

Politics & Business

By the 1880's the local newspaper was running articles concerning politics, but more importantly, from a point of view of the common, working man (no right to vote yet for women). At this time the Unions for the working man were also gaining strength. On 26 September 1883 a call to join the union was made to the local work force of Watchfield as the Swindon Advertiser reported, *'On Weds evening Mr H. Collins, of the Warwickshire District, delivered an address on the many advantages arising from the Union, on the village green, but his oratory failed to induce any one to enter the ranks. There was only a small number of listeners.'*

Local MPs were also using the same tactics to drum up support. The Swindon Advertiser of Saturday, 25 July 1885 reported a 'Conservative Meeting.' It explained that, *'James Croxton Esq, addressed a meeting on Wednesday evening, in accordance with printed bills. Difficulty was experienced at the commencement where to "pitch the tent." A wagon was placed near a barn at the Shrivenham entrance to the village, upon which the lecturer and his supporters mounted. Upon this the whole assemblage of working men withdrew to an open space opposite Mr David Pocock's shop, giving cheers for "Gladstone" and "Purvis." Finding the audience determined to stop in that particular locality, the occupants of the wagon (like "Mohomet to the Mountain") drew the same, amid jeers and hooting, to the prescribed spot. Mr John Giles of West Mill, having been elected to the chair briefly introduced Mr Croxton, who during his speech claimed the vote of the labourer in the Conservative interest, consequent upon the good laws passed by his party. Several working men flatly contradicted the speaker upon this point, believing that more good emanated from the Liberal side. Mr Croxton's explanation of Kingland's foreign policy did not suit the electors present, many shouting "Purvis is our man," etc. Mr Croxton concluded his speech amidst groans and hisses. The Chairman put the resolution in favour of Conservative principles, when only the occupants of the wagon voted for it. Three cheers were called for "Mr Purvis" which were most heartily accorded.'*

But of more interest to the local working man, was Lord Barrington's scheme to set up parcels of land known as, 'allotments.' To further the cause Lord Barrington had donated some land for use of the same. The Swindon Advertiser of Saturday 8 October 1887 ran the story, *'Lord Barrington presided over a second meeting of working men in the schoolroom at Watchfield on Wednesday evening, to pass rules, elect committee etc., in the manner of granting allotments or plots of land to working men according to their ability to work. Since his lordship has resided at Shrivenham, he has taken a deep interest in the scheme, and having granted or set apart a suitable field for this purpose, the men were not slow in taking advantage of the kind offer and applications were immediately sent in and submitted to his lordship. At this meeting all the applications were granted. The land which is to be let out in plots is most suitable, and close to the village, so that no time will be lost in walking to and fro, which is a consideration to a working man. The price fixed upon is £2 per acre, or 3d per perch.'*

Swindon Advertiser, Saturday 8 December 1894.

'Watchfield. Elections for Councillors. The first parish meeting was held as fixed on Tuesday in the schoolroom, but a number of electors were absent on the labour side. Mr D. Pocock was voted to the chair and carried out his duties in a satisfactory manner. A show of hands for candidates was taken, the result being as follows.

Messrs G. Wyatt	28
J. Haydon	27
J.A. Fereman	25
T. Knapp	19
J. Pocock	19
J.R.F. Hutson	19
A. Anger	12
R.W. Hedges	12
W. Chivers	8
R. Stone	3

This showing 10 candidates for 5 seats. Messrs Hutson, Knapp and Pocock having received an equal number of votes, the chairman gave his casting votes in favour of Messrs Knapp and Pocock, whereupon, Mr Hutson, after having previously strongly opposed the idea of a poll, demanded that a poll should be taken. The Rev J. Footman carried out the duties of clerk to the meeting.'

Swindon Advertiser, Saturday 5 January 1895.

The first Parish Council meeting was held here on Monday evening. All Councillors were present. Mr Hutson was elected as Chairman. Meeting was adjourned until Sat at 6pm, when the public will be admitted.

Another Parish Council meeting that was covered in some detail, appeared in the edition dated 28 September 1895. *'A meeting of this Council was held on Saturday evening, in the schoolroom, when there were present: Messrs G. Wyatt (chairman), T. Knapp and J. Haydon, with the clerk, M.F. Busby. The Chairman announced that the dangerous place near 'Maiden Well,' which had been pointed out to the District Surveyor, had been attended to. He also reported that the committee appointed to confer with the applicants for pastureland had made their report to the effect that they were opposed, with one exception, to putting into force the compulsory powers, and there being no other alternative by which the land could be obtained, the Council thereupon resolved that the matter lie in abeyance. No definite information was stated respecting the charities, although the matter had been in hand since last April. A long discussion then ensued (which was the chief object of the meeting) as to the preservation of a pathway from the Reading Room corner to the gate of the School*

Cottage. There is no alternative at present but for the allotment holders and Mr Hedges (farmer), when carting off or on the north corner of the field, but to draw on this path with one wheel, and this makes a bad approach to the school cottage in wet weather. The Council were of opinion that Lord Barrington's agent should be asked to make up the roads as mapped when the allotments were laid out, as there is ample means for doing this at a small expense. The clerk was instructed to write to the agent on the matter. The meeting then terminated.'

Post Office Directory - Watchfield 1854

Gentry

Major Calley, Watchfield House
Mr Edward Fairthorne

Traders

John Bowden, 'Royal Oak'
William Bowles, Farmer
John Carter, Farmer
Richard Carter, Farmer
William Carter, beer retailer & pig dealer
Mrs Mary Chandler, Shopkeeper
Amariah William Fairthorne, Maltster
James Fereman, Farmer, Castle Farm
John & George Giles, Farmers, West Mill Farm
John Pocock, Carrier & Shopkeeper
Richard Rickards, Farmer
Adin Sly, Beer retailer and Carpenter
Richard Vines, Miller, West Mill
Frederick Webb, Blacksmith
William Willis, Draper & Grocer

Population table for Watchfield (VCH Vol 2. P.241)

1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
305	284	306	341	375	363	431	433	362	376	318

Acreage 1517

