Stanton Parish History Recording Project

Personal Reminiscence File :- PR009b



WOMAN'S MIRROR, November 20, 1958 PAGE 15

ollie Knox steps back into the past and finds . . .

Before she came to Stanton Mrs. Eileen Brown was used to electricity. Now when she wants to do any ironing she has to heat up her flat irons the old way—on a coal-fired kitchen range.

Mrs. Brown has five children—the biggest family in Stanton. Here she is with her son Allan, aged 19 months. As well as looking after her family she runs the village petrol pump.

There's always time for a story before bedtime. Mrs. Brown is reading to three of her children—Allan; Eileen, 8; and John, 10—by the light of a paraffin lamp. She says she enjoys the life in Stanton.

The village where time stands still

Six-year-old Grenville Davies lights his way to bed with an oil lamp. He lives in one of Stanton's council houses with his parents and sister Susan, 11. When the houses were built they were all wired for electricity. That was five years ago, but there is still no current.

YOU won't find it easily on the map. You won't find it at all unless you keep your eyes skinned for a tiny turning past Shawbury, Shropshire.

Stanton-upon-Hine-Heath is a village where there is time to stand and stare . . . where around 150 inhabitants live an one happy family without electricity, television, cinemas, or record-players.

WELCOME

In the little age-old houses, which look a little disapprovingly at a group of modern council houses, you are made welcome, with roaring coal fires, gas and oil lamps, and tea brewed as tea should be brewed.

STANTON, which boasts one all-purpose store, a Parish Hall, an inn and a Norman church, was in the news not long ago.

As a protest against the inability of the Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board to provide the village with electric light, the voters threatened to boycott the General Election by refusing to use their votes.

They did vote in the end, but though content to remain cut off from most modern inconveniences, they still feel strongly about being cut off from the light.

TEACHER Alec Dixon talked to me in his cosy electricityless house as his three small children wrestled on the floor.

"We are a happy community," he said. "We are self-contained. We make our own amusements.

"Every Saturday there are shows into Shawbury, and in the summer we go for picnics."

"Any stress?" I asked.

"We have more pianos than most villages," he replied. "Eight children take music lessons."

Mrs. Dixon nestled in, removed a child from around her husband's neck, and said: "My mother, who is now in Australia, wrote that she dare not tell the neighbours that her daughter lives in a village without electricity. They wouldn't believe her!"

Full of piping-hot tea, Mr. Dixon sent I called on Mrs. Eileen Brown, whose husband works at the mill.

She runs a home and five children, hungry children; and, when a rare chances to call, she works the petrol pump in her yard.

Mrs. Brown, who is always nervous lest her bedridden great-aunt upstairs knocks over the oil lamp by the bed, showed me a terrifying paraffin stove for heating water, the kitchen range in the living-room, and a pump outside which has to be worked by hand.

> Though content to remain cut off from most modern inconveniences, they still feel strongly about being cut off from the light

OFFER

She leads, with enormous cheerfulness, a life which would make many mothers join protest parades in Whitehall.

"Yes, I'm Irish—I'm a great talker," she laughed, waving me to the fireside. "When I came here five years ago I bought my electric cooker. I saw it as a good safe.

"If you can get us electricity I'll make you a present of that lovely lamp"—she pointed to the stove.

I shook hands with the undefeated Mrs. Brown and called on the oldest inhabitant, 84-year-old Mr. John Ryder.

He sat by the stove, tiny, white-haired. He nodded a quick greeting.

"He doesn't hear so well," explained his wife. "We've been in this house for 56 years. No, we've never been to London.

"I used to clean the floors of the schoolroom; John worked on a farm. He was earning 17s. a week when we married."

Mrs. Ryder laughed. She laughs a lot.

I asked Mr. Ryder if things had changed.

"They've changed all right," he replied. "Things are not what they were. I remember when milk was tuppence a pint.

We agreed that nothing was what it was.

"Yes, I'm Irish—I'm a great talker," she laughed, waving me to the fireside. "When I came here five years ago I bought my electric cooker. I saw it as a good safe.

"If you can get us electricity I'll make you a present of that lovely lamp"—she pointed to the stove.

I shook hands with the undefeated Mrs. Brown and called on the oldest inhabitant, 84-year-old Mr. John Ryder.

He sat by the stove, tiny, white-haired. He nodded a quick greeting.

"He doesn't hear so well," explained his wife. "We've been in this house for 56 years. No, we've never been to London.

"I used to clean the floors of the schoolroom; John worked on a farm. He was earning 17s. a week when we married."

Mrs. Ryder laughed. She laughs a lot.

I asked Mr. Ryder if things had changed.

"They've changed all right," he replied. "Things are not what they were. I remember when milk was tuppence a pint.

We agreed that nothing was what it was.

OLD John, who still tends his garden, walks the length of the village every day.

Everyone looks out for him. He comments and gossips with as regular as clockwork.

I was told that Mrs. Ryder was a tower of strength in all the village activities.

Mrs. Mumford, who is 77, received me in her little house where she dwells with her son, her married daughter and her ten-year-old grandson, Christopher.

Spry as a cricket she told me: "I've never been far from Stanton. Been here 60 years."

I asked her: "If you had electricity would you get a TV set?"

MAYBE

Very blue eyes met mine. "Maybe, young man, I would," she said.

"But not for the children. They should be able to amuse themselves. Mine did. All eight of 'em."

And that was that.

THE shadows were lengthening. I had a "quick one" with mine host at the New Inn, Mr. Harry Gatenbury.

Time had fallen asleep in this Domesday Book haven. I shuddered at the prospect of my long drive back to London, and wondered whether maybe Stanton-upon-Hine-Heath and its kindly folk do not have the best of it.

There is a world without noise, without rancour . . . long days on the farmland, the smell and feel of the earth.

I was a stranger and they welcomed me. Stanton is a village that likes to be visited.

I drove thoughtfully back into the present, leaving the Twilight Village in the hallowed peace of the past.

A Transcription of the newspaper article

YOU won't find it easily on the map. You won't find it at all unless you keep your eyes skinned on a tiny turning off at Shawbury, Shropshire.

Stanton upon Hine Heath is a village where there is time to stand and stare... there are *around 150 inhabitants* live as one happy family without electricity, television, cinemas or record-players.

In the little age-old houses which look a little disapprovingly at a group of modern council houses, you are made welcome, with roaring coal fires, gas and oil lamps, and tea brewed as tea should be brewed.

Stanton, which boasts one all-purpose store, a Parish Hall, an inn and a Norman church was in the news not long ago.

As a protest against the inability of the Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Board to provide the village with electric light, the voters threatened to boycott the General Election by refusing to use their votes.

They did vote in the end, but though content to remain cut off from modern conveniences, they still feel strong-ly about being cut off from the light.

Teacher, Alex Dixon talked to me in his cosy electric-lightless house as his three small children wrestled on the floor.

“We are a happy community.” he said, “we are self-contained. We make our own amusements.”

“Every Saturday there are buses into Shrewsbury and in the summer, we go for picnics”

“Any pianos? I asked.

“We have more pianos than most villages.” He replied. “Eight children take music lessons”

Mrs Dixon hustled in, removed a child from around her husband’s neck and said; “My mother who is now in Australia wrote that she dare not tell the neighbours that her daughter lives in a village without electricity - they wouldn’t believe her!”

Full of piping hot tea, Mr Dixon and I called on Mrs Eileen Brown, whose husband works at the mill.

She runs a home and five healthy, hungry children: and, when a car chances to call, she works the petrol pump in her yard.

Mrs Brown, who is always nervous lest her bedridden great-aunt upstairs should knock over the oil lamp by the bed, showed me a terrifying stove for heating water, the kitchen range in the living-room and a pump out-side which has to worked by hand.

She leads, with enormous cheerfulness, a life which would make many mothers join protest parades in Whitehall.

“Yes. I’m Irish - I’m a great talker” she laughed waving me to the fireside. “When I came here five years ago, I brought my electric cooker. I now use it as a meat safe”

“If you can get us electricity, I’ll make you a present of that Blow-lamp” - she pointed to the stove.

I shook hands with the undefeated Mrs Brown and called on the oldest inhabitant, 84-year-old Mr. John Ryder. He sat by the stove, tiny white-haired. He nodded a warm greeting.

“He doesn’t hear so well” explained his wife. “We’ve been in this house for 38 years. No, we’ve never been to London.”

Mrs Ryder laughed. She laughs a lot.

I asked Mr Ryder if things had changed.

“They’ve changed alright” he replied “Things are not what they were. I remember when milk was two-pence a pint.”

We agreed that nothing was what it was.

Old John who still tends his garden, walk the length of the village everyday.

Everyone looks out for him. His comings and goings are as regular as clockwork.

I was told that Mrs Ryder was a tower of strength in all th village activities.

Mrs Mumford who is 77 received me in her little home where she dwells with her son, her married daughter and her ten-year-old grandson Christopher.

Spry as a cricket, she told me: “ I’ve never been far from Stanton. Been her 40 years.

I asked her; “If you had electricity would you buy a TV set?”

Very blue eyes met mine. “Maybe young man I would” she said. “But not for the children. They should be able to amuse themselves. Mine did. All eight of them”.

And that was that.

The shadows were lengthening. I had time for “a quick one” with mine host at the New Inn, Mr Harry Gatensbury.

Time had fallen asleep in this Doomesday Book haven. I shuddered at the prospect of my long drive back to London and wondered whether Stanton-Upon-Hine-Hrath and its kindly folk do not have the best of it.

Theirs is a world without noise, without rancour and long days on the farm, the smell and feel of the earth.

I was a stranger, and they welcomed me. Stanton is a village that should visited.

I drove thoughtfully into the Present, leaving the Twilight Village in the hollowed quiet of the past.