Stanton Parish History Recording Project

Personal Reminiscences File:- PR002

MEMORIES OF LIFE IN STANTON UPON HINE HEATH

My grandparents moved into 15 Stanton in 1923; they had 6 children and my grandfather was employed by Samuel Leighton at Church Farm. At that time the farm was part of the Harcourt Estate so was tenanted with number 15 being a 'tied' cottage to the farm.

My mother was 4 when they moved in and in subsequent years there were two more boys born to the family. All the family attended St Andrew's C of E School in the village, with many of them receiving their entire education there. I also attended this school but moved on to the Priory Girls Grammar School in Shrewsbury, having passed my 11+ at the age of ten. Mrs Wyatt was the head teacher and Miss Bailey taught the infant class. At that time there were around 60 pupils on the school roll. The school finally closed in the early 60's with the pupils moving to Moreton Corbet, then to a small school on the RAF camp before moving to the new St Mary' s C of E opposite the main entrance to the RAF Station in 1968. Many of my fellow pupils still live in the area and I see them from time to time, particularly when I'm involved in the local elections and they come to vote.

I enjoyed my school days and one thing out of the ordinary I remember was a spinning wheel being donated to the school by Miss Bunch, who was a friend of the Leighton family. This led to us going around the fields collecting sheep's wool from the barbed wire, washing it, spinning it and then using natural dyes to colour it – boiled onion skins would make yellow as well as filling the school with a strong smell!

My father was from Prees and my parents were married in 1940, with my father serving in the RAF during the war. I was born in December 1942 and remained an only child, but was always surrounded by cousins as many of my mother's siblings were close by and frequently visited my grandparents, with whom we lived for the first 10 years of my life.

As with most villages in the 40'sand 50's we were virtually self sufficient with the following trades/ professions/businesses represented:

Village Shop with its own bakery, which sold almost everything you need in the way of groceries and hardware (located opposite the Stanton Arms) run by Mr Alfred & Mrs Gertrude Rhodes. For many years after they retired the shop was run by Dorothy and Ken Doxey with my mother helping part time after she had finished delivering post in Shawbury and High Hatton.
Post Office with the Telephone Box in the garden (located at Mill House), run by Mrs Constance Turner who also did dress making and was a superb cook with only a solid fuel oven as it was many years before electricity reached the village.
In the same property her husband Robert (who had lost his leg in the First World war, but managed very well with an artificial tin one, riding his bicycle for miles) was a carpenter with his own work shop on site amidst the chickens which provided eggs for those who did not keep their own poultry.
Their daughter, Muriel (Topsy), eventually became a teacher at Moreton Corbet school and also gave music lessons to those who requested them – not always a pleasant experience as you got rapped across the knuckles with a pencil or a ruler if you hadn't practised your scales, and that was after my granny paid half a crown for each of my lessons!

Shoemaker/Cobbler, Mr White who in those days was kept busy as most people only had two pairs of shoes which would be taken in for repair on a regular basis. This shop was based in what is now part of 10/11 Stanton and later became the post office run by Mrs Gladys Moore when Mrs Turner retired. The post office was later located in the village shop.

The New Inn (now the Stanton Arms) was our village pub, at that time run by Harry Gatensbury and his wife, very basic with just the public bar and the beer served out of a jug from the back room. After his death his wife continued as land lady until she was found dead in bed one morning by George Tong who had to climb a ladder to access the property. Since that time there have been many licensees, some more successful than others with a very basic menu being offered initially as pubs started to be eating, as well as drinking places. Currently it is a very popular place to dine with a high standard of food on offer and people travelling some distance to be fed.

Farms - there were 3 farms actually in the village with many more throughout the parish, two of these were dairy farms and provided most of the milk for villagers along with a significant slice of the employment market. Church Farm was run by the Leighton Family, Village Farm by the Bowden family and Rock Farm by the Millington family. At this time they were all tenanted along with many other farms in the parish, some of which were sold to meet the death duties in the 50's when Colonel Hayes was killed in a car crash.. They still continued to be run by the same families for some years, but sadly most of them are no longer working farms with all the land being farmed by others outside the village.

Undertakers and Wheelwright George Cartwright and his wife lived at the White House from where they ran these businesses and would be the main providers of funerals with local men acting as pall bearers if there were not enough family members to fulfil the task.

Haulage – Jo Shotton owned a cattle wagon which many would use to take their animals to the regular Tuesday cattle market, held at that time off Smithfield Road in Shrewsbury. Bert Moore, husband of Gladys at the post office, would drive the lorry.

Blacksmith this trade was located on Booley Road at the Forge and was run by George Spencer and used by everyone in the parish. His son Reginald (Reg) took over the business and eventually a new forge was built on the land opposite the village hall, currently occupied by 2 bungalows. His brother William (Bill) was the village postman and lived at Hines Heath.

Stanton Mill located on the river at the bottom of the bank near the first bridge on the Moreton Corbet road was a fully operating mill grinding much of the locally produced cereal crops with Robert Davies as miller who lived with his family at River Cottage.

In the 40's there were around 50 houses in the village, all belonging to the Harcourt Estate until 1950 when the 4 houses at Moreton View were built by the council and occupied, initially for farm workers but soon occupied by other who did not work on the land. Following this build the 8 houses in Booley Road were also built by the council and occupied from 1953 onwards with my parents and I moving into number 8. After their completion the 2 one bedroomed bungalows were built for pensioners and number 9 was initially occupied by my grandparents who moved from number 15 Stanton. My husband, Roger Humphreys, and I plus our children lived with my parents for the first years of our marriage until we became tenants at number 3 Moreton View in 1972, which we were later able to buy. My husband died in 2014 but I continue to live there and my sons and some of my grandchildren live a few miles away. The house had been occupied by only one family from 1950 until we moved in – Mr & Mrs Wynn, their son Denis and his son John. The house next door,

number 4, was occupied by the Fletcher family, mother and 2 daughters, Rose and Beatrice as well as Rose's son John. Number 2 was occupied by my mother's brother Arthur Thomas Prince (known as Dick), his wife Charlotte Ellen (known as Nellie) and their two children Valerie and Ralph. Ralph is still the owner of the property following the death of his parents, whilst Valerie lives in Shrewsbury and is a regular member of the church congregation. My mother's sister Anne Elizabeth (known as Nancy) lived at Laundry cottage next to Harcourt with her husband Donald and daughters Sandra and Vanessa, so I had plenty of relations close by and many more living in Shrewsbury who would travel on the bus most weekends to see their parents where we would all meet together. There were two houses and the 'reading room' on the corner where Jubilee house now stands which had been occupied by Mrs Naomi Sykes and her sons and the Moore family – in my time the 'reading room' was inaccessible and never used. These buildings were demolished some years before the new house was built in 1977 with the waste ground offering a useful parking space as more families became car owners.

During my time in the village the number of houses have grown significantly with new plots, infill in existing gardens, extensions and of course modernisation of many properties and many families have come and gone. Many additional properties have been created by the conversion of farm buildings, certainly the case with the 3 farms in Stanton some up Booley and some in High Hatton. There is a saying "it takes a village to raise a child" and that was certainly the case for me and my peers as the village was our playground, there was very little traffic but all eyes were on us and any misdemeanour would be challenged by whoever saw us and then reported to our parents who would also mete out appropriate punishment – a great incentive to behave!

In 1963/64 we moved into the modern world when electricity was brought into the village. Until that time only the farms had electric via generators and I well remember as a small child watching the television at Village farm until 5 o clock when milking started and the picture would shrink to virtually nothing as all the power was needed to milk the cows – happy days!

The social life in the village centred around the village hall, the church and the New Inn with all activities well supported as most people did not have transport to travel and public transport could be hit and miss in the evenings. Clubs such as Women's Institute, Harcourt Cricket Club, Stanton Billiards Team, Darts and Dominoes, Mother's Union offered a wide range of interests and brought people together – in those days there were always plenty of volunteers to keep things running!

We had a vicar who lived in the Vicarage just out of the village (currently occupied by the Cracketts) and the church was very well supported by people from both parts of the parish – Santon and High Hatton, with a choir including members from all over the parish. In my early days the vicar was the Reverend Boone who christened me and there were several other who followed him – Edwards, Shufflebottom, Williams, Bradley. Sadly we have not had a vicar now for 3 years and would share one with Moreton Corbet and Shawbury if one was appointed, consequently most of our services are run by members of a dwindling and ageing congregation.
St Andrews Church has played a large role in my life as I was also confirmed and married there, all my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren have been christening there and one of my sons was married there too. The churchyard holds many of the family members no longer with us and I currently serve on the Parochial Church Council (PCC).
Over the years I have served on most of the committees in the village, I scored for the cricket team for several years in my teens; I was on the village hall committee for many years happily involved in catering for many and various events; I was elected to the Parish Council and was chair a couple of times; outside of the village but representing our community I was on the governing body at St Mary's Primary School also taking the chair for a time.
The village hall life has had ups and downs with the Rev Shufflebottom, who was a keen member of the men's billiard club, responsible for organising the fundraising for the current village hall.

At times there would be lively active committees with waiting lists for events and then there would be times when events would be cancelled from lack of support – tastes change as have many of the village population.
Sadly, as with many villages, the loss of social housing and the increased price of private housing has meant that many of the younger members of a family have had to move away for either homes and or work.
Some members of the community have always worked hard to support and take care of others who become less able and this was particularly noticeable during the Covid lockdown when we set up a 'buddy' system to ensure that anyone living alone or in need of support was contacted on a regular basis to ensure that they were safe, had everything they needed and also just to have a conversation.

Places like Oakgate nurseries were helpful as we would place an order for several people and they would deliver it into the village for each person to collect so that we could continue to plant up our gardens. Outdoor tea and cakes would be enjoyed by groups of six well spaced out, again to ensure peoples well being.

Members of the PCC, helped by others organised and delivered afternoon teas around the parish on Mothering Sunday during one year of the lockdown, kindly supported by generous donations of bread, ham etc from the Coop; I remember that I made over 70 scones and sourced small containers for jam and cream – online shopping really came into its own during those years!

Jo Humphreys
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