



Wilts Friendly Society

The Codford branch of this Society (which now numbers 113 members) held its annual meeting on Whit-Monday. The members assembled in the morning at the Rectory of Upton Lovell, whence they proceeded to the parish church, where a powerful and appropriate discourse was delivered to them by the Rev. Canon Hamilton. After Divine service they walked in procession to Codford, where they dined together in a tent erected for the occasion, and a most excellent dinner was provided by Mr Brind, of the George Inn. The chair was taken by Thos. Raxworthy, Esq., who was well and ably supported by John Ravenhill, Esq., Thomas Whiting, Esq., the Rev. Thomas Miles, the Rev. W. Gray, Isaac Flower, Esq. (the surgeon of the branch), and many other gentlemen of the neighbourhood. In the course of the evening a note was read from that "fine old English gentleman," Harry Biggs, Esq., of Stockton-house, expressing his regret at being unable to attend in consequence of the inclemency of the weather. The rain unfortunately fell heavily, and prevented those rural enjoyments usual on these occasions; but by the aid of some very good glee singing and a band of music the members passed a very pleasant afternoon. A dance afterwards took place on Mr Whiting's lawn, in which the whole party joined; but the very unpropitious state of the weather obliged them to return to the tent, where the remainder of the day was passed in much harmony and pleasure.

(Salisbury and Winchester Journal – Saturday 17 June, 1848)

The Heytesbury and Codford branches of this large and prosperous Society held their annual festival at Heytesbury on Monday last. After the members had attended divine service, where an eloquent sermon was preached by the Rev. J. Knight, they proceeded with an excellent band of music to a field kindly lent by Mr Parry, and dined together in a capacious tent, to the number of nearly two hundred. That true friend of the Wilts Society, John Ravenhill, Esq., of Ashton House, in the chair, supported by many of the honorary members. The dinner provided by Mr Compton, of the Red Lion Inn, was most substantial and good, and gave unqualified satisfaction. It is almost unnecessary to add that the day was passed in the same happy and decorous manner which characterizes these meetings. Music, dancing, and various rustic sports of an amusing rather than a degrading character, afforded entertainment not only to the members and their friends, but also to nearly the whole rural population of the district, which will doubtless work its way to the hearts of the young, and induce them to do their duty to themselves, by becoming members of a friendly society, which faithfully performs its promises, and that will not "shut the box" and desert them when they are afflicted with sickness, accident, or the infirmity of old age. The Heytesbury branch has obtained an unenviable notoriety from the unfortunate circumstance of its sick payments having been the highest in the country, but it is not equally notorious, that when the Upton Lovell Factories Club was incorporated with the County Institution, the large sum of 500 £, their capital fund, was paid over to the trustees, that whilst the greater part of its members formed the numbers of the Heytesbury branch, amongst whom were all the old and sick; the remainder became members of the Codford branch, and as they are young and healthy, their contributions have produced a large annual

surplus, which would otherwise have strengthened the former. It is therefore obvious that the accounts of these two branch clubs should be viewed in connexion, and the interest which has arisen from the 500 £ should not be forgotten. It will, however, be gratifying to all the members of the Wilts Friendly Society, to know that the unfairly abused Heytesbury branch, notwithstanding the difficulties it has had to contend against, which have not yet fallen to the lot of any other, is still gradually reducing its sick payments. The current year will show as great an improvement as the last, and with a higher appreciation of its manifold advantages by all classes of that parish, it is hoped that at some future day it will fulfill its own part, in carrying out the beautiful motto of the parent institution "Bear ye one another's burdens."

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