

Turvey



80 Years of Reminiscences

Compiled by Pauline White

FOREWARD.

In advance of North Beds. District Planning Dept. drawing up a village plan for Turvey, the Turvey Appraisal Committee (a small group of residents and with the blessing of the Parish Council) is co-ordinating work designed to produce an accurate account of the village and its life, including comment on what residents would wish to retain and change for the future.

Everyone in Turvey will have an opportunity to contribute and all aspects are being studied e.g. history, buildings, trees, transport, public services, shopping, traffic, leisure and recreation, education, health and medical care etc.

PAULINE WHITE IS CO-ORDINATING THE HISTORY. AS A RESULT OF HER MEETINGS AND CHATS WITH A NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WHO HAVE LIVED ALL, OR MOST OF THEIR LIVES IN THE VILLAGE IT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE TO RECORD SOME REMINISCENCES OF THE LAST EIGHTY YEARS IN TURVEY, AS A BONUS TO THE WORK OF THE APPRAISAL COMMITTEE.

We hope you share with us the enjoyment of these findings and if you have paid for your copy, thank you for assisting with its production and perhaps also in helping us to cover those modest costs we incur, when integrity or a sense of shame prevents us from encroaching too far on the 'help in kind' we are receiving from so many sources.

M.R.B.

Turvey Appraisal Committee.

Chris. Bishop; Mickey Bradley; Diana Gamble; David Nightingale; Ian Nixon; David Seaton; Liz. Underwood; Pauline White.

IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL US, OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO HELP IN SOME WAY. PLEASE LET US KNOW.

September 1980.

Front Cover: Line drawing of the original BARTON HOMES which were demolished in 1966.

TURVEY RECALLED FROM 1900

The passage of 80 years has brought about many changes to village life in Turvey. In particular, those living in the village are no longer so inter-dependent for their existence, and there have been changes in the physical features of the village, with the alteration or different use of some of the older buildings, together with the erection of many new properties. The size of the population however, has altered very little even with the increased housing. Today more households have smaller families, whilst earlier there were fewer households with larger families. As families of nine were not uncommon, it is difficult to imagine them living and sleeping in a small, 2 up and 2 down cottage!

Apart from the building of new houses, the 2 main Estates associated with Turvey House and the Abbey (once owned by the Longuet-Higgins family) have also altered, with many of the estate dwellings being sold privately. In fact all that is left of the Abbey Estate is Prioory Farm, a few cottages in Newton Lane, the Reading Room and Box Cottage in the High Street - the latter property has recently been inherited by the present male heir on his coming of age.

In the early part of this century, Turvey could boast a large Lace making industry occupying many wives and young girls in making and selling lace. Turvey was also the local trading centre for the buying of lace from other villages for resale to shops in Town - a lace collar cost 1s 6d (7 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)! Lace was made in the village as late as the 1940's, but in these latter years it had become primarily a personal hobby and recreational activity.

There was another smaller but no less important industry associated with hand sewn leather. Many items were made and on record are 3 shoemakers and a saddler. Labourers' boots and ladies' shoes were particularly popular and one local shoemaker's wife is known to have walked into Bedford each week to sell her husband's work. The boots cost £1.00 a pair and the hand sewn tops were said to last for a year - but the hobnails in the soles had to be replaced occasionally!!

Associated with farming and transport needs and to keep the horses well shod were 2 blacksmiths (one attached to the Abbey Estate) and a wheelwright who, amongst other things, made new iron tyres for the farm and carrier carts.

There were various other trades providing a service to the village and surrounding areas. Among these were several painters and decorators, at least 2 builders (Turvey had its own quarries and brickworks), plumbers and masons, joiners and 2 known coffin makers - the cost of a funeral, including digging the grave in 1930 was £9.10s (£9.50p).

As well as these trades, many men worked on the farms and some of the girls were in service. There were 2 main laundries in the village and washing was taken in by several other households.

To provide for the village, there were 3 general stores and a sweet shop; 2 butchers; 3 bakers - whose bakeries were also used by individual households for baking their family cakes and roasting their Sunday joints! There was a Post Office and for short periods a greengrocers; an Army and Navy store; a haberdasher's and a barber's shop.

One general store, now known as the Corner Stores was once owned by one "Pecky" Payne (the corner is still known to older residents as Payne's Corner) of whom it was stated he would cut a current in half if necessary

to avoid giving over-weight. In Turvey, in the 1930's, the gentlemen also had to take care when attending the barber's as he was very keen on jokes and stories. In one instance it is stated a customer inadvertently lost his moustache during the barber's enthusiastic telling of a story.

Also important in the village is the Mill. Though not the original building a mill has been on that site for a long time. The original building was burnt down leaving just a chimney, which survived for many years until it was demolished by the Territorial Army in 1935. The Mill has seen many changes having been a water driven flour grinding mill; a store for unrationed food during the first World War; an animal foodstuffs grinding mill; a potato crisp factory and as it is today, the Multitherm factory making specialised electrical equipment.

In the days of the flour mill, the miller ground the wheat for the surrounding farms and for individuals who had gathered wheat from gleaning the fields. He also had the fishing rights for the river, for which he received payment and he was allowed to set eel traps across the river, which led to a good trade in fair sized eels, with the fish shops in Town. The eels were packed in specially made eel boxes and sent by carrier cart. An occasional pike was caught in these traps and it is recalled that having been well salted, and drained overnight to get rid of the earthy taste, they were quite an acceptable dish.

Behind the flour mill, at one time, was a water driven timber mill to which large logs were rolled down the slope and then pulled into position by horses. When this mill finished operating, a timber yard was set up behind Turvey Lower School which was also the home of Osborne's the local haulage firm who carried coal and road materials, and later transported animals. They also ran a carrier cart to Turvey Station to meet the trains and many a young lad was reprimanded for trying to hitch a lift on the rear axles of these carts!

Along with Osborne's, Bailey's also ran a carrier cart and took passengers into Bedford twice weekly. Before the advent of their first motorised bus in 1920, they kept their horses and carts in stables in Carlton Road - now the home of Turvey Haulage.

The red Bailey's Buses were a feature of Turvey from 1920 to 1969 with a regular service, on Thursdays to Olney and on Wednesdays and Saturdays to Bedford. The last bus used to leave Bedford at 11p.m., but this stopped during the second World War. The cost of a return ticket in 1920 was 6d (2½p) and rose to 1s 8d (8p) in 1969 - now the return fare is over £1.00! Open topped buses also ran through the village in 1919 and were operated by Groves in Northampton. Apart from the buses, there was an excellent train service from Turvey Station to Bedford or to Northampton, and at one time as far as Towcester. In its hey-day, the Station had a Station Master, who was resident at the Station; 3 Signal Men, working shifts; 2 Porters and a Clerk - and provided both a passenger and goods service. The last train ran through Turvey Station at 9.20p.m. on the 3rd March 1962 and the railway bridge over the main Bedford road, required 2 attempts before it was finally demolished on the 15th May 1971.

The grain merchants, Quenby Price, took over the redundant station buildings and yard in 1969 and have kept the facade of the main building much as it was. Lost, however are the picturesque station platforms with their beautiful flower beds for which the Station had been awarded several prizes.

In addition to the excellent public transport provided by buses and trains,

there was a more informal service of bicycles. If you did not own one you could hire one for 1d (less than $\frac{1}{2}$ p) an hour, complete with oil lamp if the rider was likely to be caught in the dark. It was not uncommon for young boys in the village to run errands in order to earn 1d, so they could hire a bicycle on which to learn to ride.

Mentioning too many individual names has deliberately been avoided, but Mr. Bamford must be recalled, as his name continues in the village with a road and a place being named after him. He lived, in his time, in Richmond House, The Manse, Norfolk House and Eventide and he can be recalled making butter in outhouses in the garden of Richmond House and sending it with eggs to sell in Bedford.

In Bamfords Place he had stables and cart hovels (now the site of Industrial Cleaners) and during the first World War horses for the yeomanry were stables there at £1.00 a day, whilst the men were billeted in the village.

Mr. Bamford, with his brother-in-law ran the local gasworks. The Gasometer was behind the large green gates, on the main road near the Post Office. The gasworks were built on the land belonging to Turvey House Estate and the gas was actually made in the village, which also had its own gasman who made the gas and did any repairs necessary. Mr. Bamford provided gas for the street lights, which were lit manually by a torch and were turned off every night at 10p.m.

The meters were emptied by a local lady and at times, a wheelbarrow was needed to carry the pennies to Mr. Bamford, who then sent them by carrier cart, into the bank in Bedford. Eventually the meter collection did not produce enough money to cover the cost of the coal to make the gas, so the gasworks were sold to Northampton Gas Board and in return, Mr. Bamford received 10s (50p) a week for life and 30,000cu.ft. of gas.

Bamfords Yard and Place were once known as the Green Road and had wooden gates across it. One set was near the site of Mordants Close and another set was close to Norfolk House. At a later date, just beyond the Neetfit workshop, iron gates were put across the road. These were taken down for recycling during the second World War.

Life for many households was hard. The men worked long hours and also had their allotments in areas called Garden Fields which had to be tended to supply vegetables for their families. Some of the boys had a special dispensation during the first World War to enable them to be taken out of school early, in order to work on the farms. Some as young as 10 years of age worked from 5a.m. to 10p.m. at Harvest time, earning from 6d ($2\frac{1}{2}$ p) to 2s 6d ($12\frac{1}{2}$ p) a week!

Children started school at the age of 3 and usually left at 13, though some did stay a little longer and went on to College. In the early part of the century, there were approximately 94 children in the big school (now the village hall) with Mr. Hopkins in charge and 30 at the Lower School in the care of Miss Maclean. The children were expected to be at school on time and the school bell, which was on the roof of the Lower School was rung from 8.55a.m. to 9a.m. Even those walking from outlying farms were not allowed excuses for being late!

When the children left school, the girls usually went into the lace school or into service for 2 or 3 shillings weekly, whilst many of the boys went to work on the farms and others were apprenticed to the craftsmen or became labourers to Bricklayers.

The boys often helped on the farms, even before leaving school and in one instance enjoyed "Riding Forest on the Binder" which was the first horse

in front of 3 others pulling the binding machine around the field.

When the fields had been harvested, families were allowed to go gleaning. There was an unwritten law that as long as no stocks had been left standing in the centre of the field it was alright to glean. If the stocks were there the field was left alone.

Also helping on the farms in the early years were the boys from the "Reform School" now known as Carlton Training School. These worked in two's or three's under supervision, and they will be long remembered for the way they marched to Church every Sunday smartly dressed in suits. Before the first World War they also had their own Band and they played their Instruments from the Cemetery gate in Carlton Road to the Church.

The village revolved around the Church and Chapels. The school master Mr. Hopkins (Shiny - he had a bald head) was also the choirmaster and organist and the Rector gave scripture lessons every day at the school.

Meetings of the Band of Hope were held in a Sunday school room attached to the Congregational Chapel and a group called the P.W.A. (Pleasant Wednesday Afternoon) met there every week, except in the summer months, only disbanding in 1978. The Chapel is little used today but it does house the organ from the original Barton Homes, which were demolished in 1966.

Church and Chapels were attended every Sunday and the children went to Sunday school (whether they wanted to or not), and when they were old enough to read and sing they joined the choir.

Many of the Societies or Benefit Clubs were associated with the Church and Festivals were held each Whitsuntide to celebrate. One remembered in 1901 had amongst its clubs, The Church of England Temperance Benefit Club; The Odd Fellows Club; The Chain of Friendship Club; The Mayflower Lodge of Free Gardeners; The Old Men's Club (but with only six members at that time!)

Another Festival was held each November and swing boats and roundabouts were put in Tandy's Close (a field until 1949) and stalls were erected on the site of Crane's Close. Owners of two of these stalls were said to be called "Tommy Rock" and "Joe Soap". When Tandy's Close was no longer available the Fair was transferred to Garlick's field (now known as The Green) but this was only for a very short time.

The usual Church Festivals were also celebrated in the village. At Christmas the children went carol singing, often walking to the outlying farms to sing. At Easter they went primrose picking on Good Friday and used these on Easter Saturday to decorate the Church. For good attendance at Sunday School the children were taken once a year in a large horse drawn cart - either to Pict's Hill or Crown Farm to have a picnic.

A day that was also celebrated was Plough Monday (2nd Monday in January) when all the boys blacked their faces and dressed up and did the rounds of the village collecting pennies.

The people in the village joined together in many clubs and activities apart from the Benefit Societies already mentioned. There have been and still are a large variety of clubs. Turvey belonged to the Football League and they won the cup in 1911. However, having played a tough game in Turvey Park field the players had to come down to the Old Kings Arms (rebuilt in 1934) and scrub down under a cold water tap in the yard. Being in the League meant that fixtures were played in other villages and in the early seasons the players had to cycle to these, but later on a Bailey's bus was hired.

Cricket was also played in Turvey Park field and the pitch kept flat by the use of a huge roller which was pulled by a horse. The horse was fitted with specially made leather shoes so that its' hooves did not cut up the grass.

Tennis was played in the village on a court marked out in a small paddock that was behind the Turvey Supply Stores.

Another outdoor sport undertaken by the young people of the village, if the weather was cold enough, was skating on the Abbey Park Farm pond. Lanterns were hung in the trees around the pond and good fun was had by all, although it is said that at least one lad took an untimely dip.

Indoors, in the Working Men's Club (now Neetfit) the men had a chance to meet and to use the rings on the walls for exercise and also practice their skills at a Rifle Range! In the Reading Room Skittles and Billiards were played, the latter for the "Holton Cup" (where is this now?). It was also the venue for many enjoyable Social Evenings.

A Boxing Club also existed for a short time in buildings behind the Three Fyshes Inn. With all these activities there was also the Womens Institute; Mother's Union; Young Wives; a Girls Club and Boy Scouts. A Red Cross Society also existed and a special contingent was set up during the 2nd World War, holding lectures in rooms over the stables in Bamford's Place. A room, with a bed was made available to them in Holmwood House for use in case of an emergency!

Medical care has always been available, and there has always been at least one Doctor here, either living in Richmond House or the Grange. The Doctor would also take a tooth out for a charge of 6d. (2½p). Medical care was not cheap, although people could pay a certain amount a week (maybe 1s. (5p)) into a club to help offset the cost. A bill seen and dated 1906, for two lots of treatment given for a mother and daughter, by two Doctors in practice at Richmond House at that time cost 17s (85p).

The first major development of houses in this century were the Council Houses in May Road, built in 1919. Each set of four houses had a well sunk near them for drinking purposes, as there was no mains water.

1919 was also remembered for the erection and unveiling of the War Memorial Cross. This was put in the area always known as "The Cross", opposite the cottages known to most as Church Terrace. These cottages were in fact given the name originally of Cross Cottages.

Water seems to have been quite a feature in the village with several major floods disrupting the community. The last Brook flood before the one this year, was in 1930, with an even more serious one in 1922 which took water as far into the village as Church Terrace. The River has flooded many times but with the major flood control work that has been carried out, the water no longer comes to The Three Fyshes side of the bridge. The last serious River flood which affected the village side of the bridge was after the severe winter of 1947.

Mains water and drainage is really a recent development in the village. The Stand Pipes were put in in the early 1940's when a lot of the wells were closed, but many houses did not receive piped water until the end of the 1940's or early 1950's. One supply of water to part of the village has unfortunately disappeared for good. This was Nell's Well in Newton Lane - it was used by people living in Newton Lane and Mill Green for many years, but its use declined after the 1960's when the village

had minor notariety with a visit from Fyffe Robertson from the B.B.C, when the water had been declared unfit for drinking purposes. However, many people still survive to tell the tale!!

Turvey always seems to have been, and I believe, still is an extremely attractive village. Let us hope that in the next 80 years we can keep it that way.

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- 1. Houses Buying and Selling Lace.
- 2. Hand Sewn Leather goods made.
- 3. Saddler.
- 4. General Stores.
- 5. Sweet Shop.
- 6. Bakers.
- 7. Butchers.
- 8. Barbers.
- 9. Post Office.
- 10. Laundry.
- 11. Painters and Decorators.
- 12. Plumbers and Masons.
- 13. Wheelwright.
- 14. Police House.

Turvey House

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CEMETERY

Lodge

Limekiln

St. Andrew's Chapel (Wesleyan)

All Saints Church (Rectory)

Three Crowns Inn

School

Holmwood House

TURVEY

BEDFORD OLNEY

Congregational Chapel

Turvey Abbey

Turvey Bridge Station

Turn Mill

