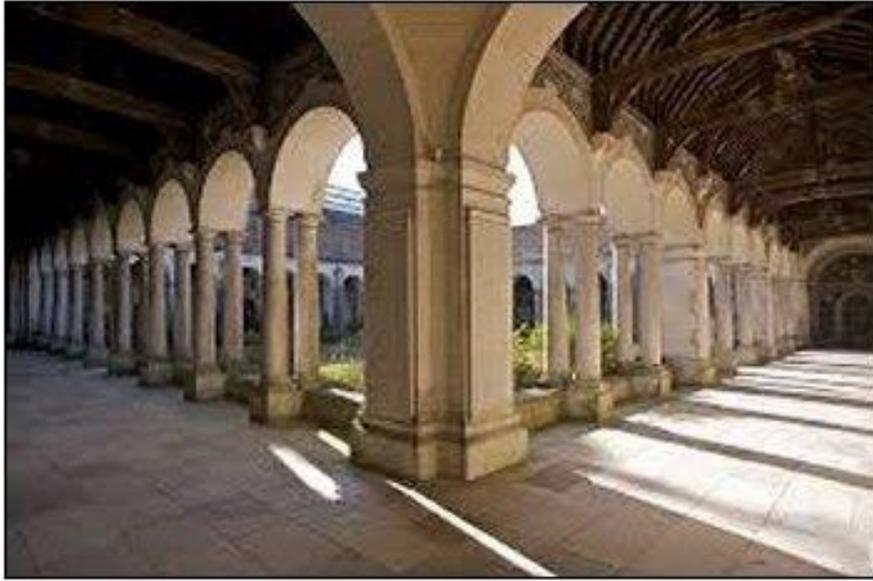


The Kipling Motoring Diaries

October 1925



Winchester College War Cloister, by Sir Herbert Baker

The Kiplings had a short motoring holiday in October, going down to the West Country for the inside of a week. The diary is complete as far as their stay for a night in Clovelly, but there is nothing about the return journey, via Exeter and Winchester. Carrie's Diaries reveal that they had brought this holiday forward because their cook had got a poisoned finger, and so couldn't safely cook.

Sat. 3rd/10.

Left b. 10.15 :- fog clearing to perfect day with leaves turning. Took new Sussex line – Petworth – Midhurst – arr. Winchester 1.15. Lunch at George. Cathedral and Baker's College Memorial which is superb. After to College Chapel, cloisters and dining hall (under guide) and schools. Slight delay owing to motor trunk not having key. Remedied by man (Kingdon) who did get it unlocked, but not locked, and away for Salisbury @ 4.20: tea at 4.50 on high down sprinkled with juniper in perfect afternoon light. Room 43 at White Hart wh. is much improved. H & C basins and gas stoves in bedrooms.

Went at once to see Cathedral – perfect impression of the Close – thence to dinner (not so bad) and to bed early, changing time 1 hr.

Their “new Sussex line” was along the A.272, which runs from east to west, right across the middle of Sussex and into Hampshire: they went Maresfield – Haywards Heath – Billingshurst – Petworth – Midhurst – Petersfield – Winchester. It is a road that this editor has driven for sixty-five years, summer and winter, in whole or in part, wet or dry, so he has an almost proprietorial interest in it.

The George at Winchester was an old coaching inn, later demolished for road improvements in 1934. Sir Herbert Baker, who had designed the Memorial Cloister at Winchester College, was an old friend of the Kiplings. Although John Kipling had gone to Wellington, George Cecil, son of Lady Edward Cecil, now Lady Milner, the Kiplings’ great friend, had been at Winchester, and Kipling had visited the school previously.

And the ‘White Hart’ at Salisbury was probably little changed from Kipling’s day when this editor stayed there fifty years later. They were clearly putting the clocks back at the end of British Summer Time. (‘Daylight Saving’ had been introduced during World War 1, and has continued ever since. Today, the usual time to put the clocks back is on the Saturday of the last week-end in October.)



The White Hart, at Salisbury



The Cathedral Close at Salisbury

Sun 4

Up at 7.20 Rl. time, good bathroom & a fine day to look at – went to see Cathedral in early morn. Light. Away at 10 a.m. for Minehead, via Wilton. Stopped at Fonthill and went to Tisbury to see F's and M's graves. Not in bad order. Then back to call on Bessie Hacker, the old servant, very little changed after 20 years. They have bought the land round their village (? *Did he mean 'cottage'*), 1½ acres and are anxious to sell off a bungalow site.

Amazingly fine August-like day – went on to Taunton for an indifferent lunch. Arr. 1: left at 2 for Minehead, via Wiveliscombe and turned aside for Tolland Church & C's ancestors' tombs, and then on to "Golden" where Mr. Brooke, the old fat grey farmer, showed us the amazing smoke-grimed ceilings (?). Saw also Mr. B. jun. & his wife & 2½ yr. son. She greatly over-dressed. A place of most utter peace and seclusion. Then on about 3.30 to Minehead. Shifty weather clouding over, evidently for wet. Hotel Metropole at 4.30 – sunk in Sabbath repose – 112m. and every yard of the road surface first-class.

They had, though it is not mentioned, visited the graves of Carrie's Wolcott ancestors (see her Diary entry for 12 Sept, 1912). Tolland County in Connecticut, USA is named after the village.

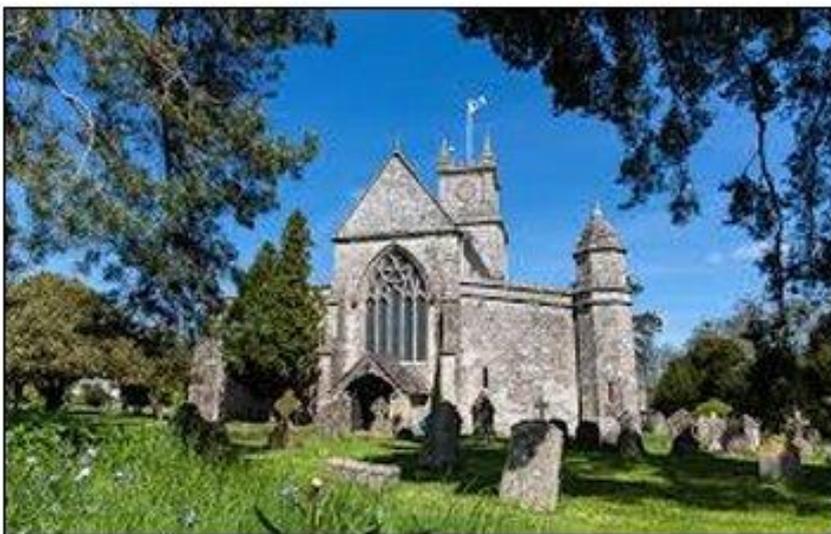
The connection was Henry Wolcott who emigrated to America and founded a prominent family which included Oliver Wolcott who signed the United States Declaration of Independence. We assume that "Golden" (perhaps 'Golden Farm?') was the Wolcott ancestral home.



Tolland Church

'Rl. time'. In the days before the general use of GMT, it would sometimes be referred to as 'Real Time', or 'Sun Time', or even 'God's Time'

John and Alice Kipling are buried in the churchyard at Tisbury, their home for the last 17-18 years of their lives.



Tisbury Church

Monday, Oct. 5th

Dull day with mist clearing to pearly sunshine. Left Minehead at 10.30 via Dunster to South Molton down valley of Exe nearly as far as Brompton. One stand-easy on top of a rise @ 12.25-12.40 on Lynmouth road to Combe Martin and Ilfracombe – blackberries and [blank]. Foliage beautiful from South Molton. To Ilfracombe where a most pretentious hotel (with French waiters) gave us a bad and expensive lunch. Thence via Barnstaple and Bideford to the Golden Bay (which used to be the Royal) at W. Ho! A good room with bath and all most comfy. Went to see Chapel, old buildings, Cory's baths and the rest of the old-world sights generally. A beautifully fine day, & promising well for tomorrow.



Dunster, the Yarn Market

Instead of going direct to Minehead along the coast road through Porlock and Lynton, they had made a broad sweep southwards before turning west to cross the middle of Exmoor, to approach Ilfracombe from the south.

Kipling had gone back to Westward Ho! twice since leaving the College: he had been with his father in 1894 when they were staying in Tisbury, and the school was still at Westward Ho! and again during a family holiday in the West Country in 1912 after the school had merged with the Imperial Services College. Now he went a third time, and was able to see rather more of the old school landmarks than in 1912.

Tuesday Oct. 6



Westward Ho!, the Pebble Ridge

A perfectly still, perfectly fine anticyclonic day. All W. Ho!, as seen from the window, looking lovely. Brekker at 9 and a good one. Then at 10.30 to watch the Lady (would-be) champions driving off before the new Golf Club. Walked for nigh an hour on the links and got over to the Pebble Ridge and basked in the sun. Then returned to Golf Club, picked up car and drove over to Appledore and walked on the quay and in the narrow lanes and saw the river at half flood in the blue sunshine.



Appledore

Then looked in on Northam Church with its beautiful roof beams and painted bosses. Lunch was bad. Then at 3.30 after a stroll in the sun and a sit down in the hotel gardens, to Bideford – 16 m. Market Place, where C. bought a small Battersea enamel box.



Clovelly

Then to Clovelly which we found in a breathless opal & pearl day's end, with scarcely a tripper. Had tea, & jam & Devonshire cream in a small house at the foot of the street at the bottom of the combe. Walked up and back to the hotel at 5.50. Letters from Bateman's which were attended to. A dance in the evening, mostly women dancing with each other.

Clovelly, on the north coast of Devon, is a small, most picturesque, former fishing village with a single vertiginous street (forbidden to motor vehicles) that straggles up the narrow combe from the tiny bay at its foot. Today, as in 1925, it is a major tourist destination. When you've walked up from the harbour to the top, you know that you have taken some serious exercise!

And that is where this diary ends: Carrie recorded that they had returned the next day to Exeter, and the following day to Winchester, staying one night in each, and returning to Bateman's on the 9th where they found a dog waiting for them. Carrie commented that Kipling had "greatly enjoyed" the tour

*There is rather more detail about the tour as far as Westward Ho! in a letter to Elsie, (PINNEY, **Letters**, Vol. 5, pp. 265-66).*
