was a successful school with 436 pupils in 2017, above its capacity. The Fledglings children's centre for under 5s was sited in the grounds⁴⁶

In 1966 The Princess Margaret school for the physically handicapped was opened by Barnardo's at Middleway for day and boarding pupils.⁴⁷ However, in September 1996 the school closed and was subsequently demolished.⁴⁸

Private Schools

The most important private schools in the parish were at Fullands and at Wilton Lodge. In 1839 George Rogers leased Fullands House agreeing to make extensive alterations including building a large school or dining room with organ recess.⁴⁹ He moved his school from Bishops Hull to Fullands in 1840 and had 20 boarders, at 35 guineas a year, and two resident masters in 1841.⁵⁰ The future General Gordon and his brothers were educated at Fullands.⁵¹ Numbers increased to over 40 and unusually a few girls were accepted as boarders if their brothers were in the school. There were usually four resident masters.⁵² Set in 20 a. including a cricket ground with a pavilion and playground, the school had hot, cold and plunge baths, tennis and five courts. It was owned and run by 1861 by the Reed family with William Reed.

⁴³ SHC, C/E/4/64; C/E/4/409/174.

⁴⁴ reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123714: accessed 28 Aug. 2019, 17 Jan. 2024.

⁴⁵ SHC, C/E/4/64.

⁴⁶ reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/123852: accessed 28 Aug. 2019, 17 Jan. 2024.

⁴⁷ SHC, DD/MAL/754.

⁴⁸ *Western Daily Press*, 24 July 1996; Som. HER 16941, 28108.

⁴⁹ SHC, DD/CH/77/6, 80/4.

⁵⁰ *Taunton Courier* 13 May 1840: BNA accessed 22 Jan. 2024; TNA, HO 107/959/26.

⁵¹ SHC, A/DAS/2 (12301).

⁵² TNA, RG 9/1617; RG 10/2372. RG 11/2367.

as headmaster followed by his sons. The school closed in 1887 and was sold in 1888. It was briefly occupied by a group of Jesuit priests in 1910.⁵³

In c. 1864 Eliza Griffiths, daughter of the headmaster of the Wellington Road Independent school, opened a senior girls' school with the help of her sisters in their home at Wilton Lodge, later known as Alexandra College or Taunton County School for Girls. She added a large schoolroom in 1869, a gymnasium and additional schoolroom in 1878 and later a large block presumably for boarders.⁵⁴ In 1881 she had five resident teachers and three pupil teachers. Girls were accepted from kindergarten to student governesses. The school closed after Eliza's death in 1893.⁵⁵ Part, now Grove Lodge, was taken for a boy's school, which had closed by 1911.⁵⁶

Between 1827 and 1830 John Foster kept the Wilton Academy described as near the Shuttern turnpike with a large playground. It taught boys commercial and mathematical sciences.⁵⁷ Mountswood school was kept by the Revd F. Banks in 1864—5 divided between elementary, modern and classical schools.⁵⁸ In 1871 there were two small preparatory boarding schools for young boys kept by the Evans sisters, formerly at Park Terrace, then at Uplands [Lowlands] and by 1883 at Haygrass, and the Gapper sisters, the latter still open in 1881. A senior boys' school was kept by Florence Haslam at Haines Hill in 1911.⁵⁹

In 1851 Clara Stephens kept a senior girls' boarding school at Haines Hill with two resident assistants.⁶⁰ Caleb Simpson and his wife Mary kept a senior boys' school at Haines

⁵³ *P.O. Dir. Som.* (1861, 1866); *Kelly's Co. Topog. Som.* [c. 1875]; SHC, DD/CH/80/4; TNA, IR 58/82654/2387.

⁵⁴ *Som. Co. Gaz.* 17 Sep. 1864; BNA accessed 16 Jan. 2024; *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1866); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/7/207, 24/1/12, 425, SANHS Tite colln, Taunton scrap book; TNA, RG 10/2372; RG 11/2367; above, intro.

⁵⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1866, 1883); SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/7/207, 24/1/12, 425, 24/1/12/425; TNA, RG 10/2372; RG 11/2367; above, intro.

⁵⁶ *Kelly's Dir. Som.* (1897); Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1902—3), 207.

⁵⁷ *Taunton Courier*, 5 Dec. 1859, 25 July 1860; BNA accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

⁵⁸ Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103; *Taunton Courier*, 27 Apr. 1864; 15 Feb. 1865; BNA accessed 16 Jan. 2024.

⁵⁹ TNA, RG 9/1617; RG 10/2372; RG 14/14242/31; Goodman's *Dir. Taunton* (1864), 103.

⁶⁰ TNA, HO 107/1922.

Hill in 1861 and after Caleb's death Mary kept a girls' school with her sister in Park Street where a limited number were taught French and needlework and moral and religious training was important. By 1881 the school had moved to Penarth, Wales.⁶¹ Mary Penistan opened Marlborough House School in Park Street on 15 September 1887 but a year later had moved it to Mountlands, Taunton.⁶² Maud McDermott (d. 1916), had a private girls' school at 22—3 Park Street in 1911.⁶³

Ethel Gange and her sister opened the Beehive Preparatory School in 1939 by Middleway, Wilton as a mixed day and boarding school with 50 children aged 3 to 8 in 1943. In 1947 it moved to Wellington Road, Bishops Hull.⁶⁴ A private nursery for under 5s used the Trident community centre in 2024 and there was a community facility at Comeytrowe Community Hall.⁶⁵

CHARITIES FOR THE POOR

Eleanor Deacon left £5 to the poor paid to the overseers in 1615 together with £2 paid for use of the north aisle by George Powell. The income was distributed at Easter but was lost later.⁶⁶ In 1639 James Cade gave two burgages in Taunton to benefit four well-behaved poor people in Wilton. The property was allowed to decay and was sold on a long rebuilding lease in 1788. The lessee replaced the old houses with a single large house and paid £6 5s. rent to the four poor who each received 6d. a week in the early 19th century.⁶⁷ The house, rebuilt in 1909 after a fire, produced £20 a year for the charity, which was taken over by the Taunton

⁶¹ TNA, RG 9/1617; RG 10/2372; RG 11/5289; Morris and Co., *Dir. Som.* (1872).

⁶² *Taunton Courier*, 16 Nov. 1887 BNA accessed 16 Jan. 2024.

⁶³ TNA, RG 14/14242/317; *VCH Som.* XIII, educ.; *Taunton Courier*, 16 Nov. 1887: BNA accessed 16 Jan. 2024.

⁶⁴ SHC, A/CBG 47; A/APN 2/6; above, Bishops Hull, soc. hist.

⁶⁵ www.trident-galmington.org.uk: accessed 24 January 2024.

⁶⁶ SHC, D/P/wilt/2/1/1.

⁶⁷ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CH/8; *5th Rep. Com. Char.*, 546—7. Now 22—3 East Street.

Town charity in 1929.⁶⁸ In 1646 Thomas Prowse then of Cullompton left £5 to the poor, which was either fully distributed or lost.⁶⁹

The poor received several charitable donations including the church offertory in the 19th century but Cade's remained the sole endowed charity until 1858 when Lucilla Spurway gave £100 to the poor.⁷⁰ The income was not distributed and the parish wanted to spend it on a new school. On being told that was illegal the charity was distributed in coal until the 1920s. Both charities have ceased to exist.⁷¹

SOCIAL WELFARE

Poor relief

Pauper removals were disputed in 1616 and 53 settlement certificates for clothworkers from the later 17th and early 18th centuries indicate most were from neighbouring parishes with a few from Devon and one from Buckingham. Paupers were removed in that period as far as Cornwall. During the 17th century there were problems with child maintenance, vagrants and women from Devon and Cornwall giving birth in the parish.⁷² The executors of a man who left his wife in poverty were required to pay her an income.⁷³ Several men had to provide for their mothers and incapacitated children.⁷⁴ Most 18th-century removals were to or from Taunton, Pitminster or east Devon. Local removals were often quashed and by the 19th century those further afield.⁷⁵ Although most pauper children were apprenticed to husbandry and housewifery, several were apprenticed to clothworkers as late as 1773 although some

⁶⁸ SHC, A/BEN/55; DD/C/353; D/P/wilt/17/3/1.

⁶⁹ TNA, PROB 11/196/329.

⁷⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 10 Jan. 1849, 28 Feb. 1855: BNA accessed 16 Jan. 2024; SHC, D/P/wilt/3/5/4; 17/2/1.

⁷¹ SHC, D/P/wilt/3/5/4; D/D/Ri/1.

⁷² SHC, Q/SR/21/36; 25/27, 56—78; 2/29—30, 200—1; 90/60; DD/SAS/C795/PR/460/3, 7, 11; D/P/wilt/13/3/3.

⁷³ E. Bates-Harbin, *Quarter Sessions Records, 1625—39*, 279—80.

⁷⁴ SHC, DD/SP/161 (1665, 1679).

⁷⁵ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/PR/460/4—5; DD/X/KT/1; Q/SR/311/156, 315/141, 331/3/3, 11, 332/1/9, 349/1/16, 350/3/8, 361/3/22, 638/3.

were assigned to several masters. Two mothers refused to allow their daughters to be apprenticed to men in 1787.⁷⁶

In 1798 38 households received fortnightly relief and coffins, midwives and clothing were supplied. By 1802 fortnightly pay was over £11.⁷⁷ In 1812 the vestry decided to buy rice for the poor and Joseph White offered seven tiny tenements west of Middleway for £28 a year to house the poor if the parish would re-roof them. The parish ceased using them c. 1830 and they were privately let by the White family.⁷⁸ Expenditure reportedly fell from £455 annually in 1813 to £321 in 1815, but by 1819 the number of households on relief had risen from 30 to 40.⁷⁹ In 1838 the parish spent nearly £200 on the poor, hired a room before 1848 to pay relief and paid an assistant overseer £2 a year rising to £5 in 1855.⁸⁰ Four children were out at nurse in 1871.⁸¹ In 1883 several prominent residents declared that the aged poor suffered from reduced relief, naming seven cases. The *Guardians* dismissed concerns as the poor should enter the workhouse.⁸² That may explain the fall in out-relief from £243 a year in 1878 to £5 by 1893 when recorded paupers in the population had fallen from one in eight in 1813 to one in 53.⁸³

In 1965—6 the county council converted Burtons Orchard, formerly Greenlands, into a mental health hostel with 10—18 places. It remained open in 2024.⁸⁴ In 1952 Wilton House was acquired by the Taunton Old People's Housing Society but was sold in 2011 and became a commercial nursing home as was St George's in Wilton Street. The Society opened Blagdon

⁷⁶ SHC, DD/X/WHI/5; DD/SAS/C795/PR/460/8, 12; DD/SAS/C795/CH/8 (1784, 1787, 1801).

⁷⁷ SHC, D/P/wilt/13/2/1.

⁷⁸ SHC, DD/SAS/C795/CH/8 (1812, 1830—1); D/P/wilt/12/1/21, 48; 13/2/3; tithe award; TNA, 58/82705/181.

⁷⁹ *Abridgement of the Abstract of the Answers and Returns ...so far as relates to the poor* (HC 1818), 390—1; SHC, D/P/wilt/13/2/1—3.

⁸⁰ *4th Report Poor Law Com.*, App. D (1838), 173; SHC, D/P/wilt/13/2/4.

⁸¹ TNA, RG 10/2372.

⁸² *Taunton Courier*, 7, 21 June 1882: BNA accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

⁸³ SHC, D/G/ta/57/21.

⁸⁴ SHC, D/B/ta/24/1/173/10433/14970; C/CA/24/12/106, 24/19/5—7; D/H/yeo/23/10/1.

Lodge, Middleway in 1966 since replaced by Blagdon Retirement Village.⁸⁵ The doctor's surgery in College Way Galmington in 2024 opened c. 1985.

HEALTH

Fullands Asylum

In late 1820 Quaker brothers Nehemiah and James Duck of Ridgeway asylum, Bristol opened a mental asylum in Fullands House for 35 patients, including up to 20 paupers. Nehemiah ran Ridgeway and James moved to Fullands.⁸⁶ James enlarged the house in 1828 to take 48 patients, In 1835 he took charge of Plympton asylum, Devon, Fullands closed and let to a farmer.⁸⁷

Musgrove Park Hospital

In 1942 the British army established a venereal disease hospital on fields north of Galmington village. It was immediately taken over by the Americans who completed their 1,094-bed 67th army hospital by January 1943. It consisted of flat roofed, single-storey brick blocks, a few of which remain in use. In 1946 it was taken over by the Ministry of Pensions and in 1951 transferred to the National Health Service.⁸⁸ New buildings were added notably from the 1980s. In the 2020s the hospital covered c. 36 a. and new maternity and surgical buildings were planned.⁸⁹

SPORT, COMMUNITY LIFE AND NATIONAL EVENTS

⁸⁵ SHC, D/B/ta/2/2/9; 24/1/118/4970; A/EBR/1/1—2; A/CWF/1/1.

⁸⁶ *Exeter Flying Post* 24 Jan. 1821; *Royal Cornwall Gaz.* 27 Apr. 1822; BNA accessed 22 Jan. 2024; SHC, D/P/wilt/13/1/48.

⁸⁷ SHC, Q/RLu/11, 18, 29—31, 50; *Taunton Courier* 31 Dec. 1834; *Sherborne Mercury* 8 Aug. 1836; BNA accessed 22 Jan. 2024.

⁸⁸ Som. HER 15848; *VCH Som.* XIII, soc. hist., hospitals.

⁸⁹ SHC, A/DPH/2/12.

A ploughing competition was held at Poole farm in 1836, land in Cutliff farm was leased for the Bath and West Show of 1924 and the Taunton flower show is held partly on Wilton lands adjoining Vivary Park.⁹⁰ The parkkeepers' cottages were sold in 1982—3.⁹¹ Wilton Cricket Club, renamed Taunton Deane Cricket Club c. 1908, closed in the 1930s but restarted in 1954 with a ground adjoining Vivary Park. A pavilion was added in 1985.⁹² Col Hamilton Gault, flew his own plane to Taunton landing at Galmington in May 1929.⁹³

A Wilton girls friendly society, possibly started in 1928, closed in 1958.⁹⁴ A Galmington branch of the Church of England Temperance Society was established in 1879 when 20 children joined the Band of Hope.⁹⁵ The Wilton scouts celebrated their centenary in 2009 and Galmington has had a girl guide troop since 1932 or earlier.⁹⁶ They were joined by Wilton cubs and guides in 1957.⁹⁷ The Galmington Women's Institute began in 1968, closed in the 1970s, was re-founded in 1987 and ceased in 2005.⁹⁸ The later 20th-century Red Cross training premises west of Wilton Street were closed and replaced by apartments in the 2000s.⁹⁹ A ward branch of the Taunton Labour party was inaugurated in 1950. In 1954 with 88 or fewer members it amalgamated with a Taunton ward.¹⁰⁰ A cinema at Footlands, Sherford, possibly for Middleway Camp, had closed by 1960.¹⁰¹

Most social activity is centred at Galmington, which from the 1960s had its own monthly magazine. Named the *Galmington and Comeytrove News* since 1988, it is delivered free to every household.¹⁰² Galmington Recreation ground (9 a., 3.8 ha.) was given by

⁹⁰ SHC, DD/HC/10/18/3; A/BCJ/1; DD/X/TF/9/1.

⁹¹ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/10—11.

⁹² *Taunton Official Handbook* (1931), 75; SHC, A/AAU 1.

⁹³ *Taunton Courier* 22 May 1929: BNA accessed 30 Nov. 2023.

⁹⁴ SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/4, p. 88.

⁹⁵ *Taunton Courier* 12 Feb. 1879: BNA 5 Dec. 2023.

⁹⁶ SHC, A/DQO/369/35/1; *Taunton Courier* 20 Nov. 1932: BNA accessed 6 Dec. 2023.

⁹⁷ SHC, D/P/wilt/9/3/4, p. 86.

⁹⁸ SHC, DD/WI/136/1/2, 136/2/1.

⁹⁹ *Taunton Courier* 23 Jan. 1960: BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023.

¹⁰⁰ SHC, DD/TLP/9—10.

¹⁰¹ SGC, D/B/ta/3/37/1.

¹⁰² SHC, A/EPF/75.

Andrew Hamilton Gault in 1929, opened in 1930 providing football, hockey and cricket pitches with borders of trees and shrubs, and formally gifted to the borough in 1931. It was requisitioned for allotments and army huts and the planting was lost. Restored by 1960 and with a modern pavilion, it provided two play areas and three pitches in 2024.¹⁰³ Additional facilities were provided from the 1980s on Penny's Field adjoining Bishop Henderson school. Galmington Colts played in the Taunton and District football league in 1963—4. In the 2020s the Galmington Dragons were in the league.¹⁰⁴

The Trident opened in 1967—8 as the Galmington and Bishops Hull Youth centre on part of the allotments after the Galmington Youth Club lost their earlier premises. It was a charity until 2017 when it became a charitable company, the Trident Youth and Community Centre.¹⁰⁵ The building was used by scout and guide groups, bowls, fitness classes, youth theatre and its own netball team.¹⁰⁶ Comeytrove Community Hall opened in 1986 on Pitts Close, Galmington, used by a variety of local organizations.¹⁰⁷

Military history

In 1569 Galmington tithing supplied six archers among other men, bills, arrows and armour to the muster in addition to pike and bill men.¹⁰⁸ At least four Wilton men were executed for involvement in the Monmouth rebellion, out of 28 suspected rebels, but their heirs were allowed their copyholds.¹⁰⁹ At least 25 men joined the navy or the coastguard between 1777 and 1925.¹¹⁰ Several men joined the army in the same period and army officers retired to the

¹⁰³ SHC, D/B/ta/3/22/9, pp, 32, 195; *Taunton Courier* 9 Oct. 1929, 12 Nov. 1930, 1 Oct 1960: BNA accessed 30 Nov. 2023; Char. Com. reg. 304652.

¹⁰⁴ *Taunton Courier* 9 Nov. 1963, 25 Jan. 1964: BNA accessed 5 Dec. 2023; galmingtondragons.co.uk; accessed 24 Jan. 2024.

¹⁰⁵ *Taunton Courier* 10 March 1962: BNA accessed 24 Nov. 2023; Char. Com. reg 304653, 1172028.

¹⁰⁶ SHC, PAM 2637; www.trident-galmington.org.uk: accessed 24 January 2024.

¹⁰⁷ SHC, D/DC/tau.d/2/2/7.

¹⁰⁸ E. Green, *Certificate .of Musters, 1569*, 278.

¹⁰⁹ W. Wigfield, *The Monmouth Rebels*, 223—4; SHC, DD/SP/417/2; D/P/wilt/13/3/3.

¹¹⁰ TNA, ADM 139/802/192, 139/955/15414; ADM 157/887/5, 157/1919/52, 157/2990/29, 157/3248/59; ADM 158/62/8/23, 158/200/29/5, 158/211/10/11, 158/216/1/5, 158/216/26/6, 158/216/48/2; ADM

parish.¹¹¹ In 1856 there was a privately-owned military storehouse, presumably near the prison, which was later occupied by the Territorial Army. Their sergeant major resided in 1911.¹¹²

A Galmington soldier had five sons in the army in 1915 and two others were King's Scouts. At least six Galmington men were killed in 1916—17 and 21 names are on the Wilton war memorial.¹¹³ During the Second World War the Royal Mail Lines Shipping Company occupied Wheatleigh, Galmington recreation grounds were requisitioned for allotments and a new American army hospital was surrounded by Nissen huts.¹¹⁴ Bombs were dropped at Galmington in August 1940.¹¹⁵ Middleway Camp was a substantial military camp with named streets and recreational areas. It was sold by the War Department in 1964 and cleared for housing.¹¹⁶ The 1948 memorial tablet in Wilton church bears 18 names.

188/25/52315, 188/123/104375, 188/128/106651, 188/138/111941, 188/158/121952, 188/169/127140, 188/200/142726, 188/320/188780, 188/356/204930, 188/478/295817, 188/754/53546, 188/860/106703; ADM 363/303/48, 363/368/139.

¹¹¹ TNA, WO 97/16/16, 97/105/62, 97/157/42, 97/334/57, 97/473/63, 97/567/97, 97/754/142, 97/1036/79, 97/1093/41; HO 107/1922; RG 9/1617; RG 11/2367.

¹¹² SHC, D/P.wilt/13/1/21; TNA, RG14/14242; below, local govt.

¹¹³ *Taunton Courier* 24 March 1915, 21 June 1916: BNA accessed 30 Nov. 2023.

¹¹⁴ TNA, RG 101/305/1/WOOU (16); SHC, D/B/ta/3/13/14; *Taunton Courier* 1 Sep. 1945, 16 Feb. 1946, 8 Feb. 1947: BNA accessed 30 Nov. 2023.

¹¹⁵ M. Hawkins, *Som at War 1939—45* (Bridgwater, 1996), 24.

¹¹⁶ SWHT, Som HER 16755; SHC, D/B/ta/3/22/10—11; above, intro.