

VA
Village Album Collection
1857-1998

ADMINISTRATIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

The so-called Village Album was a literary society centred upon the Clark family of Street, Somerset. Meetings were commenced by members in 1857, following the popular trend for essay societies and book meetings among the Quaker community, of which the Clarks were prominent, and combining a means of entertainment as well as intellectual stimulation.

It is thought that the original idea for a similar meeting in Street was brought to the area by a young member of the Metford family, educated at a Friends' girls' school in Oxfordshire, where the *Charlbury Budget* had been established. Joseph and Elizabeth Metford held the first meeting of the *Avalonian Budget* in Glastonbury in 1816. With several family links, the Clarks quickly became involved, and the *Street Budget* was established by Eliza Bull and Sarah Clark in 1829, with the Gilletts and Clothiers also taking a keen interest. The final meeting was held in January 1855. *The Village Chronicle* was also in existence between 1840-1849.

The family of James and Eleanor Clark (Fanny Clark in particular) initiated its revival over the Christmas season of 1856-1857, with provisional rules drafted and Eleanor Clark appointed as secretary. The group met several times a year to read a wide ranging set of *Album Pieces*, covering poetry, stories, history, comedy, description, natural, family and local history, travel writing, philology and satire, prepared by members of the group.

These *Pieces* were then collated into large bound volumes, the *Village Albums*, often including exquisite pencil drawings and watercolours and other enclosures such as photographs and plans. With a couple of exceptions, these still survive and continue to be a popular research resource for those interested in the history and interests of this particular community. The Village Album still meets in the present day, meeting once or twice a year.

‘As... [these Village Albums] show, one cannot separate Clarks from the Society of Friends, from C & J Clark Ltd, from Street. Street is the fertile ground in which these things grew and flourished.’ (Note by Bancroft Clark, *Somerset Anthology: 24 pieces by Roger Clark of Street, 1871-1961*, ed. Percy Lovell. 1975: xix)

EXTENT

99 volumes

ARCHIVAL HISTORY

It is not known when the Village Albums were deposited at the archive. They were at one time stored in the so-called Millfield Bookcase (see also MFB).

The *Village Albums* previously in the custody of the Clothier family were transferred to the Trust in Aug 2012.

DESCRIPTION

The earlier Albums consist of a volume per year. In later years, the contributions were not sufficient to fill an entire volume, so one volume runs over a period of years. Volume 90 was the centenary album, published in 1957. Volumes 10 and 67 have been missing long-term and are now assumed lost.

Also available: 1892 list of members and their contributions (for volumes 1-43, 1857-1891)

ACCRUALS

Accruals for recent volumes are expected in the future.

ACCESS CONDITIONS

Access to the collection is arranged via advance appointment only. Access to some collections may be restricted due to Data Protection or other restrictions. Please check with the Archivist.

REPRODUCTION CONDITIONS

Usual Alfred Gillett Trust regulations apply. Permission from the Trust and/or owner of a collection is usually required before publication. Copying of some items may be possible on a case by case basis – please check with the Archivist.

LANGUAGE

English

FINDING AIDS

A brief list is available on the Access database, prepared by Derek Patch in c 2000. An 1892 printed index for volumes 1 to 43 is available, 1857-1891.

RELATED UNITS OF DESCRIPTION

Other Village Album literary societies were active within the Clark and allied families in the immediate locality.

Early *Budget* pieces, undated, are contained in the Whitenights collections (WN 041/01), within the Millfield Bookcase collection (MFB) and within No. One (No. One 14/11). *The Village Chronicle* is available for 1840-1849 (No. One 15/16). A *Village Album* for 4 Jan 1991 is also contained with the papers of Bancroft Clark (BC). An 1840-1860 edition of the Clothier family *Fates* Village Album equivalent is available in CLO.

PUBLICATION NOTE

It is not known to what extent this collection has been used in published research.

NOTE

Further information about the Village Album is available in *Somerset Anthology: 24 pieces by Roger Clark of Street, 1871-1961*, ed. Percy Lovell. 1975.