The view from the hill BURWARDSLEY THE HISTORY OF A CHESHIRE VILLAGE

A HISTORY AND REMINISCENCES OF LIFE IN RURAL CHESHIRE

The Burwardsley Time Line

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY of BURWARDSLEY

1400

1000 ►

c.1070

Burwardsley & other villages destroyed during Norman invasion.

c.1086

1000

1100

1200

1300

1400

Domesday Survey. Burwardsley held in three manors by Aelfric, Colbert & Ravenkelt.



Over this period nothing definite is known of the village development. It is likely the manors continued and wooden framed houses built.

A Chapel of Ease, probably built in the 12th Century. The Chapel of the Holy Rood probably situated in Higher Burwardsley, was in use until its abandonment at the Dissolution of the Monastries in 1539.

1500 ►

c.1539

Dissolution of monasteries. Chapel in Burwardsley closed and deserted. Vandalised later and never restored.

c.1580

'Lowerhill Farm' & 'Pheasant' building erected. Burwardsley oldest buildings

1600 ►

1640

Cromwell's men stabled their horses here during the seige of Beeston Castle.

1654 Date stone on 'Manor Farm'.

1687 Date stone on 'The Brow'.



The Burwardsley Time Line

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY of BURWARDSLEY

1700 ►

1700 Dame School in Cherry Tree Cottage.

1729 Hodgkiss Deed.

1730 New church built, then called 'Chapel of Ease'. Now 'St. John the Divine'.

1735 Church consecration Rev'd Barnett first incumbent.

1760 - 1820 Enclosure Acts. Many new hedges planted.

1792 - 1795 Church renovated by Rev'd J. Price.

1800 ►

1811 - 1823 Rev'd J. Price imprisoned.

1819John Wedgewood preached in'Willow Hill Sand Hole'.40 converts.

1836 Tithe Acts.

1843 Primitive Methodist Chapel consecrated.

1851Burwardsley village population470 (census returns).

1860 'Drill Hall' built as the school under Joseph Parsons.

1876 Village school becomes 'Board School' under Mr. Winkley.

1880 Church underwent rebuilding & repairs under Rev'd Titley. Addition of Chancel.

1886 Vicarage built. Rev'd Keith-Chalmers.

1889 Church renovations completed. New organ and heating system. Rood screen constructed 12/89.

1891 Resignation of Rev'd Keith-Chalmers.

1894 Formation of Parish Council.

1900 🕨

1900 First car seen in Burwardsley.

1903 School in 'Drill Hall' doubled in size.

1918 - 1919 Flu epidemic, many deaths.

1925 First telephone box (by Vicarage).

1936 Piped water in Burwardsley.

1947 - 1948 Electricity to Burwardsley.

1956 Railway Station at Tattenhall closed on closure of Chester Whitchurch line.

1965 School closed.

1972 Village petrol station closes.

1980 Candle Workshops burnt down.

1991 Institute refurbishment. Snooker table sold. 1902 Burwardsley severed links with Bunbury & became a parish within Malpas Deanery.

1913 First marriage at Primitive Methodist Chapel (R. Caldecott & H. Stockton)

1923 (10th October) Village Institute opened by Mrs. Barbour.

1926 Bowling Club opens.

1946 'Marl Pit' by Well Cottage filled in. Bowling Club dissolved. Farmers Discussion Group begun - still held.

1954 Telephone Box in Higher Burwardsley.

1959 Secondary children sent to school in Tattenhall.

1971 Old school re opened as Field Studies Centre.

1977 Candle Workshops sited at old 'Willow Hill Farm'.

1988 Bank Holiday Teas in Institute begun by Rev'd J. Hughes.

1999 Work began on the first booklet about Burwardsley Village.

1700 ►

1800

1900 ►

Y2K

The view from the hill BURWARDSLEY THE HISTORY OF A CHESHIRE VILLAGE

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FOREWORD

In 1960, the Burwardsley Women's Institute entered a national competition to write about their village. The entry was commended, but remained as a handwritten account that was never published nor widely circulated.

In 1999, various activities were considered by the Parish Council to celebrate the coming Millennium and the idea of updating and publishing this existing account of village life was taken up as a project by a group of residents.

Present and past residents of Burwardsley were encouraged to submit recollections, scrapbooks and photographs. Older residents gathered in the Village Hall to identify people and places on old photographs before they were lost to living memory. The objective of the project is to bring together a wide range of information about the village that would be of interest to local people and historians alike. It is intended as a statement of village life in the year 2000 – a time when the pace of change is accelerating at such a rate that it may well be the last opportunity for a book to be the medium of record. Of equal importance is the process of collecting information which has allowed the community to work together.

A consequence of the individual contributions is that the style of writing varies with the chapters. Rather than sub-editing the book to produce a uniform style they have been left as contributed, the better to give a contemporary feel to the book.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Burwardsley Millennium Book Committee wish to thank all of those individuals who helped or contributed towards the production of this book.

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Millennium Festival Awards For All

Chester City Council Community Chest

Burwardsley Parish Council

Mr Simon Parker, The Pheasant Inn

INTRODUCTION

This impressive book sets out to present an insight into not only the history of the natural and social life in Burwardsley for centuries back, but includes reminiscences from many of its people who have related their experiences and memories to be recorded for posterity in this Millennium year.

It is undoubtedly true that the long term geological history of this area, which includes this village of Burwardsley, or Bosley as the older locals call it, has changed the landscape but little since the beginning of time. That is at least during the 200 to 250 million years since the time when the mid-Cheshire sandstone ridge was laid down (and raised up!), and within which this village on the hill sits so beautifully and so proudly.

Socially, however, the situation is far different. In little more than a blink of the eye in that grand scale of things during the past thousand years or so, the villagers have brought their influence to bear on the area which we all know and love so well. That blink represents but a few hundred years during which local people have made this village a living, vibrant, working community, and which this book sets out to record, and does so with such success. It makes reference to that pre-history, as it does to the Domesday Book which gave us probably the first recorded references to Burwardsley, (or 'Burwardslei').

It refers to the medieval period of the following centuries about which limited information is known, but about which so much has been found and recorded in this book.

It refers in greater depth to the years from then until today, and to the social, natural, agricultural, working and personal life of the village and its people during those years.

Indeed, it represents a comprehensive record of all aspects of life in this village on the hill, almost from the beginning of time.

The mix of information, whether as text, photographs, drawings, maps or paintings, make this book an outstanding memorial of the life of the village for all to see and appreciate.

There are few villages in my experience that have demonstrated so successfully their community spirit and their willingness to work together on so many facets of village life. Whether these people be young or elderly, long-standing residents or new-comers, parish

INTRODUCTION

councillors, church members (of whatever denomination), or whoever, the community spirit is very obvious and very special, and their input is clear for all to see within the pages of this book.

It was from its inception the intention that this book should record the social history of the present and past residents of Burwardsley, culminating in this special Millennium year. It can clearly be seen that the financial support that has come from a number of different bodies, while greatly appreciated, was fully justified.

However, no amount of money could compare with the work that has been done by all those who have laboured on its conception, and who have made its publication not only possible but so successful.

This book is a credit to you all. Read on !!

Doug Haynes Chester City Councillor

Burwardsley is a scattered community of homes situated at the mid-point of the southernmost section of the mid-Cheshire ridge.

The village spreads itself amid the folds of the western slopes between the Iron Age Camp of Maiden Castle and medieval stronghold of Beeston. The folded contours of the land form the watershed of the two brooks, Golborne and Crimes, discharging respectively and eventually, after meandering across the plain, into the rivers Dee and the Mersey.

The natural boundaries of the parish are, to the east, the ridge itself; to the south the source of the Golborne Brook; and to the north the upper section of Crimes Brook. All its other boundaries are ancient hedgerows, many probably marking the extent of the three original manors of Anglo-Saxon times.

Village, cottages and farms either nestle in the folds of the abundant small steep-sided valleys of the western slopes of the escarpment or alternatively perch on their dividing ridges gaining views of the plain below and the Welsh hills in the distant haze.

Why did a settlement take place here? Burwardsley, to some people even today, is a village remote from the humdrum world. The factors which led to settlement were, first, the existence of some natural clearings at the edge of the Forest of Mondrum and along the western slopes of the escarpment which provided shelter from the cold winds from across the damp, heavily forested Cheshire plain; secondly, a plentiful supply of water surfacing in springs from the red sandstone sponge of the escarpment itself, and thirdly, the fertility of the light, sandy soil enriched by the decaying vegetable matter of the plant and light tree cover of oak, birch and ash along the hillside.

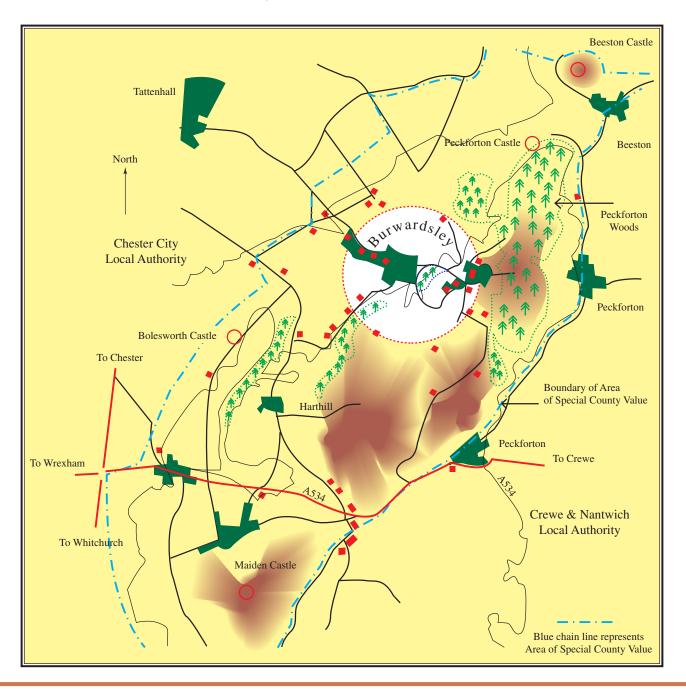


WINTER PLOUGHING IN SAXON TIMES From illustration Calendar MS Cott.Jul.A.vi

The fertility of the land responded to the primitive agriculture of the early settlers.

The picture which emerges as a result of the available evidence is of a small community, typical of many throughout England, working the land and producing from the immediate surroundings all the necessities for their simple

Burwardsley & The Peckforton Hills



lives without a great deal of influence from the outside world. News of that outside world came by the pack horse drivers passing along one of the salt roads which passed through the village and over the ridge from Chester to the salt towns along the River Weaver.

From the upper slopes of the parish, villagers have watched the pageant of history unfold below them on the plain and the hills beyond.

The smoke of the fires of Welsh marauders, the arrival of the Roman Legions, the establishment of the 20th Legion in Chester and their replacement by the barbaric Scandinavian invaders, the Norman cathedral builders, the skirmishes and the cruelties of the 15th Century and the Royalist rout from Rowton and the fall of Chester ending the Civil War of the 17th Century.

They watched the peaceful years of agricultural prosperity under Queen Victoria, the herds of dairy cattle of the cheese makers, the canal builders and the railway builders, and in this century, the aerial drama of the Liverpool Blitz and the rise of great petro-chemical giants along the Mersey turning the night sky into day with myriads of lights and flares. The next Millennium will bring greater changes still, but hopefully not change the peace and tranquillity which, in the early mornings and the long summer evenings, continue to be the most important and endearing features of this unique landscape.

THE SETTLEMENT'S GROWTH

At the beginning of the first Millennium, the land we now know as Cheshire was thickly wooded, a wild country with very few inhabitants. The thick forests, mainly of oak, covered the lower land making movement difficult except along the river corridors. Settlement had taken place only where natural clearings occurred facilitating the clearing of larger areas to support the population of once nomadic tribes from the east. Along the mid-Cheshire ridge early settlements also occurred and developed into defensive hill forts at Eddisbury and Maiden Castle. Between, smaller settlements of a few huts, primitive fields and stockades housed smaller populations.

Burwardsley probably came into being in this way, but no evidence exists of an original settlement. All we have is the original spelling of the parish name "Burwardslei", indicating a

settlement of Anglian origin somewhat later than the settlements elsewhere in Cheshire, most of which had occurred in the 7th Century. Burwardslei can be assumed to mean "*Burgweard's Clearing*" and so the labours of an Anglian settler provides the village with its name.

At that time Burwardslei was probably a scattering of wood and thatch dwellings built close to a stream or spring and constructed from the trunks and boughs of the trees felled to provide the land for ploughing with the heavy plough brought into use by these Anglian settlers. As the ploughed and seeded lands increased further, thatched dwellings would have been constructed to form the nucleus of the first community.

It would appear that three small groups developed in this way to create three manors with three separate lords; each manor probably comprising one hide of land (120 acres or 48.5 hectares), a total of 360 acres or 145.7 hectares, including the cultivated fields and the woodland and pasturelands associated with them.

The overlord at the time of the Norman Conquest was Robert Fitzhugh, Baron of Malpas, who in turn granted the land to Humphry, who became the local Lord of the Manor. One of the manors was held by the church of St Werburgh in Chester and the other two by lords who worked their land with the help of labourers. At the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086, Aelfric, Colbert and Ravenkelt (good Anglo-Saxon names), held three manors. They were Freemen. Ravenkelt had purchased his holding of one hide, formerly in the ownership of St Werburgh's church through the reeves (clerks) of Earls Edwin and Moucar of the Kingdom of Mercia and of Northumbria after it had been confiscated by them from the ecclesiastical authority. The three hides of land forming the settlement was taxable and worked by three freemen and three smallholders using three ploughs owned by the lord and one by the men themselves. The settlement also comprised woodland to the extent of one league in length by a half league in width (about 1.5 square miles).

Prior to 1066 the survey informs us that the land was 'waste', that is uncultivated, and its value was two shillings but, at the time of the survey, the value had increased to five shillings.

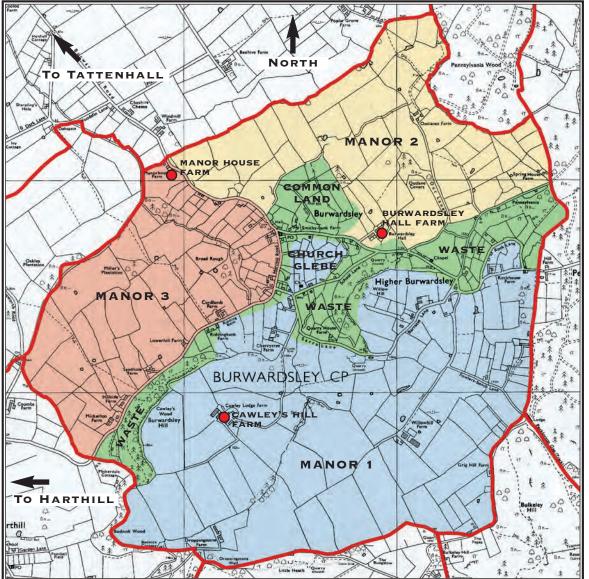
In 1093 the land which had been purchased by Ravenkelt, and now in the possession of Alured de Cumbray, was returned to the Abbot of St Werburgh for a sum of five shillings on condition

that Roger be the champion for the monastery. Evidently Roger de Cumbray had no male heir and when he died the lands were divided between his two daughters. The elder daughter, Alice, inherited the land at Burwardsley and when she married Robert Touchett, Lord of Tattenhall, Burwardsley was considered an appendage to Tattenhall. People on the manor at Burwardsley then had to attend the court leet at Tattenhall to resolve all their disputes and settle their dues.

In time the Touchett land in Burwardsley and Tattenhall passed to other owners. In the reign of Phillip of Spain and Mary Tudor it was held by the Cottons of Combermere who sold it to the Egertons in the reign of Elizabeth I, followed by Sir John Crewe of Utkinton and the Crewes of Crewe. Thomas Tarleton held it at the beginning of the last century and it was finally sold to the Barbours of Bolesworth Castle in 1856. The Barbour family still own large areas of the village to this day.

The descent of the main manor is reasonably straightforward and easily traced, but this cannot be said for the remainder. It is not possible to trace in detail the lands of all three manors. No maps or manorial records have yet been discovered to assist in this task. An indication, however, of their location in the village can be approximated by a study of the Enclosure Map of 1812. This map shows the commons and waste in the village and land that was already in private ownership at that time. The larger areas of land in private ownership are situated to the east of Burwardsley Hall Farm, to the west of Manor House Farm and surrounding Cawley's Hill Farm. These areas may be the lands of the original manors and the site of the present buildings, those of the mediaeval manor houses themselves, but, in all of the present houses nothing remains of the original buildings to support the claim. Only the name of Manor Farm with a 1654 date stone built into the gable wall of the present Victorian house gives an indication of its origins.

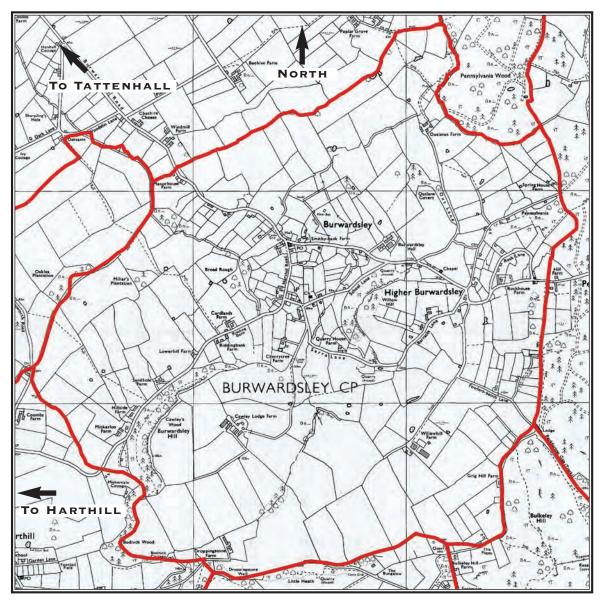
At the time of the enclosure map, many parcels of land were purchased within the enclosed areas and many plots have changed hands since and continue to do so to the present day as more people from outside the village decide to spend the best years of their lives in this beautiful country setting. Map indicating the probable location of the Three Manors in the Middle Ages



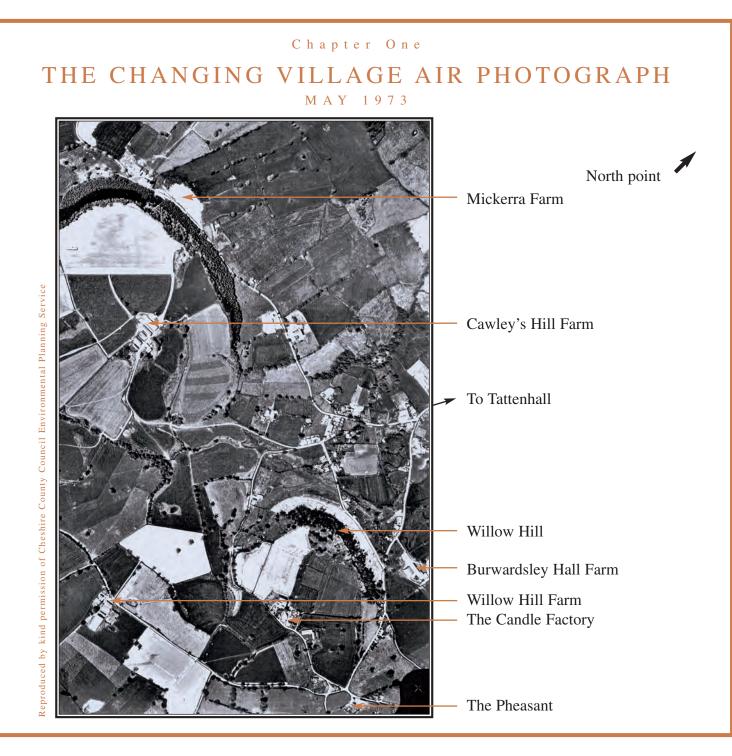
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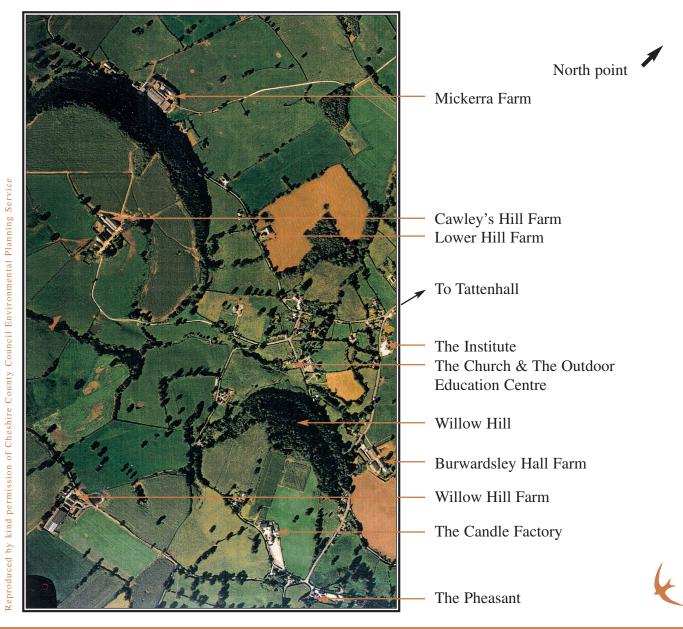
The Village - how it looks today



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Chapter One THE CHANGING VILLAGE AIR PHOTOGRAPH AUGUST 1993



THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

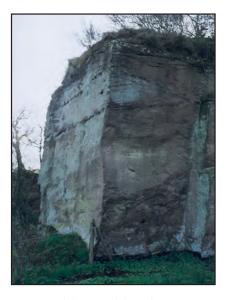
THE MAKING OF THE LANDSCAPE

The village of Burwardsley nestles into the side of a range of sandstone hills extending intermittently from Frodsham in the north east via Kelsall, Tarporley, Peckforton, Burwardsley and finally to Larkton with Maiden Castle, its Iron Age Fort, in the south west.

The sandstone itself was deposited into a broad trough or depression, which trended from south-south east to north-north west. It was transported by both wind and water as the erosional products of a vast mountain system that was situated across southern Britain and northern France. Towards the end of the Triassic period over 200 million years ago, when Britain lay within the northern tropics, widespread subsidence occurred and converted this district into part of a gulf or lagoon. This had restricted access to the sea, and the sediments here comprised the muds and silts of a tidal estuarine environment. Even before this subsidence, sediment would have varied greatly in size from coarse sand and pebbles to fine mud, as a result of fluctuating water levels in rivers. When the area underwent an arid phase the winds were strong enough to be capable of eroding, shifting and re-depositing the sandy sediments. The characteristic red colour of the sandstone in this area is due to the red iron

coating around the sand particles, a result of the oxidising environment in which these deposits were laid down.

These loose sand deposits have subsequently been consolidated over time by compression, and cemented by minerals in solution. The degree of cementation is very variable. Areas of high cementation give rise to good quality building stone such as that found in the quarry opposite Quarry Cottage in the Salver. Here the diagonal adze marks of the masons can still be seen.



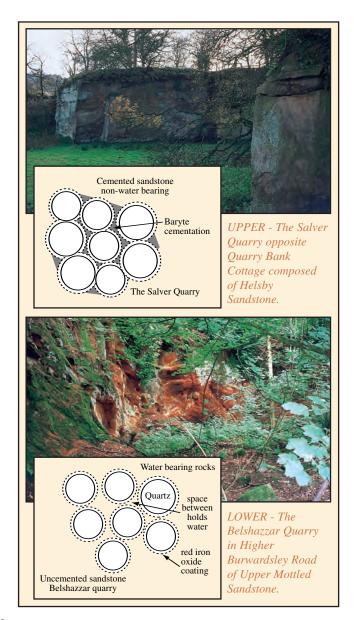
A View of the Site of the Salver Quarry (note the vertical walls of the quarry where the stone has been removed by the use of an adze)

Areas of low cementation are those such as can be seen opposite Sandhollow Farm on the Harthill Road and in Willow Hill Quarry just below Belshazzar. Both of these latter two quarries have been used to dig out loose or poorly cemented sand to use for either building sand or for scouring stone floors in days gone by - in addition to the extraction of the more compact stone for building purposes.

In the Burwardsley area the main 'cement' is rich in baryte or barium sulphate, and highly cemented rocks in this area can easily be distinguished by their baryte rosettes, or small, white rose-shaped deposits. These rocks are generally paler in colour than the bright red poorly cemented ones due to reduction of the iron to a greeny grey colour. Very good examples of these baryte rosettes can be seen on the external west wall of the church into which an inscription has been chiselled.



West Wall of St John's Church, showing the inscription; the baryte rosettes which are very small can be seen in the stonework below the inscription.

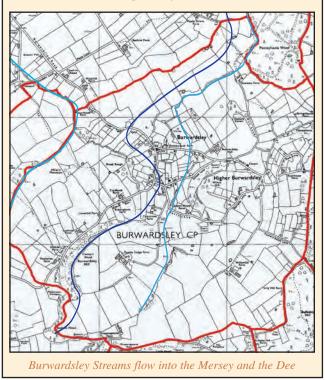




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Marl Pit - now overgrown by trees on Harthill Road



The sediments, which were originally laid down in horizontal layers in a deltaic basin, have subsequently been warped, broken and up-lifted by earth movements which have left us with the north east/south west trending range of hills that we see today.

A borehole drilled at Peckforton Gap Pumping Station showed at least 370 metres of Upper Mottled Sandstone above. A truly vast deposit!

The last Ice Age saw the advance of an ice sheet from the north and north west, reaching Cheshire and overriding the Burwardsley ridge.

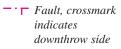
The moraine from the ice sheets can be dated to between 10,000 and 28,000 years ago (The Quaternary Age) and now covers most of the Cheshire plain as clay/marl deposits. The junction of this glacial drift and the Sandstone ridge lies along the northerly edge of Burwardsley.

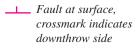
The porosity of the local sandstone is partially responsible for a plentiful supply of water in the parish, and its junction with the clay deposits has the effect of causing a series of springs and hence Burwardsley might be termed a spring-line village.

KEY to Burwardsley Streams

- Suggested line of watershed
- *Crimes Brook flows to R.Gowy then to R.Mersey*
- *—— Stream flows to Millbrook, Golbourne Brook then to R.Dee*

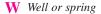
Geological Map of Burwardsley showing the boundaries of the glacially derived deposits against the much older sandstone

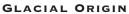




---- Geological boundary

Parish boundary





Sand and gravel

Morainic drift

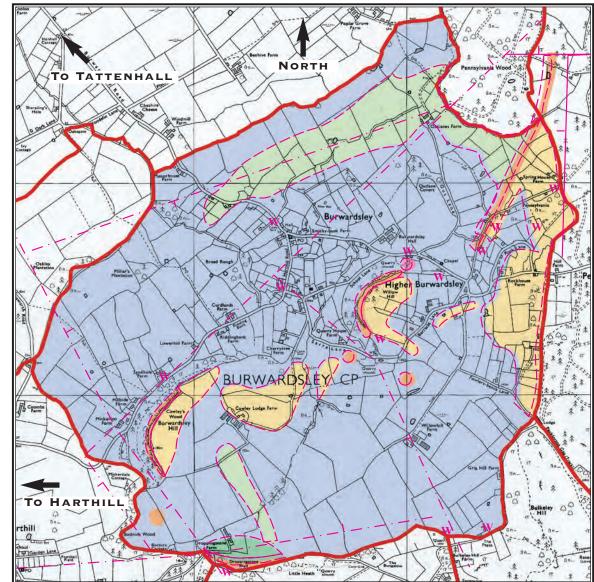
Boulder Clay





Helsby sandstone conglomerate

Upper mottled sandstone



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Springs have also been noted higher up the hill, however, and these possibly exist as a result of layers of fine mud or siltstone deposited within the sandstone which acted as impervious layers. Where the water table is high then it may abut onto this layer and the water then appears at the surface as a spring. If water that falls as rain is able to soak into the porous rock it then percolates down under gravity until it hits this impenetrable layer and again a spring line will develop.

Although the soil on top of Burwardsley Hill is generally very sandy, pockets of clay do occur. In particular a 'watering hole' is noted next to The Bungalow in Higher Burwardsley. In order for this depression to have held water it must have had an impervious clay lining or the collected rainwater would have simply seeped away down through the underlying sandstone.

Many of the older houses in the village still have their own wells and these were the only source of water both for household use and for the animals. Water was collected either from the springs or hand pumped from man-made wells. Known springs are the one that used to be at Spring House Farm at the bottom of Pennsylvania Lane, and also one that arose from within the railings of the Methodist Chapel. There is also natural seepage from the field side of where the old marl pit used to be outside Well Cottage, and this is of course on the 'spring line' by the junction of the glacial clay and the sandstone of the hill. Many wells were dug and water was pumped and carried in buckets to houses and animals. The Town Pump is thought to have been placed just above the Methodist Chapel on the opposite side of the road, and close by was an old iron trough that was always full of water. Lower down the hill in the wall of Belshazzar is a stone trough that also would have been used for water. Further down the village there was a pump at Broad Rough, one opposite Lower Hill Farm and also one by Sandhollow Farm on Harthill Road.

Although mains water came to Burwardsley in 1936 this was still used in conjunction with local wells and springs. However, water was extracted by Staffordshire Potteries Water Board and this caused the water table to drop dramatically and many wells and springs became dry. The village then became almost totally dependent on the piped water supply. The natural spring at Droppingstone is still used however to pipe water to animal troughs and must be the only spring still in use in the area.



The Natural Spring at Droppingstone

The hill at Burwardsley acts as a natural watershed where drainage water from the hill is diverted from small streams into either the Rivers Dee or Mersey. The brook, which starts at Droppingstone Spring, travels in a north easterly direction down across the Salver, then under School Lane via Aqueduct Cottage and across Higher Burwardsley Road. It eventually becomes Crimes Brook, then passes into the River Gowy and finally into the River Mersey and thence the Irish Sea. The brook which starts by Broad Rough on the other hand travels in a north westerly direction into Mill Brook at Tattenhall, thence west into Golborne Brook and finally into the River Dee and from here to the Irish Sea.

Soil type and structure varies enormously between Higher and Lower Burwardsley and this is dependent upon the immediate underlying strata. In Higher Burwardsley the soils are extremely sandy, holes made by badgers, rabbits, etc., often leave almost pure orange sand piles containing no humus or organic matter. In fact one reason why there is such a high rabbit population in this area is that the soil is so easy to burrow into. Artificial drainage is completely unnecessary as these soils are well draining and are often prone to drought when fields lower down the hill are still waterlogged! The depth to underlying solid rock is extremely variable and can vary from surface rock to deep cover within only a metre or two. As a result, farmers have had to learn the hard way as to where they can plough without fear of machinery damage. Not only this, but there are deep running sandholes to trap the unwary. These soils then on top of the hill, and often on a steep slope, have little intrinsic natural nutrient value and fields must be well fertilized each year to maintain their viability. Where there is sufficient soil depth for ploughing then maize is grown, otherwise the land is used for pasture.

At the bottom of the hill the glacial clay deposits are approached. Here the natural nutrient value is much higher, with the clay providing calcium, magnesium, aluminium and potash.

Drainage however is often a problem with the heavy soil liable to waterlogging . Here then much of the land, though flatter than above, is used mainly for dairy farming as using heavy machinery on waterlogged soils leads to compaction of soil structure, exclusion of air to plant roots and general stagnation. The fruit growing businesses at Windmill and Wood Farms are however able to take advantage of these conditions of high soil fertility and high soil moisture content . Neither of these businesses need use heavy machinery as most of the work is done by hand.

The heavy clay soil with its high nutrient value was thought a valuable commodity. Ponds such as that by Well Cottage (now filled in) were used to extract the marl which was then spread over the neighbouring sandier fields to condition them. Even today with our high dependence on inorganic fertilizers grey marl is still frequently used to improve the quality of the fields.

COUNTRYSIDE

A walk through Burwardsley offers a unique and exciting experience of the Cheshire countryside a mixture of wooded shelter and hilltop exposure with wonderful views across the Cheshire plain to Liverpool and the Welsh hills.



View of the Welsh Hills from Burwardsley

The village is mainly given over to dairy farming and all the land that can be cultivated is used for producing grass and maize for either grazing or silage. Some areas are too steep, too wet or too poor (tops of the hills) to be cultivated and are used for the growing of trees. Plantations can be seen towards the Peckforton Hills and to the west; these areas, called coverts are used by gamekeepers for the rearing of pheasants.

The sandstone ridge which extends from Frodsham to Whitchurch runs along the parish boundary from the Pennsylvania Woods to Droppingstone Farm on the edge of the Peckforton Hills. This ridge is composed of red sandstone formed in the geological time known as the Triassic period which ended 208 million years ago when dinosaurs and the first bird-like creature, the Archaeopteryx roamed the plains of Cheshire. The ridge was created when the flat

THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

plain was fractured by earth movements and great blocks of the layered sandstone were tilted. Their present shape has been moulded by the rain and winds of the intervening years.

The Sandstone Trail, a public right of way, runs along the ridge offering a comprehensive look at the surrounding countryside – oak dotted hedgerows and sandstone caves above Droppingstone Farm – oak woodland floored with bracken and bramble in the lighter areas and by ferns and bluebells in the shade.

Bird life is abundant and includes pheasant (from the highly stocked local shoots), red legged partridge, wood pigeon, nuthatch, redstart, pied flycatchers and the tiny goldcrest. Buzzards can be seen and heard from quite a distance with their distinctive mewing call.

The sandy banks are homes to rabbits in abundance, foxes and badgers – grey squirrels can be seen leaping from tree to tree.

The Trail crosses the Peckforton Gap, a well known feature on this upland walk and an old route into Peckforton village. The countryside around Burwardsley has changed markedly over the past few centuries; houses and various buildings have appeared whilst others have become redundant and decayed and now are no longer part of the village scene; forested woodland has been cleared for cultivation and fields planted with trees to provide new forestation.

Hedges offer one of the oldest artificial features in the landscape and are irreplaceable records of how the land was divided and managed by the villagers in the past. They mark the fields, the estate, the parish and the county boundaries but more importantly for the naturalist provide valuable habitat and shelter for wildlife.

The parish boundary hedges contain a wide variety of plants, for example hawthorn, blackthorn, guelder rose, holly, blackberry, and many others interspersed with trees such as sycamore, ash, damson, and oak. The Enclosure Acts, five thousand of which were passed between 1760 and 1820, usually laid down that the new fields created by enclosing the 'common and waste' land should be surrounded by a ditch with a hedge often of hawthorn - planted on the bank made from excavated material. There is still evidence of these Enclosure hedges in some Burwardsley fields where hedges still remain following the agricultural changes of the 1970's.

In the early 1970's Dr Max Hooper undertook an extensive study of 227 hedgerows and noted a correlation between the number of species of tree and shrub and the age of the hedge. Hooper's Rule states that the age of a hedgerow can be broadly determined by the number of woody shrubs and tree species it contains. Each species is worth 100 years. Burwardsley's parish boundary hedges certainly contain a wide variety of species.

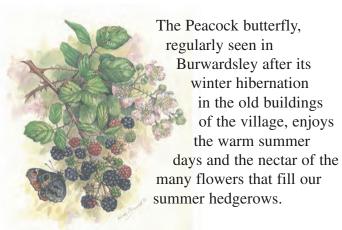
BLACKBERRIES AND BUTTERFLIES

Blackberries grow in profusion in Burwardsley hedgerows and are picked by visitors and villagers in late August and September for jam making.

In early summer the hedgerows are brightened with the pink blossom of the briar which is appreciated by countless insects and its black berries are eagerly sought after by the pheasants.



The stately pheasant, as it struts in the sun and turns over the fallen leaves seems to repeat in its burnished plumage all their rich and various tints.



In autumn the profusion of berries on the hawthorn provide food for the resident winter birds, blackbirds, thrush and the migrating

redwings and fieldfare which arrive when the snow comes in the winter. Within the leaves insects are never safe from the tiny wren.



WILD FLOWERS IN PROFUSION

Footpaths and high sided lanes are full of wild flowers – stitchwort, jack-by-the-hedge, dandelion, herb Robert, buttercup, rosebay willow herb, sweet smelling honeysuckle, wild

THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

briar, ox eye daisies, celandine, red and white campion, foxgloves and ragwort, which is poisonous to horses and cattle.

In spring the hedge banks are a beautiful hazy white with hedge parsley and in recent years the roadside verges have been planted with daffodils, making a splendid show in the weeks before Easter.

Autumn hedges bring a harvest of nettles and brambles full of blackberries, rose hips and haws along with elderberries.



As one walks through the village there are occasional clumps of sweetpeas, pink campions and comfrey. Years ago there were fragrant violets and cowslips, primroses and harebells, but sadly with the use of herbicide sprays these have been depleted. The churchyard in Burwardsley has been designated a Site of Biological Interest (SBI). It is an area of species rich grassland which includes heath grass, devil's bit scabious and betony. Molehills and butterflies are present in profusion and green and yellow lichens cover the ancient gravestones.

On the right hand side of the road leading up the hill to Higher Burwardsley is an old sandhole which was formed by the removal of sand for building, spring cleaning and brass cleaning in Victorian times. It is a sheltered spot and birds feed here in inclement weather.

A public footpath rises up here and along the upper side of Willow Hill before emerging alongside an old sandstone quarry on the Sarra where, in the marshy area at the foot of the quarry wall, marsh marigolds can be seen flowering in the spring and moorhens scoot along among the damp grasses.

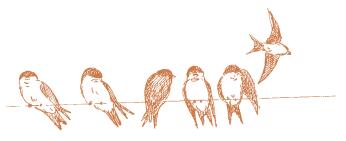
Garden birds within the village are varied and plentiful. Blackbirds, robins, finches, nuthatch, various members of the tit family, thrushes and even the greater spotted woodpecker find their way onto village lawns, terraces and bird tables.

St John's Church churchyard, a haven for wildflowers and grasses

THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

SUMMER MIGRANTS

To many people, the opening of the door to the loft at Cherry Tree Farm, in early spring, heralds the arrival of swallows from their winter feeding grounds in Africa to spend the summer in this part of Cheshire.



Here they nest and rear their young in the stables, barns and garages of the village. Arriving around the 17-25th of April along with the house martins, who for generations have built their mud homes under the eaves of some of our cottages and houses in the village, these attractive birds bring colour, interest and amusement to the villagers with their aerial displays and nest building which entails scooping mud with their beaks from the puddles and ponds. Later to arrive in May are the swifts with their scimitar-like wings and screaming flight. Church Road and around the church itself has been a summer nesting area for many years, but one house, Hillside, has a particular attraction for the swifts and has been for generations, where they fly with amazing precision and speed straight into their nests under the roof when carrying insects for their young.

But it is the warm summer evenings at the end of July when swifts (it has been said that they are the males) free from family commitments play the spectacular chasing game. When evening hawking is over the swifts descend screaming from high in the air,

swinging around the corner of Hillside – over the road around the large oak tree opposite – back across the

road – between the church, banking once more around the house to continue this performance time and time again.



Hillside in Church Road is the summer residence of some of the swifts that return year after year to nest and rear young in Burwardsley

THE RIDGE ON THE CHESHIRE PLAIN

Surely it is the swifts' answer to the joy of living, but is also a joy to the observer of this fascinating spectacle.

By the middle of August the swifts have departed and by early September the number of swallows and house martins in the village have increased, being joined by birds from other areas. Large flocks of 200+ are a common sight hawking for insects in Lower Burwardsley, along the length of Harthill Road, over Cawley's Wood and the fields below or congregating on the telephone wires by Smithy Bank. The sky is full of twisting, turning and twittering birds until the flock moves on, migrating south to their winter quarters.

By the beginning of October the last of the summer visitors have left Burwardsley and only the stragglers will be seen on passage south.

The village becomes strangely silent.

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

TREES, SHRUBS AND CREEPERS FOUND IN HEDGEROWS OF BURWARDSLEY

Alder Apple Ash Blackberry Blackthorn Briar Rose Bryony Chestnut Clematis Convolvulus Damson Elder Gorse Hawthorn Holly Honeysuckle Hops Ivy Laburnum Laurel Lilac Oak Privet Snowberry Sycamore Viburnum Woody Nightshade

BIRDS SEEN IN BURWARDSLEY

Barn Owl Blackbird Blackcap Blue Tit Bullfinch Buzzard Canada Goose Carrion Crow Chaffinch Chiffchaff Coal Tit **Collared** Dove Cuckoo Dunnock Fieldfare Firecrest Garden Warbler Gold Crest Goldfinch Great Spotted Woodpecker Great Tit Green Woodpecker Greenfinch Grey Heron Grey Wagtail Grey Legged Partridge Herring Gull House Martin House Sparrow

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

BIRDS SEEN IN BURWARDSLEY CONTINUED...

House Sparrow Jackdaw Jay Kestrel Lesser Spotted Woodpecker Lesser White Throat Little Owl Longtail Tit Magpie Mallard Mistle Thrush Moorhen Nuthatch Peregrine Pheasant **Pied Wagtail** Raven Red Kite Red Legged Partridge Redstart Red Wing Robin Snipe Song Thrush Sparrow Hawk Spotted Flycatcher Starling Swallow

Swift Tawny Owl Teal Treecreeper Tree Sparrow Waxwing Willow Tit Willow Warbler Wood Pigeon Wren Yellowhammer

MAMMALS AND REPTILES FOUND IN BURWARDSLEY

Adder Badger Field Mouse Fox Fog Grass Snake Great Crested Newt Green Lizard Hare House Mouse Mole Palmate Newt Polecat Rabbit Rat

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

MAMMALS AND REPTILES FOUND IN BURWARDSLEY CONTINUED...

Shrew
Slow Worm
Squirrel
Stoat
Toad
Vole
Weasel
Wood Mouse

WILDFLOWERS SEEN IN BURWARDSLEY

Bittercress Bluebell Bracken Bramble Buttercup Celandine Comfrey Convolvulus Cow Parsley Dandelion Dock Dog Rose Fern Foxglove

Goosegrass Gorse Groundsel Hedge Parsley Herb Robert Honeysuckle Ivy Jack-by-the-Hedge Marsh Marigold Nettle **Ox-Eye** Daisy Plantain Ragwort **Red Campion** Red Dead-Nettle Rose-Bay Willow-Herb Scarlet Pimpernel Speedwell Spurge Stitchwort Thistle Vetch White Campion Whortleberry Woody Nightshade

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

FLOWERS OF BURWARDSLEY CHURCHYARD

Cow Parsley (Hog Weed) *Hieraceum Sp*

Creeping Buttercup Ranunculus repens

Dandelion *Taraxacum Officinalis*

Dock Rumex Sp

Plantain Plantago Lanceolata

White Clover Trifolium Repens

Wild Chervil (Beaked Parsley) Anthryscus Sylvestris

Yarrow Achillea Millefolium

Heath-grass Danthonia Decumbens Baron Strawberry Potentilla Sterilis

Black Knapweed Centaurea Nigra

Bush Vetch Vicia Sepium

Harebell Campanula Rotundiflora

Heath Bedstraw Galium Saxatilis

Horsetail Equisetum Sp

Lesser Stitchwort Stellaria Grammen

Lesser Hawkbit Leontodon taraxacoides

Ox-eye Daisy Chrysanthemum Leucanthemum

Red Clover Trifolium Pratense

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

FLOWERS OF BURWARDSLEY CHURCHYARD CONTINUED...

Ribwort Plantain Plantago Lanceolata

Sedge Carex Sp

Tormentil Potentilla Erecta

White Clover Trifolium Repens

Barren Strawberry Potentilla Sterilis

Black Knapweed Centurea Nigra

Bracken Pteris Aquilina

Bugle Ajuga Repens

Common Sorrel Rumec Acetosella Cow Parsley (Hogweed) *Hieraceum Spondylium*

Cowslip Primula Veris

Daisy Bellis Perennis

Lesser Hawkbit Leontodon Taraxacoides

Ragwort Senecio Jacobaea

Stinging Nettle Urtica Deorica

THE NATURAL WORLD IN BURWARDSLEY

BURWARDSLEY FIELD NAMES

The Tithe Act of 1836 means that we have a good record of the field names of the parish in 1840. Many of these names were still used by the local inhabitants in 1960, even though the large scale maps of the Ordnance Survey now meant that field names were recorded by key numbers.

Many fields were named after an owner or tenant: Birtle's Croft, Miller's Field, Broster's Field, Benton's Birches, Cawley's Hill. Others were named after the property: Old House Field, Chapel Field, Mickledale Inclosure, Barn Croft, Willow Hill Allotment.

The use to which the land or buildings were put was another source of field name: Pit Croft, Paddock Pool, Marl Field, Horse Meadow, Cow Pasture, Sand Field, Sandhole, Well Field, Milking Bank Field, Wheat Croft, Peas Croft, Slaughter House Field, Miller's Dale, Timberyard Field, Quarry Croft, Sheep Cote Field, Stackyard Field, Brick Field, Donkey Pasture.

Some names were dictated by the field's shape, e.g. Triangle Field, Square Field, Long Croft, Round Field. Or local features were described by the field name, such as Gorsty Bank, Higher Moor and Lower Moor, Big Townfield Croft, Higher and Lower Pinfold, Brook Field, Big Broom Field, Hill Field Meadow, Well Moor, Droppingstone Slope, Bodnook Field. Others indicated the natural history of the locality, e.g. Lark Field, Fox Field, Far Rush Blooms, Asp Field, Top Willow, Big Birches, French Gorse.

Names whose origin is more uncertain include: Kittles Field, Whittles Field, Pingot, Calver, Alega Slope, Little Ostrich, Far Two Little Field, Paradise, Salver, White Field, Flea Meadow, Booze Pasture, Peggs Intake, Bantlings, Tonge Shoot, Near Backside and Far Backside, Pied Flatt, Lower Glee Blooms, Top Pudding.

Other names indicate past activities:- Wrestling Field to mark the site of an All-in Wrestling Match; Cockerhill Field, the site of cock fighting; Far Blood Field, because the blood from the slaughter house at Top House (now Falcon House) ran into the brook in the field; Sheaf Tossing Field which was renamed to commemorate a sheaf tossing competition; Sale Field to denote the site of the sale of Hill Farm; Stent Field, another field renamed to commemorate the Stent concrete building put up on it; Welshman's Croft, which was situated on the old Welshmansway, the pack horse route from the salt towns to Wales.

Sites of some of the vanished buildings and activities can be traced by many of these names.



The earliest of our buildings disappeared many years ago. The pre-Conquest settlers made use of the plentiful natural materials from the immediate neighbourhood for the construction of their buildings – wood from the areas that were being cleared for agriculture and straw from the first crops to be used as thatch to cover the simple dwellings; but the buildings were short lived and needed regular rebuilding.

In 1070 it is reported that many villages, including Burwardsley, were destroyed by the Normans in the process of quelling the rebellious populations of the north-west. Sixteen years later, however, in the Domesday Survey it states that there were three manors in Burwardsley, and so they had been rebuilt, resettled and had doubled in value.

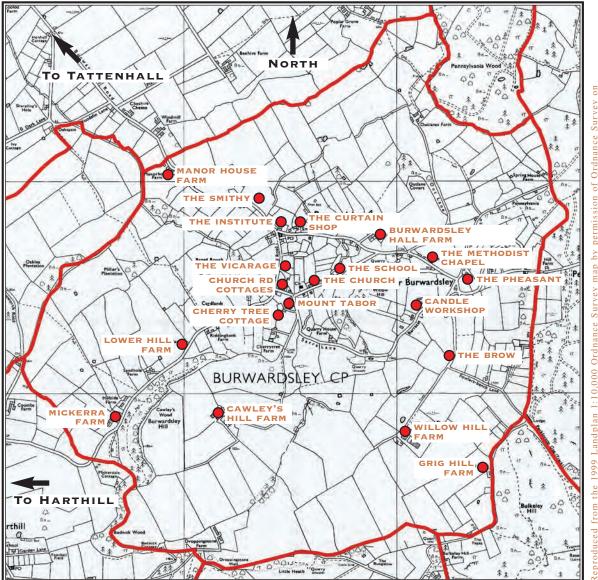


Original settlement houses - timber posts and frames with wattle and daub walls and thatched roofs

The earlier dwellings probably occupied the sites of some of the present farmsteads and cottages, in particular where timber framed houses are still extant in the village today. Many of the original timber framed wattle and daub houses which replaced them were again later rebuilt in the local red sandstone which produced a more durable and fire resistant building. This major building change took place as the skills and tools for cutting and working the stone became more common in use from the 11th Century onwards.

Roofs, however, continued to be constructed in the traditional manner with timber principals and covered in straw thatch. There was still a considerable risk of fire from wood sparks even after chimneys became a common feature and a leaky roof also caused many walls to collapse as seeping rainwater loosened the clay mortar which held the stones together.

It was not until slate from the quarries of North Wales became readily available by the 19th Century that a more sustainable house became a feature of the village and it is these which, in the main, form the largest group of domestic properties in the village. Buildings in Burwardsley



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THE SCHEDULED PROPERTIES

There are only three properties remaining in the village which are constructed with timber framed walls: The Pheasant Inn, Lowerhill Farm and some attached farm buildings at Grighill Farm. At all these properties the timber framing forms only part of the structure and stone has replaced the timber in some sections.

BUILDINGS OF THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURY

The earliest of our buildings is The Pheasant Inn, previously the Carden Arms, the Leche Arms, and prior to that a farmstead of the late 16th Century.



The Pheasant occupies a prominent position in Higher Burwardsley at the junction of ancient tracks along and across the ridge

It occupies a prominent position in Higher Burwardsley at the head of a steep-sided valley leading down to Outlanes and Crimes Brook. The buildings were probably constructed on an early settlement site, being at the head of the valley, with an adjoining spring of fresh water, and just below the crest of the hill protecting the inhabitants from the winds from across the Cheshire Plain. It is also at the junction of the tracks which lead along the west side of the hill from Rawhead to Beeston and the Packman's Route or Salt Route from Lower Burwardsley and over the hill to Peckforton and beyond.

The original 16th Century farmstead is in the form of a rectangular timber framed building on a stone plinth with a short wing constructed at right angles on the east side.

At the junction of these two sections a large stone chimney stack of 16th Century design served the fireplaces below in the original kitchen and the living room of the house.



The fire opening in the former kitchen, now the dining room of the inn, has a fine Victorian range removed from Sandhole Farm in the late 1980s. The timber supports and beams can be clearly seen in the Bar and form an attractive feature of the interior.

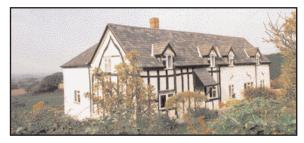
During its life as a farmstead, further buildings were added; shippens in timber frame and stone along the back and side, and later a fine tall red sandstone barn along the side of the lane leading to Pennsylvania Wood. These additions formed a hollow square, the farm midden, into which the soiled bedding from the shippens, together with all the rubbish from the farmstead itself, accumulated before being spread over the fields as fertiliser in the spring and autumn.

The farmhouse appears to have served a dual role. Due to its position at the junction of the tracks at the top of the steep hill, it became the resting and refreshment place for travellers and the ale house for the villagers of Higher Burwardsley.

To the rear of the buildings is a field known as Wassail Bank, in which it is said celebrations and feasts took place and, by some in the village, that bear and badger baiting was practised. There are also claims that a bear pit was situated close by. There is no doubt that a great deal of the village entertainment took place around the inn and there are many stories of the inebriated, local and visitor alike, having difficulty in negotiating the midden when leaving the Carden Arms on their way home.

All the old buildings have been added to and refurbished in recent times; the stone barn now contains en-suite bedrooms, the shippens are a garage with more rooms above, a fine timber and glass conservatory covers the midden and the old farmhouse itself contains the traditional public rooms of The Pheasant Inn, preserving much of the character of the late 16th Century house.

The unique position of The Pheasant, the preservation and conservation of the old house and barns, the retention of its charm and character both externally and internally, has continued to make it one of the most popular inns in Cheshire.



Lower Hill Farm, Harthill Road A 16th century timber framed house with stone and brick additions. The property was refurbished in 1973.

At Lowerhill Farm, another 16th Century property on Harthill Road, the timber frame of the farmhouse both externally and internally is still intact and the attached shippen on the east side, constructed in red sandstone, is now coloured in white to match the infill panels of the main timber frame. An ashlar central fireplace with a niche, chamfered fire beam and ceiling beams, creates an authentic Cheshire cottage interior. The house, which was in a poor state of repair and was restored and refurbished by the occupiers in1973, now provides a good example of the type of small farmstead of the period.

The farm buildings at Grighill are slightly later 17th Century. The structure, once a cottage and barn, has some timber framing although a section is built up in sandstone blocks. A thatched roof, the only remaining one in the village, is still in position below corrugated iron sheets erected as a covering to keep out the weather.

BUILDINGS OF THE 18TH CENTURY

By the 18th Century the majority of buildings in the village were being constructed in stone. Red sandstone outcrops in many areas of the village, particularly in Higher Burwardsley. In order to provide the stone for the walls, quarries were opened in close proximity to the site on which the cottage or house was to be constructed. Pockets of clay found in many areas and a mixture of clay, lime and sand from the numerous 'sandholes' was also used as the mortar between the stones. Roofs at this period were still being thatched with straw or reed and supported on heavy timber trusses, purlins and rafters.



18th century sandstone cottage. Cherry Tree Cottage is a good example of a small farmhouse in the village.

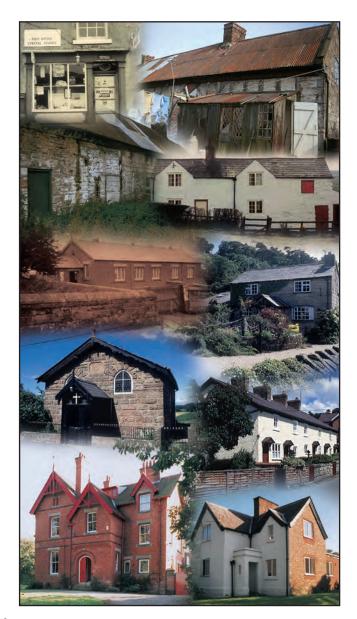
Cherry Tree Cottage is a typical example of a dwelling of this period with a shippen or barn added in the following century. The cottage is designed around a central fireplace with a room on either side and an entry into the two rooms through a small lobby or hall on the north side. This layout is common to many Cheshire cottages, the fireplace being a central feature with the hearth serving the kitchen/living room of the dwelling. A central heavy beam in the living room carries exposed ceiling joists from the outer gable to the fireplace and an attic floor within the roof space. Access to this roof space

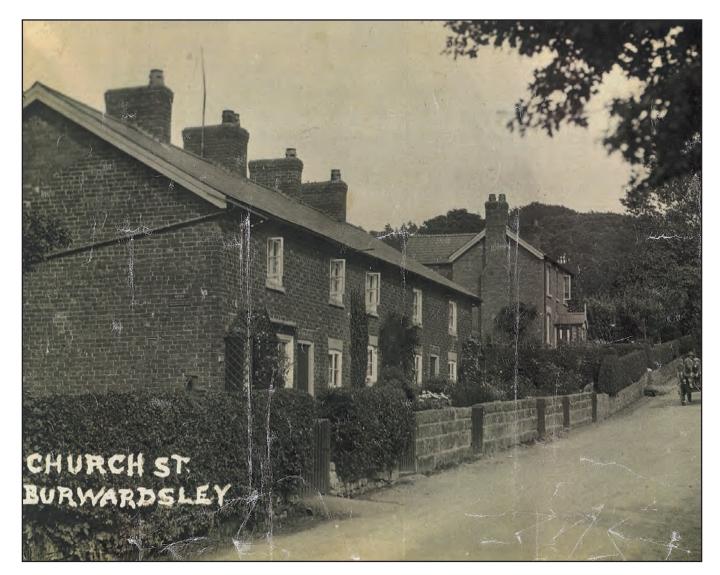
which acted as a sleeping area would originally have been by a steep ladder from the kitchen/ living room adjoining the central fireplace. The fireplace would have been an open hearth for burning wood with hooks and trivets for the cooking pots. The opening has now been filled by a Victorian range with a stone surround.

The village has numerous examples of other cottages of this period, many unfortunately extended and 'modernised' this century, often with considerable loss of character and scale compared to that of the original concept.

BUILDINGS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

In the 19th Century the availability of cheap, local bricks brought about a spate of buildings in this material. Properties were extended, shippens and barns added, upper stories constructed and old stone walls buckling with age rebuilt in brick. Roofs were no longer being thatched but the more durable and fire resistant blue slate from North Wales became the popular and common roofing material. In some instances the cheaper, porous brick walls were rendered over with a lime mortar to provide a drier interior. The row of cottages in Church Road, built in about 1820, are good examples of this type of Victorian architecture.





Cottages in Church Road showing original brick features. The first cottage was also a shop.



Cottages in Church Road, after the facades had been rendered as a water proofing measure - the larger shop window still remains.

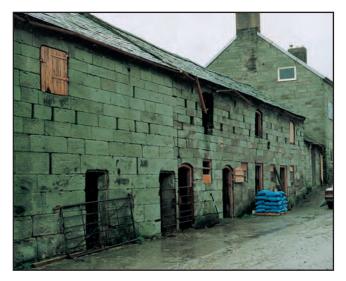
Some cottages, however, continued to be built in the local stone and the small stone house, Church Cottage, is an example of the type built on one of the plots enclosed from the common land at the time of the Land Enclosure Agreement.

During this period there appeared to be rebuilding or, in some cases, repairing and considerable remodelling, of the old 16th and 17th Century properties. Manor House Farm in Burwardsley Road is one example of rebuilding. The only remains of the original house is a stone dated 1654 and the initial RW built into the brick gable end of the present building. Local people say that on the site of the present house stood three thatched cottages and the original Manor House was situated on the opposite side of the road where an orchard existed some 30 years ago. The cottages were probably converted from the stone barn of the original manor and being old and in a sad state of decay last century were demolished for the construction of the present Manor Farm.

A similar situation occurred in Higher Burwardsley at the Barracks. The Barracks was a row of cottages demolished in the 1970s. From photographs the property appears to be of considerable age and built part in timber framing with at least one gable wall in red sandstone with coping stones and cappings. The building was probably a fine house built as the original Manor House shortly after the Civil War and, in the same way as the barn at the Manor, converted into cottages when no longer required or outdated as a farmhouse last century. Several local people lived in the cottages known as the Barracks, but no-one appears to know how they obtained the name. The village coffin maker was a resident and at the rear of his house there was usually a good supply of coffins awaiting customers.

Burwardsley Hall Farm probably dates back to the 17th Century but was remodelled internally last century. It may be on the site of one of the original manors as close by on the west side were the remains of part of the common enclosed in the last century. The Cheshire Directory of 1850 describes it as an ancient stone building. Could it have been a tithe barn or the great barn of the principal manor? At the time of the inspection by the then Ministry of Works in the 1960s, in relation to the scheduling of buildings of historic interest, it was stated to be at least two hundred years old. There are heavy oak beams supporting the upper floors, some still bearing the mark of the adze used in dressing them to suit their situation. It is obvious that considerable alterations have been made to the interior as walls have been added and ground

and first floor walls do not correspond in relation to one another. Some of the doors in the house are said to be Georgian and others of the Victorian period. Alongside the main house a dressed stone built barn with arched doorways adds to the importance of Burwardsley Hall Farm.



Barns at Burwardsley Hall Farm

Regrettably this was demolished to make space for a modern steel framed structure and the stone sold to Chester Zoo. In 1687 a stone built house, now known as the Brow, was built in Higher Burwardsley.



Mullion window at The Brow, Higher Burwardsley, the only remaining window of this type in the village

This house has a fine dressed sandstone front incorporating stone mullion windows (the only ones in the village) and with the date stone incorporated. In recent years it has been extended in a similar style to the original and forms an attractive property in the upper part of the village. The original house has associations with Methodism and was probably the place where meetings were held and attended by visiting preachers passing along the old routes from the towns on either side of the hills.

It is of great interest that many of these original houses were built shortly after the Civil War when Cheshire was settling down again after a period of strife and uncertainty. They were substantial houses and reflect the prosperity that was beginning to return to the Cheshire countryside. It is unfortunate that these are the few remaining in the village.

BUILDINGS IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

The design of houses changed later in the 19th century, both in layout and in appearance. Mid-Victorian brick built dwellings were in the main two storey; a ground floor for living and a first floor for sleeping. Two rooms positioned either side of a central staircase with fireplaces, now placed on the gable ends, allowed a cooking range to be incorporated in the living/kitchen and cast iron register grates in the 'front room' and the two bedrooms above. A central front door to the road leading into a small, square hall at the foot of the staircase gave access to the ground floor rooms and a small landing at the head of the stairs leading to the bedrooms over. Room heights were now somewhat higher than the earlier cottages. Double sash windows were used to provide ample sunlight into the four

main rooms compared to the small, square-paned cottage casement windows of the earlier low ceilinged stone cottages.



A typical nineteenth century house built in brick with a slate roof. Note the large sliding sash windows and the central front door.

These Victorian houses had only the most primitive of sanitation; no bathroom, a stone sink in the kitchen and a brick lean-to roofed 'office' at the bottom of the garden, some of which still remain as garden stores. The symmetry of the roadside facades of these homes is such as a child would draw – a door in the centre and windows either side, chimneys on either gable and a slate roof over. There are numerous examples of this type in Church Road and Harthill Road by the Post Office.

THE VICARAGE

The finest example of a late Victorian house is the Vicarage.



Victorian magnificence Burwardsley Vicarage built in 1886

Architectdesigned for the diocese and built in 1886, both to house the

large families which Victorian clergy appeared to have and to provide a dignified residence for the overnight visits of the Bishop on his pastoral visitations. The two storey building with rooms in the steep pitched roof is constructed in best quality red bricks, probably hand made, moulded in patterns around the arched front entrance and in the architectural features on the facades. The steep-gabled, pitched dormer windowed roof is clad in red tiles and the ridges are finished at the gables with elaborate clay and wrought iron finials. Attached to the house in an enclosed court is a range of outbuildings, store, wash-house and stable to house the vicar's pony and trap. It is Victorian domestic architecture at its best, the largest house in the village (larger than the church itself) and in a delightful setting of large chestnut trees and lawn. The laying and consecration of the foundation stone in 1886 was a festive occasion. A large tent was erected on the lawn in case of rain; apparently it was required on the day!

EARLY 20TH CENTURY FARMS AND WORKERS HOMES

In the early years of this century, several new farmhouses were built on the Bolesworth Estate, all bearing the initials GB (George Barbour) and the date of their building. A good example of the substantial farmhouse of this period and type is Mickerra Farm on Harthill Road.



Mickerra Farm, Harthill Road - one of the best examples of the replacement farmhouses built by George Barbour.

Well designed, attractive and built in good quality materials it blends into the landscape unlike the factory type barns now associated with it which are so important to its survival as a farm. Later, following the Second World War, more conversion and renewal of farms took place, mostly constructed in brick and in the style which in the 1950s was referred to as contemporary. They offered the tenant better facilities and more comfortable conditions than the buildings they replaced but for local character and charm the loss of the originals is sadly missed. Of the better house type of this period, mention must be made of the three pairs of houses, Mount Tabor, built in 1947 for the Bolesworth Trust Company for local people working on the estate and the farms in the village.

THE FARMING REVOLUTION

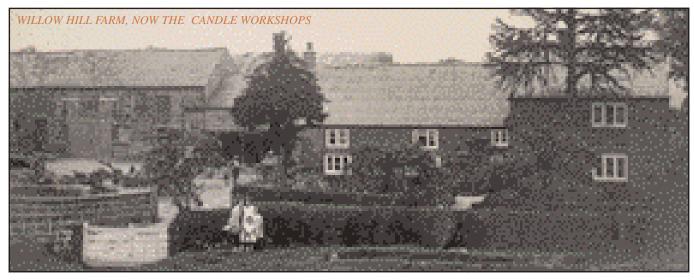
The village in the 1960s and 1970s regrettably lost many of its older, large farmhouses and outbuildings through the amalgamation of farm lands and the redundancy of the buildings that served them. Many fine buildings, which today would have been of considerable interest historically, socially and architecturally in the story of the village, were cleared and few records exist of their presence and the useful purpose they served in the rural economy of their heyday. The stones from many went to help in the construction of Chester Zoo where no doubt the most interesting part of our architectural heritage serves a similar purpose in providing shelter for the animals of that establishment as formerly the cattle and horses of mediaeval Burwardsley.

The retained farms on the estate – Burwardsley Hall Farm, Mickerra, Willow Hill Farm and Cawley's Hill Farm – were equipped with industrial type sheds to accommodate the larger herds of cattle and their foodstuffs and huge silage clamps for the winter feed required in the major agricultural change from extensive to intensive farming practices which commenced in the 1950s and 1960s.



Modern steel framed industrial style barns now to be seen at all the farms in the village

Chapter Three NEW USES FOR OLD BUILDINGS



Willow Hill Farm, prior to the demolition of the house and the conversion of the barns into the Cheshire Candle Workshops

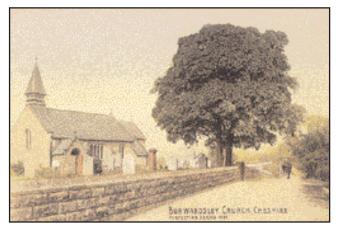


Smithy Bank Farm, now the Curtain Shop. The farm house has been refurbished to provide a modern cottage and the farm buildings converted into a rural commercial enterprise

Some redundant farm buildings in this massive agricultural and social change were put into new uses. The Candle Workshops in Higher Burwardsley was developed from the farmhouse and stone barns of Willow Hill Farm and the Curtain Shop in Lower Burwardsley from the barns of Smithy Bank Farm.

The smaller redundant buildings such as the stone built slaughter house situated next to the Village Institute was cleared away and the Old Smithy opposite Well House left to decay until the planners agree another use for this most traditional of all the village structures.

The village has no outstanding domestic buildings of this century. Many examples exist of modern extensions to farmhouses and cottages, added porches, picture windows, plastic conservatories and all the panoply of modern life, but fortunately the village has an abundance of hedges and good gardeners with ample flowers and shrubs softening and harmonising all that may not be to everyone's architectural taste.

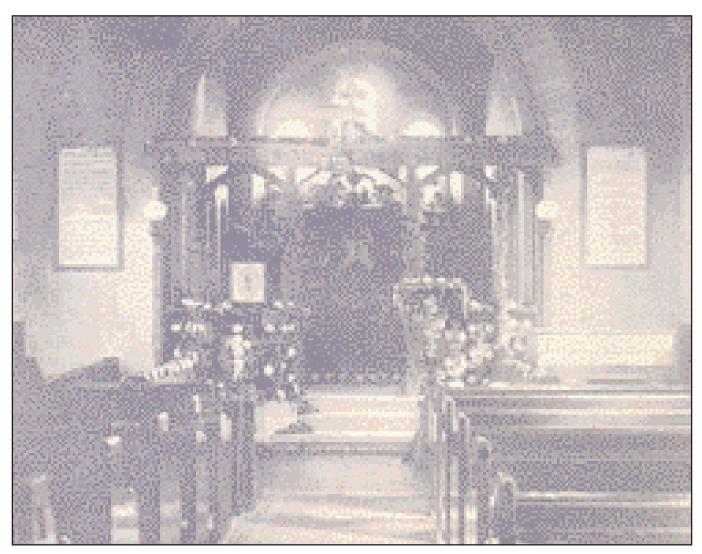


The Church in the early years of this century. Note the two fine trees at the entrance gate.



St John's Church as at present

Chapter Three ST JOHN THE DIVINE PARISH CHURCH



The interior of St John the Divine, Burwardsley on a festive occasion early last century - before electricity had been installed

THE PARISH CHURCH

The oldest of our ecclesiastical buildings, constructed in 1730, is the simple country church of St John the Divine. The building today comprises nave, chancel, vestry and porch. It is built in local red sandstone with a fine timber and slate bell tower at the west end projecting above a steep slated roof.

In ancient documents mention is made of a church in the village prior to the Reformation. The site is believed to have been in Higher Burwardsley. No actual location is given for the building but it was probably alongside Elephant Track, the old road leading from Bunbury and Peckforton, into the village and beyond. It is possible that the actual site of the chapel was on the north side of the track where a circular grove of trees stood as indicated on the old enclosure and tithe maps of last century.

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, in 1539, the chapel was closed and fell into disrepair. It was vandalised and the stones most likely used in the construction of other buildings in the parish, and so another piece of our village history has disappeared.

The present building in Lower Burwardsley was commenced in 1730, consecrated in 1735, and

built on a site in Church Road as a simple church comprising a nave and small chancel only. It was improved in 1795 by the removal of the rush strewn clay floor and the provision of a suspended wooden floor and the restoration of the original stone walls. It is probable at this time that the mullion windows were introduced and the roof members replaced with the present heavy oak trusses.

The interior is plain and simple, wainscoted in pine, with pews to match. The nave is divided from the chancel by an extremely delicate open pine screen which it is believed replaces a much older and more elaborate oak screen, said to have been presented to the builder to pay off the debt incurred for further improvements made to the church in 1889, when the chancel was rebuilt or enlarged and the vestry added. The stained glass in the east window is typical of the designs used to commemorate the fallen in the First World War to whom it is dedicated. A fascinating feature of the interior is the fine Georgian pipe organ. The organ was originally in a gentleman's house in Bickerton and given to Bulkeley Methodist Mission Room. It came to Burwardsley in 1889 at the time of the improvements to the church. Visitors to the church have been surprised at the clarity and variety of the tone. It is believed that it is a replica of an organ installed in the Brighton

Pavilion for the use of the Prince Regent. The design of the case and its Greek ornament is certainly of the period.

The homely little church stands in a delightful churchyard abounding with flowers in the spring.

THE METHODIST CHAPEL

In 1843 the non-conformist community in the village built a Methodist Chapel in the road leading to Higher Burwardsley.



The Methodist Chapel, now redundant and awaiting a new use

The site is extremely steep in both directions, sufficiently so that it was possible for a small caretakers house to be included in the subbasement of the building. The small rectangular building is constructed in local stone from the quarry in Sarra Lane and the slated roof is supported on wooden trusses. Regrettably at some time the tie beam members of the trusses have been removed, causing the supporting walls to bulge under the additional strain, leading to closure in 1995.

BURWARDSLEY SCHOOL AND OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

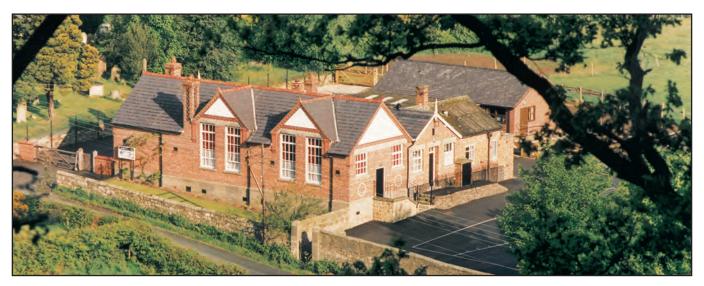
The village school is an amalgam of structures constructed for the educational needs of the community at different times over the last 140 years. The original building, referred to locally as the Drill Hall, was built in 1860 on the Glebe (the church land) as a place of "preaching and teaching". It now forms part of the rear of the present structure. Prior to its construction children had been taught in the nave of the church. The new Church School was built therefore to provide a permanent building in which the parish children could be taught correctly in a Christian manner. It was typical of an Ecclesiastical Board School of the late

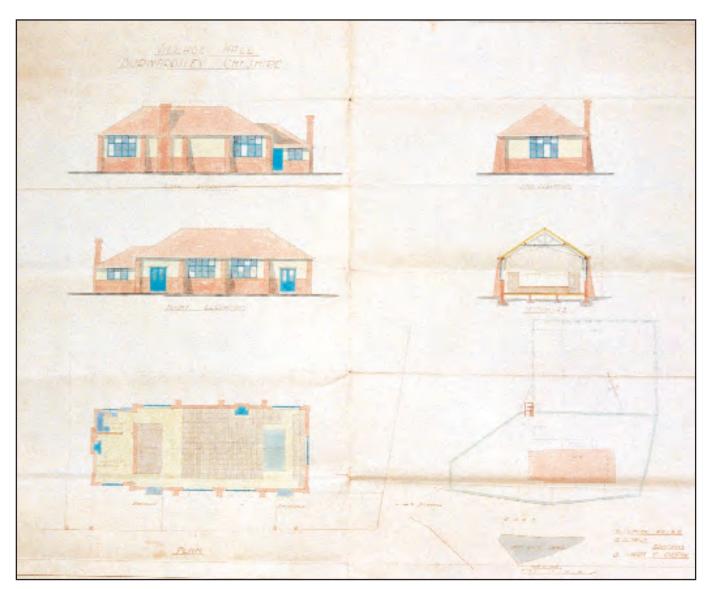
Victorian period, comprising a hall capable of being divided by wooden sliding folding partitions to give individual classrooms for the pupils, boys and girls, following the daily assembly and prayers in the combined rooms. Toilets for boys and girls would have been provided in a separate building at the bottom of the playground, together with separate playgrounds for boys and girls.

The school and building continued as a Board School until 1903 when a further rectangular hall was added to the original on the south side which now forms the present façade and can be seen from School Lane. Both buildings are of brick construction, the former having latticed casement windows and the latter with tall windows fitted into twin gables on the road façade to provide good light to the interior. The architecture is simple and economical and the only decoration is in the design of the chimneys with brickwork in an open herring-bone pattern which relieves the austerity of the whole. In recent years, with the change of use of the buildings into a residential field centre, many alterations and additions have been made, but the two original structures of 1860 and 1906 can be clearly identified amidst the modern growth.

Burwardsley Board School, now the Outdoor Education Centre.

The gable end of the original "Drill Hall" can be seen behind the main school extension fronting the road and constructed in 1903.





The original drawings of the Burwardsley Village Institute

THE VILLAGE INSTITUTE

The original building was constructed in 1923 after 3 years of debating, plans and fund raising. As the plans indicate it was and still is a simple building in a style typical of the many community halls being constructed throughout the country in pre-war days. The well-lit interior now comprises a rectangular hall with kitchen and store at the west end and toilet accommodation at the rear. In recent times a suspended ceiling has been introduced into the hall and a sliding folding screen added providing the main hall with a smaller room for committee meetings when required. It is hoped in this millennium year to add an open porch to the front facade with a parish notice board and parish map to provide information to villagers and visitors to the village.

Finally, it could be said that Burwardsley may not have any buildings of outstanding historical or architectural merit, but it does contain a varied collection of interesting structures of many ages and styles, expressing the life styles, homes, work places, spiritual and social needs of a small village community in Cheshire.

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THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

In the days before the Reformation, c.1540, there was an ancient chapel of ease in Burwardsley. The hamlet was a chapelry in the ecclesiastical parish of Bunbury and under the auspices of the Benedictine Collegiate Church at Bunbury. The chapel was dedicated to the Holy Rood and unlike other townships in the ancient parish of Bunbury, Burwardsley had its Wakes day on Holy Cross Day rather than on St. Boniface's day, the patron saint of Bunbury.

When Henry VIII dissolved the smaller monasteries in 1539, the Collegiate Church in Bunbury was disbanded together with other religious houses with revenues under £200 per year. The chapel in Burwardsley was abandoned and became badly vandalised by wandering vagrants who sought refuge in the wooded hills of Burwardsley.

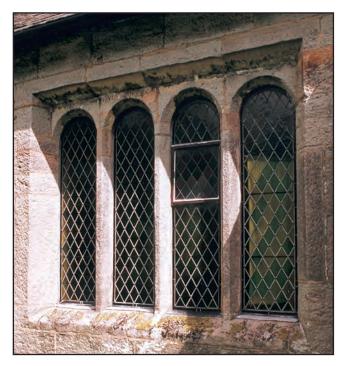
Forty years later Queen Elizabeth made a grant to Thomas Aldersey of Aldersey and haberdasher of the City of London, to reconstitute the benefice of Bunbury, but the chapel was not thought to be worthy of repair. A chapel must have been in great demand in the 'wastes of Burwardsley' but nothing was done to restore it although it was still standing at the time of the Civil Wars, 1640, when it is said that one of Cromwell's officers stabled his horses in the old chapel, when the Parliamentarians were laying siege to Beeston Castle.

The site of this old chapel may well have been in the waste of Higher Burwardsley even though in the Burwardsley Church Magazines of 1889, it is stated that the present church was erected on the site of the old monastic chapel by public subscription, and at the same time a plot of the surrounding 'wastes or commons of Burwardsley' was fenced in for a churchyard.



Possible Site of the Chapel of Ease in Higher Burwardsley

It is interesting to note that the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner in "The Buildings of England – Cheshire" considers that the present church may be a 17th century church. He states that "it looks as if the building is of the 17c especially the mullioned windows with arched lights and the shaft with the capital in the west window."



Mullioned window on south side, Burwardsley Church, which may be 17th century in origin according to Pevsner

Whichever way it happened, it was in the year 1730 that the present edifice is first documented. It is from an amazingly complex and wordy charter 'Hodgkis Deed' that we get to know of the way the church grew, curiously enough, out of the need for a school, in the township of Burwardsley. In 1725 concern was expressed that there was no school to teach the children to read English.

The Deed is dated 10th February 1725 and signed by George, Earl of Cholmondeley, Lionel, Earl of Dysart (a Scottish branch of the Tollemache family) George, Lord Malpas, (eldest son of Lord Cholmondeley), Lord Huntingtower, Sir Richard Grosvenor, John Crewe Esq., Ralph Thickness Esq., Thomas Bebington, John Stevenson, William Ashton, John Pearson, John Edge and Richard Stockton, yeomen, 'having all estates in Burwardsley, and the said John Crewe being lord of the manor of Tattenhall, whereof Burwardsley was a part'.

These noblemen then granted to Robert Piggot Esq. William Clegg, gent, William Sumner gent. John Hodgkis and Charles Dutton yeomen and their heirs, a piece of land (Church fields) some two acres within the Lower Wastes at a rate of 4d per annum payable to John Crewe.

A section of the Burwardsley Enclosure Map showing the 2 acre site of the church



Cheshire Record Office Council County Cheshire þ Reproduced

The trustees had to gather together public subscriptions and at their own expense separate off the parcel of land and 'build thereon one large room for a school house, with other lower rooms and chambers as should be thought necessary for a schoolmaster...'

These trustees were to be responsible to find a fit schoolmaster who 'could write well, and was skilled in arithmetic' was ' conformable to the Church of England' and 'a person of a sober life and conversation, free from all drunkenness, profane cursing and swearing, lewdness, and all other dissolute, immoral or disorderly practices' This man was to teach the children of the poor within the parish without recompense, taking a reasonable yearly sum for the teaching of children of the better off within the parish.

Thus the ground was given and was enclosed by a 'quick hedge' but no schoolroom was built or master found until in 1729 John Hodgkis of Tattenhall transferred his attentions to a bigger and better scheme.

It seems that the inhabitants of Burwardsley were being fairly crafty because they realized that they could kill two birds with one stone. If they restored the old monastic chapel and had it consecrated, and then used some portion of it as a school and then appointed a schoolmaster in holy orders, approved by the Bishop of Chester, the incumbent could fulfil both roles of priest and teacher. This way they had high hopes of obtaining Queen Anne's Bounty for the chapel 'if they could procure on their part so much money or lands as would be necessary for procuring the said bounty'. Queen Anne (1702-1714) was a high church Protestant who founded the Bounty in order to increase the stipend of the poorer clergy.

The 1729 deed granted to sixteen trustees and residents of Burwardsley, from John Hodgkis of Tattenhall a 'mess place' or loft and a close of land, Whittle's Field and a cottage and garden, Grosvenor Spring to be used as a school until the chapel was rebuilt and consecrated. After the consecration he granted the trustees and their heirs three shillings per year for books for poor scholars and five shillings per year in expenses for the minister. A house named Whittlesfield lies in Higher Burwardsley and there are contemporary documents which refer to a cottage and parcel of land called Whittlesfield and also a separate site, Spring House and Grosvenor Spring, although there is no mention of a school.

The proviso in the deed for the eventuality of the church not being rebuilt and consecrated, and of forfeiting Queen Anne's bounty was that the trustees should 'stand seized to the use of the

grantor, his heirs and assigns'. All of which sounds rather threatening!

Not surprisingly then, the present church was either commenced or reconstructed in 1730; the date occurs on the buttress at the south west corner of the building. The construction of the church was achieved by the 'charitable contributions of divers persons' and was provided with a church yard with a hedge on three sides and a stone wall frontage to the road.

The building had no chancel and the accommodation was terribly limited, seating some ninety adults. The box pews were quaint 'being of oak,' over five feet in height with steps and positioned on a clay floor strewn with rushes or sedges from local marsh land. Rush or sedge floors were common in early church buildings and a tradition of rush bearing festivals presumably to refurbish the flooring material were common in many Cheshire churches.

The consecration of the building was not carried out until 1735 perhaps due to a shortage of cash needed for the work to proceed. The trustees and parishioners pressed the then Bishop of Chester, the Rt. Rev. Samuel Peplee D.D.Oxon to carry out the consecration but, unfortunately, it was too late to conform with the Hodgkis Deed's time limit. It was not too late however to obtain the Queen Anne's Bounty – and, when this was granted an annual income 'arising from $\pounds 650$ at 3.25 per cent' was obtained as the stipend for the parish.

The first incumbent was Rev. Barnett MA, who received all the payments arising from the grants of land and Queen Anne's Bounty but never kept a school, nor did the second incumbent Evan Evans who did not even live in the parish and only officiated once a month.

In 1764 there were only three remaining trustees of Hodgkis's Deed, John Egerton, George Salmon and Benjamin Kyffin, nephew of Hodgkis and so they hastily set about appointing thirteen replacements.

In 1792 when Evan Evans died there remained only five to nominate the Rev John Price who must have been something of a new broom as he had put the church 'in perfect repair' by 1795, according to an inscription on the west wall.



The inscription reads "In the year 1793 this chapel was put in perfect repair by the Rev. John Price the then incumbent there of"

The Rev John Price's time in office was not without its problems. Richard Kyffin, son of Benjamin, got his hands on the deed of 1764 and laid claim to the land granted by Hodgkis and the rents of the same. The deed stated that 'wherever the schoolmaster shall not be a person in Holy Orders, and shall not officiate in chapel during such time, his (ie Hodgkis) heirs shall enjoy the rents of the land.' Horses were once again stabled in the church, when, feeling quite justified, Richard Kyffin decided to use the church to best effect and stabled his horses in the porch.

The parishioners were up in arms at this sacrilege and put the matter to rights 'by force'. But Kyffin did not rest his case there; the fact that the incumbent seldom performed the duties of his benefice and was non-resident meant that Hodgkis's heir had a reasonable case. Legal proceedings went on for a number of years and in the end were compromised, the Rev. Price taking the land granted for the maintenance of a school and Richard Kyffin (mentioned earlier) taking the land left by his great-uncle for the endowment of a benefice.

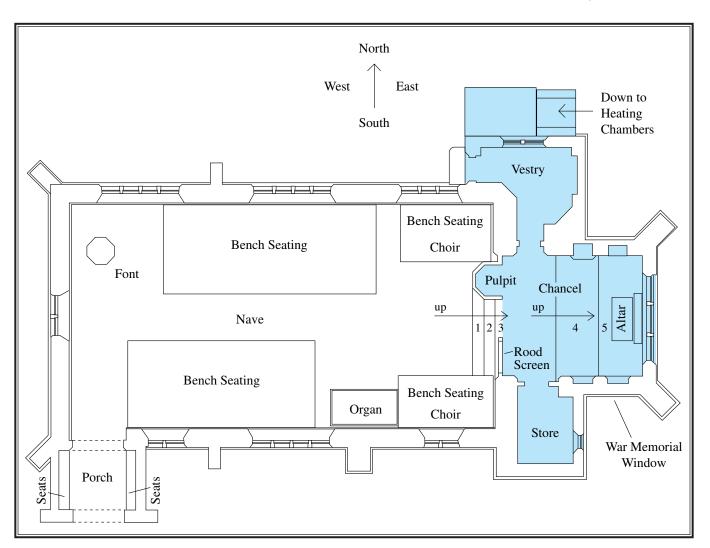
Kyffin's land unfortunately then got into the hands of the two illegitimate children of Richard Kyffin, who claimed the land after the death of Charles Kyffin who succeeded his brother Richard. The trustees were anxious to retain the whole of the land and re-form the trust. No legal proceedings were taken on behalf of the Kyffins and so the deeds and terrier still lie among the other church documents - or at least did so in the late 19th century.

All this left poor Rev. Price impoverished and he was imprisoned for a spell (presumably for debt) between 1811 and 1823 and the benefice was served by various assistant curates. Rumour had it that he died after this long imprisonment but he seems to have been around to sign various parochial records in 1824.

On the death of Rev. Price, William Vawdrey was appointed incumbent, in plurality with Harthill. He spent £126 of his own money – a prodigious amount at that time - on church repairs. His stipend was £33 per annum. He also set up a Sunday School at which children learned to read and write.

He was followed by the Rev. Edward Titley who served the church for thirty five years and is buried in the churchyard at Burwardsley. Before his death in 1883 he had set up a scheme for rebuilding and repairs, adding a chancel at the same time. At that time the church had fallen once more into disrepair through lack of finance. It was stated that 'The church, a small one, is in a deplorably dilapidated state and quite unfit for

Church of St. John the Divine, Burwardsley



- O Original church building 1730
- 1735 Dedicated to St. John the Divine
- O 1795 Improvements wooden floor, high pews removed "put in perfect order"
- O 1889 Chancel, vestry, organ chamber (now store), rood screen, new fittings and heating chamber
- O 1918 War Memorial Window

the performance of public worship. The inhabitants are principally very poor, consequently utterly unable amongst themselves to raise the £350 necessary for restoration'. How much alteration work was carried out in his time it is hard to tell but there exists a licence dated 11th October 1870 to perform a divine service in the school room, Burwardsley. There is also an agreement dated 1871 signed by Edward Titley authorising the services of an architect, amongst the 'Parish Bundle' of documents in the archives. A plaque on the north wall of the nave commemorates his services to the village.

In 1876 Mrs E Davenport of Spurstow presented the church with a pair of Jacobean chairs which are still in the church's possession.



Jacobean chair presented to Burwardsley church by Mrs E Davenport of Spurstow in 1876 Rev. Titley lived in Peckforton village as there was still no house for the incumbent and had to walk to Burwardsley 'in his long black cloak' along the Haunted Bridge road in order to take services. After his death there was a delay in finding a replacement. The lack of a house in the village and the poor remuneration were obviously deterrents.

However, finally a replacement was found in the Rev. Keith-Chalmers who must have hit the village like a bomb-shell. He wasted no time at all in having the vicarage built and the laying and the consecration of the foundation stone in 1886 was an excuse for village festivities. He was also private chaplain to Lord Tollemache at Peckforton Castle which brought him 50 guineas in addition to his £25 stipend for Burwardsley. It would seem that the Burwardsley living was virtually worthless 'owing to the incidental expenses having hitherto exceeded the value of the Chaplaincy and Living combined'.

Another exciting development to stir up the people of Burwardsley was the introduction of a monthly magazine. The Rev. Chalmers brought out 'Home Words', a collection of stories, poetry, picture puzzles and adverts, and selling at one old penny. A full set of these magazines, which unfortunately only lasted a year as it ran into debt, is in the church's keeping.

Between 1884-7 the new vicar spent £167 making the church more fit for divine service, in addition raising £15 from the Diocesan Church Building Society and even a few pounds raised within the parish. Things were going well and on Ascension Day 1885 the Bishop of Chester, Dean, and Archdeacon held a special Confirmation service in the 'little, quaint old church' where 63 candidates, nearly all adults, were presented. Regrettably things soon lapsed when the Vicar, the Rev. Chalmers, two weeks later was badly injured in a railway accident, and had to leave the parish to curates-in-charge for three years.

In 1889 a citation was drawn up leading to the faculty building a new chancel, vestry and organ chamber; the architect was to be a Henry Stanley. The work went ahead; a new vestry on the north side; a new organ chamber on the south side of the chancel: a new Rood-screen between Chancel and Nave; the removal of the temporary vestry, organ chamber, communion table, pulpit, and reading desk, and the erection of new replacements; a new heating system; the upheaval and relaying of floors between pews; the reglazing of the windows. The whole thing was completed and consecrated in December 1889. The renovations of the five years had cost some £519 and the church now seated some 150 people. At the time of the renovation a fine pipe organ

was installed which originated from the private residence, Bank House, Bickerton, home of Mr Rimmer. The organ, for a period, had been in the Bickley Mission Church and finally ended up on the south wall of the nave of St John's Church.



The excellent classical cased Georgian pipe organ in the nave of the church

The surprise resignation of Rev. Keith-Chalmers in 1891 came shortly after the new church was finished and sadly was as a result of a disagreement with part of the community he had served so enthusiastically.

He was replaced by Rev. Wanburgh who saw things very differently. His great aim was to sever the links with Bunbury, replacing the perpetual curacy by a parish Vicar. Keith-Chalmers had been violently opposed to this, and parishioners and the church authorities in general seemed at best, luke-warm to the idea. It was not until Wanburgh's last year in office, 1902, that he achieved his aim and Burwardsley became a parish within Malpas Deanery, under the patronage of the Bishop of Chester.

Rev. Clegg was the first Vicar of Burwardsley and in terms of the fabric of the church little has changed except for the installation of stained-glass windows in 1919 in the east wall and the window and plaque on the west wall, memorials to the dead in the First World War. After its redecoration in 1981, to quote Frank Whitworth, formerly of Top House (now renamed Falcon House), 'this attractive little Church still stands foursquare to the glory of God'. In 1941 the Parish of Burwardsley was joined to that of Harthill and in 1975 the Bishop of Chester withheld the re-appointment of a new vicar under the Suspension of Benefice Act and the Parishes were then served by Priests-in-Charge. The first priest was the Rev. Matthews (1975-1978). In 1982 the first non-stipendary vicar was appointed who lived rent-free in the Vicarage. In 1986 Rev. John Hughes became Priest-in-Charge and during his incumbency fostered the idea of linking the churches of Burwardsley, Harthill, Bickerton and Bulkeley, together with the Chapel at Cholmondeley Castle to form the Churches of the Sandstone Trail. Unfortunately he died in 1992 before his dream was realized. In 1993 Rev. Rex Buckley was appointed to the parish and in 1996 was inducted as Vicar of the Churches on the Sandstone Trail

THE METHODIST COMMUNITY

In common with many other towns and villages Burwardsley came under the influence of the preaching of John Wesley and soon numbers of people joined the new movement. At first they held their prayer meetings at the house in Higher Burwardsley called "The Brow" and they met regularly here.

It is said that a visit from Mr Wedgewood, the pioneer of primitive Methodism in Cheshire, into the area early on Easter Sunday 1819 so inspired the people that the first Chapel began to develop. The Windsor family who lived at the Brow for three generations held services at their house every Sunday. Preachers would arrive by pony and trap and would stay the night before travelling on. John Wedgewood (1788-1869) also preached at the opening of Tattenhall Lanes Primitive Methodist Chapel on 28th September 1851. He is buried in Brown Knowl churchyard in a tomb that is topped with a reproduction Wedgewood vase.

In1843 about 14 local men built the Methodist Chapel at Burwardsley with stone from the quarry at the bottom of Sarra Lane.

At first the Minister serving this Chapel lived at Whitchurch and had a large number of similar buildings in his care, which meant that his visits could not be very frequent and that he would have to organise his time so that each area had a fair share of his attention. Generally he made his headquarters in a village which would be central and visited all Chapels in turn in that area. When he came to Burwardsley he stayed at "The Brow" and from there attended the Chapels at Broxton, Tattenhall Lanes and Tattenhall, visiting his flock and conducting services in the newly built places



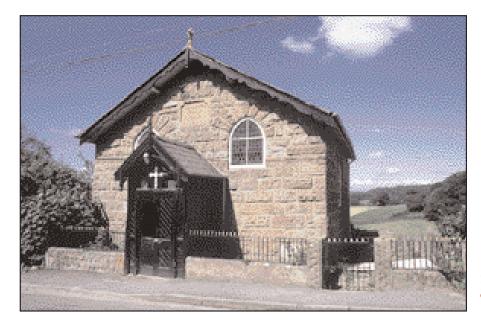
The Brow, Higher Burwardsley, the home of Methodism in the village

of worship. As the number of Chapels increased this became more difficult and though the centre of the circuit remained at Whitchurch, a Minister was appointed to Brown Knowl and from there became responsible for Burwardsley, Tattenhall Lanes and Tattenhall Chapels as well as others in the district.

In the 1920's the chapel in Burwardsley was always full with 80-90 children attending Sunday School. Every Tuesday the chapel would be filled for a bible class taught by a lady who lived at 1 Church Road. The congregation prided itself on its singing which could be heard all over the village. The second Sunday in May was known as the Chapel Anniversary and in 1993 the 150 Year celebrations saw the little chapel full of

flowers and worshippers. The second Sunday in June was the Sunday School anniversary which was held in the Village Hall as there were too many people for the Chapel. Even the Hall couldn't hold everyone and people were forced to stand outside.

Burwardsley has cause to be proud of its Free Church tradition for it had maintained its work and worship for more than 100 years. However in 1995 the chapel was closed and was subsequently sold. The £43,000 proceeds went to the Methodist Circuit to fund the upkeep of other chapels. The rather smaller congregation now makes the journey to Brown Knowl for worship. The future of this historic building is uncertain as it has no land and hence any preservation seems unlikely. It is regrettable that, today, there is no place of assembly for the continuation of Methodism within the village.



The 157 year old chapel, now abandoned and awaiting a new use

THE HOMELY PREACHER

Reminiscences of Robert Caldecott, Methodist Preacher

Robert Caldecott was a Methodist preacher whose family had lived in or around Cheshire for over 500 years. The following are extracts from his diaries covering the period when he lived in Burwardsley 1904-1919.

"On March 24th 1904 we went to live at Rock Farm, Burwardsley, which was in a very bad state of cultivation, absolutely neglected, so much so that father paid only a half rent for two years, and a three quarter rent the third. However, we struggled on improving it year by year until it became quite profitable. It has now been in the family for a long time. My nephew is now living there (1956).

There are other things in life of equal importance to getting a living. I was very much attached to the district from a geographical point of view. Until then I had lived on the Cheshire plain only. Now I was living on the hills. There was a different form of plant life growing around me in which I was interested. There was the bilberry, or windberry, growing on the hills, especially on Peckforton and Bulkeley, and other places here and there where they could escape from browsing animals; sheep are particularly fond of them. I have never seen such healthy bushes bearing such an abundance of fruit anywhere. When I first went to live at Burwardsley, I noticed that the children and some of the older people also, went on the hills every day during the early summer gathering bilberries, and the children of the poorer people could earn enough money in that way to provide them with clothes throughout the year.



Rock Farm, Higher Burwardsley, the home of the Caldecott family from 1904

How well the stonecrop flourished on the stone walls that composed some of the fences. On the same walls in winter grew the grey lichen. There was a sweetness and freshness about the climate that is not found everywhere, and to walk through the woods and smell the scent of the pines and the bracken, together with the acid smell of the decaying leafmould, to me was really delightful. At that time gorse grew very

much in Higher Burwardsley. It grew on some of the pasture land and was very difficult to get rid of. It also grew by the roadside, and in the hedges. It looks very pretty when in bloom, but it is such an aggressor. Its colour – a clear golden yellow – cannot be surpassed by any other wild plant; it has no leaves but sharp thorns as a means of self protection; it will grow in very dry places, having no succulent leaves to supply with moisture; its seeds can retain their power to germinate for at least 100 years; this fact I once proved.

The nightjar was a regular visitor to the district. When out in the evening of a summer's day I have heard it making its buzzing noise, as it turns round and round on some little mound on the ground. This bird, I understand, feeds on moths, and it may be that the buzzing sound that it makes is to attract their attention.

The first Sunday I spent at Burwardsley was a memorable one in the history of the Chapel. When I went to the service in the evening it was crowded to overflowing. On enquiry I learnt that it was a memorial service to the late Joseph Hodkinson, a member and a Local Preacher who had outstanding abilities. I was told he had received no education, could neither read nor write, but his name was written in the "Lambs Book of Life".



Gorse, a plant profuse in Higher Burwardsley, and named an "aggressor" by Caldecott

Uncle John Parker has told me that he once heard him preach, and what he said created a great impression upon his mind. He was well received as a preacher, and wherever he went the people flocked to hear him. The service was conducted by a fellow Local Preacher and a member of the Chapel. His name was Peter Brookes.

The standard of Methodism I came in contact with here was something I had not seen before. It was simple, sincere and most enthusiastic. The Superintendant of the Sunday School was an elderly man named George Tydd. He told me he had been a Sunday School worker for 44 years. Three times every Sunday he trudged up the hill from his home to the Chapel, a distance of about a mile, year after year, for nearly 50 years altogether. What a record! He was simply perfect as a Superintendant and the children loved him. There were then about 80 names on the Sunday School register.

George was widely known as a rose grower, having about two acres of land upon which he grew roses for a living. What a desirable occupation it was. He was most interesting to talk to. I bought a climbing rose from him 50 years ago and planted it beside the front door at the Rock Farm. It is still there and in a flourishing state. Whenever I see it I am reminded of this faithful servant of God.

The Anniversary Services were in those days conducted as an open air service, the Chapel being too small to hold the people that gathered on that occasion. Eventually I became a teacher in the Sunday School and member of the choir. The Chapel then, with all its activities, had become a great attraction. It was indeed a lively cause; especially so was its Christian Endeavour meetings, in which I regularly took part. It was in these meetings that I found my future wife, and there could not possibly be a better place for a young man to find a wife; not in a dance hall, but in the House of Prayer. The result was 48 years of most happy Christian companionship, including some years of courtship.

The social life of the village was neighbourly and happy, although in those days there were many difficulties and inconveniences. For one thing, the water supply was very poor. Nearly every house had its own well. There was also a well by the road side near the Chapel called the Town Well, from which some of the people carried their supply of water quite a considerable distance. When the womenfolk met at the well, there was usually a friendly chat, lasting for a few minutes or half an hour, and life passed cheerily along.

The young lady I fell in love with was Miss Harriet Stockton, daughter of the then late John Stockton of Burwardsley, who was a stone mason, and also a builder and farmer. He died quite young in life leaving his wife with eight children to provide for. The circumstances surrounding his death were tragic indeed. He had been to Beeston auction to buy a cow and was driving her through Peckforton on the way home when she started to give a lot of trouble. His eldest boy, John, was with him.

They had some running about to do, in consequence of which the father dropped down at the side of the road and died immediately. What a shock it was to them all, especially so to the mother. It was a shock from which she never recovered fully, but she struggled on and reared her family respectably and they have all made good. Three of the sons have been in the USA most of their lives, emigrating when they were young. She was the daughter of William Thredgold, whose family have farmed on Bickerton Hill for many generations.

One of the happiest periods of my life was the eight years of courtship. We spent many happy times wandering around those beautiful hills on Summer evenings, for we were both such lovers of nature. We noticed with interest and admiration every wild flower that grew, and every bird we saw; we knew all the lovely walks for miles around; one of our favourites was through the Peckforton Wood to the Stanner as it was then called, which is really a steep cliff in the middle of the wood. Right opposite Beeston Castle, on the edge of the cliff there is a footprint carved in the rock, said to be that of Oliver Cromwell who fixed his cannon there to destroy Beeston Castle. However, I am rather doubtful about this. There is a wonderful view from this spot right across the Cheshire Plain to the Dee and Mersey estuaries. The docks at Liverpool with the ships in them are quite visible on a clear day.



Beeston, Stanner Nab and Peckforton Woods from Outlanes

Another lovely walk is past the top of Peckforton Gap on to Bulkeley Hill. Here you have another view across the plain in the direction of Nantwich, and on a clear day into Staffordshire. Rawhead is a little further on along the top of the hills. Here you come first to a wonderful spring of water called the Dropping Stone, situated almost on the top of the hill. A considerable amount of water comes trickling out of the rocks, lovely clean, cold water. Further on there are some caves. They have a narrow entrance but open out to about 30 yards wide by 40 yards long. The rock of which they are composed is a beautiful colour having pink and buff shades mingled together. These caves were probably haunted by robbers a few centuries ago, and earlier still inhabited by the ancient cave dwellers.

Right on the top of Rawhead there used to be a structure known as Hortons Tower. Sometimes we took a walk over Bickerton Hill to see the wall that the prophet Nixon said would fall uphill and sure enough it is falling uphill. On our way back we sometimes called on Grandad Thredgold and I remember on one occasion we were invited to taste some of his famous rabbit pie. It contained young rabbits and mutton and very good it was.

The road between Harriet's home and mine, or rather a small portion of it, led through a cutting in a bank. This portion was known as Server Lane (now known as Sarra Lane or The Salver). There was a steep high cop on each side and a hedge on the cop which caused it to be a very dark spot. One stormy dark night, I was travelling up this lane, when suddenly I stumbled over a donkey who was lying there because of the shelter it afforded from the storm. He did not hear me coming with the wind howling so until I was right on him; then suddenly he jumped to his feet and made the loudest bray I ever heard a donkey make in my life. No doubt we were both frightened. I was really terrified and shall never forget the sensation.

At Christmas we went out with the Chapel choir carol singing. We went out on three evenings and were well received everywhere we went. It was made a very happy event with a number of young people among us. The money we got was spent on buying any requisites needed by the choir and the remainder on a summer trip to the seaside. How pleasant it is to look back on those happy events. They stand out as being among the happiest in my life.



The steep-sided banks of Sarra Lane

The autumn of 1910 was very wet; no frost or snow, but heavy rain through the winter. The following spring was early with unusual bright warm sunshine and dry weather which continued throughout the summer which was hot and dry. Often the sun shone from 4 in the morning until 10 in the evening. Everywhere was dried up; the corn was about a foot high and the hay grass six inches. The pastures were so burnt up that the cattle were half starved, and added to this was the shortage of water. In Burwardsley many of the wells dried up completely. I remember going every day to fetch two kettles of water from a well in Peckforton Wood. The journey took 40 minutes. The rain did not come until September. When the grass started to grow and the fields which had been so brown became green again, it was like another spring and the grass grew all winter. The cattle went out in the daytime picking a bit of grass and, although the hay crop was so light, it was enough to see us through. We might have bought a little more corn for them but not very much. Of course, it could not be regarded as a profitable season. It was certainly the driest summer I remember.

I have come across some old records by John Hurleston Leche Esq of Carden Hall. He makes some interesting notes respecting the seasons which are:



Carden Hall, the home of John Hurleston Leche, now demolished following a fire in the 1930's

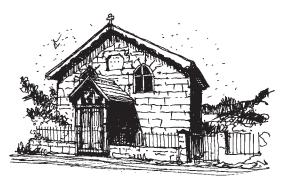
1860 very cold wet Summer; 1863 a great year for foxes; 1873 tremendous walnuts (what a contrast!); 1870 very wet Spring; 1873 tremendous rain all the year, no chance of fishing; 1879 very severe Winter, frost commencing early November and continuing until the middle of March.

In those days a hard winter would create much unemployment and consequent poverty. 1897 was also a severe Winter. I remember that one quite well. I note with interest no mention of dry seasons is mentioned in Leche's report. My father told me of two very dry hot Summers which occurred in 1867 and 1868. They were the years immediately following the rinderpest, or cattle plague, which took place 1865 and 1866, and which brought upon the farmers great loss and hardship. Being dairy farmers, they lost

their cattle and they lost their living. However, they ploughed their pasture land and grew wheat. The dry seasons that followed were beneficial to the wheat and the price was fairly good; so by patient toil and careful economy they redeemed their circumstances.

In January of the same year, a neighbour who was a young man like myself, and a member of the Chapel, had just become a Local Preacher. His name was Harry Windsor. He came to see me one Sunday morning to ask me to go with him to Crewe-by-Farndon, where he was planned to preach that day and take the afternoon service. He said he had only one sermon and as there were two services he seemed to be in quite an awkward position. I said "Well, I will come along with you and sing a solo in the service. That will help you out a bit but I am not authorized to take services." I was at that time often engaged in singing solo. However, on the journey he persuaded me to take the afternoon service which I did. Crewe Chapel is only a small country place, but was then noted for the number of preachers it had produced. So it can easily be understood how I was treated by those dear Christian people there. I received every encouragement from them.

On April 2nd1913 Harriet and I were married at the Primitive Methodist Chapel, Burwardsley.



Burwardsley Methodist Chapel where Robert Caldecott and Harriet were married on 2nd April 1913

The Chapel was specially licensed under the new Act for the occasion, the cost being borne by some unknown person. Undoubtedly it would be one of the members. Rev A G A Lees, the Minister of the Brown Knowl section of the Circuit, conducted the service and the Chapel was crowded to overflowing. We had a number of wedding presents, among them being a Bible and Hymn book from the Trustees, it being the first marriage solemnized in the Church, a silver sugar container given by members of the Choir, a similar jam container from the scholars and teachers of the Sunday School and a silver teapot given by a dear friend and co-worker, Arthur Brookes, who, sad to relate, died at the age of 29. We went to live at Rock Farm, which I took over from father when he retired. We had just enough money between us to start in a moderate sort of way. Everything was plentiful in those

days and fairly cheap. For the first few weeks after we moved in we were disturbed about midnight each night by hearing unusual noises in the kitchen below and claimed it to be a ghost. There were several houses in Burwardsley reputed to be haunted and Rock Farm was one. The sounds we heard were like someone doing the domestic things in the home. I can testify to the fact that it was not imagination; yet it was not an evil omen. It must have been the spirit of William Crawford who built the place and was so devotedly attached to it. He was not a bad man. Rather a good man. Can it be that his spirit paid occasional visits to the place where he had spent his earthly life? Who knows! However, we were not terrified when we heard the strange sounds but rather joked about it. I never saw what we call a ghost, but have heard several, and each time it has had some significance. God speaks to His children today even as He did in days of old, sometimes in a dream, or in an unaccountable event, or it may be by the sound of a strange tapping on the wall.

When we started farming, cheesemaking was going out of favour with Cheshire farmers and selling the milk was becoming popular. So we sold the milk, taking it with a horse and float to Cooke's Creamery at Tattenhall every morning. The price we were paid was 6 pence per gallon in the summer and 9 pence per gallon in the winter. Of course, the feeding stuffs were correspondingly cheap. Bran was about 5 shillings per cwt, Indian meal 7/3d, compound cake from £6.10s to £8 per ton, eggs were 18 for 1 shilling. But we managed very well on these prices and prospered. The standard rate of wages for a farm worker was then 15 shillings per week of about 60 hours or more.

On March 21st 1914 our daughter Maud was born. She was a lovely baby, with rosy cheeks like her mother and fair hair. We were very proud of her.

September 3rd 1914 was a sad day for the world. On this day war was declared between Germany and France, afterwards known as World War I because eventually nearly every country in the world was involved in it. What suffering and death was brought about by it. Prices of everything began to rise and many things became scarce and dear, especially food, which made farming very good. Milk gradually rose to 3/8d per gallon. There were great difficulties to be encountered, the young men having been called up for military service. Labour was scarce and everything in short supply. More land had to be ploughed up to grow corn and potatoes which meant more work for the farmers but, with fewer farm workers, it had to be done by hard work and long hours. In the early part of 1916 a very

severe spell of frost set in and lasted for 6 weeks. All this time there was a bitter east wind. It was freezing night and day and the ground covered with snow – but not very deep. What a job it was taking the milk to Tattenhall every day with a pony and float. I shall never forget my experience during that winter but what must it have been for the soldiers in the trenches in France? What a cruel thing war is.

It was during that cold spell of weather that Harriet's mother died at the age of 57. She had been in very poor health for a number of years. Three of her children – Walter, Fred and Frank could not be present at her bedside because they were in the USA. They have all done well and have been enabled to enjoy more of the comforts and luxuries of life than if they had stayed in England.

The spring was late that year because it took such a long time for vegetation to recover after the severe frost. I saw even gorse and holly bushes cut to the ground by the severe frost. While I was living at Rock Farm I had a good dog, Rover. He was a very good cattle dog. In fact, he could fetch or drive any animal or at least have a good try. He used to round up the cows every morning when they were lying out, and we just waited in the yard for them to come. One morning we waited and waited but no cows were to be seen. We began to wonder what had happened, when we saw them coming along the road below the farm. The dog was behind them bringing them along quietly. They came into the yard and we tied them up in the shippons without knowing anything as to how they had got on the road. Later in the day I saw Mrs Jones, a smallholder whose land adjoined the field where the cows went at night. She told me they have got over the fence into her field and to get back into their own field it meant climbing a steep cop. The dog tried his best to get them to go back the same way they got in but could not do it; so he took them down to the gate which opened on to the road and lay down behind them waiting for someone to open the gate. When Mrs Jones saw the position, she opened the gate for him and Rover drove the cows on to the road, barking a word of thanks to the one who had opened the gate for him. He could do lots of clever things but could not manage to open field gates! Some people say animals cannot think or premeditate but I know they can and this is an example. He was a lovely dog, a pure bred Scotch collie and I had him for 15 years.

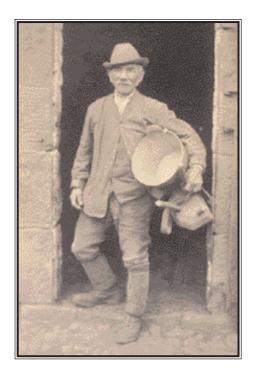
On another occasion a horse I had showed remarkable sagacity. This horse was subject to attacks of gripes. One night, or rather in the early hours of the morning, I heard a hammering noise in the yard, and got up to see what was the

matter. I found the horse striking his stable door with his fore foot. I opened the door and he went in and lay down. He had got another attack of his old complaint which had come on when out in the field; so he had jumped the fence and come home to lie down in the stable. I may say he was very ill this time and I nearly lost him. However, through a change of diet he never had the trouble again.

One afternoon, during corn harvest, we were busy in the field when a messenger came and told us that a sow had got an empty syrup can stuck fast on her bottom jaw and was making a terrible to do about it. So we went down to the farm to try to relieve her. We had a great surprise when we tried to get it off for the rim of the can had got embedded in her jaw. We had to use a hammer and make it oval shaped to get it off. While all this was taking place the old sow was screaming the place down and saying "Oh, it's easier to get into trouble than it is to get out of it" and she decided never again to have anything to do with empty syrup cans.

In the autumn of 1918 an epidemic of 'flu swept across the country, followed by pneumonia, and many people died. There were several deaths in Burwardsley and some were young people. The complaint returned again the next winter. Often whole families were laid up with it. John Wedgewood, the pioneer of Primitive Methodism in Cheshire, started his mission at Bulkeley in 1819 with an open air service. He then visited Burwardsley and took his stand on a piece of waste land half way up the hill, known locally as the sand hole. When he began to preach, his influence was so great, that about 40 were converted. Among them were stone masons, farmers and their workmen. Following this services were held in cottages and farm kitchens, but after a while they felt they needed a Chapel to worship in but they had no money to build one.

So they decided to build one by voluntary effort. The masons hewed and prepared the stones – there were plenty of quarries about – the farmers carted them to the site, and the labourers helped to erect them. Someone else supplied the timber and together they built that very substantial little Church which stands there today, as a monument to the devotion of those early Methodists of Burwardsley."



LOCAL JUSTICE

In the Norman reorganisation of England following the Anglo Saxon period, the Anglo Saxon shires were replaced by "comtes" or counties. Within this reorganisation, Burwardsley, together with other settlements in the south west corner of the newly named county of Cheshire, were grouped into an administrative district known as The Dudeston Hundred and now referred to as the Broxton Hundred.

Within the hundreds, justice was administered through the manorial court system, with disputes settled at the Hundred Court by Justices from Chester and important or far-reaching matters referred to the Shire Court held in Chester and presided over by the Sherriff and the Earl of Chester.

Justice within the manors was of course settled by the Manor Courts overseen by the respective Lords of the Manor. In the case of Burwardsley the local Lord, Humphry, meted out justice to his tenants referring any appeals whenever they occurred to his overlord Robert Fitzhugh, Baron of Malpas. It has not been possible to trace any records of local disputes or decisions taken by the Shire Court and local Court Leet records have long since disappeared. One record of a Burwardsley loyalist soldier, however, exists in the records of the Shire Session held in Chester in 1662. Following the Civil War and the establishment of peace, together with the restoration of the Crown, the new king agreed to grant pensions for soldiers who had fought for the Royalist cause in the conflict. Such a person was Thomas Hodgkis of Burwardsley, whose petition was presented at the court session for consideration by the Justices of the Peace. The petition reads as follows:

To the Right worshipful ye Kings Majesties Justices of ye Peace att this Sessions Assambled. This humble Peticon of Thomas Hodgkis of Burwardsly Comitatus Cestrie.

Sheweth

That your Petioner now aged, yet ever a true and loyall Subiect to his Soveraigne Lord ye King, without any Change or turneing, was all along in actuall Service for his said Soveraigne; and not onely lost the use of his limbes, but his estate in that service not only to the ruine of himself but his posterity, haveing had as yet noe releife att all ether for his said service or his sufferinges. And since there is an act passed for ye reliefe of such suffering Subiects as can produce testimoniall of there ever constant fidelity and acted service for their Soveraigne

This humble suite is, that such an annuall pension, as such private soldiers, are capable of, may be now ordered for your Petitioner to receive as fully as the act can or doth permitt, and your Petitioner as for ever bound shall for ever pray etc.

Regrettably it would appear that he did not attend in person to support his petition, which is marked "absent" and it can be only assumed that his pleadings were in vain.

BUNBURY VESTRY

There was little need for any parish administration in mediaeval times; lay justice was the prerogative of the manorial courts and the safeguard of the spiritual needs of the inhabitants was that of the village priest. In the case of Burwardsley this was the Rector of Bunbury.

In the time of Elizabeth I, however, local church and the clergy acquired a non-ecclesiastical function in addition to dealing with church matters only. They were adopted as the unit of administration for the new Poor Relief Law and other lay functions. This joint ecclesiastical-lay administration was retained until 1894 when civil parishes took over the civil function of the ancient ecclesiastical parishes. Until this time the administration of Burwardsley and its inhabitants was in the hands of the Bunbury Vestry. The Vestry or the parish parliament was an assembly of the male inhabitants of the parish and dealt with all aspects of the communal affairs of the parish. Meetings were held in the parish church at Bunbury and Burwardsley inhabitants would have had to travel there to express their communities' views and take their turn in the respective offices required of them within the vestry. Vestry meetings were chaired by the incumbent of the parish, who had both an ecclesiastical and a civil duty. The minutes were kept by a clerk. Two churchwardens, a constable, waywardens and overseers were also members, submitting their accounts to be "allowed" at the annual meeting.



Bunbury Church in which the Church Vestry meetings were held prior to the 1894 Local Government Act

From our investigations into the Bunbury Vestry records Burwardsley and its inhabitants seem to have played little part in parish affairs, although parishioners must have served at some period as officers. Certainly the village supplied an Overseer of the Poor at the end of the 19th century, and a chance reference to this occurs in the first Minute Book of the newly formed Burwardsley Parish Council. The office of Overseer dates back to 1572 when overseers distributed relief to the poor of the parish, and for this purpose a rate was levied on each parish and collectors were appointed to receive the money for distribution by the overseers to the needy. After 1834 overseers' duties were restricted to the collection of the Poor Rate, and paid relieving officers were made responsible for the allocation of money in the relief of poverty.

1894 AND THE PARISH COUNCIL

The office of overseer in Burwardsley proved itself to be historic in another connection in 1894, for it was on the initiative of the overseer, Mr William Phillips, that a meeting was held to nominate candidates for the formation of a parish council. The formation of Rural District Councils and Parish Councils took place in 1894 when the greater part of the administrative powers of the Vestry passed into the hands of parish councillors, and when self-government may be truly be said to have begun.

Burwardsley Parish Council Minute Book Finte Parish Meeting Board School 18941. Dee 4 M'William Phillips Tom' acting on helary office Father the overseer opened the meeting proposed that the Rev I'll Wandbrough take the chair which was seconded by W hunce and Carried The Chair man then proceeded to receive the Nomination papers for candidates for Parist Connect Which were an follows the first Seren being checked by show of heards the remaining the detering thereby avoiding a Poll _ 1 Allman James 12. Booth John 33 But John 30 Carr Richard Junt. 29 Mance Williams 24 Lathan Hours 24 7. Phillips Williams Jun! 34 Bowher volue 21 Benson Fudicial. 16 Hughes Charles. 23 Alecton John 23 Wharton Joseph 2.1 Worth Charles. 23

Photo of Minute Book

This first meeting was held in the then Board School, and from thirteen candidates who presented themselves for nomination, seven were elected to form the first council, and one candidate was elected to represent Burwardsley on the newly-formed Rural District Council of Tarvin. The first meeting was held in December 1894 when the Chairman and Vice Chairman were elected. Declarations were signed and witnessed: Mr Edward Woolley was appointed Assistant Overseer at a salary of £8 per annum; Messrs Parrs Bank of Chester was to be asked to accept the position of Treasurers to the Council, five Trustees were appointed to distribute local "Doles" or Charities, and finally a rate of one old penny in the pound was to be levied to cover Council expenses.

By November 1895 two Overseers and one Assistant Overseer had been appointed; the minutes of meetings record that the Overseers were to be issued with the Precept of the Parish Council in the sum of £8 to cover Council expenses, which were signed, and conditions were made upon which the office of Assistant Overseer should be held. These were:

- 1. That the Rates as collected be paid into Messrs Williams Bank, Tattenhall, on the Tuesday after collection in the joint names of the overseers, and that drafts on that fund be signed by the Overseers jointly and countersigned by the Assistant Overseer.
- **2**. The tenure of office of the Assistant Overseer be terminable at six months' notice on either side.
- **3**. That the Assistant Overseer be insured for £100. A later entry shows that the Insurance Premium of fifteen shillings per annum was paid to insure the Rates.
- **4**. That the Assistant Overseer be Clerk to the Parish Council at a salary of £8 per annum

At this meeting Mr Peter Brooks of Rose Cottage was appointed as Assistant Overseer and Clerk to the Parish Council, an office which he held for 20 years.

From 1896 onwards minutes of the meeting indicate the problems and difficulties of a rural area, and show the efforts of the Councillors to solve them.

April 1896: Proposed...that a Memorial be presented to the Rural District Council representing unnecessary expense incurred in carting road materials from Bickerton Hill quarries, and suggesting that they be carted from Rock Farm quarry in Burwardsley.

December 1896 – Proposed...that the state of the bye way past Mr Dawson's cottage be brought before the notice of the District Councillor and that he be requested to take necessary steps with a view to repairing the same.

April 1897 – A discussion on the state of the road past Mr T Dawson's house then followed ... Proposed...that a committee be appointed to inspect the road and procure an estimate and report their decisions to the council.

A further development took place in May 1897 when it was proposed...that the District Council be requested to divert the rainwater which now flows down the lane or bye way passing behind Mr Dawson's cottage, and which, in stormy weather, causes much damage, and that the Clerk to communicate this resolution to the District Council. At the same meeting it was resolved... that the occupiers on either side of the said road or bye way be respectfully requested to dress the hedge abutting on to the said road. Evidently the committee of inspection had found neglected and overgrown hedges and the Council was exercising its right to have this matter dealt with by the tenants of the property ... so as to prevent the matter being carried to the District Council.

May 1987 – Further news of developments in the matter of the repair of the road "A letter read from Tarvin Rural District Council ... they had given instructions to Mr Hughs, Surveyor, to give his attention to the complaint made by this Council."

It was also reported at this meeting that the overgrown hedges had been attended to and it was decided to deal with the matter of the bye road at the next meeting. This took place in July when Councillors were told that the Rural District Council had not yet decided how to dispose of the surplus water. Eventually some means of doing this must have been found for, in April 1898, the Parish Council was authorised to carry out the repair at a cost not exceeding £1.

It was rather ironic that the Council should have a problem in dealing with surplus water for the one matter which was brought before many meetings of the Council was the lack of water and references to it were constantly appearing in the Minute Book.

THE VILLAGE WATER SUPPLY

Originally there was no pump in Burwardsley, and the people had to rely on the natural springs and brooks for water for drinking and household purposes, as well as for supplying water for the animals. At times the supply was very limited so causing a great deal of hardship for everyone. It is hardly surprising that the matter should be raised at the second meeting of the Council when it was proposed to sink a well under Ridding Bank. No more was heard of this, however, and at the next meeting it was proposed that a roadside cistern be put up near the Chapel, the cost to be defrayed by public subscription. This was evidently done though there is no indication as to the date, but a reference to the well, then called the Town Well, occurs in April 1909.

"....A letter being read from Mr F W Jackson (who unfortunately died in the flu epidemic of 1918) drawing their attention to the condition of the well known as the Town Well and also other wells of water. Proposed...a committee be appointed to inspect the Town Well and also suggest some scheme of enclosure and obtain an estimate of cost."

From this it seems that as the well was not enclosed it was open to cattle so that the water became muddy and unfit for use.



The recess in the wall opposite the chapel, which for many years housed a water trough. The town well appears to be in the field immediately above this recess.

"24 May, 1909 – The question of covering in the well by Mr Jackson's farm (the former Willow Hill Farm, now Candle Workshops) and also of enclosing the Town Well was again brought before the meeting ...it was proposed that Mr Carter, District Surveyor, be asked to give his advice and practical help of a labourer to do the work if the Council find material. Also proposed that Mr Carter be asked to clear out and provide space for the water to lodge opposite, so as persons can use it to water cattle. Also proposed that Mr F W Jackson of Hill Farm get the well opposite his house covered and defray the cost by Public Subscription if possible."

July 1909 – When the Council met on this occasion they considered a proposal by Mr G Barbour of Bolesworth Castle to construct a tank on a waste piece of land. No objection was raised to this provided that any parishioners could draw water from it in time of need.

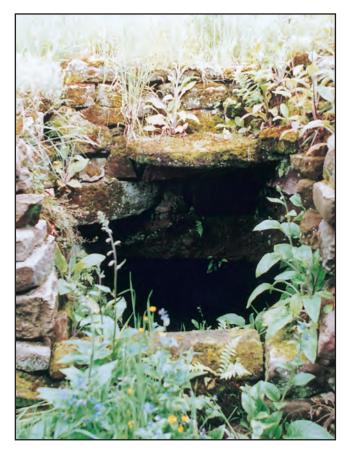
17 March 1913 – At this meeting Councillors were concerned about the enclosure of land opposite to the Town Well. They were afraid that they would be denied access to the water which was in good supply there. One member was detailed to find out whether the land was to be enclosed, and to report to the next meeting. No report was entered in the Minute Book, but it seems that the matter was referred to the Rural District Council. Evidently some action was taken, for 3 October has an entry "... the Chairman said he wished to draw the attention of the meeting to the unsatisfactory state of... the Town Well and pump." The proposal which followed asked the representative on the Rural District Council to enquire if the work was finished and to complain of the unsatisfactory state of the work on the well.

In 1914 the Rural District Council proposed to collect the water from the local springs and supply the bulk of the houses by gravitation, but the Local Council decided that this would be too expensive. Another scheme put forward by the District Council in 1927 was to cost £5.000. This was considered to be too great a sum to be raised in Burwardsley and so the matter was left until 1934 when a representative of the Rural District Council came to explain another scheme for the supply of water. This was more successful and by March 1936 complaints were being made that the water mains were not available everywhere, so indicating that a piped supply had been brought to at least part of the parish. After 1938 there are no more entries concerning water so it can be assumed that this problem had been solved.

In 1984 there were numerous complaints about the poor water supply. A new mains system was finally installed in 1989 in the lower village though the people of Higher Burwardsley had to wait a little longer. It was quite common during this time for there to be no water at all to households during milking time when water demand by the farms was at a maximum.



Well at Sandhole (now Sandhollow Farm) which served the house in winter, but dried up in the summer months.



The Well (now filled in) at Sunnyside, Higher Burwardsley. *Note the ledge for the buckets

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

The Parish Councillors of 1894 onwards would have welcomed electricity had it been available then for their meetings were held by candlelight and the accounts from 1894 to 1903 show an expenditure of one shilling for stamps and candles. In 1945 a proposal to bring electricity to the parish was a popular step and an installation was made in 1947/1948. So Burwardsley, after a very long period of waiting, had at last a good supply of water and light.

MANAGING THE PARISH National and Parochial Matters

Most of the business transacted at local Council meetings was parochial in character, but occasionally other events of a wider interest were discussed as in May 1902 when a meeting was called to consider how the Coronation of Edward VII should be celebrated. The Local Government Board gave local councils permission to levy a rate not exceeding three old pennies in the pound but, at Burwardsley, it was decided to ask for voluntary subscriptions instead. Collectors were to collect first from their landlords and then from the other people in their area. The proceeds of the collection were to be used in giving a tea to the children and old people of Burwardsley.

Another entry in 1916 indicates the payment of National Insurance by the Clerk of the Council. The scheme began in 1911 but until 1916 the Clerk did not ask for any help in paying this annual sum, when the minutes show that he asked for his salary to be raised or else for the Insurance to be paid for him. The annual sum for payment amounted to twenty three shillings and this was paid for him by the Council rather than increase his salary.

The only reference to the First World War occurs in August 1915 when a subscription list was opened to help Belgian refugees. There is no indication as to the amount raised but it is clear that the fund remained open for nine months.

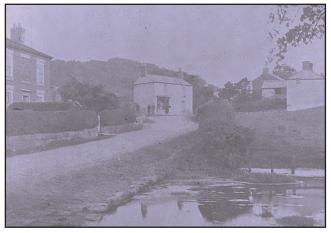
The remaining entries deal with purely local matters, for example the appointment of the first local Managers for the School: hitherto it had been called a Board School and had not had local representatives on its management committee. Another entry deals with the cleaning out of the Marl Pit which had evidently become a place in which to dump rubbish – the cleaning cost £16 10s. The year 1920 brought a scheme for a local fire engine: Burwardsley Parish Council agreed to join the scheme put forward by the Rural District Council and there is evidence that they paid a subscription towards it in 1931.

From 1923 - 1925 efforts were made to put up a Public Telephone in the parish. The cost was to be £18, of which Major Barbour guaranteed to pay half. The Council could not levy a rate to pay the remaining sum of £9 so this sum was to be raised by public subscription.

Other proposals dealt with improvements and the widening of roads which even in 1925 were considered narrow and dangerous for traffic, and with the granting of a half day holiday per week to the postman, to which no objection was raised, while other entries show the gradual raising of the Assistant Overseer's salary of £8 to £12 in 1923, and from £12 to £16 in 1925 to cover the cost of journeys in the rate collection. In 1930 Burwardsley and Harthill were combined for the purpose of representation on the Rural District Council, and it seems that from this time the Clerk to the Parish Council had fewer responsibilities, for his salary then was assessed at £1. From that it was raised to £1 14s in 1933 and it remained at that figure until 1945.

1946 saw the filling in of the marl pit at the roadside by Well Cottage. Marl had regularly been dug from pits in this area to spread over fields to improve fertility when cow dung was insufficient to serve the purpose.

These pits were dug in clay and then usually filled up with water to become ponds.



The Marl Pit or the Village Pond in Burwardsley Road, in need of clearing



The Site of the Marl Pit which was filled in in 1946 and now used for parking vehicles and the council's snow plough

It would appear that this one, being next to the road, was convenient for tipping rubbish and so eventually had to be filled in to prevent this site becoming an eyesore. The same year also saw victory celebrations for the end of the war.

In 1952 the Parish Council became affiliated to the County Parish Councils Association for the annual fee of 10s. 6d. per year. At the same time the clerk's salary was raised to £2 10s. per annum.

1953 proved to be a busy year for the Parish Council when Mr Ravenscroft, the new Head of Burwardsley school, became clerk (until 1956). There then proved to be a very noticeable improvement in both legibility and clarity of Parish Council minutes! This was also the year of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II and great festivities were planned by the Coronation Committee, who were also entrusted with money allocated by the Education Authority. In the same year the Parish Council were busy compiling an up-to-date map of local footpaths which were to be submitted to Tarvin Rural District Council. Four years after the initial submission of footpaths for the survey of public rights of way, matters had still not been resolved. It would seem that many paths, which had been considered to be no longer in use, were still scheduled on the survey. The Parish Council was dismayed that, after all their

care and attention to detail, their efforts had been ignored and resolved to protest to Cheshire County Council but without any success. Even today the problem is not completely solved.

Mr Fleet proposed the need for a telephone kiosk in Higher Burwardsley and this was finally installed in 1954 – though, it would seem, without lighting.



The Lutyens' style telephone kiosk with additional 1990 "utilities"

The closure of the Chester to Whitchurch passenger train service in 1957 caused much hardship as this passed through Tattenhall Station. The local bus service was hard pressed to cope with the increase in passengers, especially the schoolchildren.

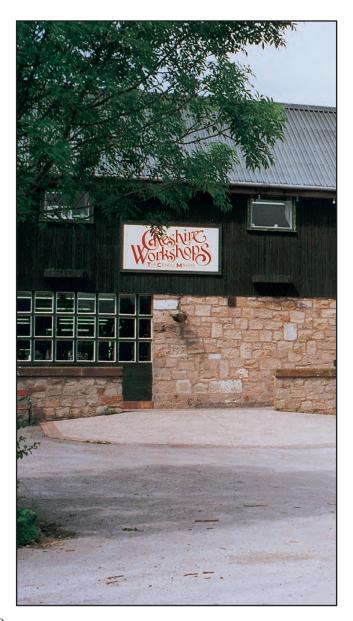
It was in 1959 that the village school underwent a dramatic change. The Education Committee decided that Burwardsley school should be brought into line with the rest of the country, having separate teaching facilities for secondary children. This was greeted with dismay as it meant that secondary age children were to be transferred to Tattenhall Secondary School, with no special transport laid on for them, despite the pleas of the Parish Council.

Several proposals were put forward in 1965 to improve the village, one of which was for litter bins. These were finally installed in 1999! It is also reported that name boards on the roads were put up, but these certainly could not have lasted long as the present day Parish Council is once again considering road signs.

No minutes are recorded for the years 1969 to 1972, as there were no parish council meetings. Enthusiasm had waned. Mrs Beatrice Mayhew of Whittlesfield then revived it in 1973 and became the driving force until she left the area in 1989.

THE CANDLE WORKSHOPS AND TRAFFIC

1974 was a turning point in the history of Burwardsley, when planning permission for the change of use of the old Willow Hill Farm was applied for. The Parish Council showed such concern when the application came in that it was decided that, in the case of future controversial applications, a public notice of the application should be posted in the village. Little did the Council know what was to come. Also in that year it was noted that there were 17 empty properties – all assumed to belong to the Bolesworth Estate - together with 67 households. In contrast, there are today 76 households and no empty houses.



Three years later the small business that Ann Sanderson and her father had started in her cottage, Meshach, making sand candles, was growing rapidly, having transferred to the old Willow Hill Farm on Barracks Lane. The business had moved initially from Meshach to the empty White Cottage across the road (now rebuilt as Hillside

House) and then to Willow Hill Farm, subsequently to be known as the Cheshire Candle Workshops.

In 1980 the Workshops burnt down in a very spectacular fire. The manufacturing side immediately moved up to Cawley Lodge Farm where unused cow stalls were converted into a workshop. Fortunately it was during the summer when this occurred and the cows were out to grass. However, many a cow came in to calve amidst the smell of molten wax! The Candle Workshops



STORY vid Parry Jo

PICTURES







The Parish Council in their minutes expressed concern that "in due course the Cheshire Workshops might expand even further, thus bringing an even greater volume of traffic into the village".

reopened in August 1981.



some buildings



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Chapter Five PARISH AFFAIRS

Councillor Sanderson (co-owner of the Workshops with his wife Ann) shared this concern and said that the Workshops did not intend to expand their tourist trade".

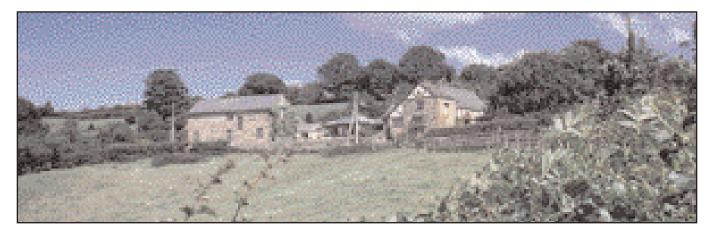


The Candle Workshops at the millennium.

In the Parish Council meeting the following month further misgivings about increased volume of traffic etc were again aired. This was with some justification as by 1983 the minutes recorded complaints about the volume of traffic going up and down the hill to the workshops. Indeed, on Bank Holidays people who lived at the top of the hill were effectively marooned as the traffic in the lane was at a standstill, queuing from below the Methodist Chapel right into the car park of the Workshops and blocking all the

junctions. Today the Workshops are not as busy but it is still common to see coaches, having missed the right turn at the Pheasant, struggling to back down or even to turn round by Darius Cottage. The concrete raised path by the post office also bears the scars of many a coach trying to turn left to Harthill.

The Pheasant Inn, under the licensee, David Greenhaugh, underwent a major expansion in 1985. The old barn, with its ugly monopitch corrugated roof, was converted into luxury accommodation and a conservatory was also added to take advantage of the wonderful views over the Cheshire Plain. In 1990 a strange discovery was made at The Hollows when Mr and Mrs Carter put their house up for sale. When the purchaser's solicitor came to do the searches he discovered a footpath that actually should have passed through their kitchen! This may have been one of the footpaths that had fallen out of use during the 1953 submission of footpaths to Tarvin Rural District Council, though according to Dennis Dutton, one of the oldest inhabitants, there was never a footpath anywhere near the Hollows! As a consequence, a new footpath was signposted alongside the Hollows but this is so steep as to be almost unusable!



The Pheasant Inn at the turn of the century. The old barn on the left converted to bedrooms and the conservatory added to take advantage of the views.



Joseph Windsor and Joey Wharton in a chandry, outside the bakery at Balshazzar

All the roads in Burwardsley are narrow but none so steep and narrow as that up to the Pheasant and beyond. That is the route that the milk tankers have to take to go to Outlanes, Willow Hill and Cawley Lodge Farms.



So it was in 1994 that the village saw the increase in size of milk tankers from 10 tonne to 26 tonne with some trepidation. No doubt the drivers felt the same! What a vast change in transport in under 100 years, from chandry (horse and cart) to 26 tonne tankers and 50 seater coaches, reflecting the advances in engineering and technology – but is it really progress? The problem is that the roads were designed for horses and carts and not modern coaches.



Country lanes are not designed for coaches

COUNCILLORS' SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

What does emerge from a study of the records of the Parish Council is the long service and regular attendance of its members, and it is due to the efforts of these men and women that so much has been done to improve conditions locally. On their shoulders have rested the burdens of local government, and it is due to them and their like everywhere that local and District Councils have proved their value and worth to the community.

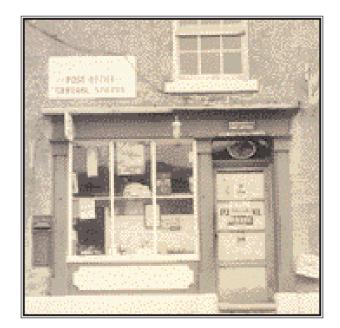
It can be seen that elections were first held annually; then from 1901 onwards every three years, until the First World War when a break of six years occurs; then again from 1937 when a break of nine years occurs owing to the 1939-1945 war.

Costs of elections of Councillors were met by levying 4d from each farmer in 1910; by 1932 costs had risen and a levy of 1s 3d was made upon each member of the Council. These records show the long years of service given by many Councillors. At present, our longest serving parish councillor is Mike Hanson of Cawley Lodge farm, having clocked up an impressive 25 years of service, including a short spell as Chairman.



Councillor Mike Hanson of Cawley Lodge Farm, 25 years' service and still going strong

A List of Parish Councillors from 1894 to the end of the 20th century is included in the Appendix.



Chapter Six RURAL LEARNING

Chapter Six RURAL LEARNING

VILLAGE EDUCATION

The Village School

The earliest known school in Burwardsley appears to have been a Dame School operating in Cherry Cottage and to have been in existence in the early 18th century. The teaching was done in the room which is now the kitchen, in the corner of which is a small recess where it is claimed that the dunces and troublesome children were placed to encourage them to mend their ways.



Cherry Tree Cottage, housed a Dame School in the early 18th century. The house has stayed in the ownership of the same family ever since.

It is difficult to discover whether there was another school in Burwardsley at this time. A record of a 1725 endowment deed providing £20 per annum by the Marquess of Cholmondeley for the education of some 96 boys and girls in the parish leads one to believe that a much larger building existed elsewhere in the village in order to accommodate such numbers. Although education at this time was by no means compulsory it is an amazing fact that there were 96 children between the ages of 4 and 12 living in the parish and in need of education. Families of eight or more children were not uncommon at this time, but all members of a family had to do their share of work within the family before and after attending a school to read and write.

Following Lord Cholmondeley's endowment and probably associated with it, in the same year, a petition was addressed to seventeen 'enclosing landlords' asking for the allotment of part of the 'waste' (unenclosed common and woodland) in the village at that time to be made available for purchase by them. This land would be allocated as a school site. The requirement for education sought by the villagers is predictable but the geographical scale of their expectations is surprising. They complained that there was no school even for teaching reading either in or within three miles of Burwardsley.

Their request was for a school building with rooms for the master "for promoting and encouraging learning, especially in the meaner sort who were not able to send their children abroad to be taught". They looked for a master who could write well, was skilled in arithmetic and was conformable to the Church of England. He had to be suitable "to instruct, to read, write and cast accounts, the children of the poor; and also take a reasonable yearly sum for the teaching of such persons not in the Poor Book". Despite the petitioners' plea, however, it would appear that no land or school was provided and the children were taught in the church from about 1730. This appears to be confirmed by an entry in The Cheshire Directory of 1850 which states that the Chapel of Ease was used as a day school with an endowment of £10 per annum.

orgs Bird gout for Stous House for Williamon for toudington finchall Loudr pools. an Sullows for bonder Has thil You for Dowingtons tos Latin Bild Martha Hook Ron Elless for M Bir & Soud

The 1607 entry for the Poor Law Collection at Burwardsley

In 1860 a new school building was constructed on the glebe land adjoining the church; it was known locally as "The Drill Hall" and it was said to be for "preaching and teaching". Both the 1850 and 1860 Census returns indicate that a Mr Joseph Parsons was the schoolmaster. The 1851 Census shows that the village population was at an all time high with 470 persons recorded as domiciled in the parish. The numbers of children of school age would have been considerable and the schoolmaster must have been relieved to have had presented to him in 1860 a purposedesigned school instead of the use of the nave of the church. The 1870 Education Act provided that an "elementary school be set up in areas where school provision was insufficient". Local Education Boards were set up to manage such schools which became known as Board Schools. So, in 1876 with legislation now establishing the principle that all children must receive an elementary education, the "Drill Hall" became the Burwardsley Board School accommodating 44 children "most of whom had never attended school before". A new headmaster, Mr Alexander Winkley, was appointed to run the school with no doubt the assistance of a small staff and the inevitable 'school monitors'.



The School, built in 1860, known locally as the Drill Hall.The first headmaster was Joseph Parsons

1876 " Burwards ley Board School opened this week although the building of the class room and other improvements are not completed. Entered seventeen names in the Admission Register. The children seem fairly well-Schaved. Lug 14" Twenty frish scholars admitted, and others during the weeks making a total forty - four. Found many had not allended any schoolars previously All very bachward in 3 Rs. 25th Mumbers steadily increasing Made a rough classification according to ability to read to. Sewing taught on two afternoons by Mrs Povell. The infants have made considerable progress in the Alphabet this week. The scholars are learning to perf. general orders, all together.

The opening page of the Burwardsley School Log Book 1876

The School Log for the end of the first week reads:

"Burwardsley Board School opened this week, although the building of the class-room and other improvements are not completed. Entered seventeen names in the Admission Register. The children seem fairly well behaved.

Twenty fresh scholars admitted, and others during the week, making a total of forty-four. Found many had not attended any school previously. All very backward in 3Rs.

Numbers steadily increasing. Made a rough classification according to the ability to read. Sewing taught on two afternoons by Mrs Povell.

The infants have made considerable progress on the alphabet this week. The scholars are learning to perform general orders all together."

The log for the week of 26 October 1877 reads:

"Had occasion to reprove the girls for mixing with the boys in play. Multiplication class incorrect in their work."

The girls and boys obviously had separate playgrounds and when eagle eyes had wandered they had drifted together!

Mr Winkley, however, only stayed until October 1878, with his final recording of:

"Notice which I gave the Board expired yesterday. Have given a holiday today to get ready for leaving. Now close my engagement here, not with much regret, as it is a lonely place."

Mr Jones then took over and stayed for six years until his retirement due to ill health in October 1884. During his tenure Mr Jones obviously did not enjoy a good attendance rate as shown by the following entries, which also show the frequency of half-day holidays given for local events. It appears he thought it prudent to give a holiday if he guessed the children wouldn't attend anyway.

August 12th "The tea-party which the children had been patiently waiting for took place this afternoon. The scholars walked in procession

from school under the superintendence of myself and Mr J Spencer to a building kindly lent by Mr J Wharton for the purpose. After tea, the scholars proceeded to Mr J Wharton's field where they indulged in various games and afterwards returned to the building where they sang a few sacred songs and cheered lustily for the treat enjoyed."

August 19th "Children rather given to disorder this week. Had occasion to use the cane too often. Ordinary progress."

August 26th "Attendance this and previous week not so satisfactory as the corresponding period of last year. Caned one scholar (Job Povall) for playing truant. Sewing as usual."

September 2nd "Standard N, M and V commenced to work sums from arithmetic books and have made fair progress. Steady progress in other subjects."

September 9th "Gave all standards an exam in dictation and found them much below the requirements. Many children kept at home for 'potato getting'. Sewing as usual."

September 16th "Weekly average = 49. The attendance officer (Mr J Adams) called in as usual this week and was furnished with a list of irregular attendees to each of whom he promised to send attendance forms. Steady progress in 3Rs."

September 23rd "Gave half holiday on Thursday this week to give the children and opportunity of seeing the Agricultural Show at Tattenhall. Poor attendance during the week."

According to Keith-Chalmers' historical notes in 'Home Words', the School Board were fortunate in 1884 to secure the services of Mr Joseph Poole as schoolmaster, to bale out the school "now in a deplorable backward condition, owing to the previous master's illness". The staff strengthened in 1887 by the appointment of an assistant mistress, Miss Wilson of Yarmouth, to instruct the infants and the girls in sewing, and to play the organ in church on Sundays. What a find!

The improvement was remarkable, as the table shows:

Year	Master	Passes	Grant	Merit Grant	
1883	Wm Jones	63%	£17 18s 0d	Nil	
1883	Report:	Results are very poor. The infants are backward. My Lords will be compelled to enforce Act 115 (ie reduce grant earned)			
1886	Jos Poole	84.4%	£46 6s 0d	Good	
1886	Report:	The school is proceeding very satisfactorily. The work was neat and was fairly accurate. The infants were in good order and pass fairly. J Poole teaches well and maintains good order in the school. (T S Gleadows Esq Inspector)			
1888	Jos Poole	96.3%	£77 14s 0d	Excellent	
1888	Report:	English has been well taught and percentages are excellent. The infants pass well and needlework gives better results. Order good.			

The prizes were given by the vicar and distributed by Miss Barbour: a certificate to every child who passed H M Inspectors' examination, together with 40 books to those who had made over 390 attendances and three special medals to the best boy and girl in the school and to one boy who had not missed school once.

By 1889 the school was splitting at the seams and children of non-parishioners had had to be dismissed. However 127 children remained on the books and alterations had to take place. The partition wall between the infants' and large school room was taken out and one of Messrs Hodkinson and Co's patent 'Revolving Shutter Screens' with glass panelled service door – easily removed and soundproof – was put in. The school was also decorated at the Vicar's expense and during the summer the parish entertained 83 children from the slums of Liverpool. What a long and exciting day out this must have been for them.

An extract from Malpas Deanery Magazine for 1897 showed a grant of nineteen shillings per head on an average attendance of 55 mixed school and seventeen shillings per head on 26 of the infants, besides £10 population grant.

In order to accommodate the increased demands of the school the building was more than doubled in size in 1903 with the addition of a large hall on the road side of the existing Drill Hall.



View of Burwardsley School from the rear showing the "Drill Hall" in the foreground and the 1903 additions towards the road

Throughout the record of the school log, which goes from 1876 to 1921, the school was regularly closed for blackberry and bilberry picking, heavy snow falls, etc. Once it was even closed so that a wedding party could be held there. School holidays seemed to be much more fluid than today and were often moved around to suit local events and even the painting of the school. In the early years of the 20th century the effects of influenza were much more dangerous than today.

There was a notable epidemic in 1897 and a very serious outbreak in 1918, with telegrams flying backwards and forwards between the Ministry of Health and the school. The school was forced to close completely from November 1st to December 16th. The school roll at this time was 88 and many children walked up from Tattenhall, 3 miles away, to attend.

In 1903 the County Council took over the responsibility of the Board School. The headmaster at that time was Mr Henry Sandbach who served the school from 1896 to 1938. He remains something of a local legend in Burwardsley, where many of his old pupils still live and have amusing tales to tell.

> Mr Henry Sandbach, headmaster from 1896 to 1938

Until 1944 all pupils stayed at Burwardsley school until the age of 15. It was in 1944 however that the 11+ exam was introduced and those that passed had to travel to Chester or Whitchurch – usually by train from Tattenhall – to attend the grammar schools. On the closure of this railway line in 1957 Crosville bus company was called upon to transport these children. The remainder of the children stayed on at Burwardsley until the age of 15. In 1959 it was decided to bring Burwardsley school in line with other schools and it was changed into a primary school only, the older children going to Tattenhall to the secondary school. This was not a popular move with Burwardsley people, especially as Burwardsley was too close - according to the County – for transport to be provided for them. These children then had to walk or cycle the three miles to Tattenhall and back every day. It was particularly arduous for those who lived at the top of the hill in Higher Burwardsley, especially with a heavy satchel, when, more often than not, jobs on the farm had also to be completed that evening as well as schoolwork. The last headmaster of the school was Mr Ravenscroft from 1952 to 1965.

Tattenhall Secondary School closed in the mid 1970s and now all children in the area are bussed to Malpas to the Bishop Heber High School.

The old primary school is now used as a residential Outdoor Education School for primary children throughout Cheshire, run by Brenda Clark, who took over from John Jones, the first Warden. John opened the doors in September 1971 amidst much apprehension by

local people who thought it might be a type of approved school! Today, mainly thanks to John's efforts, the Field Centre is well integrated into the community. It specialises in teaching children to recognise and appreciate flora and fauna and the country way of life and also gives valuable lessons in community living – something in which the Burwardsley children of old needed no instruction!



Some of the visiting children at the Field Centre

So, education in Burwardsley has passed through many stages from that given in a house, to the church, to the Board School, to the Council school, to Field Centre. No better use could have been made of the old school buildings than to provide a "love of the countryside education" for the urban children of Cheshire, the Wirral and Liverpool.



A group of visiting schoolchildren actively engaged in finding out more about the countryside



A school photograph circa 1947

From left to right:

Back row - Joey Wharton, Harry Windsor, Mrs. Doonan, Joyce Hopley, Frank Dutton.

Middle row - Sheila Tydd, Violet Wilkinson, John Harding, Ruth Hassall, Freda Harding.

Sitting on front - Harry Hughes, Denis Tydd.

A school group with the last headmaster Mr. Ravenscroft probably taken in the late 1950's

From left to right:

Back row - unknown, Lawrence Parsons, John Williams, Michael Jones, Harry Hewitt, unknown, Eileen Tydd.

Middle row - Michael Horton, Philip Benson, Wallace Dutton, Trevor Blezzard, Keith Hopley, Brian Weaver.

Front row - Dorothy Dutton, Janet Harding, unknown, Margaret Wilkinson, Jean Benson, Doreen Harding, Mavis Hughes.



THOUGHTS ABOUT BURWARDSLEY SCHOOL

By Anne Laing, former teacher at Burwardsley School

I went to teach at Burwardsley School in January 1958. We had just moved to Handley Rectory. I was offered a temporary post as there was a vacancy due to the resignation of the infants teacher. At one time she had been Head Teacher but had lost her hearing. When I arrived it took the pupils a long time to realise there was nothing wrong with my hearing and I learned a few choice words.

Burwardsley was still a remote rural community. Most people were farmers or smallholders or worked on the farms or were employed by the Barbour (Bolesworth) or Tollemache estates. The village had a post office within the village shop. As well as the church there was the Methodist chapel in the village and this had a very faithful congregation and has only recently closed. There was still a roadman employed by the council. Very few new houses had been built in the village. There was a very useful village hall which is still flourishing and well maintained. The village was served by few buses. Most people got about by bicycle. The school, a very well-built structure, had good accommodation for the seventy-odd children who were taught there. There was a good hall, two class-rooms which could be made into one with sliding doors, two cloakrooms – one for the boys and one for the girls – and a very lovely playing field with delightful views. How I used to enjoy taking my class out there to work in the summer.

The School Managers were Richard Barbour (Chairman) – the 'Lord of the Manor', a much respected farmer, Mrs Fleet, a farmer's wife who had been a teacher, and the vicar. Burwardsley had its own vicar. Merging parishes was only just beginning to take place. There were probably other managers as well and the correspondence to the Manager would come from the County Education Office. The palatial County Hall was not built then.

The Head Teacher, Charles Ravenscroft, had a house opposite the school. He was there until the mid-sixties, having come there after the previous Head had had to leave. He retired from there, and lived in the house until he died.

I had come from one of Lancashire's Residential Special Schools and so it was a great change for me. The children came from hard-working families, many on very low wages.

People from Higher Burwardsley who picked and sold bilberries reckoned to use this money to buy the children's shoes. If the children lived on farms or smallholdings, they would have had to have helped with the milking, cleaning out the animals, and chopping up mangolds and Swedes in winter for fodder – all before going to school. They were often late and sometimes had not even time to change. Some of the old Cheshire words continued in their vocabulary – buckets were 'bowks' and forks were 'yilvers'. Having been brought up on a farm in Cheshire I mostly knew to what they were referring. Often they came to school so tired, which was not surprising.

The people who worked at the school were good souls, 'salt of the earth'. Mrs Vernon, who lived in the cottage opposite the church, kept the school clean, whilst Mr Vernon kept the school heated. They were helped by their daughter-inlaw, Mrs Houghton, who lived in Upper Burwardsley and cooked excellent dinners on the premises. My mouth waters now when I think of her boiled mutton. No mutton these days! Her puddings too – the good old country sort – were delicious. It was excellent that some of the children who had long journeys to school had a good, hot midday meal. Other children brought packed lunches. Free dinners were served, too. Parents and grandparents of the children remembered when there had been an old kitchen type range in the Infant Classroom and a family could bring a hotpot or a cottage pie and have it heated in the oven to eat together at lunchtime. When school dinners began to be cooked in the 30's they cost one shilling a week. These were subsidised by local people giving their surplus fruit and vegetables. Often only the meat had to be bought. This may have happened at Burwardsley. I can remember these dinners well at Malpas Junior School. I do not know at what date the canteen had been added.

Although we were not a Church School we always had our Harvest Festival at Church on the Friday of the week when the village were holding theirs. The school always did the flowers in Church for the month of June when the foxgloves were in bloom. Mrs Ravenscroft always helped us as she was a very artistic lady.

Winters were certainly harder then. There was usually a week when I was not able to get to the school because of the snow drifts. By the same token, the children could not get in either. If the snow began to fall during a school day a decision had to be made whether to close the school or send home those children who lived at a distance.

I had horrendous struggles up to Peckforton Gap to take one family home in my car. (Even when the school became an annexe to Tattenhall and two men on the staff this still fell to my lot!)

Willow Hill was a lovely site to use for nature study. It was populated by foxes and had badger setts. There was one strange incident when we found about nine large white cockerels laid out in a circle, heads to the centre, and one wondered what had been going on up there.

The school became smaller and I left to join the staff of the Church of England Junior School in Tattenhall. Then began a very different era and I came back to Burwardsley again to teach as it was used as an annexe to the Tattenhall Primary School. This new school (in Tattenhall) was to be rebuilt as an open plan school and so the school was preparing for this. Teachers shared classrooms and numbers were so much bigger. The children were bussed night and morning to and from Tattenhall to the Burwardsley school. The playing field became well used and the playgrounds were marked out for various activities.

In the past, Blackberry Week and Potato Week were when the children were given a holiday to help with the picking. This has now become the October half term. At planting time and harvest time the children were often absent as everyone had to help. The attendance officer tried to get them back into school but with limited success.

When I went the equipment was old and scarce, as were books, and difficult to replace. The children who passed the 11+ (formerly the Scholarship) went to the grammar (boys) and high (girls) schools in Chester. The girls went out to have cookery in the Jubilee Hall at Malpas. I taught Needlework. Sadly, this is lacking from the curriculum today.

There were highlights to the year. One was the Deanery Sports, still being held, which had originally started as a Picnic and Sports given for the children of the Deanery at Bolesworth Castle. They were taken originally in horse-drawn carts. I suppose people changed at the Castle and so the Deanery Clergy and teachers took over the organisation. What rivalry there was between the schools! There were shields and cups to be vied for. They are still awarded. They were given by various people – the Comber Cup by a previous Rector of Handley and the Packman Shield by a wealthy family from Tilston. The venue moved round the Deanery schools but at present is held annually at Bishop Heber High School in Malpas.

The other annual occasion was a trip which was run by the railway, picking up at Tattenhall Road station for the local schools. They went as far afield as Blackpool, Holyhead, York, Windermere and London. I went on one to London and one to the Lake District. Parents and grandparents joined our outings. It really was quite an adventure for them.



Nancy Stokes and Audrey Ryder, two of the ladies of the Outdoor Education Centre during John Jones wardenship.

REMINISCENCES OF JOHN JONES First warden of the field centre



I had just opened the Centre in 1971 and the cook was Mrs Ena Hall, a pillar of the local community, especially the Methodist Church. One afternoon I brought into

the Centre a piece of ragwort to show her the striking colours of the Cinnabar Moth caterpillars that covered it. She said, and I quote, "Don't you dare bring that mare's fart into my kitchen". Her hand shot to her mouth and her face turned a nice red. I didn't ask her to repeat!

As I travelled into the village past Tom and Arthur Large's farmhouse (Sandhollow Farm on Harthill Road) I invariably gave them a lift, especially on pension day. One May morning Tom got in as usual with his shopping bag and remarked on the weather. Further on, before Ridding Bank, I had to slow down for a couple of walkers and then after Curdlands he said – "These 'ere kedlocks are a blooming nuisance." He had a twirly moustache and, with his local dialect, I was not quite sure if he was swearing about the walkers or what? When we got to the Post Office I said "Do you see these kedlocks often?" He turned and looked at me and said "They're all over the blooming place" and pointed to the hedge bank which was covered with cow parsley!



A large clump of cow parsley which grows profusely along Harthill Road

About 1980 I kept a few sheep and a couple of pygmy goats at the Centre and one day Eddy Fowles from

Pennsylvania rang and asked if I could spare a bale of hay. I said yes if he would fetch it. He came along in his Land Rover and as usual any one who called at the Centre was offered tea or coffee. We went into the Day Room. Over the years I had taught myself to stuff birds and animals to a reasonable level and they were on display in this room. I had recently done a hare's head (the body was too crushed to do anything with it) and when Eddy saw it he asked if he could have some hair off the hare's ears to make a fly for fishing. I agreed and off he went. The following week he rang and asked if I had a ram with my ewes and I said yes as I had borrowed a ram from Roy Bennett from Beeston.

Eddy then asked if he could have some wool from a special place on the ram. I said he could but to give me some time to pen the ram. Later that day we were in the pen with the ram and Eddy asked if I would turn the ram on his back to immobilise him. This I did, whereupon Eddy put his 'specs on and brought out a pair of tiny scissors. It then dawned on me where this special wool was coming from. Eddy wanted the soft pink wool from the ram's scrotum to make another artificial fly; this was called Tup's Indispensable. You live and learn!



The Centre's fine ram. Just what Eddy required for his prize fly.

How do you stop hens pecking their own and

other hen's eggs when all else has failed? This is Eddy Fowle's (no pun intended) way. Eddy had bought 50 hens from a battery farm and housed them in the usual type of hen cote, nesting boxes one end, perches in the middle and a pop hole for the hens to get in and out. To begin with he was getting a fair number of eggs but then the output began to decline until he was only getting about one a day. He discovered the reason when he saw a hen with dried egg yolk on her beak. A battery hen never sees her eggs. As soon as it is laid it rolls away but in the hen cote she would see her egg and others. Eddy tried the usual – mustard, mustard mixed with washing up liquid, hard boiled eggs smeared with all kinds of flavours! It was to no avail. After pondering all evening he came up with an idea which would sort them out.

Next day he borrowed an electric fence from George Wild, the Peckforton Estate gamekeeper. He then cut a rubber conveyor belt into six squares and placed tin lids on these squares to form a line outside the hen cote. The tin lids were then wired up in series and a broken egg was placed on each tin.

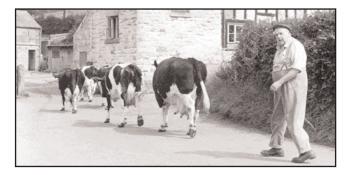
He then opened the pop door and the hens came out and very quickly saw the array of equipment in front of them. After overcoming their suspicion they approached the eggs and started pecking them. Eddy was unsure how strong the shock should be so he started with the smallest possible charge and switched on. Suddenly they all jumped back and stared at the eggs in disbelief. They approached again and the same thing



happened. By the third day none of the birds were going near the eggs and Eddy was reaping the rewards in the nesting boxes. This is the funny bit. He was collecting eggs one day when a hen was just about to lay, so he stood and watched. The hen stood up, squatted, laid her egg and rushed out of the nesting box as quickly as she could. "Recharging battery hens!!"

B'osley was called cowkeepers' country because there were so many smallholders with a few dairy cows. Many of them had pigs whose food was supplemented with whey. Most of the farms made cheese and the whey was the by-product. One smallholding, Quarry House Farm, was such an establishment. Mr and Mrs Moulton had the tenancy when I arrived to work in the village. I very quickly got to know the couple and would take children to see the cows and the pigs. One year, across the valley from the farmhouse, a vixen had established an earth and would bring the cubs out to exercise and play. On numerous occasions Mrs Moulton would ring me up and whisper on the telephone "The cubs are out now. Hurry up!"

I called at the Carden Arms one evening. I had got to know a few of the regulars (George Brooks, Jim Clare, Tom Bennett, Sam Barnes, publican) and was invited to play "penny knock" with dominoes. No one forewarned me that they were 9 spot dominoes - which I had never seen before. It's not hard to understand that I left the pub having had to pay for my learning curve! The locals, of course, were highly amused and some of them richer.



Sam Barnes, landlord of the Carden Arms with part of his herd

The same George Brooks of Fowler's Bench Cottage worked for the Potteries Water Board at Bulkeley and arrived one lunchtime in his tractor. He got out of the tractor and lifted out a huge galvanised bucket. In the bucket was a large plant with some spikey fruit in the leaf axil. He said a similar plant was found five years earlier and a great deal of fuss was made concerning it. He couldn't remember the name of the plant or why a big fuss was made. We had a good look and felt the hard spikey fruit but I had never come across anything like it before.

He left it with me and I looked in all my reference books.

Eventually I identified it as the Thorn Apple (family Solanaceae) with the following description "An introduced annual on waste and cultivated ground etc. Uncommon but found throughout England and Wales. The whole plant is extremely poisonous, containing several narcotic substances which have been put to use in the drug industry." So, if you live around Fowler's Bench Lane, be careful of strange plants.

Audrey Ryder tells the story of one little girl saying, after a walk, "I knew we were nearly home, 'cos we saw the buffaloes." (David Greenhaugh's Highland cattle, next to the Pheasant)



The Schoolchildren's "buffaloes"

BURWARDSLEY OUTDOOR CENTRE

Thoughts of pupils of Underwood West Junior School after a walk through the woods and lanes of Burwardsley in the dark:

The Moon Over Willow Hill

Trees – black silhouettes, Bent, crooked shapes – Roots, twisted under Our feet, trying to trip us up

Wind, gently whistling, Cows, afraid of the night, Footsteps, walking carefully – Balancing

Bats, darting, swooping, catching supper of tasty insects, Smell of damp leaves, distant fires, The touch of rough bark, Steadying our steps – All our senses alive – Looking for badgers

GAMES PLAYED BY VILLAGE CHILDREN

At the end of last century, and well into the present century, there was little planned entertainment for children; there were fewer toys than at the present time and what toys there were, were less elaborate than those of today. This meant that children were to a great extent dependent upon themselves for amusement, and though make believe games such as Homes, Families and Shops were played, a great proportion of children's time was spent in playing ring and line games. These would be played amongst groups of children in the early morning before school; at playtimes between lessons; during the break for dinner and after school in the village streets. These games were very old and had been passed on from one generation to another. Some are well-known today and they include "Oranges and Lemons", "Old Roger is Dead", "London Bridge is Broken Down", and "Here We Come Gathering Knots of May" – (this obviously refers to collecting may blossom) - whilst other games played by children cannot be found in any collection and are in danger of being lost altogether. Some games have been common to many areas but there are variations in the words in some districts, even though the game is played in exactly the same way.

Ring games were played in Burwardsley during the childhood of Mrs Hall of Cherry Cottage and the information given by her has been used in describing games played over seventy years ago. One mentioned by her was called "Who's Going Round My Stony Rock Tonight" but the way of playing it has been forgotten so it has not been possible to record it. Another ring game played in Burwardsley was called "The Rains Rain High", and one which was played in a village about twelve miles away as "The Wind Blows High". It was played in the following manner: any number of children joined hands skipping round and round in a clockwise direction, singing the following words:

"The wind, the wind, the wind blows high The rain comes pattering down the sky She is handsome, she is pretty She is a girl from London city She goes courting, one, two, three Will you tell me who is she?"

These words were intended to apply to a girl who had been chosen to stand in the middle whilst the rest skipped around, and when the words had been sung all the others gathered together to choose the name of a boy of whom the girl in the middle was supposed to be fond. When the name had been chosen the skipping

around continued with the girl still standing in the middle and the following words were sung:

"..... says he loves her All the boys are fighting for her Let the boys say what they will For will love her still. He gives her a kiss and sends her away And calls her his lily white daughter"

So ended the game; then the girl in the middle chose another to take her place and the whole process was repeated until everyone was tired of playing and another game might be chosen in its place.

The words of the Burwardsley version of the game would be the same as those written above, except for the beginning which was:-

"The rain, the rain, the rain blows high, The rain comes pattering down the sky"

No doubt there are many versions of the same game in other parts of the country.

Wallflowers was another ring game. Children joined hands to form a circle and prepared to skip around. The child who organised the game was the leader who would call out a name in the middle of the game. Everyone skipped around in a clockwise direction and the following words were sung:-

"Wallflowers, wallflowers, growing up so high Where all the children they shall never die Except (girl's name called by leader), she's a naughty girl, Oh fie, for shame, oh fie, for shame Turn your back to the wall again"

As this last line was sung, all those in the ring changed hands and turned around so that they were skipping with their backs facing the centre of the ring. The girl whose name had been called would then stand in the middle as they skipped around her with their backs towards her. This ended the game, but it could be repeated as many times as desired, with a different child chosen to stand in the centre of the ring each time.

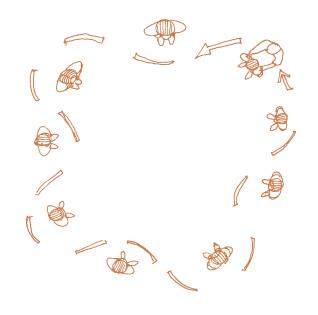
In and Out the Scottish Bluebells was played in this district about 1955 and was sung in Harthill as "In and out the Darkie Bluebells". Any number of children could play, and they formed a circle with a space between each one so that it was impossible to hold hands. One child was chosen as leader and this leader skipped in and out of the circle, in front of and behind alternate children, while these words were sung:

"In and out the Scottish Bluebells In and out the Scottish Bluebells In and out the Scottish Bluebells I'll be the leader"

By the time the children had reached the end of the verse, the leader was standing behind one of those forming the ring, and was tapping her on the shoulders with both hands while the others sang:

"Tap-a-rap-a-rap her on the shoulder Tap-a-rap-a-rap her on the shoulder Tap-a-rap-a-rap her on the shoulder I'll be the leader"

Then the children skipped in and out of the ring with the child whose shoulders had been tapped following behind. The whole song was sung again and then there would be two following the leader. It was repeated again and again until all the children forming the ring were following behind the leader when the game ended. If anyone wished to play the game right through again, the last one to be tapped on the shoulders in the previous game became the new leader.



The arrangement of the players and the pattern of movement in the game "In and Out the Scottish Bluebells"

Other games were "In and Out The Windows", "The Farmer's in his Den", "On the Mountain", various skipping games such as "Liverpool Echo – Daily Post", "Raspberry – Gooseberry", "How Many Busses in the Station", "Eeper Weeper". In most of these games only one girl was skipping at a time while the others waited their turn when the previous one was out. These games required a lot of skill. Nowadays girls do not play skipping games as frequently as they used to do and so a great deal of this skill has been lost.

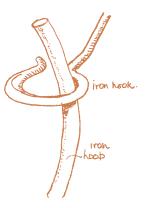
While the girls were improving their skill at skipping, the boys were perfecting the technique of throwing by throwing stones at various targets: sometimes a tree trunk, an old tin can or perhaps an old bottle, with the intention of hitting these targets as often as possible, the winner being the boy who scored the greatest number of hits out of a given number of throws. As their skill increased they naturally chose smaller and smaller targets, and increased the distance from which they threw. From this desire there developed the game played in Burwardsley over sixty years ago and known as "Jack Stone". Each boy found for himself a large stone known as a Jack upon which he placed a smaller stone, then taking smaller stones in his hand, he stood so many paces away and attempted to knock the smaller stone from the Jack. The winner was the one who knocked off the small stone the greatest number of times, from the greatest distance.

In the 1920's iron bowlers or hoops at a cost of one penny were very popular. The village blacksmith would hammer iron rods to shape to produce the bowlers and hooks to guide the bowlers along. The children would volunteer to work the bellows to heat up the fire while they waited for their bowlers to be made. At such a time the blacksmith always had an eager audience.



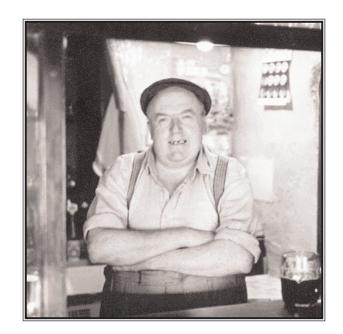
Little boys had iron hooks.

Games with marbles were played by both girls and boys and many of them became such experts that they regularly went home from school with more marbles than they had arrived with. The village shop was always well stocked to replenish the



losers. The object of the game was to get as near to the glass "alley" (large marble) with the first flick. The second flick was to hit the alley and cause it to hit the opponents marble which then became the property of the winning hitter.

Many other games such as Whip and Top, Conkers, Hop Scotch, Tag and variations were played as well.



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GETTING ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE

LANES, BRIDLEWAYS AND FOOTPATHS

The Parish Network

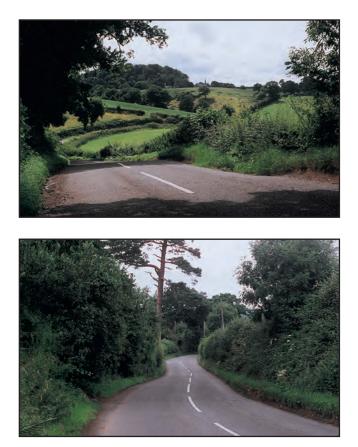
The earliest settlers along the ridge travelled through the thick woodlands of the plain where the only tracks and paths were those made by the wild beasts moving between their feeding grounds and watering places.

As settlements became established in the clearings on the hill, locations within them became obvious for satisfying the needs of the new community. In one place there was probably an abundance of nuts and wild berries for food, in another good forage for cattle and pigs, in another the land cleared for the growing of crops and a nearby stream or spring to provide the water supply for the community.

In visiting all these places the settlers looked for the easiest and most direct routes and so a primary track system was established within the community. As new areas were cleared and cultivated, so the number of tracks grew until the settlement was connected by a trackway system linking all the essential areas of the community and at the heart of these tracks the homes of the settlers became established over a period of time. The early years of the settlement would have been one of survival and inward development. There was little need to travel but, as the organisation and administration of the land slowly developed through the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods, villagers found themselves more and more in contact with others beyond the boundaries of the three manors making up 'Burwardslei'.

By the time of King John, in the early mediaeval period, well established administrative and commercial links with the manors of Tattenhall, Harthill and Malpas were in place and, on the east side of the hill, Beeston with its castle and Bunbury with its collegiate church would have been regular venues for Burwardsley folk both for trade and spiritual needs. The lines of the present roads, down the hill towards Tattenhall and below the ridge and down towards Harthill, wind and twist as the old tracks no doubt did to ease the rise up the hill and to avoid the rocky places, trees and other natural features which might have obstructed the route.

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The ancient ways in and out of the village wind and twist up and down the hills

Eastward the trackways have not developed into modern roads and, both along the ridge towards Bickerton and over the ridge to Peckforton, Bunbury and Beeston, the old paths and tracks are still extant. These tracks would not have been used during the hours of darkness when the only light was the moon or a horn lantern. Burwardsley folk rarely ventured out after dark.

By the Middle Ages the people of the village would have had a much greater contact with the world outside. Visits to the markets at Chester and Beeston would have been undertaken to exchange produce for domestic needs such as clothes and shoes. Once in a lifetime there might have been a visit to the annual fair in Chester or to enjoy the religious plays performed by the Guilds at Whitsun; experiences which would have been treasured in times when a short journey would have been an adventure. Their mode of travel would probably have been on foot or horseback, riding side saddle or pillion fashion. The more prosperous would have travelled by horse drawn cart, used for the occasional journeys to market, to carry passengers and the periodic coffin on its last journey to Bunbury church for burial.

Until the eighteenth century all roads were in a deplorable condition and particularly so in country districts. Deep ruts and floods made roads difficult and dangerous to traverse and there are accounts throughout the country of people being drowned in pot-holes. With the greater need to travel and the advent of the stage

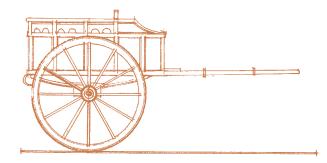
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coach in the late eighteenth century many roads, particularly those between the major towns, were improved but, as the maintenance of all highways rested in the hands of the village vestry and its amateur officials, conditions varied greatly throughout the country. As speed and the reliability of travel increased, good roads became essential and the formation of Turnpike Trusts creating new roads and the use of macadam surfaces to the old roads meant matters improved considerably.



The Smithy at Barnhill on the old stage coach turnpike road between Chester and Whitchurch

Towards the end of the nineteenth century regular journeys were being made by Burwardsley people to all the markets in the local area. They would take their own produce and eggs, butter and cheeses from other smallholders in the village and sell them at the market. These items they would take to Whitchurch market held on Friday and Chester on Saturday. They would travel by cart – called a chandry –



The horse drawn chandry used by farmers on market day. "Chandry" is derived from Chandler - a salesman.

taking the country lanes to Broxton before joining the old coach road running south to Whitchurch via Nomansheath and north to Chester via Hatton Heath and Rowton Moor. These journeys would be undertaken whatever the weather, the only protection of the "hucksters", as they were called, against the cold and rain being a rug and large umbrella.

The postman delivered his letters on foot, collecting them at Tattenhall, walking up to Bolesworth Castle, into Harthill and down to Burwardsley. If he had any letters for people living in houses away from the road he sounded a bugle horn as a signal for them to come and collect them from him. He also collected outgoing letters which he stamped on behalf of the sender at Tattenhall – stamps were one old penny each – from whence they were taken to Chester by chandry for dispatch onwards to their

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final destination. At that time there was one collection and delivery of letters each day. Later on a post box was installed in the village and the postman issued with a bicycle which made the collection and delivery of mail much easier and quicker. Further developments were the arrival of the sub Post Office and the Royal Mail van which not only carried the mail but village passengers also in the afternoon to supplement the bus service.

The main railway line between Chester and Crewe was constructed in 1840 and the Whitchuch to Chester Railway was completed in 1872. The junction of the two lines known as Tattenhall Junction became a station of some importance with a bus from Tattenhall to the station to meet every train. At the end of the nineteenth century Tattenhall had two stations, one on each line and Burwardsley people had to first go to their neighbouring village to make their monthly trip to either Chester or Whitchurch.



Broxton Station on the Chester/ Whitchurch Line

(closed by Dr Beeching in the 1950's)



Tattenhall Station on the main line Chester/Crewe now closed and converted into a small industrial estate

The farmers took their milk daily by cart to the stations

for onward delivery by train to city outlets and the days of the chandry to the local markets began to decline. The pony and trap became the prime means of wheeled transport for trips to the station, to Beeston on market days and to the hills for picnics at holiday times.

Mr Mannings saw the first motor car in Burwardsley when he was a small boy in 1900. It was owned by a Miss Fry who had been a teacher at the school a few years before and who had returned to the village to visit friends there. About this time Mr Mannings also told of seeing his first bicycle with a free wheel. The rider was travelling down from Higher Burwardsley to Smithy Bank and people watching him thought that he had lost the chain because he was not pedalling; but when they saw him pedalling up the slope they realised that this was a new development in cycling.

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Cycling became a popular means of transport and it was not uncommon to see young ladies cycling around the village visiting their friends and neighbours.



A popular means of transport in the 1920's

The first car to belong to a village resident was a smart new Humber from the Grosvenor Garage in Chester and was driven by the vicar's wife, Mrs Barker. It must have been a time for miraculous apparitions for, according to the evidence of W H Reeves in a letter to Jean Dutton, the villagers had scarcely recovered from the sight of Lord Tollemache driving a tractor in which he had just invested; he was ploughing the fields below Peckforton Castle "in no time at all".

It was as late as 1935 when Mr Maddocks from Tattenhall began a bus service. This followed a circular route from Tattenhall up the Righi to the main road, left to Barn Hill, through Broxton to the Red Lion (now the Bickerton Poacher) at Bickerton, returning through Harthill and Burwardsley to Tattenhall and on to Chester via Gatesheath. This service continued until Crosville took it over, having six buses based in Tattenhall. It is remarkable that, on browsing through the minutes of the Parish Council, how often a request was made for a particular service to be re-timed. This was usually acquiesced to a truly local service! Mr Maddocks, on opening his business, also introduced the first petrol pumps into Tattenhall. Later the garage owned by Molyneux and Evans (the father of Ray Evans of Outlanes Farm) took the premises over in the early 1950's, starting a repair business as well as selling petrol. Villagers had to travel from Burwardsley to Tattenhall, three miles away to get their fuel until the garage opened at Fairview, Burwardsley in 1967. Unfortunately, this closed in 1972 and once again people had to travel to Tattenhall until the garage there also closed in the mid 1980's.

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The village petrol station in 1968 (top) and the Ryder's forecourt garden in 2000 (below)

The closure of the Chester/Whitchurch passenger train service in 1956 as a result of Dr Beeching's swingeing cuts caused much hardship for local people, commuters to Chester and Whitchurch and also the grammar school children who had to travel to Chester daily. There were consequent calls to Crosville for an improved bus service for Broxton/Harthill and Burwardsley and the call continues this century for better, user friendly transport services for our rural area.

Nowadays the majority of inhabitants have cars. Indeed a large number commute to the towns to work but, nevertheless, a good deal of walking is still done in Burwardsley by locals, by schoolchildren visiting the village and by the Sandstone Trail walkers.

VILLAGE LANES AND BRIDLEWAYS

Burwardsley can only be reached by the roads to the north west through Tattenhall or to the south west through Harthill. Even these roads are winding and narrow and in general follow the contours of the hills. Although there are many tracks leading across various parts of the sandstone ridge, there are no direct roads between Burwardsley and Peckforton to the east or Beeston to the north east. The track over Waste Hill past Elephant Track cottage saves 5km over the route by road to Peckforton village and was part of the 'Walesmansway' or 'Walchmonstreet' – Welshman's Way – "a route

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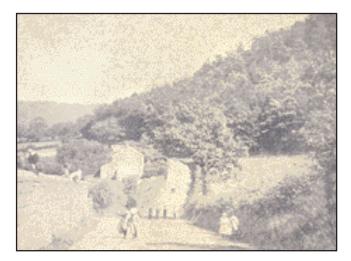
for the trade in salt between the Cheshire 'wiches' (salt towns) and Wales" Welshman's Croft – now known as Smithy Bank – was on Welshman's Way. This part of the route comes from Alpraham, via Bunbury, Spurstow, Burwardsley, past Elephant Track to Tattenhall and finally to Chester, a major traffic route in the Middle Ages.



The Old Salt Road crossing the hill to Peckforton, part of the Walesmansway

This track, still surfaced with locally quarried stone with gutters down each side, was used by – amongst many others – the famous itinerant preacher John Wesley. He preached at Bunbury and surrounding villages in October 1749.

Within the village itself, the road from Broad Rough to St John's parish church is known as Church Road. Leaving the church it becomes School Lane, though on some old photographs it is referred to as School Valley.



School Valley with children in the 1920's

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Locally the whole stretch, Church Road and School Lane, are known as The Street. Where it meets the main hill, Higher Burwardsley Road, as far as the old Methodist chapel it was known as Top End Road. From the Methodist chapel to the top of the hill by the Pheasant it was known as Wassail Bank, associated with the name of the field behind the Pheasant.

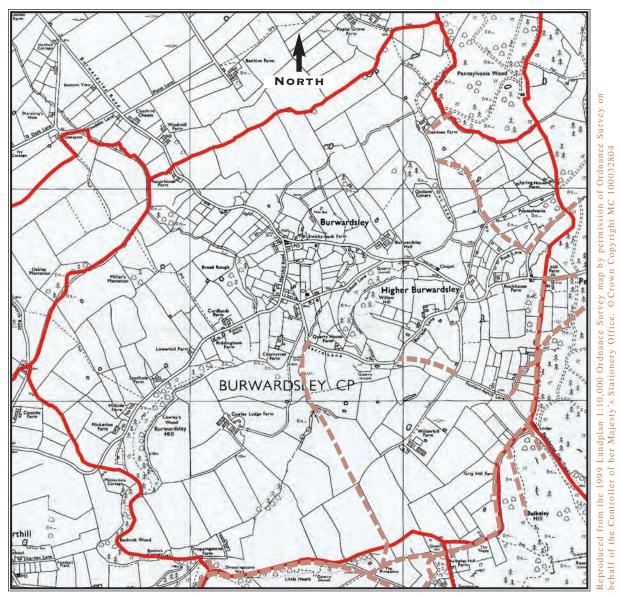
How the names came into being seems to be lost in the mists of time. A little further up Wassail Bank and on the opposite side of the road to the chapel, there is a lane shown on the 1842 map, running along the contours of the hill. On this lane were the village stocks and so it was appropriately named Stocks Lane. Like many local lanes (Outlanes, Witch Pit) Stocks Lane only gives access to the fields and such lanes were not thoroughfares. A curiously named road was Maggot Lane, now known as Rock Lane, which runs up in a loop behind the Pheasant through an area once known as 'The Waste'. 'Wastes' were areas that were too steep or rough for cultivation and so were used to keep pigs on - to snuffle about, eat acorns, etc and grow fat!

The single track steep lane which passes the Candle Workshop is locally known as The Salver though the top end is really Barracks Lane, called after the houses known as the Barracks which were situated there. The name of Salver may have come from the white daisy like flower (chamomile?), perhaps used as a salve, which grew there. This would also explain the origin of Whittlesfield or white daisy field, which is the house just past the present Candle Workshops. An alternative name is Sarra Lane, probably a corruption of Salver, but in Robert Caldecott's recollections (see Chapter 4) he refers to it as Server Lane.

LOST LANES AND FOOTPATHS

Some roads/tracks have disappeared as a result of lack of use. Meadow Lane, for instance, linked Burwardsley (opposite Well Cottage) to Tattenhall Lanes and was used by children from that area walking to school in Burwardsley and by people walking to church. With the transfer of Burwardsley schoolchildren to Tattenhall in 1959 and the subsequent closure of the Burwardsley school in 1970, this path then gradually fell out of use. Another track opposite Meadow Lane went up the side of Well Cottage and into the fields behind Curdlands Farm. An 1840 map of the sale of Cawley Lodge Farm shows an Occupation Road leading from the existing Fowlers Bench Lane up the drive and past the new Willow Hill Farm to Droppingstone

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Map showing right of way footpaths in Burwardsley Parish

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(at Harthill but in Burwardsley parish). Whether this name had any connection with Barracks Lane or the houses known as the Barracks (behind the Candle Workshops) is uncertain.

Witch Pit Lane used to lead off Pennsylvania Lane approximately opposite Lilac Cottage to give access to the fields which were then farmed by the Windsor family who lived at The Brow. The name may be connected with the legend of the 'witch' who lived on Pennsylvania Lane. The Witch Pit itself, though, has since been filled in. Was the "ducking stool" here for the mediaeval practice of ducking women?



Squeeze Belly Avenue, a romantic village path

Squeeze Belly Avenue is a name for which no one seems to have a derivation but was probably the linking lane from Outlanes up to Pennsylvania and was reputedly used by courting couples in days gone by! Set in the wall at the top of this lane is an old oven which originally had a cast iron door. This was used as a delivery box for milk, post, etc by the people who lived in the cottage (now no longer there) which was at the bottom of Squeeze Belly Avenue.

There is also an 'Eleven Lane Ends' where the roads go around the recently rebuilt Darius Cottage next to the Pheasant. This is a junction where 5 lanes meet but, if each part of the road around Darius is considered as a separate lane, there there are indeed eleven lane ends!

The first edition of the Ordnance maps produced in 1882 shows a greater number of footpaths than there are today. These footpaths across the countryside linked roads to roads, villages to villages, and farms to farms. They were the shortcuts for the travellers on foot and were widely used before wheeled transport became a common and convenient means of transport. Many footpaths became less and less used and, in 1973, the County Council and the local landowners entered into an agreement whereby certain footpaths were removed as public rights of way

Chapter Seven GETTING ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE

in exchange for dedicated routes. These now form a section of the Sandstone Trail along the escarpment in Higher Burwardsley. The spectacular views of the Cheshire Plain, the two estuaries of Dee and Mersey, the Wirral and the Welsh Hills enjoyed by walkers from far afield in both winter and summer, more than compensate for the loss of the old traditional shortcuts through the village.



Stile on Sandstone Trail

Chapter Eight PEOPLE AND WORK

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PEOPLE AND WORK

The number of people in Burwardsley at the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 was probably no more than nine, but it seems likely that, as the amount of cultivated land increased, so the population gradually increased. Possibly as the manorial system began to break down and more freedom of movement began, there was an increase of population in Burwardsley towards the end of the Middle Ages although there is no written evidence to prove this.

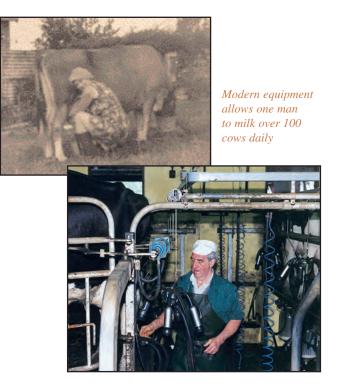
It is likely that the population grew in the eighteenth century when there was a general increase all over the country. The first evidence which gives the number of people living in Burwardsley is found in a County Directory of 1850 which states that there were 204 persons resident in 1801. By 1831 the number had risen to 394. Then census returns show: In 1960 there were 202 adults over 21 years of age and it seems likely that the total number of inhabitants was somewhere between 250 and 260. The Register of Electors for 1999/2000 shows there to be 146 adults but as at September 1999 it was actually 133. An estimate of those below age 18 is 39, giving a total population of 172. Thus the village population is almost a third of what it was 150 years ago.

Consequently it is clear that the population rose steadily until the latter part of the nineteenth century when it began to decline. The decline over the last forty years has probably been brought about by the following factors:

• a declining birth rate and move towards smaller families (1.7 children per couple average in UK compared with nineteenth and early twentieth century when families often had 12 to 14 children)

- **1841** 458 inhabitants
- 1851 470 inhabitants (240 males, 238 females, 107 houses, 2 uninhabited)
- **1881** 440 inhabitants (212 males, 228 females, 100 houses, 5 uninhabited)
- **1901** 320 inhabitants

- a decline in the number of houses (see chapter on buildings)
- the occupation of private houses by older couples without children
- more mechanisation on the farms and so less demand for farm labourers
- the greater mobility of the workforce



Throughout the centuries most people have been engaged in work on the land. The first settlers were entirely dependant upon using the land to provide basic food requirements. After the Norman Conquest the needs of the people who lived on the manor had to be met. Each manor was a self-contained unit and everything that was needed to support life had to be produced within its boundaries. Most of the men would be engaged in ploughing, sowing and harvesting, and also in the care of animals with one or two smiths, milkers or shepherds.

In time, however, the manorial system began to disappear; open fields were enclosed and tenant farmers came into existence, living on farms where the land was rearranged into compact fields. This seems to have occurred in Burwardsley, although by 1840 there were many cottages which had small fields attached to them, evidently relics of the open fields. These smallholdings and their tenants worked the small amounts of land they had, but probably worked for a farmer as well. In some directories they were called farmers but, in others, cowkeepers, for they had no arable land and merely used their land for pasturing cattle.

In the nineteenth century the basic industry was agriculture. However, there is an interesting entry in Lewis's Topographical Directory of England and Wales in 1844:

> 'Burwardsley, near Broxton. Many of the inhabitants are employed in the manufacture of gloves.'

This occupation was probably a cottage industry and the gloves produced would be collected at certain periods by capitalist glovers who provided the materials and paid wages when the finished articles were collected. The work could be parttime and done during slack periods in the farming year, the income obtained supplementing that from farming.

From the mid nineteenth century census records, we see that the vast majority of the inhabitants were born in Burwardsley and the others were born in the adjacent villages of Tattenhall, Beeston, Bulkeley, etc. In the 1881 census there are very few people who were born further afield. One striking exception in the 1851 census is a wife born in Russia; or does the enumerator mean the area of Russia Hall near Tattenhall? Foreign parts! The biggest farms in the 1851 census were Hall Farm with 139 acres and four labourers and Hill Farm with 154 acres and three labourers. A Church Chapel is recorded as "under the parish church of Bunbury" in 1851 and many children are recorded as "at home" for their occupation – very few were given as "scholar" and one assumes that they did not receive an education. The inn keeper at the Carden Arms (now The Pheasant) in 1851 was Richard Rutter who was born at Bunbury.

The 1851 census records John Sutton of Lower Town being a master blacksmith, aged 62, born at (sic) Wiliston. Wife, Jane Sutton, aged 52, born at Burwardsley. Three children, still at home, i.e. Elizabeth, age 25, unmarried, born at Burwardsley, Samuel, age 20, unmarried, born at Burwardsley, Ann, aged 16, unmarried, born at Burwardsley. John Sutton's headstone, in Burwardsley churchyard, records: John Sutton, died aged 93, in 1879. This would mean he was born in 1786. We know from census records that he was the village blacksmith. He would have been of an age to have been at the Battle of Waterloo (1805) and the story of him being the Duke of Wellington's blacksmith at Waterloo could be correct.

Cawleys Hill Farm – 200 acres in the 1861 census was the largest in the village. Its residents were:

John Cawley, head of house age 47 born at Ridley Hall

Jane Cawley, wife age 44 born at Hampton

William Cawley, son age 19 born at Ridley Hall

John Cawley, son age 17 born at Ridley Hall

Mary Powell, dairywoman age 21 born at Burland

Margaret Falconer, housemaid age 28 born at Bickerton

Elizabeth Ardern, cleanerage 16born at Spurstow

James Alman, servant boyage 15born at Burwardsley

In 1871 Hill Farm was still farmed by a Cawley – John, aged 27, but no family is shown on the census return. Cawley is obviously a Burwardsley family name as the hill itself is shown as in the possession of John Cawley in 1827 on the Enclosure Map. By 1881 Hill Farm is now called Cawleys Hill Farm although the farmer shown as head of house is Thomas Spencer and there are no Cawleys in the village.

Occupations were very similar in the 1851 and 1881 Census. The vast majority were farmers or agricultural labourers. The next group were the stonemasons and their apprentices and labourers. Outside labour was brought in to help at busy times in the stone quarries and some of them lived in two cottages high in the woods on the way to Stanner's Nab.

In addition there were the normal occupations of village life: in 1851, living in that part of Burwardsley known as Higher Town, there was John Harding, master tailor, employing two men and with two sons, called Samson and Solomon.

Also:

Stephen Owen	thatcher
•	
Joseph Harding	wheelwright
George Price	shoemaker
John Filkin	gamekeeper
John Hughes	master grocer - with lodger William Ledsham, a retired grocer
John Windsor	master shoemaker - in Lower Town
George Windsor	master shoemaker - in Lower Town
Peter Dutton	master shoemaker - in Higher Town
Edward Tomkin	joiner
John Sutton and his son Samuel	both blacksmiths.
William Nield	grocer – in Lower Town

There were two Chelsea Pensioners living in Burwardsley in 1851. One was Charles Wooley, a widower, aged 64, who was born at Bickerton, and the other was Charles Price, aged 66, born at Peckforton. Thus, they were born in the late eighteenth century and could have been at the battle of Waterloo.

A quick look at the 1861 Census reveals very similar names and occupations, with the addition of dairymaid, cattle dealer and bricksetter – surely an indication of the first brick-built cottages as opposed to the usual sandstone. An unusual occupation was a ragman and peddler whose place of birth is just recorded as England. It doesn't sound as though he was too certain where he was born, perhaps because his parents were wandering peddlers, too. Martha Filkin's occupation is recorded as higgler. Hall Farm had 139 acres and was farmed by Samuel Walker, employing four labourers. Joseph Nield was another of the larger farmers with 108 acres, also employing four labourers.

The 1871 Census shows that there were 12 inhabited houses at Fowler's Bench, where stonemasons, agricultural labourers, a shoemaker and a pig dealer lived; there were three uninhabited houses as well. Today there are two houses at Fowler's Bench and no trace of the lost 13.

Other properties which have now disappeared – or have different names – are those at Outridge and Spring Vale. There were eight houses at Underhill – but no Underhill at all today.

The 1881 Census records Joseph Nield has been replaced by William Nield as head of Hill House Farm and John Stockton runs Manor House Farm. Hall Farm now records Eli Carr as head of house. Samuel Sutton is still the blacksmith in Lower Town, but Thomas Sutton – his brother – is recorded as blacksmith "out of employ".

In fact, the 1881 Census records a number of people as being "out of employ", including Peter Dodd, a stonemason. The quarrymen brought in from other parishes left their cottages on Stanner Nabb and they fell into disrepair; the ivy covered ruins can still be seen. The wheelwrights were Thomas and Charles Hodkinson, the gamekeeper George Hichton Senior, the joiner James Roscoe - born in Wigan, a real foreigner! At Grig Hill and Fowler's Bench lived a number of farm labourers and cottagers, but also George Dodd and Thomas Dodd, stonemasons. Joseph and John Stockton were stonemasons at the Quarry. At Cawleys Rock Cottage lived another stonemason, William Allman, born in Malpas. At Aqueduct Cottage lived Thomas Allman, his wife Mary and seven other members of their

family. His occupation is recorded as huckster. The present tenant says the cottage got its name because the original occupants obtained their water from a spring in the cliff face above by means of an overhead pipe across the lane to the cottage. The butcher and general shopman was Edward Wooley at Lower Town. An additional occupation was a railway clerk; modern life was encroaching!

At "Top" Burwardsley was another grocer, Ann Parsons; the schoolmaster, William Jones; another butcher George Carr; a tailor, William Moss - surely not the original Moss Bros? - and another shopkeeper, Mary Carr and her son John, a butcher. The village seems to have been fairly self sufficient so far as shopping and general crafts were concerned. Of course we must remember that the present population is about a third of what it was at the end of the nineteenth century.

Pre 1900 there were at least two shops in Church Road. One was at Plantain House and the other was opposite at No 1 Church Road – it still has larger windows than the other cottages. Darius Cottage in Higher Burwardsley was also a shop until about 1914 but the cottage was totally rebuilt in 1999. That shop was then reopened by Arthur Tydd in Pennsylvania Cottage.

Belshazzar was the site of a shop run by the Parsons family who also baked bread for the village. People still alive in the village today can remember several shops in Burwardsley. Very different now at the Millennium when the one village shop/post office has a struggle to survive. With the increasing mobility of inhabitants and the opening of superstores in Chester, the succession of tenants saw business decline drastically. In 1990 it was in imminent danger of closing and it was with much relief that new tenants were found.



According to a framed newspaper clipping at the Pheasant, it is believed there were three alehouses in Burwardsley in the sixteenth century. One of these was the Pheasant, then called the Leche Arms, after the Leche family at Carden who owned it. It was later called the Carden Arms and in recent times became the Pheasant Inn. Well House and Cheshire Cheese are believed to have been the two other inns.

In the 1999 Register of Electors we see that there are now only 72 inhabited houses in Burwardsley and the number of people eligible to vote (ie over the age of 18) is 146. Even allowing for the under 18 year olds, it is obvious that the village has declined both as regards population and houses.

Two examples of the many shops that used to be in Burwardsley. The older photograph shows Pennsylvania Cottage. In the modern photograph, note the larger window in the first cottage in Church Road indicating the position of the shop.





There is now one shopkeeper and no blacksmith, butcher, shoemaker, tailor, dressmaker, stonemason, schoolmaster – indeed no school as such – no wheelwright, nor thatcher. The farms are still there, although employing fewer people. Most people work out of the village nowadays, but there is a growing number who are home based.

The millennium photo of 1999 tries to recapture a previous village photo



Photograph by Graham Catherall Photography

In 2000 agriculture is still the predominant feature of Burwardsley, there being five working dairy farms utilising virtually all of the nonresidential land. However, due to various factors, agriculture provides employment for only 15 residents. Typically, each farm supports the tenant farmer couple, who employ a herdsman (in three cases living in the village) and use the services of a resident contract worker for cutting silage, ploughing, hedge cutting, etc. Increased mechanisation and the use of mobile contractors has meant that agriculture has become less labour intensive.



The increased use of mechanisation allows fewer workers to carry out routine farm work





Fewer farms, with larger herds, is reflected in the way the milk is collected



The Candle Workshops provide employment largely to people living outside the village and the Pheasant Inn provides a small number of part-time jobs for villagers.



Rob, Joan and Ray Evans farm at Outlanes Farm on the eastern edge of the parish. Ray is a long serving member of the Parish Council and a keen bowler.



Mr and Mrs Rowland Houghton run the popular Candle Workshop (formerly the old Willow Hill Farm), and son Gareth is in charge of the restaurant.

Simon and Barbara Carden are at Willow Hill Farm with their children Sarah and Tim. They have a fine Holstein Friesian herd and Simon is also a director of Deeside Dairy Farmers which is a co-operative buying group.



The Reverend Rex Buckley with a group of visiting school children, following a tour of the parish church.





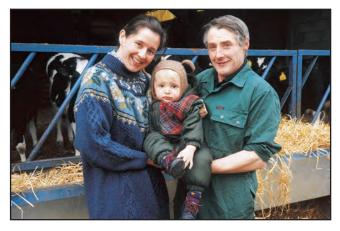
Phil and Sandra Benson live at Manor Farm with their four daughters. Phil is an agricultural contractor, and in addition to cutting hedges in the village, keeps our roads clear of snow in winter.



Mickerra Farm is the home of Michael and Clarissa Hughes and their son Thomas. Mike is a keen dairy farmer with an exceptional herd of Holsteins, having sold bulls to AI companies. Clarissa is a consumer psychologist at Unilever Research at Port Sunlight.



Mike and Nicki Hanson live at Cawley Lodge Farm and Charlie Oare is their stockman. Mike, a parish councillor, has a keen interest in countryside management and Nicki is a very talented flower arranger.



Alan and Sue Simpson are at Burwardsley Hall Farm with their son Dominic. Alan follows his father George Simpson, his uncle Peter Proudlove and his grandfather Harold Proudlove in farming here.



Sandra and Steve Goodwin and the village postman keep the village up to date with news of the outside world.

Summary of employment based on 130 registered electors in September 1999

		%
Employed	farming	11
	self-employed	14
	outside village	35
	Housewife	14
	In education	6
	Retired	20
		100
		100



Brenda Clarke, the warden of the Burwardsley Outdoor Education Centre, with a group of children who have come to find out about life in the country.



The Pheasant and its landlord David Greenhaugh are well known throughout Cheshire. Ex-mariner David has managed the establishment during the latter years of the 20th century. The Pheasant is now under new management



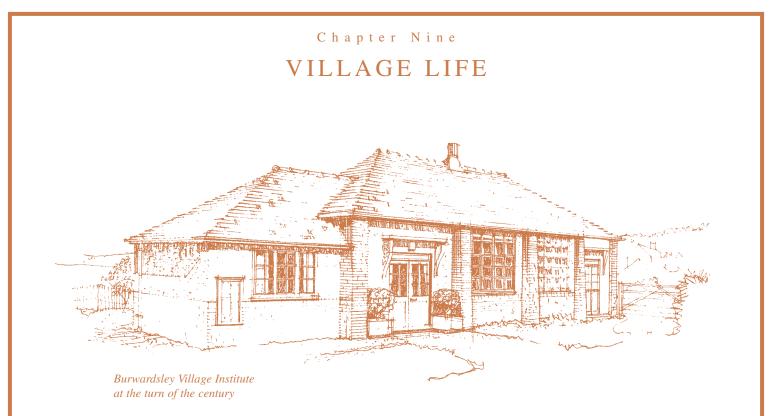
THE VILLAGE INSTITUTE

On an evening of very inclement weather in February 1920, a small group of villagers met in the school to consider raising funds for a village hall. Even though the number of participants was small, a committee was formed to consider the construction of a hall of about 60 x 20 feet, suitable for public meetings, concerts, etc. It was decided that there was a great need for such a building in the village and a spate of fund raising events, sales of work and other village functions followed. As the need for a meeting room was considered an urgent priority, the purchase of an ex-army hut was put forward as a solution to the problem but this was deferred until more funds became available.

By November the committee felt that an approach should be made to Major Barbour of Bolesworth Castle, the principal landowner, to familiarise him with the aims and objectives of the parish committee and the fund raising ventures that had taken place and in order to obtain 'as far as possible his financial support'. Major Barbour responded quickly to the delegation and attended a meeting. It was suggested at first that he might provide the whole building or advance the money in the form of a loan, but the Major felt this was too much to ask and finally made an offer to meet half the cost, together with provision of a site in the centre of the village of sufficient size to also include a bowling green. He had brought along to the meeting his architect who had prepared a plan costed at £1,200. A great deal of discussion took place before and after Mr Barbour and his architect left and it was finally decided that the cost was too great, a member of the committee was directed to draw up a plan himself, more in keeping with the wishes of the members present.

More feverish fund raising followed, Major Barbour being kept informed as the bank balance mounted. A visit was made to Tilston to inspect their new hall, but the delegation could not recommend a similar building for Burwardsley.

By late June 1922 sufficient funds were available for the committee to make approaches to another architect, Mr Beswick Jnr of Chester, to draw up a new plan for the hall. In anticipation of the future building, the Vicar and the Churchwardens presented the committee with three hanging oil lamps to light the new hall on its completion.



In August the new plan was accepted. Mr Beswick was asked to include a 200 gallon water tank to be placed in the roof and subject to some minor whims and fancies of the committee, to draw up a specification for the work.

By November the contract was ready for signing and Major Barbour was informed that on completion the hall would be administered by the same committee which had seen it proceed so far.

Dated 24th of October 1923. Sease and Trust Deed of the Burwardsley Institute

The Seals of the Lease and Trust Deed of the Burwardsley Institute signed and witnessed on 24th October 1923

enjoy the premises hereby demised during the said term without any lawful interruption from or by the Lessor or any person rightfully claiming from or under him ... IN WITNESS whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first before written. SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED) Robert Barbow by the said Robert Barbour in the presence of Runoas dely Groces Raymond Broker ling SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED by the said Herbert Barker John Jackson in the presence of P. Hall. Burwardsh John Booth. Henry Sandbach SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED) by the said John Jackson in) Burrow Rymed Bratis the presence of L'Hace. SIGNED SEALED AND DELIVERED) by the said John Booth in) the presence of L. Lall. Burroar dally Raymond Brontis Chrocers Burrosololy Jarmer

Work on site had commenced by December. Messrs Broster, Manning, Baker, Hopley, Jackson and Dodd, committee members, all volunteered to cart bricks from the brickworks now the site of T G Builders Merchants in Tattenhall - to Burwardsley in order that the walls could be constructed. By May of the following year, sufficient work had been undertaken to pay Mr Barlow (apparently the contractor for the walls, windows and roof) the sum of £350 on account of the work he had completed, and a meeting was called with the architect to discuss the plastering and the types of chimney pots to be used. The building was nearing completion. It was agreed that the opening should coincide with the AnnualVillage Fete.

In June a strange occurrence took place. The Secretary was instructed to write to Major Barbour and express the regrets of the Committee at the mistake of placing the hall on the wrong site. The apology appears to have been accepted in good faith as no mention of the matter occurs again other than at a later date further land for use as a bowling green was provided by the Major. It is interesting to speculate that the Hall should have been built on the land now used as a car park and the present site to be the bowling green, hence the need for additional land for the green of 30 x 40 yards in its present situation. Throughout June and July final preparations were being made for the completion of the hall and its grand opening. The interior was decorated by local volunteers, a fence along the road side and a gate at the entrance was constructed, chairs were purchased at two shillings each from the Cheshire Temperance Association and a programme for the opening with a concert party was booked for the evening entertainment. Finally, Mrs Robert Barbour was invited to perform the opening ceremony on Wednesday 19 September.

The best laid schemes however are not always accomplished in country areas where activities such as milking and harvest get in the way of finishing parish halls. The date had to be changed and finally on 10 October 1923, almost three years after the first meeting, the Hall was opened by Mrs Barbour. A short ceremony at the entrance doors, including a prayer by the Vicar, further speeches inside by the Hon. R Barrington, were followed by tea and entertainment in the evening by Mr Platt's concert party. It was a splendid occasion and is captured by a photograph of the ceremony given to the Committee by Mr Sandbach later in the year.



A group of local personalities including Mr and Mrs Robert Barbour of Bolesworth Castle, the Vicar, the Rev Baker and the Headmaster, Mr Sandbach, at the opening of the Village Institute on 10th October 1923.

As winter approached, the question of lighting the building other than by the three oil lamps given by the church was raised. A delegation was despatched to see the new Paraffin Gas Lamps installed at the hall in Capenhurst and three were purchased as a result of the visit. The hall was insured, the building for £800 and the contents for a further £200, the architect's final account agreed and his fees paid, and a final payment made to the contractor. Major Barbour's final commitment was £500.



Programme for the Evening Entertainment following the opening ceremony

A billiard table was purchased from a sale in Ledsham on the Wirral, draughts, dominoes, cards, whist tables and a ping pong table were also provided. A piano was given on long term loan by Mrs Barker and an order for the Liverpool Echo and the Express to be provided was also made. Tom Parsons was appointed as the first caretaker at a wage of £1.10.0 per week and a list of rules was drawn up. Charges were decided for billiards (3d for 20 minutes and 4d for 30 minutes) and an annual membership fee of 2/- for persons over 14 years and under 17 years and 4/- for over 17's was to be charged. The institute was to be open every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday from 5 - 9.30pm. Tuesdays were reserved for ladies from 6.30 -9.00pm with the proviso that the billiard table was not to be used other than by expert lady players. The new hall was now ready to be the focus of the village social life.

The institute saw its first fete on 14 August 1924. This was to become an annual affair and was a very important date on the village calendar. In 1930 it included sports for ladies, men and youths, two tents were erected, one was 60' x 25' and the other was 18' x 14'.

There was a farm produce competition and show, a pony gymkhana, pillow fights, ankle competitions, treasure hunts, silk hats, skittles, coconut shies, an obstacle race that included climbing up a pole, over a lorry and under **** a pegged sheet Speen Repaire & Improvements to Village Hall and teas BURWARDSLEY GALA FI were planned for 400 Saturday of Whit-Week-end people, 4th JUNE, 1938. with the official programme Over Silver Band booked TOLLEMACHE to play for ed to perform the Openin Mrs. HAMILTON CARTER dancing in the evening. What a grand event! A Gala Fete took place in 1938 to raise funds for the refurbishment of the hall and this included wrestling, sheaf tossing and bicycle races around the village as well as all the other events. These annual fetes were still thriving in the

1960's but don't happen so often these days and are certainly not so grand.

nission to Ground 6d.

Billiards obviously was a very popular game in 1923, so much so that a further smaller billiard table was bought in 1924. The cost of a game was 4d each, but the loser had to pay the winner's fee so the games were keenly contested. Burwardsley players joined the local league and so then travelled around all the nearby halls to play as well as having visiting teams to play here. The caretaker's main duty was to collect the money for the games, which were restricted to 30 minutes, such was the demand, and also to make sure the cloth was maintained in good condition. He was required to keep order, a job that was obviously not easy as there are many comments in the minute book about youths receiving warning letters or having their membership suspended. There were also problems with people not paying their subscription – does anything change?

Concert parties were organised on a regular basis, these were either home produced events such as those put on by Mrs Brown of Willow Hill Farm in aid of the Sunday School or professional concerts given by people outside the village. They usually consisted of singing, dancing, comic turns and recitations. The WI, who also met at the hall on a regular basis, wanted to put on concerts of their own, but there is a record of this being turned down. The reason given was that they may have deterred people from attending the ones put on by the Institute committee. Did they think this was overkill or were they frightened of the competition? Lawrence Parsons, however, must have been in favour as he put on concerts for five consecutive years in aid of the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds, a society which helped widows and orphans. A curious minute from a meeting in 1925 says 'Canon Baxter was very anxious to give us a concert by the Ko Ko Koons'. Unfortunatley there is no post concert report to let us know how this went!



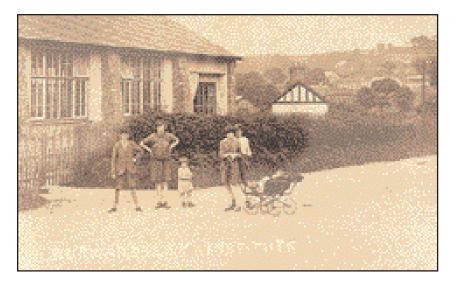
One of the many concert parties which entertained the village, on the stage in the Institute. Probably about 1930.

The stage in the Institute was also used for film and lantern slide shows. These were nearly always a sell out. A man came from Chester once a week with all the equipment and the latest films. In those days the programme consisted of the feature film, a supporting film, cartoons and the news. For most people it was the only way of getting up to date news of the outside world.

1926 saw the beginning of the Bowling Club sub-committee in charge of their very own bowling green at the side of the Institute.

Bowls was a very popular past-time during the summer months and again there was much inter-village competition. A silver cup awarded by the Bowling Club and last competed for in 1937 was won by David Dodd. The Bowling Club was suspended during the war. However, when it was re-formed in 1946 the pitch was in poor condition, the mower was not working and it seemed that there was insufficient interest to get things moving again, and so it was abandoned. Unusually though, even at the height of its popularity the bowling green was often used for summer dances!

Another highlight of village life occurred on the second Sunday in May when the Annual Anniversary of the Methodist Sunday School was held here. The Institute was used as the Chapel could not hold the number of people wanting to attend. Apparently, even the Institute was stretched. Everyone went in their very best clothes and the singing was such that it could be heard across the village. Scripture Union meetings were held for the children after school every Monday and this was taken by the Misses Howell who lived at Plantain House.



Tydd children outside the Institute. Note all the buildings in the background which are no longer there



The Village Institute as it is today. The poster is advertising line dancing.

During the war years there were several events such as concerts and sales given to raise money for the Red Cross in their efforts to help our soldiers, sailors and airmen.

Just after the war Harold Proudlove and Ernie Randles initiated a group which was later to be known as the Farmer's Discussion Group. This came about as a result of Mr Proudlove being friendly with the local representative of the Wartime Agricultural Executive Committee which had been set up to introduce and implement new initiatives, as a result of the severe upheaval which had occurred in the farming world during the war. These three people decided that it would be advantageous to both sides if there was regular contact between them. The meetings were and are still regularly attended and still held monthly in the Institute. It is an opportunity for the farming community to discuss current issues and to listen to speakers on different aspects of agriculture, and is as relevant today as during its inception all those years ago.

The Busy Bees was a group of Burwardsley Ladies who met weekly in the home of Mrs Edith Fleet of Well House. They knitted, sewed, crocheted, embroidered and painted and were 'as busy as bees', making things to sell at the annual bazaar, also held at Well House. All this activity was to raise funds for the church and the Institute. In fact, in 1962 the Institute minute book notes that the hall floor was in such poor repair that it was no longer suitable to hold dances on it, and so it was left to the ladies to fund raise!

Of course, the Village Institute was the regular meeting place of the Burwardsley Women's Institute, to whom we are extremely grateful for collecting, recording and assembling in the 1960's much of the material which has helped in the production of this book.



One of the many occasions that the W.I. met at the Institute

John Hughes was the new vicar in Burwardsley in 1986 and in 1988 he and his wife, Elaine, began with others from the village the now famous Institute Teas. During the 1980's the Candle Workshops in Higher Burwardsley had been becoming more and more popular, especially on Bank Holidays, when traffic often came to a standstill. John's idea was to open the Institute to passing tourists every Bank Holiday and to provide them with reasonably priced home-made food. These 'teas' were so successful that they are still running today.

In 1987 the Institute was used so little that when a group of local mums were looking for somewhere to hold a playgroup, the Institute committee allowed them the use of the hall. They finally got a more permanent home at Harthill School in 1991 and when they moved out it was decided that the whole building could benefit from a facelift. Once more there was major fundraising to pay for the alterations, decorations and new curtains.

It was the billiard table, sadly no longer used and which was sold for £1,600, that provided the main part of the fund which began a major refurbishment of the hall in the last few years. The hall has been refurbished to meet all modern social, safety and hygiene standards required by the local authority and is still used today as a popular venue for all parish functions.

There are also two other long running events that are on-going in the Institute. One is the Whist Drive that still takes place every month. Whist has always been a very popular game in Burwardsley and prior to the Institute being built it took place weekly in the village school.

The other long-standing event is the annual Harvest Supper in October. More recently introduced events are line dancing which takes place weekly, helping to keep us fit, and the monthly meetings of the local Barn Owl Society.

The Institute has, with sustained effort from the local residents, remained the hub of rural village life, adapting to the changing requirements of society for the past 77 years. With careful management it will continue as a meeting place, soon to celebrate its centenary.

It is appropriate in this Millenium year that the Village Institute - the hub of the social life of Burwardsley - provides the background to the assembled villagers for the Millennium photograph.

BURWARDSLEY CUSTOMS AND TALES AS RECALLED BY THE ELDERLY GENERATION OF VILLAGERS

Please forgive us if your memories of the people, places and events of the past differ slightly from those in this book. We have found that, talking to people still living in the area, memories do vary; for example was the field on Cawley's Hill off Harthill Road known as Strawberry Field or Raspberry Field? Memory can play tricks and sometimes we were given slightly differing versions from different people.

Many years ago when floors of cottages were covered with stone flags, and before cleaning materials were on sale, local people used to go up into the hills to the local sandhole to collect supplies of the white sand. This was used for scouring the floors, and as each stone was thoroughly cleaned, a little heap of sand was left in the middle of each one. When the floor had been cleaned all over, little piles of sand lay on each flagstone; these were not removed and a week or so later the whole process was repeated. Sometimes, however, in place of the heaps of sand, dock leaves placed in the shape of a cross were laid on the floor. No one seems to know why this was done, but it appears to be a custom practised against evil spirits. Some years ago an

elderly resident, Mr Hodgkinson, remembered his mother doing this when he was a boy; so it is clear that this was still being practised at the beginning of the 20th century. Another custom which was remembered by people in the village about 30 years ago was the annual Wakes which was a celebration held on the anniversary of the dedication of the church. Generally there was a procession which made its way to the church where a service of commemoration was held, after which the celebrations took place. Local people did not remember much of the service but they did talk of the fun and games.

The preceding day the Wakes traders came into the village bringing the goods they were to sell, and stalls were put up in the Chapel Field (probably the Glebe Land adjoining the church) and the road outside. Toys, sweets and other items which would appeal to the children and grown ups alike were on sale, but perhaps the favourite stall was the toffee stall which in the latter years was always manned by Sally Ball.

In the field were hobby horses, swing boats, coconut shies, shooting galleries, Aunt Sallies and all the sideshows of a fairground, while at some time during the day bear and badger baiting took place to "amuse" the onlookers. In the evening the village band played for dancing - if the weather was fine this was held in the same field but, if wet, dancing was held in the barn at the Carden Arms (now the Pheasant); in either case the admission charge was three old pennies.

There is no doubt that this annual event was a red letter day in the lives of the people; there was very little amusement then as known today and villages depended on themselves for their own entertainment.

When music was required it was supplied by the village band which consisted of a drum, concertina and violin and the players met one night each week during the winter for band practice. Its services were required each year on the day of the Wakes and also when any village dances were held. The church, too, had its own orchestra in the days before there was an organ. Mrs Hall's grandfather played the clarinet and Mr Parson played the violin – the other instruments will have to be left to the imagination as there are no records of them. Perhaps cellos and serpents as in other churches.

In common with many other Cheshire villages Burwardsley has a tradition of Soul Caking though when it was last carried on has not been recorded. The words of the song were similar to the rest of the county but the performers wore

animal skins over their heads; so it appears that Soul Caking in Burwardsley was associated with some form of "Mummers Play". Not so many years ago an elderly resident, Mrs Mannings, remembered Souling Parties coming to perform in her home when she was a child; some of the performers were usually very merry as they had been primed with home made ales and wines on their journey round the village. On one occasion Mrs Mannings' mother was worried about their alcoholic state and took the children upstairs to take refuge in a bedroom until the visitors were on their way.

A local custom which still carries on is the Harvest Festival held in the church to celebrate the safe gathering of the harvest and it is followed today by a Harvest Supper for all residents in the Village Institute.

LOCAL CHARACTERS AND OTHER TALES

John Cawley was the owner of Ridley Hall and a Cawley lived at Hill Farm in Burwardsley between 1840 and 1880. Since then the hill nearby has been called Cawley's Hill and the farm, Cawley Lodge Farm, thus named on the Ordnance Survey maps. The Cawleys had a huge bull which worked in harness and which drew a large wagon which was still to be seen at Hill Farm about 40 years ago, 1960. It was then seen at Hopleys in Brown Knowl. The bull was regularly used but one day fell over the edge of Cawley's Hill and broke its neck.

At the drive entrance up to Cawley Lodge Farm there are two huge stone gateposts which must weigh several tons.



The huge stone gate pillars at the entrance drive to Cawley Lodge Farm

They were quarried at Little Heath quarry above Burwardsley, near Dropping Stone Farm, in John Cawley's time and were brought laboriously down to the farm a little way each day. Reports of the number of animals drawing the posts vary; some say only horses were used; others state that nine horses and the bull were employed in this undertaking. Progress was very slow however, for the great weight of the stone caused it to sink into the soft sandy soil, and when the animals strained to pull it out, the tackle broke. Local people said that one day was used to move the posts a little nearer to their final position and the following day was spent in repairing the tackle used in moving the stone. Eventually the two posts were set into place. John Cawley intended to put up a wrought iron gate showing a plough and a pail and, in gilt and ironwork, inscribe the following: "May the landlord flourish and the farmer never fail". Unfortunately he never completed the plan. However, the two posts remain and they have not weathered at all in spite of the length of time they have stood there and in spite of the soft nature of the stone. The working of the stone is as clean and sharp as it was when they were put up, with no signs of crumbling or breaking. At present they look as though they will last for centuries.

Another local story concerns Richard Carr who carried on a small carrier's business. All his carrying was done on the back of a donkey which he owned as he had no carrier's cart. People used to employ him to carry sacks of corn and other articles. His donkey was tethered at the side of the road when not working, so that it could eat the grass growing there. Its two front legs were fastened together by a rope which was attached to a stake; it was then allowed a good length of rope to allow it some restricted movement to reach a circle of grass. When Richard Carr left his tethered donkey to graze, the village boys would come along and untether it and take turns in riding it up and down the road – much to the annoyance of its owner who threatened dire punishment if he caught them.

Samuel Sutton was the local blacksmith and he had a very famous father. He, too, was a blacksmith, John Sutton. Burwardsley anecdotes say that he had been with the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Waterloo and was the Duke's personal blacksmith.

The smithy was opposite the Post Office next to the wheelwright's. The children used to gather round to watch the blacksmith shaping the iron hoops which were later fitted round cart wheels.

The smithy is now the garage at Smithy Bank but the blacksmith's initials 'BF' – Bill France and date of the building are still there in the apex.

However, after the smithy closed down, another one was opened on the road to Tattenhall between Top House and Manor House Farm. This was used for many years and the empty building still stands beside the road with the old forge still inside.



The Old Smithy in Burwardsley, awaiting a new use

Another local memory concerns the besom seller. In the late nineteenth century it was obviously difficult for village people to travel far for life's necessities and so many of their purchases were made locally and sold at the village shops. Other goods were sold direct to the villagers by the people who made them. One of these was an old woman who came down from the Bickerton Hills carrying a sack on her back. This sack was full of besoms which she had made from twigs collected on the hills and they were all ready for fitting onto a handle. These she sold to villagers for three halfpennies each.

A local surname – Kinsey – was connected with the office of Bear Warden. Research has shown that the supposed last Bear Warden came from Carden and not Burwardsley. However, many villagers believed that the name of their village came from the "Bear-wards-ley", though this is not the origin given in the Oxford Dictionary of Place Names, nor in Place Names of Cheshire by Simon Potter. Whichever theory is correct, it is quite likely that bear and badger baiting did take place in Burwardsley in the Wassail Field behind the Pheasant Inn.

Another of the fields called Cockerhill Field, near the Pheasant Inn, was probably so named because cock fighting was a local sport.

There are other local tales of smuggling in Burwardsley. What was smuggled is not known but it is said the smugglers came from Tattenhall with their goods loaded on the backs of donkeys. They passed through Burwardsley and on up to

Raw Head where they stored their contraband in some caves. One day, however, they were caught in the process of moving their goods to the Bickerton area and one smuggler's donkey was taken and impounded in the pound at the top of Gallantry Bank. The donkey's owner must have been immensely strong for he climbed into the pound and lifted his donkey over the low walls and escaped with it. In 1834 the daughter of the Vicar of Tattenhall wrote in her diary of the dreadful brigands of Bloody Bones Cave on Raw Head who terrorized the neighbourhood, plundering graves and stealing cheeses from farms.

Incidentally, in the Malpas Deanery Magazine for August 1899 the author writes of Tattenhall churchyard and records that about 1840 "one of these tombs was utilised for a curious purpose. About that time the hills were infested with a gang of robbers, who plundered the cheese rooms at farmhouses and William Wright affirmed that the produce of these robberies from farms within a radius of four or five miles round Tattenhall, was brought and deposited there, the lid of the tomb being lifted up, and the cheese placed therein." John Leche's diaries provide an insight into the Carden Estate – of which much of Burwardsley was a part – during the 16th and 17th centuries. Drainage of farmland was improved by ditching and crop yields were improved by marling. This natural soil improver was obtained by digging out from places where it occurred, thus leaving the typical marl pits of this area of Cheshire. Cheese production also increased from the Carden Estate and was sold as far afield as London. Cheeses matured for 12 months and in 1698 John Leche's diaries record that 23 horses were used to send 248 cheeses to Chester.

VILLAGE FAMILY TALES

The top of the village, or Higher Burwardsley to give it its official title has a hidden-away corner – of which Burwardsley is full – called Pennsylvania. The Latin roots of this word show us that it means "woods all around" and, in fact, although much of the woods have been replanted by Peckforton Estate, there remains a very pretty corner of woodland and a few cottages tucked away. Here, at Spring House Farm, Dennis Dutton was born, although he later lived at Lilac Cottage.



Pennsylvania Woods and Stannah Nab from Higher Burwardsley

His grandfather owned the nine acre farm on the edge of the Peckforton estate and Dennis remembered as a boy the foresters on the estate sending him to his mother to "get a scald on" - a mug of tea? Dennis's mother, Annie, had a busy life. In addition to the household tasks and animals to feed, she would travel through all weathers to Chester Market, often by horse and cart but sometimes on foot, to sell the produce from the farm - butter, chickens, rabbits, etc and then on to Hoole to sell house to house whatever remained. She would bring home tripe for the parson, cow-heels for her husband and perhaps a kipper from Sally-Ann, a colourful market character who sold a basket of kippers for 6d. The bustle of Chester must have been quite a change from Burwardsley - as it is now - and

she told of having to get the horse and cart in the wake of the tram on the way home on Saturday nights, through "a sea of heads everywhere".

Before the Second World War several of the cottages were holiday homes owned by business people from Manchester and Liverpool who came to share this peaceful part of the country. Walkers, as now, were frequently seen in Burwardsley, and during the second World War several cottages were filled with evacuees. Although the evacuees livened things up, life continued much as before, and many villagers reared and killed a pig to eke out their rations. Dennis Dutton, who helped his father with the milkround, remembered having to deliver their entitlement of free milk to the wives of servicemen in Burwardsley, even though many of them kept their own cow and had plenty of milk.

Schoolchildren were expected to behave themselves and the boys from Higher Burwardsley would frequently take on the boys from Lower Burwardsley in a football match or other game. The children's treat was the Sunday School trip each year to Blackpool or Liverpool when they could spend their pocket money on the roll-apenny and still come back with a "five bob" watch for your father and a bottle of lavender scent for your mum. Going to church meant getting dressed in your Sunday best, sitting still and listening to the parson; the best part was the fun on the walk to and from church. Then the smaller brothers and sisters used to run on ahead and hide at some vantage point to see who was walking to or from church with whom.

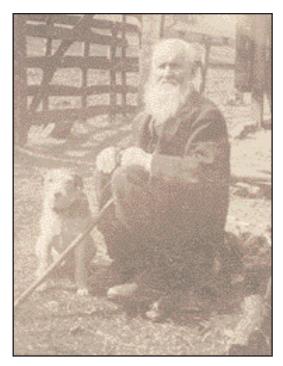
Pennsylvania and Higher Burwardsley have always had stories of ghosts and witches connected with them. There was the witch who kept an eagle in her barn and the "pit" – (now filled in), in the field opposite Lilac Cottage and the Roost. It used to be called the "witchpit". Dennis remembered eerie experiences when helping his father calving at night in the fields when badgers' eyes gleamed as they scuttled away.

Other reminiscences concern Harold Parsons, the mechanic, who was known as "twenty-four pints and three brandies" after his legendary celebrations on VE Day. On asking the local lads for directions you would probably be sent "up Top Road Corner, down the Salver or Wassail Bank, along School Bank and down the Strate" or else "down Joseph Tydd's Hill for 'Tattna' (Tattenhall).

Down a track, tucked away, but really only a stone's throw from the church, lived Mrs Phillips at Cherry Tree Cottage in the house where she was born and her mother before her. She was a pillar of the church all her life and was organist for 50 years. On her sideboard stood a carriage clock, presented to her by grateful parishioners as a reminder of long and faithful service. Music was always important in her life. In her youth she would cycle to Bickerton each week for her music lesson with Miss Clegg, the Vicar's daughter, and she looked forward each week to choir practice led by the Vicar, Mr Barker. He used to beat out time with a baton and kept his choristers in line as Mrs Barker played the organ. Mrs Phillips' father was a grocer in Tattenhall whereas her mother kept the house and smallholding ticking over. Even so, they sold the cottage to the Bolesworth Estate for one shilling a year in return for its upkeep and maintenance. School for Mrs Philips, her sister and three brothers, was a short journey. Mr Sandbach was Headmaster and Mrs Sandbach taught the

infants. School life was very strict but very happy. Everyone attended regularly – including the Attendance Officer, by all accounts. When they grew older, Mrs Phillips' sister went into Chester to work each day, via Tattenhall station, and her brothers worked for the estate, one as a mechanic, one as a joiner and one as a chauffeur. But for Mrs Phillips there was plenty of work at home and so she spent a life centred on the village and the church in particular. Church on Sundays was the social event of the week. Everyone turned out. Mrs Phillips' greatgrandfather who was a stonemason made the present church font in their yard at Cherry Tree Cottage when there was a long frosty spell which made it impossible to carry out his normal quarrying work. This new font replaced the blue 'sugar basin' which had been used hitherto and which you can see on display in the church.

Mrs Phillips of Cherry Tree Cottage remembered her strict but happy childhood with her three brothers; playing cricket on their field where Mount Tabor houses now stand; her brothers playing football for Burwardsley Football Club run by Mr Dodd of Cawley Lodge and whose three sons were also in the team. Burwardsley team used to be very popular. The football pitch was on land at Cawley Lodge Farm. Mr Dodd had five sons who all played for the team. Postwar was its hey-day. Two coach loads of supporters went to away matches and the village was deserted. One year Burwardsley team won three cups. The crowd supporting the team at home were "as large as those which support Chester City today".



Old Mr. Hall - Grandfather of John Phillips



Burwardsley Football Team

She also remembers Perce Dodd's good right foot knocking a woman spectator in the crowd down; of 'wimberrying' and playing in the caves at Rawhead with other children, especially of trying to terrify each other in the caves' dark interiors; and of Mr Badrock, of the smithy opposite to Well House, making the children 'bowlers' to play with.

The village boys volunteered to work the hand pump on the organ – often Jack Peers, Norman Bosley or John Harding. Jack Peers lived at Flute Cottage and his father had been the organ blower before him. Jack earned £1 12s. 6d. per annum for his job which his mother used to buy him a new suit. At festival times the church was so full that extra chairs had to be put down both sides of the aisle. Burwardsley seems to have had little luck when it comes to the length of service of its vicars. Mrs Phillips remembered a succession who came and went very quickly. Among them were Mr Harcourt-Williams, Mr Carswell, Canon Vaughan and Canon Philpin. Mrs Phillips served all these as organist and several more afterwards.

One of the oldest Burwardsley inhabitants in recent years was Auntie Polly and the following is a tribute to her written towards the end of her life:



"Auntie Polly Vernon"

Auntie Polly is a term of endearment she well deserves, for she is the kind of old lady we would all dearly love to have as an auntie - warm hearted, a youthful 91 year old with a twinkle in her eye and more tales to tell than anyone could ever believe. The odd name may escape her here and there but her sense of humour is as strong as it always must have been. Auntie Polly, or Mrs Vernon, lives opposite the church in Church Cottage, a neat, white cottage, with a well cared for garden. Taking care of, and pride in, things has been her life. Now she proudly boasts she does all her own work and adamantly refuses to be 'home-helped'. She was caretaker at the school for 15 years and proudly brought up her family of whom she is still the hub and who try to repay by looking after her in little ways – as far as they are allowed. Every morning and evening she makes the trip across the school to tend her seven hens and two pheasants and you will see her about, bright and early every morning. She always had a wave for you as she leans on her gate 'ready for a natter' or potters in her garden. Mrs Vernon lived in her cottage until well into her nineties. She was born Polly Wooley in Huxley but moved to Tattenhall when her parents took on "The Bear and Ragged Staff" where she met her future husband. Her husband had to give up farming because of an injury so Auntie Polly and her husband moved into

Church Cottage in 1939. It had been lived in by Mr Stockton. He kept three airedales and several pigs, all of whom had the run of the house. Indeed, reports have it that if you walked in one might pop out from "under the 'arth and come walking out". The Estate improved the cottage and Polly cleaned it up and made a home for the family at £1 a week rent. A bathroom was built on and a septic tank put in and she remembered how wonderful it was when she got electricity. The cottage, originally split into two and housing two families, was now one and with every modern convenience.

During the war she remembered a bomb falling near Beehive Farm and going up to Strawberry Hill to watch Liverpool being heavily shelled. Her husband went into the army but was called back to work on the Estate – as Auntie Polly put it, "Mr Barbour got him off".

Shortly after moving to Church Cottage she was asked to take over as caretaker of the school. This she did, serving the school well for 15 years, which is an awful lot of boiler stoking. After that, her daughter Nancy took over the job for the next 22 years. Although by now the school was an Outdoor Education Centre, Auntie Polly still took a keen interest; she knew how many children were there, where they were from.

Her love of children shone through in all her contact with them. She hated the quiet when the school was closed for two years and was especially glad to see people come and have a look round the church when visiting the area. Most of all she loved a bit of life, a good party such as the village parties which began again in Silver Jubilee Year. It saddened her that there were fewer children in the village but she was extremely proud to be the village's oldest resident and used to say "I just wouldn't want to be anywhere else".

Another long-standing resident was Ena Hall nee Parsons who was born in Burwardsley in 1915 in Oak Cottage. This was the original Oak Cottage opposite the Vicarage and at the side of Broad Rough. It had been her family home for three generations of Parsons: her grandfather Joseph Parsons, her father Lawrence Parsons and her brother Herbert who was the last to live there with his wife Molly. It was condemned as unsafe and demolished soon after 1925. Joseph had fourteen children to house in his two up, two down sandstone cottage.



The Parsons in front of their home, Oak Cottage This was demolished in the mid 1980's and is the intended site of new houses to be built in the village shortly.

Ena's grandfather was Joseph Parsons who is shown in both the 1850 and 1860 censuses as being a schoolmaster. Probably in the village church and at the newly built Drill Hall constructed in 1860. He did not, however, carry on when the Board School was opened in 1876, as the first headmaster there was Mr Winckley.

Ena's father Lawrence was Clerk to the Parish Council for 20 years until his death in 1940. He was also the superintendent of the Sunday School which Ena attended as a child twice every Sunday at half past ten in the morning and

again at half past one in the afternoon. There must scarcely have been time for lunch in between! She also remembers the village tip that was at the Sandhole, now known as Willow Hill Quarry, and she and her friends would often go and look in there for anything interesting that other people had thrown out. On one memorable occasion she and a friend had found a pair of shoes, still in good condition, which had been thrown there by the vicar's wife. This lady was renowned for having trouble with her feet and would always throw uncomfortable shoes in the tip. So they were walking up the Street towards the church in this pair of cast off shoes feeling very grown up and daring, when who should be coming towards them but the previous owner of the shoes! What embarrassment!

Lawrence was also the main organiser of the charity concert parties in the 1930's, held in the Village Institute annually. He brought in a semi-professional group called the Al Johnson Party from Wrexham to entertain. The money raised, Ena thinks, went to the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds of which he was the secretary. This charity raised money to help widows and orphans. Ena married Dick Hall from Cherry Tree Cottage in 1942 and they then moved to Tattenhall where she has lived ever since, although her ties with Burwardsley still continued as she returned on the opening of the Field Centre to be the cook and greatly enjoyed working with John Jones. Her daughter Rachel still plays the organ in Burwardsley Church.

Chapter Nine VILLAGE LIFE

VERSES WRITTEN BY THE REV CANON G VAUGHAN, B.D., BURWARDSLEY VICARAGE, BURWARDSLEY

Sung at a Harvest Supper in the Village Institute to the tune of *The Mountains of Mourne*

1. Come gather round me good Bosleyites all, And the friends here from Harthill and from Tattenhall.

The supper we've eaten has been a great treat; I'm as full as a tick from my head to my feet. We thank Mr Gosmore for getting the meat Which was cooked to a turn by our friend Mrs Fleet.

We praise all who've helped her to make such a spread

And for seeing that guests should be so amply fed.

2. Now Bosley, some say, is an outlandish place, And the people who live here are quite commonplace.

Some houses are nice, some falling to bits And the air is polluted by large silage pits. But I say "come and live here and soon you will find That the people are homely and friendly and kind".

Though be careful, if in peace you are wishful to be

'Mong the natives related around Burwardsley.

 There are Dawsons and Bensons and Hopleys and Shones, There are Bosleys and Kinseys and Hugheses

There are Bosleys and Kinseys and Hugheses and Jones,

There are Hollands and Dykes, there are Gosmores and Tydds,

And the Duttons and Hardings with a score of fine kids.

There are Vernons and Threadgolds, and there are the Dodds

Who outnumber the others by very long odds. There are Parsons who are Non.Cons and Parsons who are not

But also we are losing dear Allans, the Scot.

4. There are Ravenscrofts, Rutters and Randles and Rooks,

I had to put that in to rhyme it with Brookes! There are Eardleys and Hewitts, and Chesters and Browns,

(Not the Browns out of Chester who sell ladies gowns)

There are Mosfords and Proudloves and Williams and Stokes,

Chapter Nine VILLAGE LIFE

And a lot of young ladies without any blokes! There is Whitworth, his Missus, and two hefty sons And the Halls and the Prices and two Hodkinsons.

5. The stranger who comes here thinks he has been sent

To a wonderful place in the Old Testament. If he'll wander at will and just walk to and fro He will see Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, Belshazzar, Darius, Mount Tabor he'll scan But there is no furnace, no lions, no Dan. The natives don't play on the Sackbut or Flute,

They would rather play whist when they hold a good suit.

6. Our Doctor on Friday was limping about With a soft slippered foot that was swollen with gout.

He went to see Partridge the following day Because he was keen at his supper to play. And Partridge said "Ken, you are running a risk,

The cause of your gamminess is a slipped disc",

So he wrapped him in Plaster of Paris, quite tight,

And here he is playing in Trios tonight.

7. It's time that I brought my poor rhyme to an end;

My aim was to please you and not to offend. The names I have mentioned have just been for fun,

So I pray for your pardon for what I have done.

But nothing like this could be ever complete Without Herbert Kinsey and friend

Harry Fleet;

Such Wardens as these I shall pray there will be

For as long as I live with you in Burwardsley.

Chapter Nine VILLAGE LIFE

IN CONCLUSION

In September 1986 the Rev John Hughes and his family moved from a suburban village east of Crewe to this very rural village of Burwardsley. On his first morning at the Vicarage John was amazed at the magical stillness of the place and urged his wife Elaine to go outside and "listen to the silence". Indeed John never ceased to marvel at this peaceful stillness.

It is our hope that the peace and tranquillity experienced by John Hughes on that first morning in Burwardsley will prevail through this Millennium in the village with the view from the hill.



PERPETUAL CURATES IN THE BURWARDSLEY CHAPELRY OF BUNBURY

Rev.

Barnet	1735 - 1759
E. Evans	1759 - 1792
J. Price	1792 - 1824
W. Vawdrey	1824 - 1848
E. Titley	1848 - 1883
R. J. Keith-Chalmers	1884 - 1891
F. R. Wanburgh	1891 - 1902

PRIESTS IN CHARGE

Rev.

R J Matthews	1975 - 1978
F Mawson	1978 - 1982
W B Faull	1982 - 1986
J W D Hughes	1986 - 1992
R Buckley	1993 -

VICARS OF BURWARDSLEY

Rev.

J.T. Clegg	1902 - 1916
H. Barker	1916 - 1930
J.W. Harcourt-Williams	1930 - 1941
A.M. Carswell	1941 - 1952
G. Vaughan	1952 - 1956
W.J. Philpin	1956 - 1961
A. Veness	1961 - 1974

1897 J Booth T Dawson T Robinson J W Simcock J Stockton J Wharton T White

PARISH COUNCILLORS 1894-1946

1894	1896
James Allman	J Booth
John Booth	R Carr
John Brett	J Ibbotson
Richard Carr	T Robinson
William France	J W Simcock
Thomas Latham	G Tydd
William Phillips	J Wharton

RDC Representative: T Parsons Clerk and Assistant Overseer: P Brooks

1898	1899	1901
J Booth	J Ankers	T Robinson
T Dawson	T Dawson	A Ryder
T Robinson VC	T Robinson VC	J Windsor
J W Simcock C	J W Simcock C	J Brett
G Tydd	H Sandbach	G Tydd
J Wharton	G Tydd	T Parsons
J Stockton	J Wharton	T White

RDC Representative: T Parsons Clerk and Assistant Overseer: P Brooks

1904

J Booth J Brett L Parsons L Robinson C A Ryder VC G Tydd J Windsor 1907 J Booth VC F W Jackson H Jackson L Parsons A Lea T Robinson C J Windsor

1910 J Booth C F W Jackson VC H Jackson L Parsons A Lea A Ryder J Windsor

RDC Representative: T Parsons Clerk and Assistant Overseer: P Brooks

1913	1919	1922
E Badrock	J Booth VC	T Dodd
J Booth	A Sandbach C	A Caswall
H Chesters	A Caswall	H Hewitt
F W Jackson C	H Chesters	W Manning
L Parsons	T Hopley	R Broster
H Sandbach VC	W Manning	T Hopley
J Windsor	S Hewitt	H Sandbach C

The name of the RDC Representative is not recorded but believed to be H Sandbach. The Clerk and Assistant Overseer, P Brooks, served until 1915, then resigned owing to ill health. His successor was L Parsons.

1925

J Booth T Brown A Caswall T Dodd S Hewitt T Hopley H Sandbach C 1928 H Sandbach C T Hopley T Dodd J Booth A Caswall S Hewitt A Turner

1931 T Brown H Proudlove T Hopley W Booth H Sandbach C S Hewitt T Dodd

RDC Representative: H Sandbach Clerk: L Parsons

1934	1937	1946
H Sandbach	Rev H Williams C	J T Dodd
Rev H Williams	T Dodd	T Dodd
T Hopley	T Hopley	Rev A M Carswell
T Dodd	H Chesters	H Proudlove
H Proudlove	H Proudlove	H Fleet
H Chesters	H Sandbach	T Brown
T Brown	T Brown	T J Peers

The Clerk, Mr Lawrence Parsons, died in 1940, after holding office for 25 years. Mr F Pritchard took his place.

1952

Rev A M Carswell C J Vernon T Dodd D Dodd T Brown J Peers

1957 J Vernon C H Fleet D Dodd J Peers D C Mosford Mrs Mosford

1961 D C Mosford C Mrs Mosford H Fleet A Rutter D Dodd Rev A Veness

1983

1966

1988

Rev A Veness C H Fleet D C Mosford A Rutter J Peers F Whitworth D Dodd

1973 Mrs B V Mayhew C M Ravenscroft J Peers H Fleet F Whitworth Rev Veness Mres Basnett

1978 Mrs B V Mayhew C M Ravenscroft Sanderson R Evans M Hanson Harper R Bosley

Mrs B V Mayhew C R Bosley R Evans M Hanson Harper Mrs A Ryder Sanderson

Mrs A Ryder C Rev J W D Hughes Mrs S Hughes R Evans B Hassall M Hanson

1993

1999

Mrs A Ryder C
Mrs J Brunsden
G Simpson
S Prince
Dr K Grey
R Evans
M Hanson

Mrs A Ryder C G Bramall R Evans M Hanson S Prince Mrs P Mumme-Young D Greenhaugh

SURNAMES OF HEAD OF HOUSE IN THE 1851 CENSUS

TYDD HODKINSON STOCKTON DODD OWEN CROWFORD FILKIN BOOT SUTTON JONSONS MANNING WITE BATMAN FORSTER RUSCOE JONES CARR WHARTON PARSONS NIELD ALLMAN BROWN TOWERS WALKER PINNINGTON DAVENPORT MORREY GIBSON DUTTON BIRKHILL PRICE NAILOR WOOLEY SADLER LEECH EDGERTON DARLINGTON KINSEY BOWKER HARDING HUGHES BROOKES HATTON WINDSOR RODEN TOMKIN POVALL WILSON LIGHTFOOT RAVENSCROFT

ADDITIONAL SURNAMES IN THE 1881 CENSUS

HARRISON	MANLEY	THREADGOLD	RANDLES
ALLMAN			

OCCUPATIONS 1850 - 1860 - 1906 FROM THE CHESHIRE DIRECTORIES

1850

Joseph Parsons John Stockton Peter Dutton Jo Povall George Price John Windsor John Windsor John Sutton James Wharton Sam Dutton William Neild James Carr John Foster Ab Darlington Jos Dykes Moses Ellson John Foster Peter Foster Thom Foster Joseph Johnson Will Manning Jos Neild Rob Ravenscroft Thom Sadler Samuel Walker Will Walker Geo Windsor Will Crawford

Schoolmaster Stonemason Boot & Shoemaker " " " ٢٢ Blacksmith Victualler Shopkeeper Farmer ۷ ۲ ٢٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ٢٢ ٢٢ ۷ ۲ ٤٢

1860

Jos Parsons John Stockton Peter Dutton George Price John Windsor Samuel Sutton James Wharton George Davies Mary Dulton John Sutton **Richard Darlington** William Crawford James Carr John Cawley Ab Darlington **Elizabeth Foster** Peter Foster **Thomas Foster** Jos Johnson George Kinsey John Lightfoot Jos Neild Mary Ravenscroft Thomas Stockton Samuel Walker James Wharton Geo Windsor Jos Windsor

Schoolmaster Stonemason Boot & Shoemaker 44 " Blacksmith Victualler Shopkeeper Shopkeeper ۲٢ Grocer Farmer ۲۲ ٢٢ " ۲٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ٢٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ۲٢ ٢٢ ٢٢

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OCCUPATIONS CONTINUED...

1906

John Booth	Postmaster
Herbert Parry	Blacksmith
Joseph Wharton	Victualler
Thomas Parsons	Shopkeeper
John Booth	Grocer
Peter Brooks	Tailor
Thos Hodskinson	Wheelwright
Robert Caldecott	Farmer
Herbert Chesters	"
Thomas Foster	"
Charles Hodskinson	"
Frederick Jackson	"
Herbert Jackson	"
Arthur Lea	"
Mrs Price	"
Thomas Robinson	"
James Simcock	"
Arthur Ryder	"
John Stockton	"
John Garner	Cowkeeper
William Large	"
Thomas Manning	"
George Windsor	"
Joseph Windsor	"
John Ankers	"
Sam Hewitt	66

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