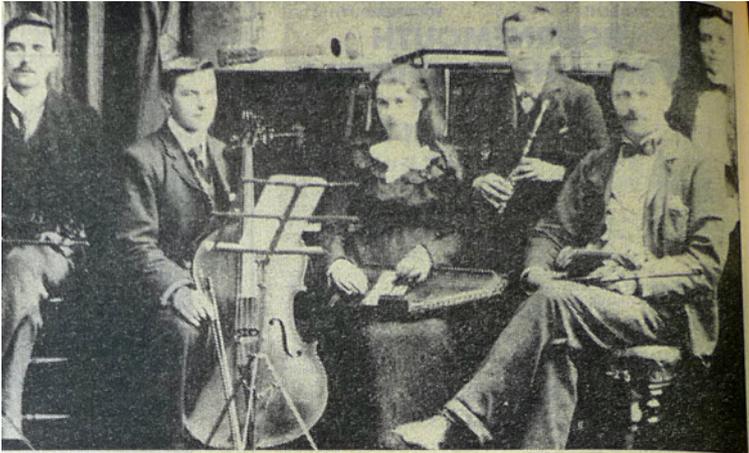


OUR PAST IN THE PICTURE

Christchurch Herald April 8, 1966



A Christchurch photographer of many parts was Alfred Mallett, whose family made up a musical group which was much in demand at local events. His business prospered so much that he had to move from his High-street shop. Author Allen White tells how Mallett bought a row of five cottages in Church-street for £160 at an auction, but one of the sitting tenants proved difficult, and remained in bed while the house was pulled down around him! The charming young lady in the picture, Ethel Mallett, became Mrs. Atkins many years ago, and still lives in Christchurch, in Flambarth-avenue.

ON the face of it, the story* of the photographers of Christchurch between 1855 and 1915 would seem an odd, esoteric and rather dull subject for a book.

In fact, this is one of the most fascinating little volumes to come into this office for some time. It's the result of pains-taking research and scholarship by Allen White, who is not only a professional photographer himself and an historian of local repute, but is also passionately devoted to the town.

He gives an intriguing glimpse into the recent past, right from the cover picture of Church-street in 1860, with the Priory towering above it, to the back-page photograph of a group of officers and their ladies at Christchurch

Barracks, now MEXE.

The town's first photographer appears to have been J. D. Cox, who opened his business in the 1850s in what is now a sweetshop at 64 High-street.

One of Cox's pictures, of the 10th Hants volunteers lined up with their band outside the town hall, shows the road in a state which would give the present health committee a fit!

In the early 1860s Harriett Cobb, the daughter of Robert Day, who was Bournemouth's first photographer and had a studio in the Square next to what is now W. H. Smith and Son, married Joseph Cobb, who had a wool and stationery shop in the High-street. Harriett, who had been taught photography by her father, started a children's portrait studio in a glass house in the garden of the High-street premises.

An artist and photographer, William Pousty, of Church-street, conceived the idea of a mobile studio, a horse-drawn van, a photograph of which is in the book He covered a wide area, stretching as far as Romsey, Stonehenge, and Wimborne, and published many photographs of local scenes.

He and his wife and five children emigrated in 1882 to Launceston, Tasmania, where he died 17 years later.

Joseph Cobb's business was sold to Alfred Mallett, who was not only a photographer, but an artist and a musician. The author tells the story of how Mallett took on a young apprentice, Tom Brown, whom he taught not only photography but how to play the violin as well. The result was that Tom Brown left photography and became a professional musician; he played in Boscombe Arcade.

Alfred Maltett remained in Christchurch for 23 years and his studio in Church-street housed the largest collection of local views in the district. He was often summoned to photograph visiting royalty at Highcliffe Castle, including the Queen of Sweden, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and a number of German princes.

Thomas Tapsell, who took over a studio in Bridge-street, now the Goya Art Studio, numbered among his customers the famous Russian community of political exiles at Tuckton Bridge. In 1908 he accepted an invitation to go to Russia and became the official photographer to the community headed by the celebrated novelist, Tolstoy, at Tula, about 30 miles from Moscow.



A Tolstoy exclusive. A photograph taken in Russia of the great novelist Tolstoy with Christchurch cameraman Thomas Tapsell in 1909. Allen White believes it has not been published before.

He never returned to Christchurch. Unhappy and homesick, he died of pneumonia and was buried in Tula.

JACK DWYER.

*** Christchurch Photographers, 1855 - 1915, by Allen White, printed by Hurad Ltd., 2s. 6d., on sale at the Red House Museum, Camerama in Bargates, Norbury's in Lymington-road, Highcliffe, Foxbury's in Church-street, and H. G. Commins at 100 Old Christchurch-road, Bournemouth.**