

"Servants of the Community"

For Able Jakeman, the tinker, it was the first Christmas and New Year he would spend without his wife, Annie.

They had known each other all their lives, so her death during the winter had been hard to bear. She always had had a weak chest, and it had been a harsh season.

His grief would still catch him unawares, and he would find himself weeping from the slightest memory of her.

Their son, Jacob, had taken on the knife-sharpening, and so Able stayed at home at Tadmarton, soon realising how much his wife had done, not only for the family, but for the whole community. So Able resolved to carry on her good work, and hired the Tithe Barn at Swacliffe for a full fortnight, and for the twelve days of Christmas all were invited to join Able, his friends and family. Annie had been held in such high regard that very many of the locals came along, contributing what they could, so that the poor and needy could benefit at this time. With stories, singing and dancing, a roaring fire and food and drink, the event was a huge success. On the twelfth night, all made their way to the adjacent orchard, where the trees were toasted with cider, amidst many cries of "Wassail" and the echoing response of "Drinrael". By two days later, the barn was returned to its previous state, but things would never be the same for Able. The following year, he was elected councillor, one of the first for the newly formed Labour Party, a position he would hold until his own death seven years later. Annie and Able Jakeman, Servants of the Community.