

THE PARISH CHURCH is dedicated to St. James the Great, patron saint of travellers and pilgrims, and it is known that it was established in Anglo-Saxon times, though there is no written record of its actual founding. It was mentioned in the Domesday Book as being in the patrimony of 'the church in Worcester' which meant that the Benedictine monastery of that period may well have commissioned its building and would have the right to appoint its priest and receive any dues. The name of the village at that time (and it experienced many variations) was given as Hereford in a charter of 799 which records:

*'Coenwulf King (of the the Mercians) to the abbot Balthun in exchange for 12 manetes at Hereford, thirty manetes belonging to the minster at Kemsesei (Kempsey)'. Then, in 814 we read:*

*'Deneberht, bishop of Worcester and his cathedral clergy to Eanswith for her lifetime, with reversion to the church of Worcester, two cassati at Hereforda on condition that she keeps the church vestments in repair' and again in 964:*

*'Edgar, King of the English, Emperor and Lord of the peoples within it to the Church at Worcester, exemption from all but the three common dues of the following estates (seventeen names follow, one of which was Herefortun)'*

*The Early Charters of the West Midlands by H.P.R.Finberg*

This first church would have been made of wood, with walls of wattle and daub, a thatched roof and an earthen floor and, it is believed, stood where the present church now stands. With the coming of the Normans following the Battle of Hastings in 1066 the wooden structure would have been replaced by a stone building, rectangular in shape, probably with a small rounded apse at the East end, a semi-circular arch above the doorway and narrow splayed windows, rounded at the top and fitted with shutters which could be removed when necessary. It is thought that this church was built in the early years of the 12th century and to it was added the tower which still stands today. Some years later, in the 1300s the nave was knocked down and a new nave built, longer and higher and having a very fine chancel, giving us the church as we now know it, though, of course, the years have seen some changes. The East window, for instance, was removed in 1855 and replaced by the present one. Pews replaced the open bench seating; a spire and a porch were added, an organ installed, vestries built etc., but the main structure has changed very little. Originally, the walls were plastered inside and out, but the plaster was removed round about the turn of the last century and by that time a wall had been built round the churchyard.

The 20th century saw the old graveyard around the church filled and more land acquired and consecrated for the 'new' graveyard; the War Memorial was put in

position, the pulpit removed and a new one placed on the North side of the nave - the list goes on, and it is impossible to mention all the details which changed the building's appearance without altering the structure. The two latest additions, however, are worthy of mention:- water was brought into the church and a sink installed in the choir vestry and this has made life so much easier for the coffee servers, the flower arrangers, the cleaners and so forth, then, in 1998, to the great delight of all churchgoers (and, it is hoped, to the village generally) the bells were re-hung and now, for the first time in history they can be properly rung. Up to that time, they had could only be chimed; the bells were static and hammers striking them produced the sound. Now, thanks to the foresight, interest and energy of a number of people (particularly the Bells committee set up for the purpose), a new ringing chamber has been created in the tower, ringers recruited and trained and the bells actually rung. We are fortunate in possessing a very fine set - we are told by people who know that they are bells to be proud of.

So, the church whose existence in Anglo-Saxon times when the parish system first began to evolve led to Harvington being given the status of 'parish' continues to try and serve that community as, historically, it always did, and now there are bells to remind people of its existence and to proclaim the eternal message.

**2** THE MANOR HOUSE. In the early Middle Ages, the next most important building in a village after the church was the Manor House, and Harvington has a fine example. It is thought that it is the oldest house in the village, parts of it being early 14th century. The building and its adjoining lands were, like the church itself, owned by the Dean and Chapter of Worcester cathedral (and then by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners) and, in its early days, it seems likely that the Rector would live here - certainly the Rev. Moses Hodges occupied it for many years during the 17th century, when it was referred to as the Parsonage House - but then came a long period when it was let out to farmers, men of substance who were of importance in the village but never 'squires' in the accepted sense of the word. It should be remembered that many of the Rectors never lived in the village, their homes being elsewhere in places of more importance to them and their parochial duties here being carried out by (ill-paid) curates who certainly did not live at the Manor.

From 1904 three generations of the Bullock family lived here and then the property passed into the possession of a Mr Brown who sold it to John Byrd (together with the lands comprising Manor Farm) in 1956. In 1986 he, in turn, sold the house and garden to a speculator named Lloyd who built an estate of 6 expensive houses on part of the land before selling the Manor to its present owner in 1987.

The house has an intriguing feature in that part of the upper floor appears to be hung by iron straps from the principal tie beams of the roof. The derelict Pigeon House or Dovecote which stands about 50 yards from the Manor is thought to be contemporary with the house itself. It is built of rubble masonry lined with stone compartments and was roofed with stone tiles - a fine example of its kind before time took its toll. These dovecotes were introduced into this country by the Normans and were exclusively for the use of important places such as monasteries and the houses of the upper classes. They were a source of revenue and a means of subsistence during the winter months when they provided fresh meat. They were always built near the main dwelling house so that the 'master of the family may keep in sight all those who go in and come out'. Dovecote-breakers were guilty of theft and heavily punished.



3

THE VILLAGE HALL Built in 1931, the village hall is owned by the Parish Council on behalf of the village and is managed by a committee made up of a representative from each of the village organisations, under an elected chairman. It stands on a site donated by Miss Penney who lived in Cedar Lodge opposite and was built on or near a pool from which nearby Pool House gets its name. The building cost £1087 of which the WI (at whose insistence the Parish Council eventually agreed to build a hall) raised £153. A grant was made by the Carnegie Trust but the remainder was taken as loan from the National Council of Social Services, being finally paid back in 1936.

Pictures and a report from the *Evesham Journal* on the of opening of village hall in 1931 follows.



1931

3

LADY EYRES MONSELL WITH THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS. (Photo: "Journal.")

A very large gathering assembled in the centre of the beautiful village of Harvington on Wednesday afternoon to witness the formal opening of the new Village Hall, which has recently been erected on an excellent site near the Schools. The new hall, which is of quite a pleasing design, stands well back from the road, and its size and general construction is such that it cannot well fail to be of the greatest service in the social life of the village and the immediate neighbourhood.

The main hall is 50ft. long by 25ft. wide, and, in addition, there is a committee-room which can be separated by a folding screen to form two dressing-rooms, cloak-rooms, lavatory, and kitchen. There is also an electric boiler, and the hall throughout is brilliantly illuminated with electric light. There is a large platform at the far end of the main hall, two good fireplaces, and interior decorations are in a cheerful colour scheme, and the whole building gives an idea of solidity and comfort which is as pleasing as it is rare.

The scheme to build a village hall in Harvington has been to the fore for a number of years. The present site was generously presented to the parish about six years ago by Miss Penney. At about the same time another scheme was started, but this fell through. Some three years ago a Parish Meeting was called to discuss the question, and as a result a Building Committee was formed, with Mr. R. L. Brazier as chairman, and so successful were they in their efforts to raise money that the present hall is the result, and it is certainly a credit to all concerned.



4

THE SCHOOL, correctly entitled Harvington C of E (controlled) First School was built in 1849 thanks to the energetic influence of the Rev. Canon A. H. Winnington-Ingram, Rector at that time and a man who firmly believed in the value of education. The original building had only one classroom and a house for the headmaster (or mistress) but, in a fairly short space of time, a classroom was added for use by the infants and, gradually, it was extended to accommodate the increasing numbers of children. In its early days, there was only one teacher, who coped with all ages, but this changed in the course of time, particularly with the introduction of the pupil-teacher system. The school log books record the consistently poor attendance as children stayed away from school to work in the fields or were kept at home suffering from the numerous illnesses, such as measles, scarletina, mumps, diptheria, scarlet fever which regularly struck them low. A pump in the school yard supplied the only water, earth closets were a constant worry and needed a great deal of attention to reduce the health risk; the Rector (and his wife) visited regularly, the latter dispensing food and clothing to the poorest children, the former maintaining strict discipline both in school and out and stressing the importance of regular attendance at church. Inspections were frequent and thorough and the school was always closed for a whole day before an inspection so that a comprehensive cleaning-up could take place. Adherence to the timetable and plan of work was very strict, any slight deviation having to be recorded in the log book. Heavy snowfalls are recorded in most winters - very different from today one feels, and the school was closed for quite long periods of time because of the cold.

Over the years the school has been extended, the latest addition being the Nursery unit catering for pre-school children and due to be open in September 2000. The school today enjoys an excellent reputation - one of which the village can be extremely proud; how fortunate we are that it has such a long and interesting history.

5

FIELD NAMES In the latter half of the 18th century a series of Land Enclosure Acts was passed by Parliament by means of which the old open-field system of farming dating from mediaeval times was changed and the countryside began to look rather as we know it today, with hedges and fences and walls dividing and enclosing the land in a clearly defined way. Ownership changed, usually to the detriment of the lower classes and great hardship resulted in many areas of the country. The Act which affected Harvington was passed in 1787, at which time three Commissioners (lodged in Salford Priors) reapportioned the lands of this village, designating roads and issuing instructions about their upkeep, and appointing overseers to make sure that the instructions were carried out. It was a time of



upheaval which is difficult for us to imagine and one of the sad effects of the changes was that most of the wonderful names given to the fields and meadows far back in history became lost to us, names like 'Piece above village' 'Great Nestor', 'Crooked Furlong', 'Berry Lynch', 'The Doles', 'Slingals' and many more simply went out of use. A few remain: Green Street (now Green Street Farm) Lambpit, Longlands, Ragley Furlong as Ragley Road, Small Moors, the site of a caravan facility and, of course, Cress Hill - the latter, through an unfortunate mistake on the part of Wychavon Council who, when replacing the road sign had a 't' instead of an 's' put at the end of the word and then refused to change it, is now Crest Hill, which, sadly, gives no clue to the fact that there used to be cress beds in the brook near the bottom.



- 6** THE OLD RECTORY, now a private house, was given its present look by the same Rev. Canon A.H. Winnington-Ingram who brought about great changes in the church and was responsible for the building of the school during the early years of his incumbency (the 1850s). He had the original late Elizabethan house enlarged (it is not known whether it was already known as The Rectory) by adding a new wing and by building outhouses and a coach house, thereby creating 'a house fit for a gentleman to live in'. Land was also acquired for the enlargement of the garden to border on Walker's, now Finch, Lane. In those days, the clergy could do things like this without reference to higher authority. It would not be allowed today.
- 7** THE GRANGE, one of the Village's most sizeable and gracious houses, with its open outlook and its 'ha-ha' is thought to date from the early part of the 18th century and, like so many of the substantial properties in the area, was owned for many years by a branch of the Bomford family. Some 13 years ago, the nearby farm buildings were sold for development and were imaginatively converted to dwelling places. Grange Lane possesses several attractive black-and-white timbered properties, one of which, Yew Tree Cottage, rivals the Manor for the title of the village's oldest house.
- 8** THE 'COACH & HORSES' INN stood, until 1976, on one of the village's most dangerous corners and, though he realised it would mean a considerable drop in takings, the then landlord, Bill Baldwin, decided not to object to the proposed bypass which was duly opened that year. Older residents recall how difficult it was to get across the road to the church when all the traffic to and from Stratford

thundered by and it is said that the side of the building was often damaged when struck by passing vehicles. Others recall that one landlord was also the undertaker, and coffins could be seen in various stages of construction, frightening at least one young girl so that she always ran past. At that time, Station Road had not been developed as we see it today and was known as 'the back of the town'. Today, the inn is enjoying a growing reputation for hospitality and excellent food.



9

'DALKEITH', a Grade 2 listed building once housed a nursery school in its upper rooms. For 27 years Miss 'Pip' Stone ran a highly successful school for children of pre-school age and, when she retired in 1982, the village was left without kindergarten provision until the Play group was started in the Village Hall. The land behind the house, when sold off, was used for the building of Walnut Close and the outbuildings were converted into a pleasant development known as Harvest Court.



SHAKESPEARE LANE and the surrounding area contain many places of interest. 'The Shakespeare Inn' which stood at the top of the lane is believed to have begun as an 'outdoor' when the resident started to sell beer and cider sometime in the region of the second half of the 19th century. In 1912 a beer licence was granted to a Raymond Walker, at which time there was a bar and smoking room, with a lawn at the back where families could sit. By 1916 it had become a Flowers public house and the landlord's name again was Walker.

This pub was especially popular with the hop-pickers during that era, but it remained equally popular with 'the locals' well after the hop-picking days were gone. Until its closure, it was a favourite meeting place for the Football Club, the Darts League and the British Legion members and is fondly remembered by them. Sadly, little now remains, and that has been incorporated into the property which stands on the site of the original building.

Opposite, along the public footpath, is the new churchyard, acquired and consecrated in 1915 when the old churchyard became overcrowded and no longer usable.

At the foot of Shakespeare Lane stands 'The Limes', parts of which are understood to be 15th century with later additions and alterations and known in earlier times as The Homestead. It was a working farm and the Misses Stratton who were the last people to run it as a farm can be well remembered by older villagers. They supplied milk from cows which were brought in twice a day from their grazing across the road, up the hill beyond Bank House, at which times the busy Stratford traffic had to be stopped. When the property was sold in the 1970s the house and outbuildings were separated, the adjacent barn being converted into a dwelling house.





11 'FIRBANK', the attractive timber-framed house facing south as one enters the village from the old Stratford Road was the home of the distinguished local artist, Sam Towers whose daughter, Hilda, married Ralph Brazier of 'The Close', Station Road. Both their names, but his particularly perhaps, came to be associated with many village organisations for whose advancement and success they worked tirelessly. An original flower painting by Hilda Brazier, who inherited a large measure of her father's talent, hangs on the wall in the village hall.

'THE LAURELS', just above Firback was once the home of two Bomford brothers, Benjamin and Jack and it is believed that their generosity paid for the restoration of the church spire in 1947, when the old oak shingles had to be removed and were replaced by copper sheeting.

12 MALTHOUSE CLOSE & THE STEPS. This area was scheduled for demolition at the beginning of the 1970s but thanks to the intervention and foresight of the then Public Health Inspector, a Mr D.E. Berry, a property developer was persuaded to renovate the properties rather than pull them down, with the result that we now have this delightful restoration which is a credit to the village. During renovation, malted grains were found in an old oven. At the entrance to Malthouse Close, the house on the left was, in living memory, a shop, the front room of the property being used for the purpose. Mrs Moss was the last proprietor and was renowned for 'selling everything'.

13 At the corner stands 'The Old Bakery' which, until the advent of mass-produced, wrapped, sliced bread in the early 1960s provided bread for the local community and 'around the area'. At Christmas time, when the baking was finished, housewives who had no suitable oven would bring their festive poultry to the bakery for cooking. Both 'The Bakery' and 'The Retreat' which stands next door, were rebuilt after a fire in 1856, but both keep their attractive, late Georgian appearance. At the corner on the opposite side of the Stratford Road stood the blacksmith's shop with two timber-framed cottages standing hard by, very close to the roadside. Picturesque though they were, with the ever-increasing amount of traffic on that road they presented a real hazard and were finally condemned in 1938. The smith, George Grimmett, had held that post for 23 years and had become a village institution, his forge and shop being a favourite meeting place for local men who passed many a happy hour there 'putting the world to rights'. When the Council houses replaced the cottages, Mr Grimmett was one of the first occupants, but was quoted as saying 'it was never the same'. Behind the smithy was once a cider mill (or press) worked by a pony. It is known to have been still in use in 1929. The nearby hop-kiln was built for the drying of hops during a period from about 1893 to 1924. It had fire holes at each end and the draught



JACK BOMFORD'S    ↑    MRS MOSS'S SHOP    ↑    THE STEPS. MR & MRS JONES



'BLACKSMITH'S CORNER'





HOP-PICKING, ANCHOR LANE, 1905

14



THE REV. WINNINGTON-INGRAM'S READING ROOM  
OPPOSITE THE SCHOOL

was controlled by wooden 'sails' of a single-vane type. The hops were brought in the 'cribs' into which the pickers heaped them; after drying they were packed into huge canvas bags called 'pockets' and taken by train to their destination.

**14** Opposite the school and near to 'Cedar Lodge' stood THE READING ROOM, built at his own expense in 1887 by the same Rev. Winnington-Ingram who had instigated the building of the school. This was a simple, rectangular building as will be seen from the old photograph, designed to offer a quiet retreat for the men of the village who could go there and read the newspapers which were brought in for their interest and for the widening of their horizons. Strict rules were laid down for its use and it is understood that the scheme worked well and was greatly appreciated. When the Rector died a few years after the scheme began, his widow gave the property to the village and it continued in gradually decreasing use until 1965 when, with little interest being shown in it and after various unsuccessful attempts to have it used as a shop etc., it was put up for sale, demolished and the land used for the building of a small group of private houses.

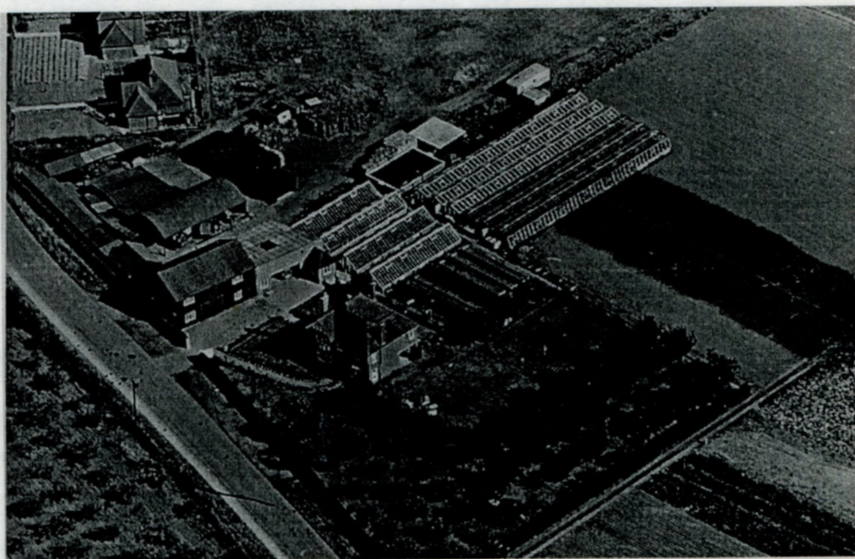
**15** RAGLEY ROAD. The acquisition of the land along this road for the building of Council houses after the Second World War involved the village in a long-drawn-out controversy. It was glebe land, rented out as allotments and both church and tenants were volubly reluctant to have its use changed. The uproar was then prolonged when it was suggested that the 'spare' land should be used as a children's playing field - another contentious subject which has never been satisfactorily resolved.

**16** LEYSFIELD. Where the present group of bungalows occupied by Senior residents now stands, there was a camp built at the beginning of World War 2 to house conscientious objectors. In time, its use was changed; the Women's Land Army used it and, later, it housed first Italian, then German, prisoners of war. We understand that they were never heavily guarded; they worked on the land and moved freely about the area.

**17** BREDON VIEW AND COTSWOLD VIEW - two late Victorian houses standing side by side on Village Street have both been the village Post Office at some time in their history, the latter being the home for many years of Mr and Mrs Cook - John Bazaleel and Alice Mary who died within two months of each other in 1967. Mr Cook's parents started the village Post Office in the village in 1888 and he took over as postmaster in 1929. When he retired in 1946 the Post Office, which also housed the first telephone exchange, had been in the family's hands for 58

years. His wife, a teacher, was (to quote from *The Evesham Journal*) notably well-versed in history and music, she knew the Bible very well indeed and her command of local history was extraordinarily sound. One of Mr & Mrs Cook's sons, Steve, inherited his mother's love of local history and was regarded by many as the village historian until his death in the early 1990s. After a period during which the Post Office was in St. James' Cottage near the church (hence the box there) it was restarted, this time in Bredon View as part of the shop which had been the village stores since 1897. Trading ceased in 1991 after the sub-Post Office had moved with the owner to the nearby Post Office House (on the site of the Telephone Exchange) where it is still in existence today, offering a friendly and comprehensive service to the community. With the closure of the shop in Bredon View, the only remaining store in Harvington became J & S Stores in Leys Road, owned and run by Mr & Mrs John Hardman in the best tradition of village shops. Bredon View remained unoccupied until 1993 when it was bought for the purpose of converting it to a B & B establishment, restoring it to its original Victorian appearance.

**18** THE GOLDEN CROSS public house stands at the crossroads which were (and are) often referred to as Harvington Cross and it is believed that there has been an inn on that site for very many years. The licensee in late Victorian times was one Charles H. Tyack, his successor being Samuel Coley, a market gardener. He, in the course of time acquired land in and around the village, building the house called Oldfields which is almost opposite the inn and which overlooked numerous greenhouses, the relics of some of which can still be seen. His son, universally known as 'Reg' Coley was a well-known figure in the community, holding several public offices and being very influential in the management of St. James' church. Reg's grandson, Nick, still farms the land held by the family and runs the farm shop along the Evesham Road.



THE 'OLDFIELDS' PROPERTY

**19** ORCHARD CLOSE, built in 1933 was bought by Dr. & Mrs Hugh Nunn who started a plant nursery business which, from small beginnings, has developed into a substantial Wholesale Only business sending specialist plants all round the country. Dr Nunn became the Tree Warden a few years ago and has been responsible for most of the planting of the trees which now flank the entrances to the village.

After World War 2, the village grew rapidly with a number of private developments as well as public housing changing its appearance, not for the better in the opinion of many of the older inhabitants

20

In 1963 **Myatts Field** was built, named after Charles Myatt, a market gardener and good citizen, being a generous benefactor and a staunch churchman, serving as churchwarden for many years. The son of an innovative and farseeing father, he continued to develop ways of improving local produce, concentrating especially on asparagus, rhubarb and strawberries.

In 1950 **Brookedale** was built and Leys Road began to assume greater importance.

In 1965 **Orchard Place**, so-called because of the orchards which it replaced was built on land sold for development by Mr Ralph Brazier whose son, Brian has been of great assistance in the compilation of this project.. The names of Mr and Mrs Brazier appear in village records with great frequency, both of them having contributed generously to the community.

In 1980 **Blakenhurst** and **Hughes Close** were built, followed by

In 1987 **St. James' Close**. By this time, also, numerous houses and bungalows had appeared along Station Road (now apparently mis-named since the closure of the station in the 1960s) as had Walnut Close on 'Dalkeith' land. Several barn conversions had also taken place, in old Village Street and at The Grange and Shakespeare Lane. Manor Park was built.

In 1989 **The Rowans**, again on Leys Road, filled the available space there and is currently in the news again as discussions take place about the future of the Black & White garages site.

In 1999 **Eric Newing**, a well-known figure in the village and correspondent for *The Evesham Journal* having died and left generous bequests to the community, the Parish Council decided to commemorate his name in the newly-built and highly controversial development of public housing on the old Beoley site at the crossroads opposite The Golden Cross.

In 2000 '**Croftlands**' at the top of Anchor Lane was demolished and is being replaced by 3 executive type houses.

The **Black & White** garages site has been sold and plans submitted for the building of private houses.

HARVINGTON GARAGE, owned since 1978 by Bob Heppell, was previously owned by three generations of the Wagstaff family and WAGSTAFF & SONS appeared over the frontage. Petrol was sold there (as indeed it was until about 6 years ago) and payment was made at a kiosk in the Wagstaff's house nearby, where teas were also sold to visiting coaches, as well as plums - tons of plums, according to Mr Wagstaff senior. Strong rivalry existed between the firm and that of the Marsh family opposite, at The Black & White company, Mr Wagstaff defiantly displaying a notice saying 'British cars only sold here' - this as a jibe to his competitors whose importation of Volkswagen vehicles brought buyers from far afield. The Wagstaff connection was already over by the time Mr Heppell bought the property but he was often entertained by Mr Wagstaff's stories of the past. Mr & Mrs Heppell, until recently, lived at 'Firbank' and did much to restore it to its present immaculate condition.

With the closure of workshops at Harvington Garage and the Black & White, the only car repair service is to be found at John Walsh's Ferndale Garage in Leys Road.

THE PLAYING FIELD. The provision of a playing field for the children and young people of the village has nagged at successive Parish Councils for many long years and is still the subject of controversy. Records show that it has long been recognised that children need somewhere to play, the old habit of playing in the street outside one's own front door, no longer being possible. It has also been recognised that, failing all else, youngsters will play on the forecourt in front of the Village Hall, causing damage and aggravation, but no permanent solution has been found, the problem being that nobody wants a playing field at the bottom of their particular garden. Numerous sites were suggested over at least the past 30 years and, finally, after the purchase by the Council of an orchard belonging to Reg Coley some distance behind the Village Hall, it seemed that a solution had been found and everybody rejoiced. The playing field with its new equipment was opened in the 1980s but, sadly, the

## Playing field opened after 30-year wait

About 30 people were guests of the Harvington parish council when the village's playing field for children aged under 16 was opened.

Mrs Elizabeth Harrison, chairman of the parish council, spoke of the "long road that had been travelled" and paid tribute to those who had pressed for a playing field more than 30 years ago, such as Mrs Lucy Baylis, who performed the opening ceremony.

Mrs Harrison also thanked all those who had helped, both professionally and voluntarily, and emphasised the benefit there could be to the community when voluntary groups worked with their parish council.

Mr Ken Davis, who had organised the project, explained that an orchard of one-and-a-half acres had been turned into a playing field, but this was only a

beginning. More equipment, seats and trees could be bought if support was forthcoming for the playing field association, which was the body responsible for maintaining the field and further fund-raising.

"We must look after this little bit of England," Mr Davis said. The land for the playing field had been bought a year ago by the parish council and the £1,600 spent so far on its development had come from the Harvington Recreational Trust fund, which was established in 1978 to administer charitable grants, and the residue of the money was raised in Jubilee Year.

Mrs Baylis said: "I hope the children of the village will enjoy the field and be proud of it." After the ceremony she was presented with a posy of flowers by Rhoda Edy, aged two, and then kicked a football on to the field to show it was ready for use.

situation deteriorated all too rapidly, it being found that it was too remote for young children to play in safety and too far from view to hope that it would not be vandalised. The equipment had to be dismantled and the field fell into neglect. Valiant attempts are presently being made by the current committee of volunteers to bring the field back into use but lack of funds is creating a severe holdup. The village needs an area of land somewhere where an adult eye can be kept on it and mothers with young children can visit for short periods without feeling cut off from all other activity.

**23** THE SPORTS FIELD is now the home of Harvington Cricket Club who lease it from the County Council. There is a football pitch as well as the cricket pitch and both are used by the boys and young men of the village under the guidance of volunteers who give time and effort to coaching. The cricket club continues to flourish and members are justifiably proud of the new clubhouse which was built (with some help from the National Lottery) and opened on 1 August 1997. It is available for hire and offers excellent food along with the other very fine facilities.

**24** HOP PICKING DAYS This was a relatively short period of village history, lasting from about the 1890s to the mid 1920s, during which there were two large hop-fields down Anchor Lane. At the start of each season girls from Dudley came to train the young hops up the sticks and tend to them. Then on the last Sunday before the beginning of September, special trains brought between two and five hundred 'pickers' from Dudley to pick the hops on a piecework system. They worked long hours and lived 'rough' in barns and outbuildings, their working hours being strictly organised by an older woman known as 'the queen'.

The hops were picked into 'bins' or 'cribs' made of sacking, with trestle ends which could be folded and moved along the lines as the vines were pulled down with long cutters. Each 'bin' was visited by a measurer with a bushel bucket. The number of bushels were entered onto the worker's card and then into the bailiff's note book. The hops were then taken to large ovens and there sulphur was added so that for weeks the sulphur fumes pervaded the village air.

The most highly-skilled man in the whole operation was the hop-drier who, with his assistants, worked day and night, keeping the ovens at a constant temperature. There were 3 malhouses: a large black and white one near the smithy; one next to the Shakespeare Inn and one down by the river near the ford, where there was also a paper mill. It is known that, in addition, the end part of the flour mill (The Mill at Harvington) was also used as a malhouse. Remains of it were still there when the Greenhalgh's took it over in 1988.





'THE MILL  
AT  
HARVINGTON'



1988



1999

When dried, the hops were packed with the aid of a press into enormous sacks called 'pockets'. These were stored till the harvest was over and were then sent off on loaded waggons to the Hop Market in Worcester.

Today, where hop-picking took place, local enterprises thrive: Small Moors Caravan Site is a family business established in 1963 and consists of 100 static caravans, all privately owned - one by the Mother's Union, who use it as a holiday facility for mothers and children. Manor Farm Leisure is also a caravan site, set up in 1991 and run as a family business - part of a farm diversification project. It offers static caravan holidays, facilities for touring caravans and river and lake fishing on the farm. Mill Farm (Ornamentals) is another thriving family concern, producing young plants for garden centres. It is situated at Longlands, already referred to as one of the ancient named fields.

**25** THE MILL AT HARVINGTON Domesday records that there was a mill here, serving this Anglo-Saxon settlement of some 93 souls. It can be assumed that it was at the river because it would be water-driven, windmills only coming into existence in the 12th century. Some years later, in 1143, the mill was granted by Prior David (of Worcester) to one William Rupe at a rent of 17 shillings and 'thirty stiches of eels' (a stich being 25). There was some litigation involving mill (or mills, by this time) in 1294 and again in 1311, usually between the 'church at Worcester' and its tenants, but then, in 1549 after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, both mills were sold by the Dean & Chapter at Worcester to one George Willoughby, lord of the manor of Netherton. There are references in more recent history to a paper mill, a corn mill and a flour mill and the ruins of the latest structure can still be seen on the island in the river, a sad reminder of more glorious days, but little is known in the way of recorded fact for inclusion here until we come to the acquisition of the property known now as The Mill at Harvington, by the Greenhaigh family in 1988. The story of their sensitive reclamation of the old flour mill and bakery is one of foresight and good taste so that the village now takes pride in the delightful appearance and the excellent reputation of this prestigious hotel, both of which do credit to its ancient history.

**26** THE RIVER AVON Little is known about the river in its early days other than some of the names by which it was known, varying from Antona to Avena (709), Avene and Eefene (845) but, in the reign of Henry 1 it is on record that Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick was 'mynded to have passage for bootles (?) from Tewkesbury to Worcester for transporting of merchandise for the advancement of Warwick' but the river was very different in appearance then, being a 'narrow, sluggish stream, deep and shallow in turn and never to have borne a boat of any burden'.



Villagers from Harvington planting trees at the newly-completed Robert Aickman lock at Harvington.

~ ANOTHER HUTCHINGS SUCCESS ~

# Avon lock a tribute to waterways genius

Despite heavy rain and fast currents, Lord Avon, son of the former Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, arrived by boat on schedule to open the Robert Aickman New Lock at Harvington on Saturday.

There were fears on Saturday morning that the opening ceremony might have to be altered or even cancelled because of the weather. But, although it kept many other boats away, Lord Avon arrived precisely on time aboard the electrically propelled boat Patricia and the sun shone for most of the time.

The lock has been built by the Upper Avon Navigation Trust at a cost of £150,000 which would have been considerably more but for the fact that a lot of voluntary labour was used on the project.

Work on the lock began 16 months ago and the first boats passed through it in December. The lock itself is a tribute to Mr Robert Aickman, founder of the Inland Waterways Association who died in 1981, although there is, nearby, a bronze portrait plaque incorporated in a monumental brickwork seat which has been built to provide a permanent national memorial to him.

Alcester Victoria Silver Band, in a marquee on the riverbank, struck up with "See the Conquering Hero Comes" as the Patricia arrived. After it had entered the lock Lord Avon cut a blue and white tape suspended across the lock chamber to formally open it. Then he stepped ashore where he later unveiled the Robert Aickman plaque

which had been made by the sculptor Faith Tolkien.

Speaking from a bridge across the lock, Mr M. Macfarlane, of the IWA, described Mr Aickman as a genius. "Such a man needed a memorial and this has been built in the true spirit of him," he said.

Lord Avon congratulated the UANT and the IWA on their imaginative and good work. He recalled that his father had been MP for Stratford, Warwick and Leamington, or a combination of them, for 30 years and he took the name of the river when he decided to retire.

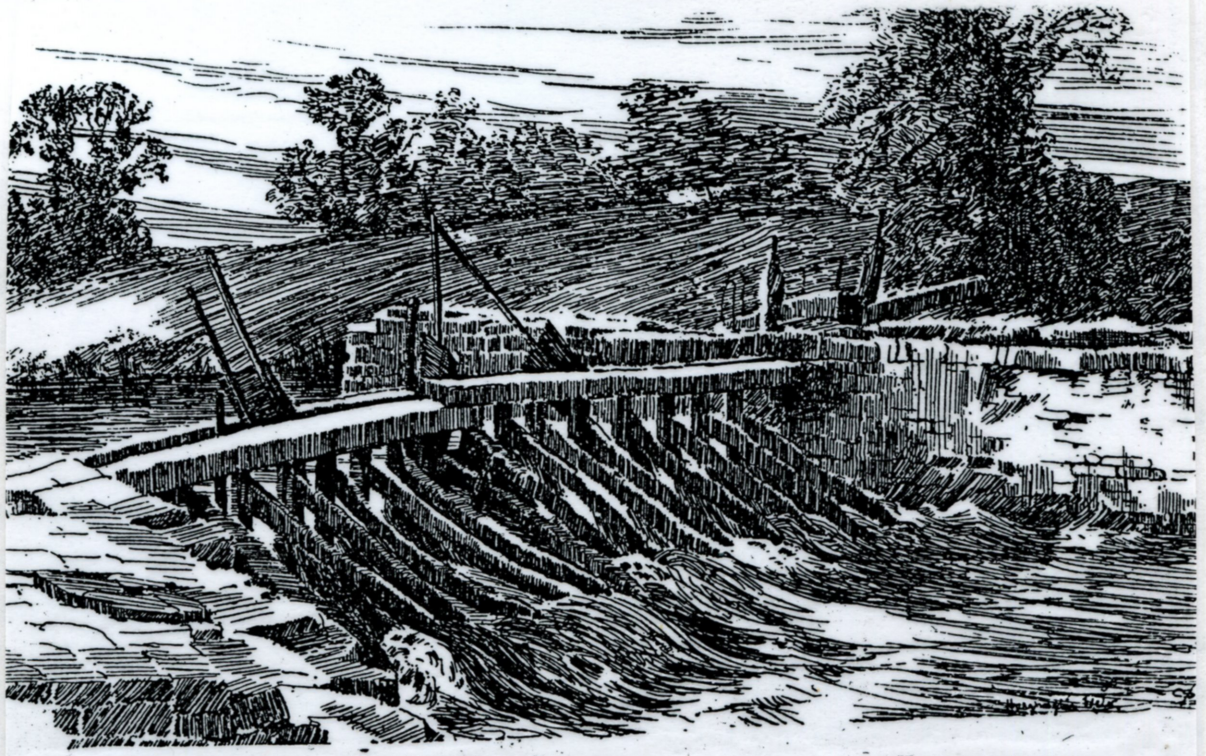
Robert Aickman he described as a "remarkable man," who was particularly good at getting things done. He added: "I believe the development of this lock is a splendid example of what can be achieved by dedicated voluntary effort."

Lord Avon then met the

council of the trust and officials of the IWA as well as some of those who worked on the lock.

The lock has been built to replace the old Robert Aickman lock, which was built in 1969, together with its tortuous, narrow channel which was liable to so much silting and bank slippage that it had to be dredged every year.

It has now been completely by-passed with a straight stretch of navigation, a new basin and a new lock which at 130 ft long and 26 ft wide probably makes it the biggest of its kind in the Midlands and certainly bigger than any in use on the Severn.



LOWER HARVINGTON WEIR AND LOCK 1900

26



HARVINGTON MILL - 1900

In time (but the story is too long to tell here) it was cleared and sluices constructed (one at Harvington) and thus made eminently usable for barge traffic from Bristol to Warwick, with sugar, oil, wine, tobacco, iron and lead being brought up to Warwick and corn, flour, coal and cheese being exchanged. It is thought that about 400 craft a year, carrying an average of 30 tons each, used the river. The barges were about 35 feet long, flat-bottomed or nearly so, sometimes steered with an oar and often with a square sail on a mast fixed for'ard. There was no horse-towing path; if necessary, haulage was done by gangs of men.

By the 1800s the scene had changed; canals had 'taken over' and roads had improved sufficiently to be a great challenge to river transport, but it was the railways which dealt the death blow. Despite many local attempts to retain the river's importance, less and less traffic used it, it fell more and more deeply into disrepair and, finally, after the owners of the toll rights had sold out to the West Midland Railway, no effort was made to maintain it. In 1878 The Great Western Railway proposed that 'the Avon should be abandoned' and its fate, for the time being, was sealed.

In 1949 the Lower Navigation Trust was formed and in 1962 the river was opened up for use as far as Evesham. But it is the work of the Upper Avon Navigation Trust, under the directorship of a Harvington resident - David Hutchings M.B.E. - which is a matter for great pride in this locality. Accounts of the work carried out by teams of workers (many of them volunteers, many servicemen, many prisoners from local gaols) the setbacks and triumphs and the final remarkable achievement, make fascinating reading and make us proud, when we see the clean, attractive river flowing past The Mill at Harvington that this restoration took place here, on our most famous boundary, and its architect lives in the village.

The information contained on the map and these accompanying notes has been compiled from many sources, including the recollections of village people past and present. Whilst every effort has been made to check for accuracy it must be recognised that errors may have occurred. For reasons of space, it has not been possible to mention all the people, properties and businesses both past and present which merited inclusion. Apologies are offered for these errors and omissions.

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