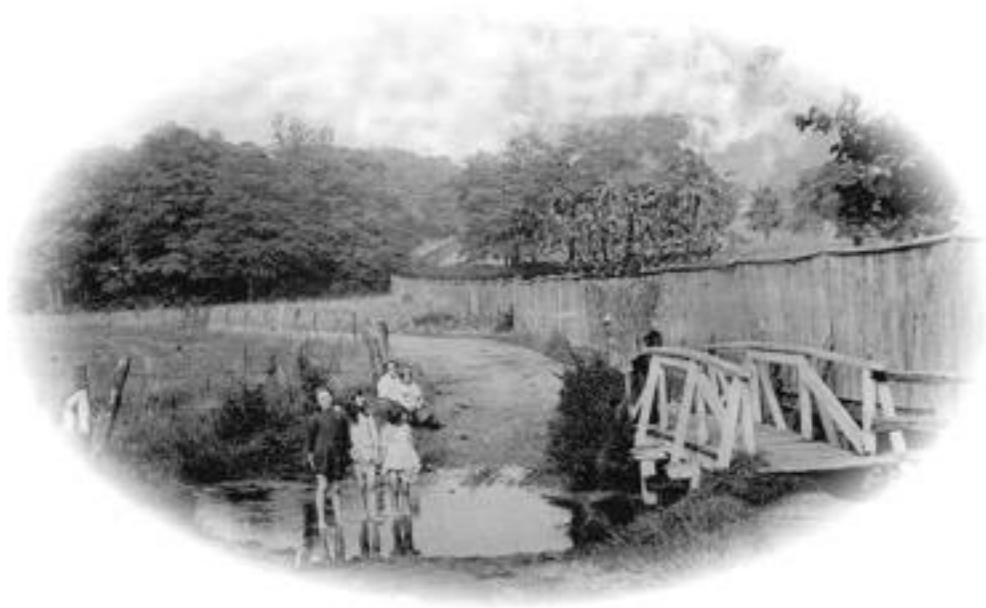


Marston Green



Down Memory Lane

Margaret Francis

**“A selection of snippets remembered by many
and recorded here”.**

Marston Green



Down Memory Lane

Margaret Francis

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The villages of Marston Culy and Wavers Marston, referred to as Merstone, were first recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1066.

The village of Marston Green has evolved from those early beginnings and it has grown and developed over the centuries.

As the 20th century closes it is evident that the greatest changes have occurred there in the past 70 to 80 years.

As it moves into the 21st century it is hard to imagine that such great changes can occur there again in such a relatively short space of time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Acknowledgements and Preface	
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	Marston Green -The Early Years	8
Chapter 3	Growth and Development	19
Chapter 4	Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate	28
Chapter 5	The Local Village Services	41
5.1	Marston Green Tavern	42
5.2	Shops and Services	48
5.3	Medical Facilities in Marston Green	59
Chapter 6	The Village School	61
6.1	Schooldays	62
6.2	The Land Lane School	68
6.3	The New School	87
Chapter 7	The Garden of Memory	90
Chapter 8	The Hospitals in Marston Green	98
8.1	The Hospital Sites in Marston Green	99
8.2	Marston Green Maternity Hospital	116
8.3	The Future	118
Chapter 9	The Development of Transport Services	121
9.1	Elmdon Airport	122
9.2	The Railway	127
Chapter 10	Personal Tales	134
Chapter 11	Mrs Morley's Story	156
Chapter 12	Where are they now?	169
	Postscript	179
	Appendix: List of Articles, Figures, Maps and Photographs	181

Acknowledgements and Preface

I would like to thank everyone who has helped and guided me through my first attempt at writing a book.

Without the support and encouragement of my family, it would still be lots of pieces of paper randomly scattered throughout the house.

My thanks go to the many people who provided me with tales of their experiences, with publications, newspaper clippings, photographs and other valuable memorabilia. Apologies too if I have not used it all. (I would be into volumes if I had).

Especially to:

Peggy and Cyril Driscoll	Mr George Kitson
Mrs Dorothy Marsh	Mrs Betty Dalman
Roy Roberts	Mrs Holt
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The Library staff	Jim (at the station)
Mrs Ethel Morley	Mr George Taplin
Mrs Mary Walker	Jeremy Pritchard
Mr French	Margaret Harding

And to all the many other people who I don't necessarily know, who have related tales to my parents on their wanderings around the village.

Many thanks to my mum and dad, Jean and Norman Baugh for their patience, when I have asked them yet again to check some piece of information or other for me.

To my many colleagues and friends who have offered encouragement and advice during this 'little' project. Like 'Topsy' – it grew!

Also to Ivor, for his support and guidance with the computer, to Wiz who showed me how to get the photographs and text into the right places and to Laura for her occasional 'useful comments'.

Thank you all

Margaret.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Chapter 1 Introduction

Back in the early 1970's when I was a student I did my first study of the Village of Marston Green where I grew up.

Since then I have moved away, but as time has gone by and my time spent in the village has been less frequent I have become increasingly aware of the vast range and speed of changes in and around the area.

I felt that it was important to record some of these changes and as we approach the 21st century it seemed like an ideal time to do so.

I have gathered my information here from a wide variety of sources. My appeals to family, friends and acquaintances, as well as responses to my letters published in the local newspapers and the church magazine have provided a wealth of memories.

Indeed several visits to the 'attic' from some people have resulted in wonderful documentary evidence of events over the passing years.

This is not intended to be a 'weighty tome' but a light hearted wander through the life and times of folk who have at least at some stage in their lives, been part of the community that makes up the Village of Marston Green.

It is possible that there will be inaccuracies – for that I apologise, but I hope that you will share the information, in the way that it is intended.

Enjoy your journey back through the years and come.....

Down Memory Lane in Marston Green.

Margaret Francis
Summer 1999

My Personal Memories

My earliest recollections of Marston Green are as a six year old. I would be taken by steam train, to the village, to check on the progress of our newly built house. We would come from our two up two down terraced house in Sparkbrook, where I was born.

The one mile walk from the station either down Elmdon Lane, or through the village centre, opened up a whole new world to me. Countryside replaced rows of houses and factories. Fields, farms and animals grazing were all new experiences.



Photograph 1: The 1953 Coronation in White Road, Sparkbrook

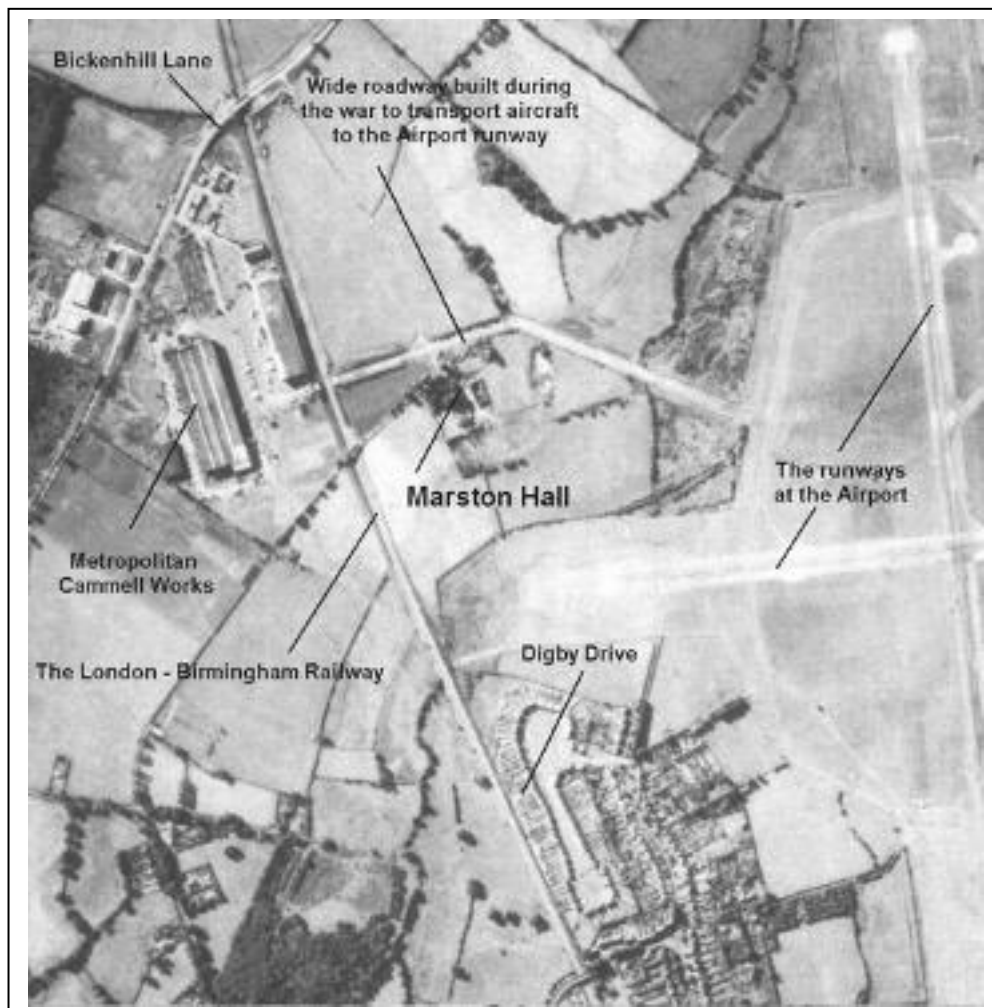
My Uncle who was a plasterer, had told mum and dad of the homes being built outside the City of Birmingham in the post war years. The village of Marston Green was an ideal location for the family as dad worked in New Street Station and could travel easily to work. So towards the end of the 1950's, our new 3 bedroom, semi-detached house (with indoor plumbing) at 60 Digby Drive soon became the centre of 'My World'. It cost the princely sum of £1,995.

Building work was still going on in the rest of the estate so my newly found young friends and I happily explored the new houses and the local area together. We could safely wander along the right of way alongside the railway track, to walk beside the brook and investigate the whirlpool under the railway embankment. We could play alongside the short runway on the airfield (fences were few and far between) and go along to the end of The Foredrift or Newlands Lane and play in the air raid shelters at the edge of the Airfield. Mr Astons cows would graze, unconcerned, in a field at the end of Elmdon Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

One of my new friends lived at Marston Hall, the old Tudor Manor House. How I wish I had appreciated then, the history and importance of the place. It was just across the field from Digby Drive. We would play in the barns in the farmyard and wander through the orchards. If we were allowed in the house the wooden panelled main Hall provided a wonderful stage for our little plays and concerts. (The people in the huge portraits, which lined the stairs, were our audience). The bathroom upstairs amused me. It was the first time I had been aware of 'double holers'. There were two toilet bowls and tall cisterns in the same room, with a long polished wooden plank across, with a hole for each!

Outside the front drive of Marston Hall was a wide, long runway which had been built in the early days of the war to transport aircraft from the Metropolitan Cammell works in Bickenhill Lane, where they were manufactured, to the main runway at the newly opened Elmdon Airport. This roadway was a wonderful safe area for learner drivers in the post war years. Increasing growth and development of the Airport and bureaucracy eventually led to this private training ground to be fenced off and barred to the general public.



Photograph 2: Aerial view of Marston Hall.

Schooldays were a different experience too. From a large brick built Inner City school, the quaint little school at Marston Green, made up of its variety of prefabricated buildings was quite a culture shock.

I joined the infant department in Mrs Kay's class. The work did not seem too different, until it came to arithmetic. I had just mastered addition of £.s.d. (pounds, shillings and pence) and at Marston Green they were onto **multiplication** of £.s.d. It appears that I coped with the challenge and from the early days I really enjoyed my time at the school. We were offered a variety of subjects and challenges.

I was temperature monitor in Mr Spencer's class. I had to read the thermometer, which was outside, twice each day and plot the results on a graph in the classroom. He kept bees at the far side of the field and older pupils were allowed to be bee - keepers. We produced our own honey, which we were allowed to sell to our families. I enjoyed learning about the Tudor period with Mrs Marsh and having needlework lessons. We did basket weaving – realising the importance of keeping the cane wet, so that it did not split.

The deteriorating condition of the buildings and grounds was of little consequence to the pupils. The holes and bumps in the playground, provided challenges when playing marbles. The cracks and changes of surface gave bases and 'home' areas for games of 'tig'. There were barriers and bars for climbing and hanging from, in fact it was probably incredibly unsafe – but ideals and standards were different then.

P.E. lessons always ranked highly in my daily activities and I enjoyed being a member of the rounders team. We would travel to other schools, by regular bus services to play matches in the summer. Sports days likewise involved a journey, usually to Castle Bromwich for the Coleshill and District Inter School Sports.

I was unaware of the changes, which were beginning to take place in the early 1960's. I have vague recollections of the old Tavern – but no knowledge of the furore surrounding its demise. There were still a lot of individual cottages along the main roads. Mrs Sheasby lived in a cottage opposite St Leonard's Church, she would give away windfall apples from the orchard in her garden. A small black pony would stand in the gateway to the field at the bottom of Elmdon Road bridge (where Aylesford Drive is now). Malt House Farm on the opposite side of the road was still farmed by the Brazier family. There was a cottage where the maisonettes now stand in Station Road – near to the school entrance with a lovely cottage garden leading down to the road. All swept away in the name of progress!

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Lyndon Croft, Brook Croft and Elm Farm Avenue were the first major developments in the 1940's after the main roads, Elmdon Lane, Elmdon Road etc had individual properties built after the sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate in 1919. Digby Drive and Mowe Croft appeared in the 1950's and it seems from then on, the changes were much more rapid.

Life in the 1960's in Marston Green still seemed very much to revolve around the many typical 'village type' activities. The churches provided a wide range of clubs and events. Cubs, Brownies, Scouts and Guides all had good size packs. The Village Club offered a wide choice, from Snooker to Amateur Dramatics all held at the old cramped Village Hall. The Horticultural Society organised the annual Flower Show in the Village Hall and adjoining field (now Hidcote Grove) and the marquee would be erected, along with the swing boats and other attractions. Produce and Crafts were entered in the Show, prizes were won for the exhibits and the 'Bowl for a Pig' event was hotly contested. The Cricket Club flourished at the Recreation Ground and the Tennis Club, at the back of Leah Martin's cottage in Elmdon Road was well attended.

Despite the City of Birmingham looming large – just across the border at The Bell, Marston Green was in Warwickshire. It was part of Meriden Rural District Council, in the Parish of Bickenhill. The administrative Offices for the area were in Coleshill, which was served by an hourly Midland Red bus service from Birmingham City centre. The nearest corporation bus route was the number 14, which terminated at Tile Cross. The postal address was Marston Green, Near Birmingham – or for some, Warwickshire!

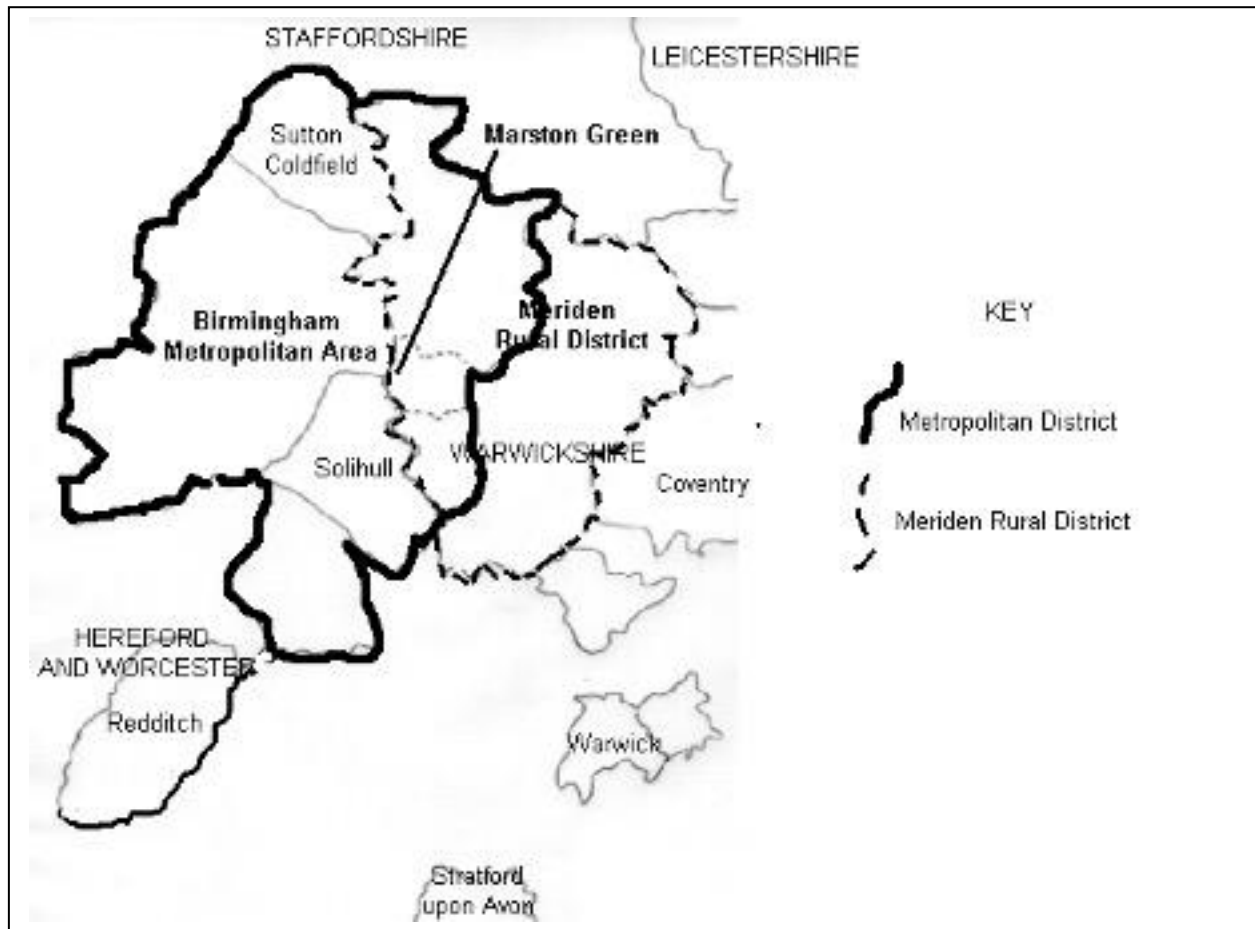
In the early 1970's, major changes occurred in the administration of the area when the findings from the Royal Commission on Local Government in England and Wales had been published. It was decided to set up major Metropolitan Districts. District 25(f), was to include Marston Green along with Solihull and Sutton Coldfield as part of the Birmingham Metropolitan District.

The map on the following page shows the proposed boundary changes in the area in the early 1970's. The Birmingham Metropolitan area was extended to include Solihull and Sutton Coldfield as well as parts of the Meriden Rural District.

The administrative changes took place, Marston Green and Chelmsley Wood, became part of Solihull District (North Solihull), but at the same time became included in the West Midlands 'umbrella'. Postal addresses changed and became Marston Green - B37.

West Midlands bus services began to add routes to the area. The increasing developments around the area of The National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham International Station and the Airport changes all had an impact on Marston Green.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Map 1: The Location of Marston Green

I moved back after my college years and began teaching in one of the many new Primary Schools in Chelmsley Wood. Although the basic structure of the village was unchanged – new houses and estates were appearing on a regular basis. Increasing numbers of the population owned their own cars and the whole area was becoming busier and more suburban.

At the end of the 70's my husband and I moved to Canada. It was when we returned in the mid 80's, that I realised really for the first time that Marston Green was no longer a village, in the sense that I had known it, but it had become part of the West Midlands Conurbation.

There is still a heart to the place and it is still technically a village, but whether it could stand as a self-sufficient entity as we approach the 21st Century is, I think, questionable.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Having met many people throughout the world, from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures I realise that I was fortunate to have lived in a community such as Marston Green. I feel that the village in the middle part of the 20th Century was a safe caring place, and everybody was accepted for the part that they could play in it.

I trust that subsequent inhabitants of the village will get as much pleasure from living there as I did.



Photograph 3: The Village Road Sign at Holly Lane.

Chapter 2 Marston Green - The Early Years

All the features associated with the English landscape of the Medieval period were found around the Marston Green area.

“In the beginning”



**Merston de Culy (Marston Green) was mentioned in
The Domesday Book.**

It was surrounded by open fields and divided into strips for cultivation. Peasants' cottages built around a wooden cruck frame, walled with wattle and daub and with a thatched roof were the main buildings occupied by the local peasantry. The Lords of the Manors had their Manor Houses or Halls.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Marston Green – then referred to as Merstone - was recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086.

In the 12th Century it seems to have been split into 2 Manors. The only way to distinguish them was to adopt the name of the Lord. They became known as Marston Culy and Wavers Marston.

In the 15th Century Marston Culy was held by the Leecroft family and then passed on to the Digby's who were Lords of Coleshill and Sheldon. It remained with them until the 1920's.

The successors of Wavers Marston were the Catesby's of Stow, who sold it to the Maines in 1574. In the Mid 18th Century, it passed to the Notts of Lichfield. Very little documentation exists about Wavers Marston but the site of the settlement was thought to be around the lands which adjoined Marston Hall. This was an early 16th Century building which was demolished to make way for the Airport extension in the late 1970's.

Marston Culy on the other hand is thought to have been located on the present site of Marston Green and developed on an original moated site, which is now covered over. As it was only a hamlet within the Parish of Bickenhill, it was not in a position to have a Parish Church. In 1348 Sir Fouk de Bermingham allocated land to help subsidise the cost of maintaining a local Priest to 'Celebrate Divine Service in the Chapell of Saint Leonard'. The first chapel dedicated to St Leonard in 1549 was reputed to have been situated at Chapel House Farm. It was thought that this chapel was demolished in the middle of the 16th Century. A Priests House is thought to have originally existed on the site.

The most recent Chapel House (which was used latterly as the Golf Course house, near to the railway station) was demolished in 1981. The original Chapel is thought to have served as a stopping place for the monks en-route from Maxstoke Priory to Olton.

The lake which was beside the Chapel House was reputed to have a plug in it, so that it could be emptied out if necessary.



Photograph 4: Chapel House Farm, the site of the Golf Course

In 1939 plans were in place to develop the site around Chapel House Farm to construct a new golf course. Chapel House Farm was to be used as the professional quarters and clubhouse. The pond, which stood nearby, formed a difficult hazard on the tenth green.



Photograph 5: The Pond at Chapel House Farm

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The next record of any church in Marston Green is in 1835, when the Ebenezer Congregational Church in Birmingham founded a preaching station and Sunday School in the village and a chapel was erected two years later.

Marston Green Chapel, a small wooden building was erected during the 19th Century, as a Wesleyan Chapel. This site was acquired in 1862 by the Digby family who built their own private chapel. They did not have it consecrated, so several laymen were able to preach there.

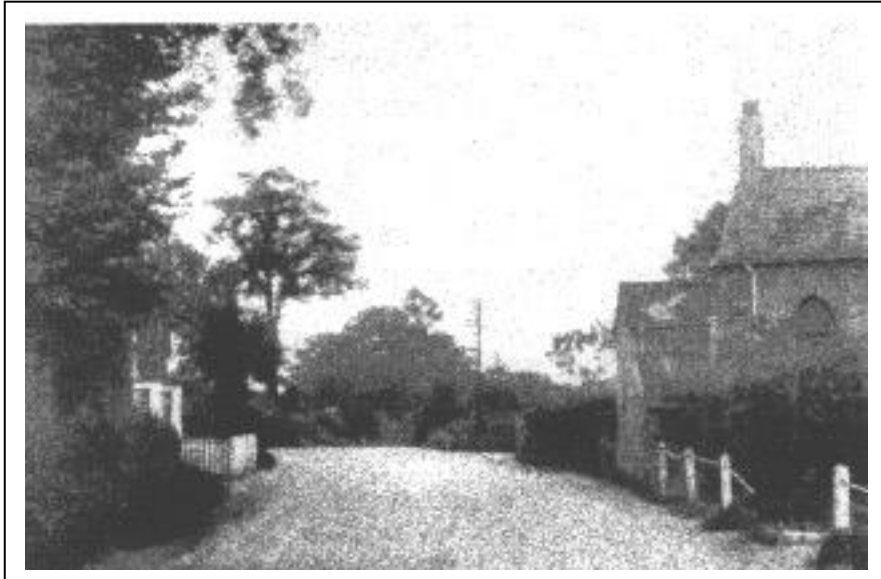
Villagers were invited to attend the chapel because of the long walk to Bickenhill Church. In 1922, Col.F.J.B. Wingfield Digby gave the chapel to the Church of England. It was built in Station Road near to the corner of Land Lane, but eventually fell into disrepair.

In 1923 the Marston Green Chapel was acquired by the Birmingham Diocesan Trustees and in 1928 Marston Green was separated from Bickenhill for ecclesiastical purposes and united with the Parish of St. Giles at Sheldon.

Shortly afterwards Col. Wingfield Digby made a gift of three acres of land in Elmdon Road for the erection of buildings essential to the religious and social needs of church life. Building of the red brick church began in 1936 and the Parish Church of St Leonard in Marston Green was consecrated on May 28th 1938. It cost £4,000 to build the church and the old building was used as the church room until a new church hall, attached to the church was built. It was not until 1961 that the old chapel was finally demolished.



Photograph 6: St. Leonard's Church consecrated in 1938



Photograph 7: A View of the Wingfield Digby Chapel

The Chapel was built for Built for Col. Wingfield Digby at the corner of Station Road and Land Lane, beside the Gravel Pit



Photograph 8: The Chapel, beside the Gravel Pit

Week long festival celebrates birthday



AFTER steadfastly serving the community for 60-years parishioners of St Leonard's church (pictured) in Marston Green are marking its birthday in style - with a week-long festival.

The festival started on Sunday June 14 at 10 am, with a special service given by the Bishop of Aston, the Rt Rev John Austen, which was attended by Meriden MP Caroline Spelman and the Mayor and Mayoress of Solihull, Coun Peter and Mrs Sandra Hogarth.

Several former members of the congregation who have left the parish also returned specially for the occasion.

On Wednesday the celebrations took on a musical theme with a concert by pupils from Marston Green Infants School, Whitesmore School and members of St Leonard's Junior Choir.

Today (Friday) sees the start of a three-day flower festival followed by an evening barn dance.

And on Saturday afternoon there will be a mid-summer market from 2pm in the parish hall and Maypole dancing, followed by variety evening.

The festival will end with a songs of praise service on Sunday morning.

Rev Roy Allen, Vicar of St Leonards said: "We felt it was right to celebrate 60 years of witnessing to the Christian faith and serving the community.

"It is an opportunity to express our gratitude to present and past members of the congregation and to local organisations, residents and businesses who have supported us over the years."

SOLIHULL NEWS 20-6-98

Solihull News 20.06.98

"A week long flower festival was held during the early part of June 1998 to celebrate the 60th birthday of St Leonard's Church."

Article 1: St Leonard's Church 60th Anniversary

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

At the end of the 19th Century a 'Free Church' was established in Marston Green, which became affiliated to the Baptist Association.

The Free Church in Land Lane was rebuilt on the existing site in the 1960's. The estimated cost of the building was £10,000 and over £5,000 towards the total had been raised in less than three years. A building fund was set up and members of the congregation were invited to raise funds in a variety of ways.

At the Foundation Stone laying ceremony, members of the congregation and children were able to lay individual bricks, which they named, in the foundations. For this privilege they paid 2s. 6d. per brick. A souvenir wooden mallet, engraved with an appropriate message, was also available. This raised a further £115 towards the building costs. The Rev. R. G. S. Harvey was the minister at the time and his youth and enthusiasm were thought to be factors, which would contribute to the success of the building project.

The opening and Dedication service was held on 29th June 1963 and the first Sunday services were held in the Church the following day. The old church building was retained and became used as the Church Hall. Various extra meeting rooms were added over the years.



Figure 1: Opening and Dedication of the Free Church



Photograph 9: The Free Church – Pre 1963.

Later the church building became the Church Hall.



Photograph 10: The Free Church and the Hall –1990's

By 1997 the Free Church in Marston Green had become a Baptist Free Church with a commitment to a wider church being shown through an 'open' communion table. Everyone is invited to share the bread and the wine. Also, through a more informal and relaxed approach, church membership is offered to all denominations.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Marston Green remained fairly small until the present Century with a population of about 190 in 1841. The people were housed in 52 cottages. By 1875 there had been an increase to 65 cottages, but in 1880, 16 houses known as the Barracks were demolished. These houses appear to have stood around the site of the present village centre and were erected by a man known as 'Old Isaac'. He rode around the countryside astride his ass and collected all sorts of 'odds and ends'. After his death, the houses, some of which had thatched roofs, were taken into the Digby Estates and demolished. This left only 46 homes and farms in Marston Green.

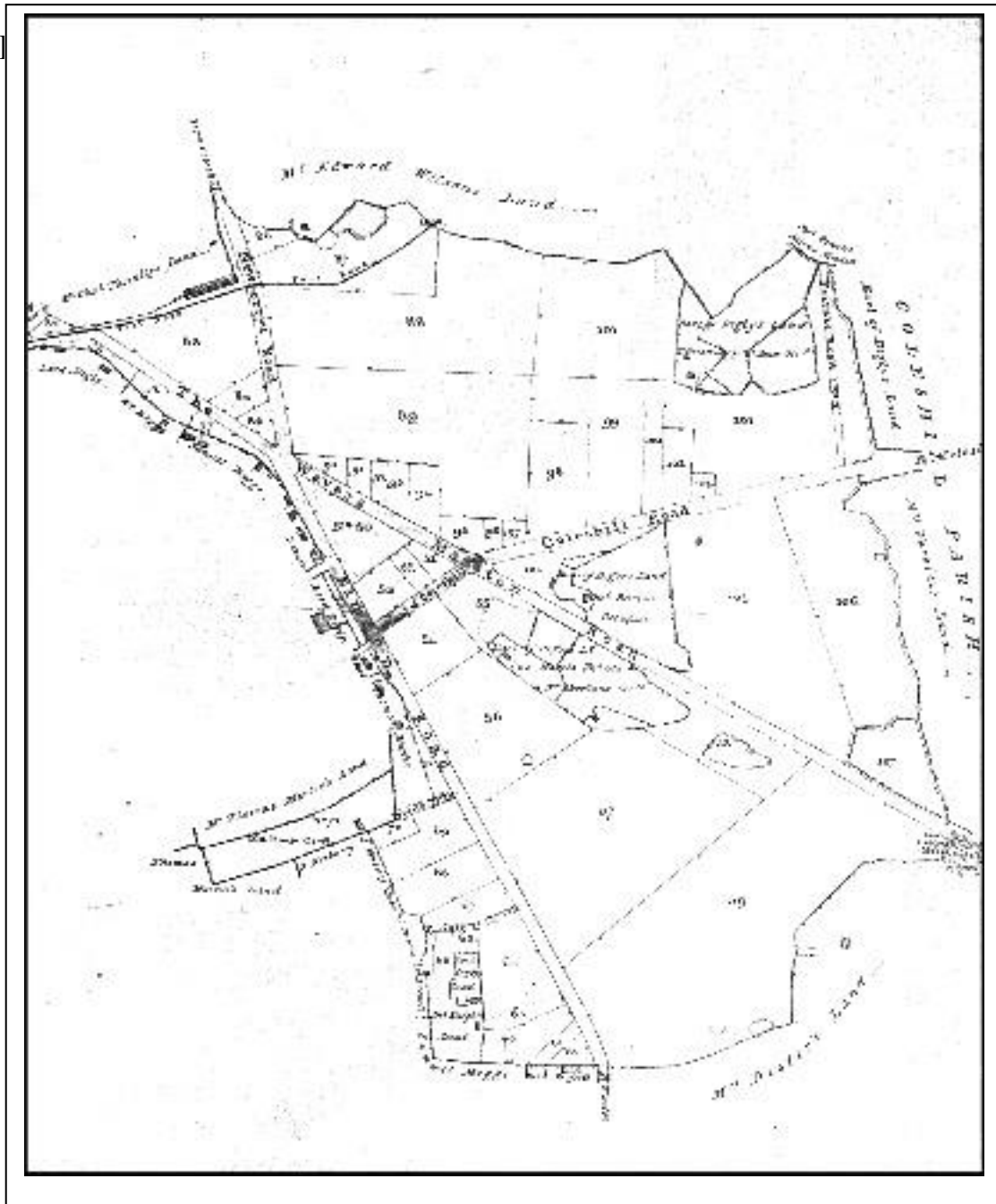


Photograph 11: Oil Painting of “The Barracks”

The painting shown above is displayed in Marston Green Library and it was presented to Bickenhill by former Councillor Alan Barnes. It was painted by his grandfather in 1860.

The painting shows the cottages known as “The Barracks” which stood on the corner of Alcott Lane and Chelmsley Lane and were used by Irish labourers working on the Birmingham London railway line. Woodbine Cottage on the left was demolished in 1967.

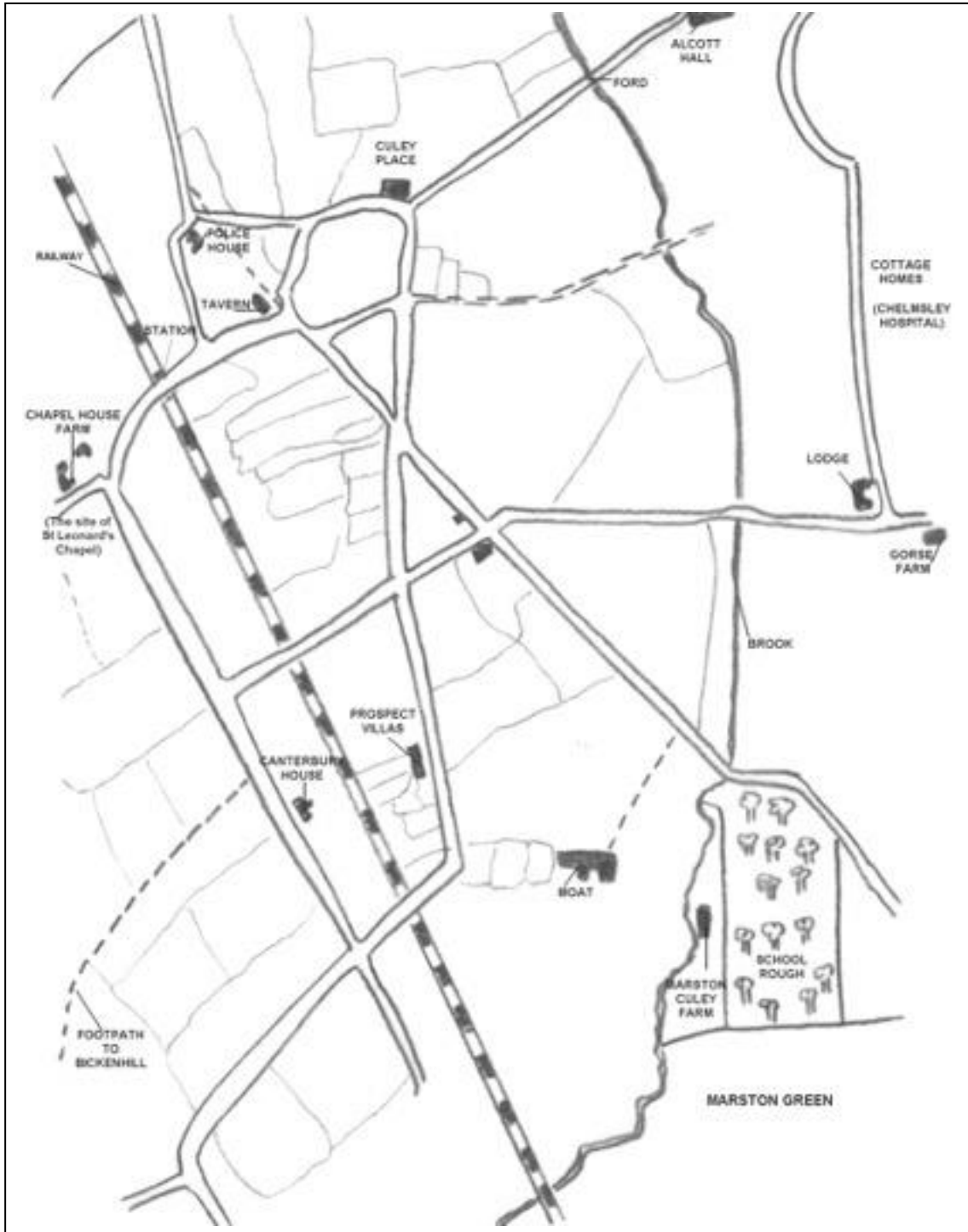
The whole area originally would have been part of the Forest of Arden, but the actual site of Marston Green was on a small sand capped ridge 300 ft. above sea level.



Map 2: The Land Holdings in 1839

This map was produced before the railway was built through Marston Green. The road layout is virtually unchanged, but Station Road is known as The Wavers Marston Road. Newberry's Road became Chelmsley Lane. J Newberry owned several plots of land, but the largest proportion of the land belonged to Earl Digby.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Map 3: 19th Century Road Layout

Chapter 3 Growth and Development



20th Century Developments

Marston Green, as a village, changed dramatically in the second half of the 20th Century

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

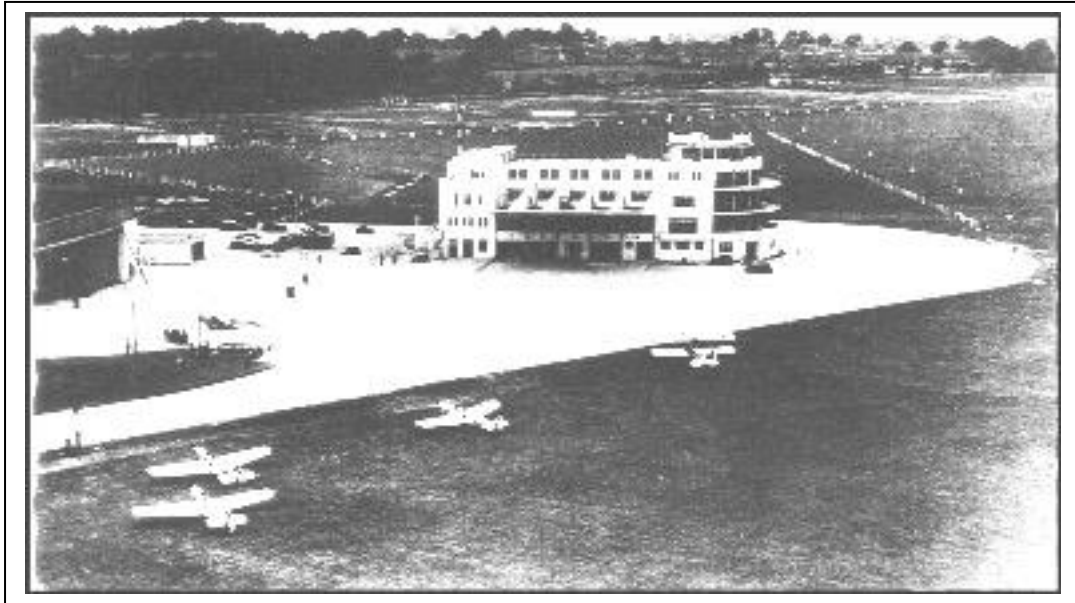
Marston Green was predominantly an agricultural settlement with an arable farming background, which, as it progressed into the 20th Century, became largely pastoral. Many of the farms have now been sold off and the land developed in a variety of ways.

The break up of the Digby Estate in the 1920's was the start of large scale and rapid development of Marston Green and the land which was controlled by the family has now almost all been developed for housing, Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre.

Elmdon Lane was one of the five original roads of the village, as laid out in 1790 by enclosure by a private agreement of the 17 landowners of Marston Culy, as it was then known. One end of the lane, leading to Bickenhill, was closed off to through traffic when the runway at Birmingham Airport was built across its path in the late 1930's. The other end, near to the village centre, was closed in the late 1960's when the level crossing at the station was finally removed with the increase in number of the trains through the station.



Photograph 12: The Level Crossing, seen from Elmdon Lane



Photograph 13: Elmdon Airport 1939

The Airport built in the 1930's effectively created a no through road situation in Elmdon Lane. It was no longer possible to walk to Bickenhill.



Photograph 14: Birmingham Airport Emergency Exit Gates
The gates formed a no through road at the end of Elmdon Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Initially several isolated houses began to appear, opening up and developing the main roads in the village. The majority of these houses were detached and stood in their own grounds.

One of the houses in Elmdon Lane, has been owned by the Marsh family since it was built around 1930. Mrs Marsh recalls the history of 94 Elmdon Lane.

“I think the family paid £850 for the house when it was built – at that time it had no garage. Those with a detached brick built garage cost another £50. It had a long garden and during the war when everyone was being encouraged to “dig for victory” (i.e. grow food) Mr Marsh bought an extra plot at the bottom of the garden. His neighbour did not want to buy his extra plot so he bought that too. Many of the houses in Elmdon Lane have very big gardens acquired in this way. Looking at the house from the front on the right hand side there was a public footpath to Bickenhill. A wooden fence separated the garden from the path. On the other side of the path was the old field hedge of hawthorn interspersed with hawthorn trees.



Photograph 15: The Old Public Footpath to Bickenhill,

The Old Public Footpath is now part of the garden of 94 Elmdon Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

This path was designated a bridle path because at some time or times a coffin(s) had been carried over it to Bickenhill Church. I understand therefore that it could not be closed without an Act of Parliament. It was in our house deeds that if it ever closed the land would become our property. I understand that this happened when the airport opened. An alternative public footpath was provided opposite Land Lane.

The old field hedge is now the boundary of my garden (***and a devil to cut!!!***).



Photograph 16: The old Post Box at 109 Elmdon Lane

At the time the house was built, there were no houses at the end of the lane (Mr Marsh remembered it as an un-surfaced rutted lane) except for quite a large one, which was demolished to make way for the new ones. Both of its' gate posts remain (one has a post box set into it) and is now the end of the drive of 109. This was possibly Canterbury House from where Canterbury Drive got its name. At the time the builder gave permission for people moving into the new houses to help themselves to any of the bricks etc from the demolition. In my garden a number of the rockery stones came from there.

When the houses were first built they were not on mains drainage. Each had a septic tank at the bottom of the garden. By the time I moved to the house in 1948 they were on mains drainage."

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

After World War 2 there was a migration of families from the rapidly expanding City of Birmingham and development proceeded on a much larger scale.

Between 1945 and 1950 three housing estates were built, the first of these being Lyndon Croft a council estate of 28 houses. The next large scale building was in 1956/7 when an estate of 102 semi detached houses and 1 detached house and a shop were built on farm land about a mile from the village centre. This was to become Digby Drive and stood on land, which would probably have been known as Wavers Marston.



Photograph 17: Lyndon Croft in the early 1970's

The new school being built in the 1960's had to be extended in plan as soon as it was completed to accommodate the rapidly increasing population of the area. It was fortunate that a large site had been acquired for the school, as an Infant school was an easy addition to the village.

Several other estates and small cul-de-sacs were built over the next few years as the population of the village grew steadily. Marston Green was seen to be an attractive village, in the countryside but close enough to the city to have easy access for those who worked there. Several of the old detached houses and cottages with adjoining land were demolished and new houses built on the land.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Development within the confines of the village slowed with the Green Belt Policy of the late 1960's when housing development was restricted to "limited in-filling". The limits of the village boundary were not to be expanded. As it is impossible to enter or leave Marston Green village by road without crossing a river it was easy to define the perimeter of the area.



Photograph 18: 'Limited in-filling' in the early 1970's.

Four semi-detached houses were built on the corner of Station Road and Chelmsley Lane.

A great deal of change and expansion has gone on in the area in the latter part of the 20th Century though, but outside the boundaries of the village. Many of these changes have had a more profound effect on Marston Green than the developments within the village.

Chelmsley Woods were removed and the huge housing estate of the same name was built in the 1960's. The decision to build at Chelmsley Wood was taken by the Minister of Housing on 17th September 1965, following a public enquiry.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Objections were raised to the scheme, particularly from Meriden Rural District Council and the other local Parish Councils, on grounds of amenity and the threat to the Green Belt separating Birmingham and Coventry.

By the end of the Second World War, in 1945, three thousand homes had been destroyed by German bombs in Birmingham and there was to be no house building in the City for six years, so the slum clearance had been halted. When this problem was coupled with the plans for massive redevelopment of the City centre there was a terrific demand for new homes. Estates were built within the City in areas such as Castle Vale, a former RAF base and at Bromford Bridge on the site of the City's racecourse.

By 1963, there was no more land available within the City boundary and the population was increasing. It was estimated that there would be a deficiency of 43,000 dwellings by 1971.

The Chelmsley Wood development was built on 1,500 acres of what had been 'Green Belt' land. The plan was for 14,500 dwellings to be built for 55,000 people. The customary period for a development of a new town of this size is fifteen to twenty years. This development was planned to take just five years from 1966 to 1971.



At the peak of building in 1969 almost 100 dwellings per week were being completed

Alcott Wood at the top of the picture is one of the few remaining areas of the original woodland, which exists. It lies just on the outskirts of Marston Green.

Photograph 19: Chelmsley Wood

The massive housing development planned and built in the late 1960's.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Several other large scale developments were planned in the area at this time. The first phase of The National Exhibition Centre (NEC) was built on land at Warren Farm, just to the west of the village, in the early 1970's.

Along with the NEC, plans were put into place to build a new railway station on the site to provide the beginnings of a complex communications network in the area. £2,500,000 was the estimated cost of the building of Birmingham International Station in 1972.

Alongside this, were talks to extend and expand Birmingham Airport, with a new £10,000,000 terminal building as the centrepiece of the project.

One development which was proposed in 1972, which did not pass the planning stages, was to build a £12.000,000 'out of town' shopping centre on a 45 acre site between the NEC and Stonebridge. A spokesman for the London based company who were submitting the plans did say that:

“Obviously the fact that the site is in the Green Belt will be a major stumbling block”.

Mr Keith Speed M.P. for Meriden at that time, responded by saying:

“Thousands of ordinary people have made planning applications over the years, which have been turned down on Green Belt grounds. They would be justifiably enraged if big business were to succeed where they have failed.”

The motorway network around the Midlands was also developing rapidly at this time and the M42 north – south route was the one which affected Marston Green and the surrounding areas the most. Links with the A45 and the siting of motorway interchanges and service areas were causing further problems for the planners and local population alike.

Major developments were occurring in the 1970's, which were to change the area more profoundly than ever before.

Chapter 4 Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate

Major F.J.B. Wingfield Digby owned a large proportion of the land in and around Marston Green.

The First Major Changes

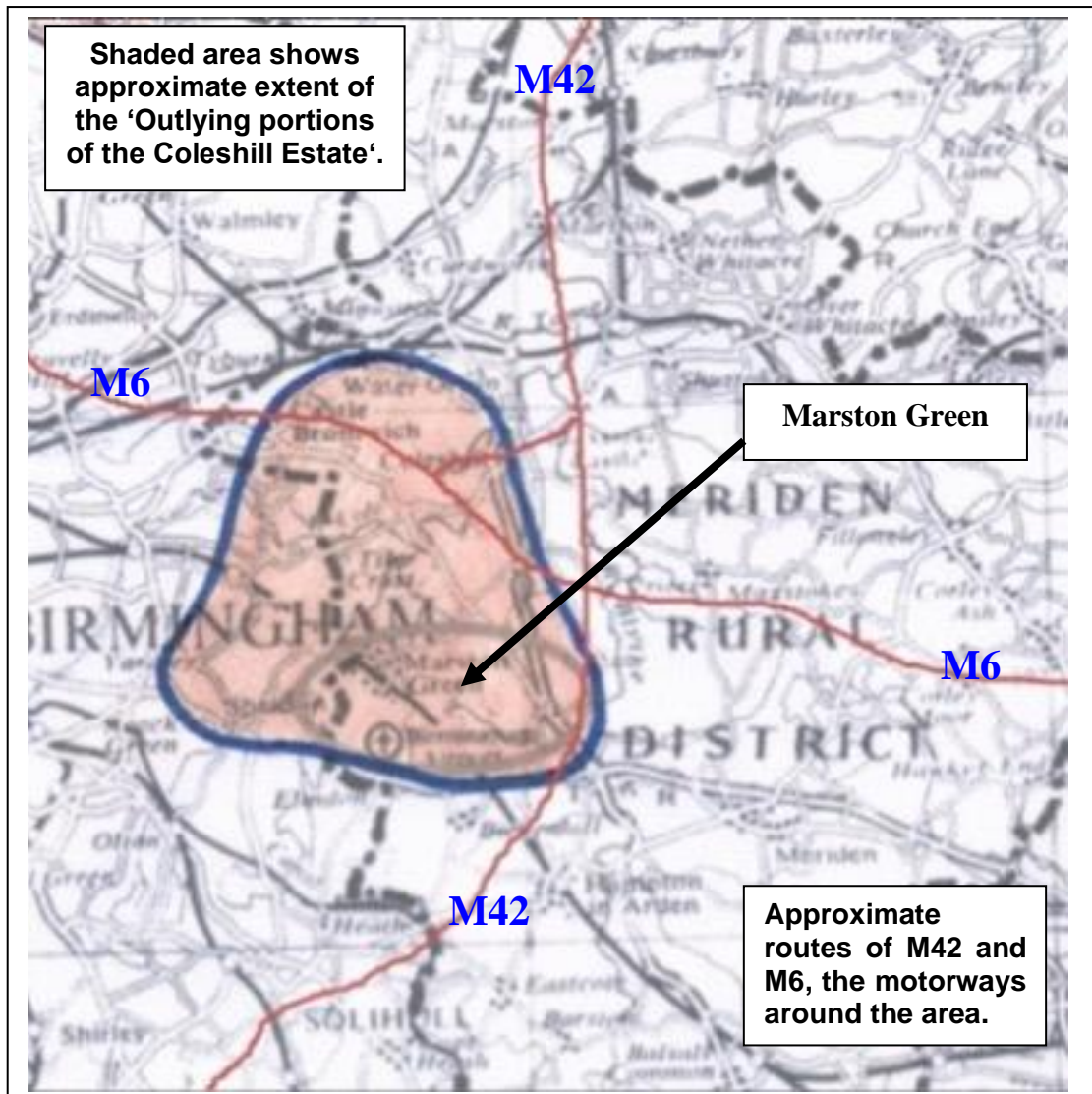


In July 1919, an auction was held to sell most of his property in Marston Green, including several of the farms and fields and the oldest property in the area - the 16th Century, Marston Hall Manor House and its farm.

Chapel House Farm which, had been the site of the first preaching station in the area, was another of the properties sold.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

In July 1919 the Birmingham Auctioneers, Edwards, Son and Bigwood conducted an Auction Sale at the Grand Hotel in Birmingham. The properties to be sold over the two days were by direction of Major F.J.B. Wingfield Digby, D.S.O. who was selling 'Outlying portions of the Coleshill Estate, Near Birmingham'. The extensive sale of the Estate included properties, which covered an area from Water Orton in the North, down to the Coventry Road at Elmdon in the South. Sheldon and Yardley stood to the West and the Old Chester Road formed the Eastern boundary.



Map 4: Map of the West Midlands area

The location of Marston Green and the approximate area of the Wingfield Digby Estate offered for sale.

The Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate took place on Tuesday and Wednesday July 22nd and 23rd 1919. The Auctioneers, Edwards, Son and Bigwood conducted the sale at the Grand Hotel in Birmingham.

Sinise at Sheldon, Yardley, Marston Green, Elmdon, Coleshill Heath, Shard End, Kins Green, Tile Cross, *Castle Bromwich, and Water Orton.

Particulars, Photographs and Plan of the
OUTLYING PORTIONS OF

The Coleshill Estate,

Extending to about **4,580** Acres,
With the Mines and Minerals included, and producing a Rent Roll of about
£6,840 per annum.

The Estate is all situated within eight miles of the centre of the City of Birmingham, and comprises—

20 EXCELLENT PRINCIPAL FARMS,
Varying in size from **100** Acres to **270** Acres,
With GOOD HOMES and HOMESTEADS, including the FINE OLD JACOBAN RESIDENCE,
"SHELDON HALL,"
WITH THE VALUABLE OAK PANELLING THEREIN, as follows:

	ACRES		ACRES
Lower Barn Farm	147	Shard End Farm	159
The Elms Farm	214	Outmoor Farm	109
Lyndon Green Farm	143	Mackadown Farm	128
Wells Farm, Garrett's Green	155	Malthouse Farm	139
Garrett's Green Farm	139	Tile Cross Farm	139
Chapel House Farm	214	Sheldon Hall Farm	183
Marston Culy Farm	128	Kingshurst Hall Farm	269
Elmdon and Newland Farms	253	Cockshutt Farm	143
Marston Hall Farm	224	Button's Farm	125
Coleshill Heath Farm	119	Attleboro' Farm	136

10 CAPITAL SMALLER FARMS,
Varying from **50** to **100** Acres,
including Wells Green Farm, Mackadown House Farm, Coleshill Heath Farm, Bennett's Wall Farm, Hob Farm.
13 Desirable Small Holdings and Choice Cottage Holdings.
ATTRACTIVE RESIDENCE AND LAND,
"THE CHESTNUTS," GARRETT'S GREEN.
PRETTY COTTAGE RESIDENCE, COCKSHUTT HILL.
BUILDING AND ACCOMMODATION LAND.
Fully-Licensed Premises, "THE COCK INN," ELMDON.
Valuable Woodland Property, York Wood, 35 acres.
ALLOTMENTS AND ABOUT 40 COTTAGES.

EDWARDS, SON & BIGWOOD
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
WILLMOT, WILLMOT & PINNEY

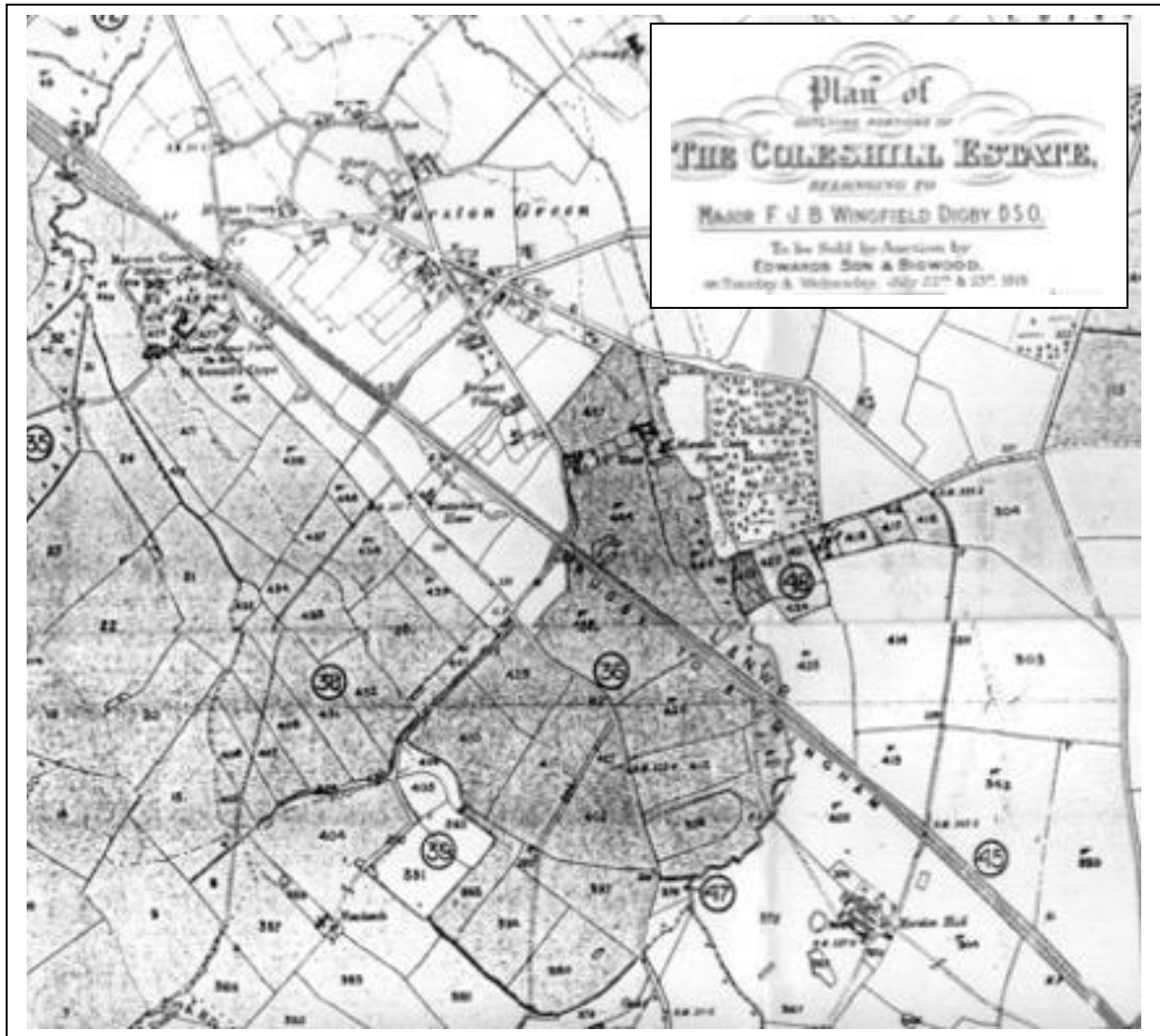
WILL SELL THE ABOVE BY AUCTION AT
THE GRAND HOTEL BIRMINGHAM,
On Tuesday and Wednesday, July 22nd and 23rd, 1919,
At 3 p.m. precisely.

Figure 2: Sale Poster for the Wingfield Digby Estate.

Several of the farms and properties offered in the Sale were those which were in Marston Green. This was the time when the first major changes were to be seen in Marston Green. The map shown on the first page of this chapter (Map 4) gives a relatively simple view of the extent of the Wingfield Digby Estate offered for sale in 1919 and the current landmarks of the area (1999).

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The original 'Sale' poster (Fig 2) shows the extent of the sale and identifies some of the individual properties which were to be included in the sale.



Map 5: Properties for sale in Marston Green.

(This map Z5981/1 is published with permission of Warwickshire County Record Office)

The map above is part of the Plan produced for the Sale of The Wingfield Digby Estate, but shows quite clearly the relative position of a number of sizeable 'sale lots' surrounding Marston Green.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

MARSTON GREEN.							
35	21	Chapel House Farm	...	...	...	214-100	365 0
36	23	Marston Culey Farm	...	...	...	128-638	253 0
37	24	Elmdon and Newlands Farms	...	...	...	253-707	294 0
38	25	Small Holding	...	...	...	53-886	82 15
39	26	Small Holding	...	...	...	10-768	20 0
ELMDON.							
40	26	Tiger's Island Cottage	...	...	...	200	6 10
41	26	Two Pasture Fields, Coventry Road	...	...	...	10-782	30 0
42	27	The Cock Inn	...	...	...	3-157	60 10
43	28	Pair of Cottages	...	...	...	320	10 0
44	28	Small Holding, Coventry Road	...	...	...	57-630	85 0
45	29	Marston Hall Farm	...	...	...	224-526	293 4
46	30	Accommodation Holding, Coventry Road	...	...	...	36-724	47 10
47	31	Pasture Land, Elmdon Lane	...	...	...	880	1 0
48	31	Small Holding	...	...	...	11-590	25 0
COLESHILL HEATH.							
49	32	Fifields Farm	...	...	...	95-017	46 0
50	33	Coleshill Heath Farm	...	...	...	119-500	146 0
51	33	Arable Fields	...	...	...	24-052	30 0

**Figure 3: Specific properties for sale in Marston Green.
“The Sale” on Tuesday 22nd July 1919**

MARSTON GREEN.							
65	41	Mackadown Farm	...	...	...	128-302	178 10 0
66	42	Mackadown House Farm	...	...	...	75-888	118 0 0
67	43	Two Cottages	...	...	...	350	12 16 0
68	43	Pasture Field, opposite Mackadown House	...	...	...	1-266	2 0 0
69	44	The Malthouse Farm	...	...	...	139-508	221 15 0
70	45	Three Arable Fields	...	...	...	13-887	18 0 0
71	45	Cottage Holding	...	...	...	10-140	21 0 0
72	45	Cottage and Blacksmith's Shop	...	...	...	489	12 0 0
73	46	Cottages adjoining the Bell Inn	...	...	...	392	23 8 0

**Figure 4: Property acreage and rental rates.
“The Sale” on Wednesday July 23rd 1919.**

The value and size of the properties ranged from Lot 47 with less than an acre and an annual rent of £1.00 to Lot 35, Chapel House Farm, with 214 acres and an annual rent of £365.00. Although Elmdon and Newlands Farm and Marston Hall Farm were actually greater in acreage, the rental value of these farms was not so great.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

A number of examples of specific “Sale Notices” show the range of size and relative importance of the properties offered for sale. Having acquired the Plan, which went in conjunction with the sale it, is possible to find out exactly where the properties were situated.

The first example “LOT 38” shows details of the property and its exact location.

LOT 38. (Coloured Green on Plan.)					
A Valuable Holding of Excellent Arable and Pasture Lands, in the Parish of Bickenhill, near Marston Green Railway Station, and containing 53-886 Acres, or					
53a. 3r. 21p.					
S.A. NO.	DESCRIPTION.	SCHEDULE AREA ACRES.	TENANT	RENT £ s. d.	REMARKS.
<i>Parish of Bickenhill.</i>					
406	Pasture	3-242	Mr. Dick Hall.	70 0 0	Apportioned rent. Annual Ladyday tenancy. Notice has been given to ter- minate this tenancy at Ladyday, 1920.
407	Pasture	4-112			
431	Meadow	7-543			
Pt. 441	Pasture	7-213			
408	Pasture	6-254			
455	Pasture	8-27			
434	Pasture	1-589			
432	Pasture	5-292			
440	Arable	6-823			
417	Arable	7-744			
Pt. 406	Pasture and Arable	1-238	M. G. Ashley.	12 25 0 Ditto.	
Pt. 420	Pasture and Arable	2-984			
415	Meadow	3-825			
Pt. 438	Arable	4-588			
388	Occupation Road	-313	In hand.		
430	Occupation Road	-123			
		A. 53-886			(53 25 0
		or			
		A. B. P.			
		53 3 21			
Tithe (apportioned value), £7 3s. 8d.					
Timber Valuation, £27 0s. 0d.					
<i>This Lot is sold with the benefit of a right of way over the strip of land reserved for an approach from Elmdon Lane, being part Nos. 435 and 466, part of Lot 35; also with the benefit of a right of way over the foredrift No. 429, part of Lot 37.</i>					

Figure 5: The Sale details of Lot 38

The land today is situated between the Foredrift and Newlands Lane.

The houses and gardens in Elmdon Lane between the Foredrift and Newlands Lane now stand on the land in Lot 38 (described above). The Right of Way mentioned, is the one, which used to run from Elmdon Lane to Bickenhill, which was closed when the Airport was built. The remains of the original right of way run through the garden of 94 Elmdon Lane.

The range of land and properties for Sale was quite varied in size and value. LOT 47, a single field (enclosure) was situated just about where the entrance to the new Birmingham Airport terminal building now stands.

N.B: Ladyday, for termination of tenancy was 25th March 1920.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The annual rent for Lot 47 was £1.00, for just less than one acre of land and is now the site of the Terminal Building at Birmingham Airport.

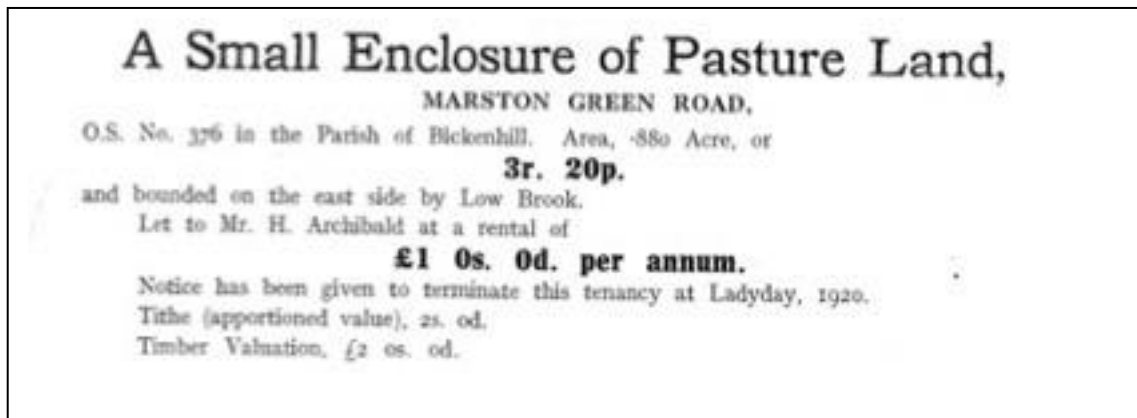


Figure 6: Details of Lot 47 – The Site of Birmingham Airport.

The much larger farms and properties received more attention and the details shown in the sale documents, such as those of LOT 35, 'Chapel House Farm' also give a valuable insight into life and times gone by.

Chapel House Farm, in Marston Green, adjoining the Railway Station is shown offering "commodious" accommodation, picturesque grounds and a boating pool. With 214 acres, the farm in 1919 provided an annual rent of £365.00 (just £1.00 per day). The farm became incorporated in the Golf Course in 1939 but has disappeared today following the expansion of Birmingham Airport.



Photograph 20: Lot 35 "Chapel House Farm"

A Most Desirable
FREEHOLD DAIRY FARM
situate in the Parishes of Sheldon and Bickenhill, adjoining Marston Green Railway Station, known as
“CHAPEL HOUSE FARM,”
and comprising a **COMMODIOUS FARMHOUSE**, with Picturesque Grounds, Boating Pool, Spinney and Dell, extensive and well-arranged **HOMESTEAD**, and 214·109 Acres, or
214a. Or. 17p.
of sound, well-watered Pasture and Fertile Arable Land.

The Farmhouse, approached through wide, open drive, comprises Porch, Dining Room, Drawing Room, Breakfast Room, Back Hall, large Kitchen, having white enamelled sink with hot and cold water supply, Larder, Lobby, Dairy, large Back Kitchen and Scullery combined, also having hot and cold water and soft water supply, and Coal-house. There is a Cellar under Breakfast Room with rolling way from Yard.

On the First Floor are Landing and Passage to five good Bedrooms, Dressing Room, Linen Cupboard, Bathroom, lavatory bowl, W.C., and Airing Cupboard, Store Room and Fruit Room having concrete floor.

In Paved Yard are Oil and Lamp Pantry, W.C.

Good Kitchen Garden with fruit trees and Orchard, and outside Privy.

The compact and well-arranged **Farm Buildings** are as follows:—On the south-west side of House are Foldyard (with water laid on from Birmingham Corporation Main), Boiling House, three 3-tie Cowhouses, 4-tie Cowhouse, 11-tie Cowhouse, Mixing House with two Grain Cisterns and loft over, Cooling House, Root House, Chaff House with machine floor over, Corn Stores and Mill, Engine House, 5-tie Cowhouse with granary over, seven-stall Stable and Loose Box, with Fodder Room over, two-stall Nag Stable with loft over.

In Orchard and Roadway is a block of Buildings comprising two Duck Pens, Coach-house and two-bay Wagon Shed with granary over, two-bay Wagon Hovel and Implement Shed, Labourer's Hut, and adjoining is a large walled-in Pig Yard.

Surrounding the Foldyard near road are 4-tie Cowhouse, two large Cattle Feeding Sheds, two-bay Barn with driftway (one bay used as 8-tie Cowhouse), Loose Pen, Privy, good Rickyard, with well and pump.

There are Buildings on O.S. No. 39 known as **“SHEEPCOTE,”** and comprise brick and tile Cattle Feeding Shed, two-bay Barn and small Foldyard.

On O.S. No. 21 are Fodder Shed, Cattle Feeding Shelter, with fenced Enclosure and Rickyard.

Figure 7: Details of Chapel House Farm.

The Farm was situated close to where the Railway Station stands in Marston Green.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Chapel House Farm was certainly sold as a 'going concern' with mixed arable and pasture fields. Again the right of way mentioned in Lot 38, leading to Elmdon Lane is in evidence here.

Parish of Sheldon.			
Pt. 40	Arable	...	9,410
39	Buildings	...	477
34	Arable	...	13,540
33A	Pasture	...	928
31	Pasture	...	6,070
38	Arable	...	10,040
35	Pasture	...	9,228
29	Pasture	...	9,751
28	Pasture	...	1,500
29	Pasture	...	12,205
24	Pasture	...	7,522
21	Pasture	...	6,025
21	Pasture	...	8,302
20	Pasture	...	8,300
22	Arable	...	12,530
15	Pasture	...	10,037
23	Pasture	...	16,261
25	Pasture	...	16,427
26	Pasture	...	7,634
30	Pasture	...	1,971
32	Pasture	...	1,087
Parish of Bickenhill.			
Pt. 520	Pasture	...	11,455
520	Pool	...	640
518	Pasture	...	7,316
Pt. 517	Pasture	...	2,297
426	House and Buildings	...	1,327
475	Pasture	...	7,260
424	Foredrift	...	564
472	Pool	...	184
477	Rickyard and Buildings	...	531
Pt. 470	Pasture	...	4,938
471	Pasture	...	4,938
Pt. 475	Arable	...	9,270
474	Pasture	...	12,125
495	Pasture	...	2,931
219	Spinney	...	1,456
220	Pool	...	1,182
Pt. 466	Road	...	274
			105
A. 114,100			
04			
A. S. V.			
214 0 12			

Mr. Sidney Walker. 255 =

Apporportioned rent. Annual Ladyday tenancy. Notice has been given to terminate this tenancy at Lady-day, 1928.

Sheldon Farm

In hand. do

£165 = 0 =

Tithe (apportioned value), £37 13s. 4d., as follows:—
 Parish of Bickenhill, £7 10s. 4d.
 Parish of Sheldon, £30 3s. 0d.

Timber Valuation, £460 os. 0d.

This Lot is sold subject to a right of way in favour of Lot 35 over the strip of land reserved for an approach for Elmdon Lane, being part Nos. 435 and 466.

Figure 8: Details of Sale of Chapel House Farm.

LOT 37, Newlands and Elmdon Farm now lies entirely on the Airport land and was probably the site where the original Elmdon Airport stood. The properties at the farm were in the three Parishes of Elmdon, Bickenhill and Sheldon and this lot was made up of a range of buildings as well as the farm. There was Elmdon Farmhouse and a Homestead as well as a two-bedroom cottage known as the "Newlands". It is of course possible that Newlands Lane took its name from the cottage.

A FIRST-CLASS
FREEHOLD DAIRY FARM,
known as
“ELMDON FARM”
and
“NEWLANDS,”

in the Parishes of Elmdon, Bickenhill and Sheldon, at the junction of Coventry Road and Marston Green Lane, 7 miles from the City of Birmingham, comprising the picturesque and substantial Rough Cast FARMHOUSE, extensive and well-arranged HOMESTEAD, a good Brick and Tile Cottage, with a Range of Farm Buildings, at the “NEWLANDS,” together with 253.707 Acres, or

253a. 2r. 33p.

of well-farmed Arable and Pasture Land.

The whole let, with other lands, to Mr. Alfred Burman, at a rental of

£294 0s. 0d. per annum.

Notice has been given to terminate this tenancy at Ladyday, 1920.

The Farmhouse at Elmdon contains Tiled Hall, Dining and Drawing Rooms, Kitchen with Porch opening into side Yard, China Pantry, Dairy, two Cellars, Back Hall, Scullery, fitted with hot and cold water, back Staircase, four good Bedrooms, Bathroom, lavatory bowl, W.C., Servant's Bedroom, and two Attics.

There is an excellent Garden at front of House.

At the rear of House is Paved Yard, with soft water tank, Cooling House, Tool Shed, and Coal-house.

The Farm Buildings, arranged around Foldyard, are 4-tie Cowhouse, covered way to Rickyard, Hen Roost, 4-tie Cowhouse, Harness and Cycle Rooms with granary over, Three-stall Nag Stable, five-stall Stable and Corn Bin with loft over, two-bay Barn having driftway, part used as Mixing House with grain cistern and Chaff Hole, Labourer's Hut and Room over, 9-tie Cowhouse, with feeding passage and gangway to same, 14-tie Cowhouse with feeding passage, six Chicken Pens, and a Paved Washing Space, with water supply.

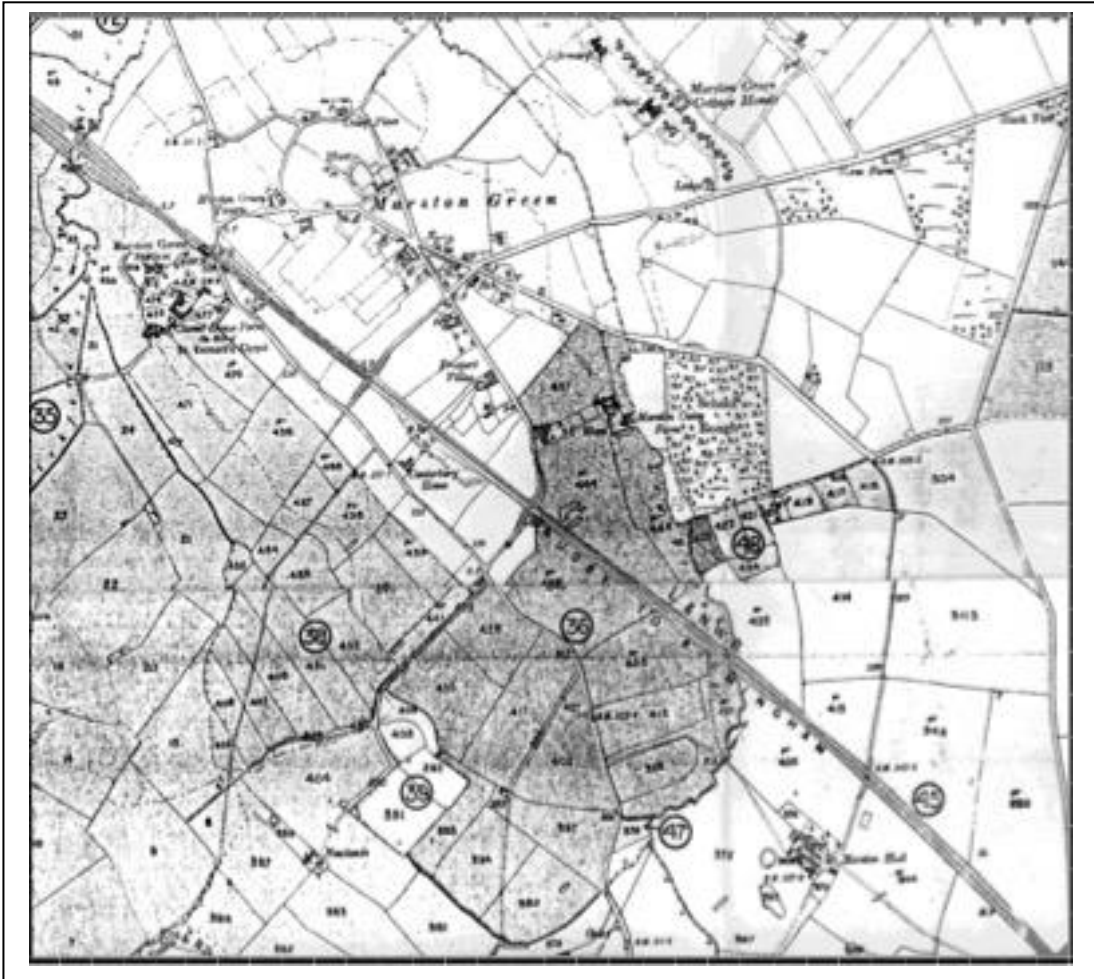
Adjoining is a Pig Yard with boiling furnace, three 2-tie Cowhouses, five Pigsties, Hen Roost, and 2-tie Cowhouse.

In Yard at rear of Barn are Engine House, Cart Shed, Trap Shed, and in Field O.S. No. 155 there is a large Wagon Hovel with two lean-to Implement Sheds.

At the “Newlands” is a Cottage containing Entrance Porch, Living Room, Pantry, two Bedrooms, Coal House, Privy and Garden, and good water supply; and a useful Assemblage of Farm Buildings, comprising large Cattle Feeding Shelter, two-bay Implement Shed with granary over, two-bay Barn with driftway, 12-tie Cowhouse with Fodder Room over, 7-tie Cowhouse and Foldyard.

There is a P.O. Wayleave for 3 struts and 2 sties, in respect of which a rent of 2s. 6d. is receivable.

Figure 9: Details of the Dairy Farm on the site of Elmdon Airport.



Map 6: The main Sale Lots in the Marston Green area

Detailed in the Sale Particulars for the Wingfield Digby Sale.

(Copyright Z 598/1 Warwickshire County Record Office)

Lot 35 is Chapel House Farm.

Lot 36 is Marston Culey Farm.

Lot 38 is Arable and Pasture lands which now forms Elmdon Lane.

Lot's 39 and 47 are Arable and Pasture lands.

Lot 45 is Marston Hall Farm with Marston Hall, built in the 1600's.

Marston Hall Farm and Marston Hall probably stood on the original settlement of Wavers Marston. The Hall was built in the early 1600's and finally demolished in 1980, when the plans were in place for the development and expansion of Birmingham Airport.



Photograph 21: Marston Hall

Marston Hall stood on the land where the new Terminal Building for Birmingham Airport was built. The long driveway up to the Hall began in Bickenhill Lane just past two little cottages, which stood beside the bridge, which went over the railway (opposite to where the entrance to Birmingham International Station now stands). These were known as Wagstaff's and were kennels.

During the war the road running along in front of the Hall was widened to enable Aircraft which were manufactured at the Metropolitan Cammell Works in Bickenhill Lane, to be taken to the runway at the Airfield.

The land on which the Hall stood was obviously the ideal site when expansion of the Airport became inevitable and despite efforts from local interest groups to preserve it – the oldest important property in Marston Green was finally demolished in the early 1980's.

A VALUABLE
Freehold Agricultural Estate,
known as
"MARSTON HALL FARM,"
comprising
A Most Attractive and Interesting Farmhouse,
with gabled elevation, having a vertical sundial (dated 1666). The House is approached
by a carriage drive from an avenue of lofty elms, and has a pleasant Garden.
Extensive and Modern Farm Buildings, a well-built PAIR OF COTTAGES,
and
224a. 2r. 4p.
of excellent Arable, Pasture and Meadow Land, in a good state of cultivation.
The whole let to Mr. H. J. Cattell at an apportioned rent of
£293 4s. 10d. per annum.
Notice has been given to terminate the tenancy at Ladyday, 1920.
The Accommodation of Marston Hall is as follows—Enclosed Porch, Reception
Room, Drawing Room, Main Hall having a magnificent old Oak Staircase, with Oak
panelled dado and spandril. On left-hand side of Main Hall is Lobby leading to Dining
Room, large Kitchen, Scullery with hot and cold water, Serving Pantry; on right-hand
side, Garden Entrance, Pantry, Larder, and Stores.
On the First Floor, is an old Oak panelled Gallery with balustrade, Bathroom with
lavatory bowl, four good Bedrooms, Servants' Bedroom, W.C., and two Attics.
There are two good Cellars, and outside is covered way leading to Yard, with pump
and well, Oil Stores and Lamp Pantry, Dairy with Cheese Room over, large Back Kitchen
and Wash-house, Ashes and Boiling Furnace.
In Orchard are Fowthouse, Potting Shed, Privy and old Forge and Cattle Shelter,
and adjoining Orchard is an excellent Kitchen Garden, with choice fruit trees.
The Farm Buildings in Front Yard are Labourers' Hut, three-bay Wagon and
Implement Shed. In side yard are large modern Cowhouse for 35 cows, with ample
passage way, Cooling House, Kennel Yard, and Washing space, Feeding Pen, Coal-house,
Motor House, Float Shed, two-stall Stable, Loose Box, Harness Room, seven-stall Stable
and Harness Room with Granary over the whole, Nag Stable, four-tie Cowhouse, Loose
Box, four-bay Barn with floor over, three bays forming Fodder, Cake and Mixing House,
Hay Loft, Corn Stores and Grain Cisterns, Engine House, Cattle Feeding Shelter, with
walled-in Yard and Rickyard.
Surrounding Foldyard are large Cattle Feeding Shelter with enclosure, eight-tie Cow-
house, and a range of disused Cowhouses.
The two Cottages on O.S. No. pt. 253 each contain Living Room, Pantry, combined
Kitchen and Scullery, two Bedrooms, enclosed Paved Yard, Coal and Wood Shed, Privy,
and Good Garden, and water supply.

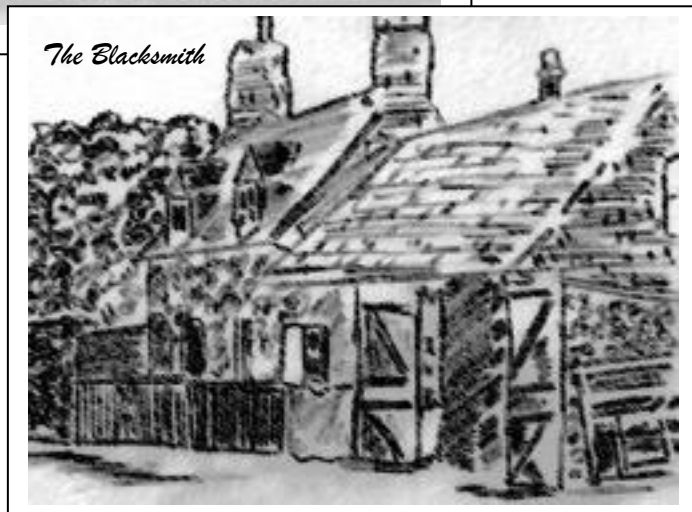
Figure 10: Sale of Marston Hall and Marston Hall Farm.

This was probably the original site of Wavers Marston.

Chapter 5 The Local Village Services

A variety of shops and services have been available in Marston Green through the years. Many services are no longer available for a variety of reasons.

The Blacksmith has long since disappeared along with home delivery from the many of the local traders.



The Service Sector.

Chapter 5.1 Marston Green Tavern

The only hostelry in Marston Green village is the Tavern.

Originally the cottage on the corner of Station Road and Coleshill Road was the Village Inn. The Digby family apparently did not like to worship in their Chapel, so close to a public house and consequently provided land close to the village pound in Station Road for a new Tavern

The 'new' Tavern was built in 1862 and the building stood, in very pleasant grounds for almost 100 years, before it was decided that a new modern building was needed to replace the now 'old' one.

A report in The Coleshill Chronicle on August 4th 1961 gave an interesting and somewhat one sided view (probably shared by many) of the proposals for a replacement for the old building.

The article entitled: **“Marston Green’s New Pub – will the face fit?”** goes on to say:

“Willy –Nilly one finds oneself not an admirer, on the whole of present - day architects.

A non–expert might be led to think that today, with a wealth and variety of building materials and with examples before us in the world, of places built from 300 years back to 3,000 years ago, it would be possible to equal, or even to excel, the appeal of Finchingfield and Bourton in our villages and of Florence or Athens in our cities“.

The writer of the article goes on to say:

“I am thinking of Marston Green’s principal thoroughfare – Station Road – where the “Tavern” public house is to be demolished and re-built.

A quarter of a century ago this road was a winding country lane.

Today it is similar to (no better, if no worse), Station Road, Stechford and a hundred other suburban Station Roads.

The “Chronicle” would be doing a service to the village if, in due course, it were able to publish a picture of the proposed new public house, so that Marstonians may evaluate whether their aesthetics as well as their amenities have been properly considered”.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

It appears that plans, placed by the brewery to replace the Tavern, were not well received by the locals. The editor of the article added that the brewery concerned was still awaiting final sanction for the redevelopment of “The Tavern” from Coleshill Licensing Justices. If and when this was obtained, they agreed to make a drawing of the new public house available for publication.



Article 2: The Tavern published in The Coleshill Chronicle.

The article continues:

Soon it may be down with the old and up with the new at Station Road, Marston Green. The owners of “The Tavern” (pictured above) are planning to demolish the present premises and re-build a more modern public house.

Coleshill Chronicle August 4th 1961

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The brewery in question obviously received permission for their plans and the old Tavern and its' tea room, gardens and bowling green were demolished and replaced with the “modern” facilities which stand today.



Photograph 22: The Marston Green Tavern in Station Road.
pre 1961



Photograph 23: The replacement modern Tavern.
It was built in the early 1960's.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 24: The Tavern early in the 20th Century.

It appears, according to the post card (above) that The Tavern was originally an Hotel and had a bowling green, tea room and attractive pleasure gardens.



Photograph 25: The Old Tavern.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 26: The Bowling Green at the Tavern.



Photograph 27: The Rose Pergola in the Tavern Grounds.

The grounds provided a peaceful and relaxing environment for the local residents and visitors alike.

Any one for tea?



Photograph 28: The Tavern Tea Room.

Before the 1960's the tea rooms at Marston Green Tavern provided a place for the locals to meet together.

The railway line running through Marston Green would have provided easy access to the countryside from the city areas of Birmingham and Coventry to Marston Green. The Tavern Tea Room and other facilities there would have made a delightful destination for a day out.

Many clubs from all over the area used the wide range of facilities at The Tavern to gather and hold regular meetings and activities.

In 1961 plans were put forward to demolish the old Tavern and adjoining cottage and rebuild a new modern pub on the same site. When this "new Tavern" was built, none of the facilities were replaced and the delightful grounds were turned into the car park.

Chapter 5.2 Shops and Services

Until the break up of the Digby Estate in the 1920's the services available to the locals, were those which supported a small rural community.

Once the community began to grow the needs of a larger, more diverse population came to the fore. Although access to the nearby City of Birmingham was easy by train, the majority of the locals would look to the village for their everyday needs.

By the mid 1940's, the shops in Marston Green were already established and it would have been possible to purchase almost anything required for day to day living. On the whole the same shops still stand today. The range of goods have changed over the years and it is questionable whether it is possible to buy everything required nowadays in the village shops.

Not only were there shops available, but a variety of services were provided by local tradesmen and deliveries made by milkmen and bakers, who along with the postman called daily. Laundrymen came weekly and the coalman delivered coal as required. Into the 1960's even 'pop' was delivered weekly from large vans. The grocer and butcher also delivered weekly orders.



Photograph 29: The Blacksmith.

In the early 1950's there was still a blacksmith in the village. It stood somewhere near the Bell at the bottom of Holly Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The kinds of services available from people who lived in the village were:

- ◆ Jobbing builders and joiners
- ◆ Electricians
- ◆ Plumbers
- ◆ Painters and decorators
- ◆ Dressmakers
- ◆ Shoe repairer
- ◆ Car servicing
- ◆ Television and radio repair and servicing.

There was a nurseryman called Moseley who lived in Chelmsley Lane (where Moorend Avenue now joins). He sold tomatoes and vegetables in season and also flowers.

There was a poultry farm somewhere near the cemetery which sold eggs and you could order a fresh chicken (In those days chicken was a great treat, only for special occasions !!!)

Mrs Marsh recalls a typical trip to Wrensons to order her groceries for the week.

“I would go into Wrensons to dictate my order which would be delivered, at first by a boy on a bike with a big basket on the front and later by van.

White coated Mr Haines, the manager, was a real grocer in the old sense – he really knew the trade. If I paused in my dictation he would lean forward resting his hands on the counter and say “And the next pleasure?”

The bacon hung up in ‘sides’ on hooks and would be sliced on a slicing machine to whatever thickness you desired. Butter (in the shape of a small barrel in which it had been delivered) stood on a marble slab and was cut and patted into shape with wooden ‘butter pats’ as requested. Sugar would be weighed out, a piece of blue ‘sugar paper’ deftly made into a bag and the sugar poured in. Dried fruit similarly, but that was bagged in a clover pink.

Later on I had a Wrensons hard back ‘order book’ which I handed in on my way to school on Wednesday for delivery on Thursday”.

At one time a mobile shop – Simpsons – travelled around the village providing a service for the elderly and housebound and others who could not get to the shops easily. Not a lot of the older folk had access to transport.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



In the 1950's the shop at the corner of Station Road was the grocers' Wrensons. In the 1990's the same shop is Flair, DIY.



Photograph 30: Wrensons Stores

Photograph 31: Flair DIY

Greens the sports shop and Boots the Chemist were at the end of the shops in Station Road. Joe the barber was next door, to the left of the Bus Shelter in Photograph 32.



Photograph 32: Shops in Station Road in the 1950's.



Photograph 33: Jones Suburban Stores.

In the 1960's a general store with a small café. In the 1990's it is Bacco's Italian Restaurant.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

A list of the shops around 1950, shows the wide range of goods available for the people of Marston Green.

Situation	1950's	1990's
Land Lane	Mr Smith's Grocery	Private house
Corner of Land Lane & Elmdon Road	Blizzard's Greengrocery Aston's Butcher Mrs Broadhead's general drapery, underwear, wool etc Driscoll's – Electrical, radio and T.V. Outdoor Mason's – Groceries sweets (school 'tuck shop' at 4.00 p.m.) Shoe Repairer	Private house Motorcycle spares Large signs produced both shops have been knocked into one Outdoor Solicitors office
Station Road	Alcotts – Ironmongers, seed shop, corn chandlers Osborne's Grocery. Tea Gardens sign outside – visitors to rural M.G. from city on day out, could bring their own sandwiches and get a pot of tea and eat in the garden. Campbell's Chemist Plumber and gasfitter – shop used as HQ Hanson's – Electricians, for sales and service Grocer Miss Hutchinson's – old fashioned draper (later became Macey's ladies clothes, wool and drapery)	Church Mouse Estate agent Florist Magson's Chemist Taplin's secondhand bookshop Picture Framing Real Care appliances for the disabled. Wellies Day Nursery

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Village Centre	<p>Griffin's Garage Midland Bank Don't remember– but by 1960's Reardon's Delicatessen and grocers Confectioners – sweets and tobacco Electrical goods and Services (the owner accidentally electrocuted himself). Sewing machine spares. Boness – Drapers and ladies wear</p>	<p>Garage Estate Agents Chinese take away Confectioners Laundrette Bookmaker</p>
Village Centre	<p>French's Ironmongers – Mrs French kept shop, Mr French did jobbing building, repairs etc Vanity Fayre – ladies hairdresser Joe the barber – men's hairdresser Boots the Chemist Green's – sports shop</p>	<p>Fish and Chip shop Hazy Fantazy Ladies hairdresser The Village Stores grocers Barclay's Bank</p>
Corner of Station Road/Alcott Lane	<p>N.B. Police houses and the Police Station stood on the corner just behind the Tavern. Jones's Suburban Stores – general store and café Post Office Griffin's Garage – petrol and service repairs</p>	<p>Bacco's Italian Restaurant Post Office Car show room</p>
Near the Station	<p>Newsagent – 'parking' at the back for bikes 1d or 2d per week for train/bus travellers. 'Hetty's' – grocery, café etc Wrenson's Grocers</p>	<p>Newsagent General store/tea shop</p>
Holly Lane	<p>Co-op – Grocery Hairdresser (with chiropodist above) Butchers R.E.R. Smith Electrical</p>	<p>Flair DIY Co-op off licence and Grocery Opticians R.E.R. Smith Electrical</p>

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

At the Station Yard

**Coal yard with 2 or 3 coal
merchants**
LCP Fuels and
Mellishes and The Co-op

Station Car Park
and bus stops

The names and details may not be entirely accurate, but it just goes to show the changes in use of the shop premises over the last 50 years.

When Chelmsley Wood was built in the 1960's a shopping centre on the Marston Green side of the development provided a variety of larger shops with easy reach of the village.

Most of the weekly shopping is now done in large supermarkets around the area, with the majority of people now owning cars and having easier access to shopping centres, both in the vicinity and further afield.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 34: 1950's. The Village Centre.
Looking towards Griffin's Garage and the shops.



Photograph 35: 1950's. Holly Lane.
Hetty's shop on the left and the Co-op on the right.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 36: Shops in the village centre of Marston Green.

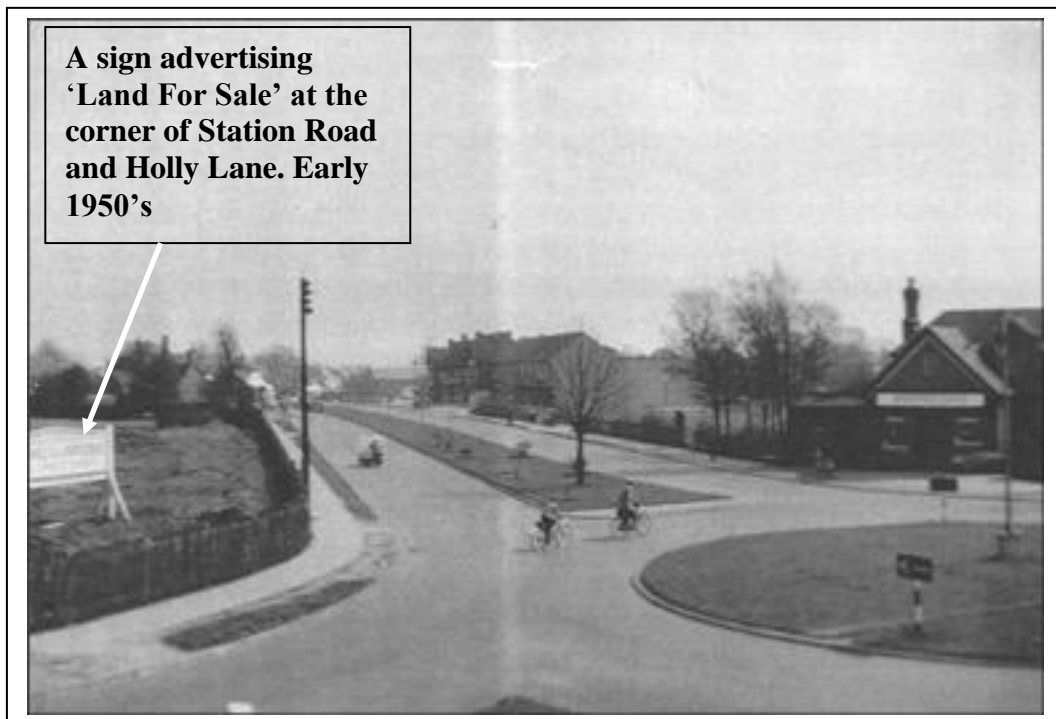
They were built prior to the 1960's. Ownership has changed over the years but the basic buildings remain unchanged.



Photograph 37: The Village Centre in the late 1990's.



Photograph 38: Station Road and Alcott Lane –1990's
Bacco's Restaurant and the Post Office standing across the corner.

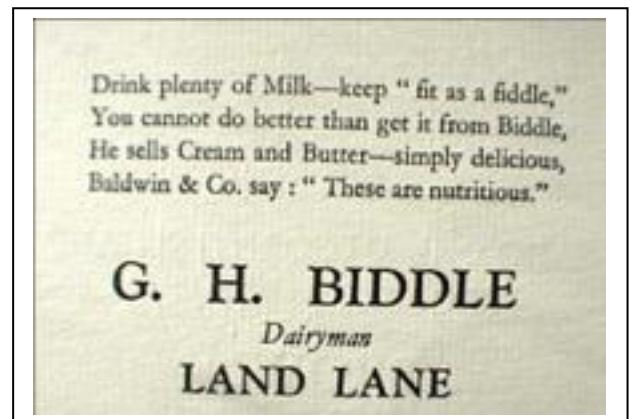
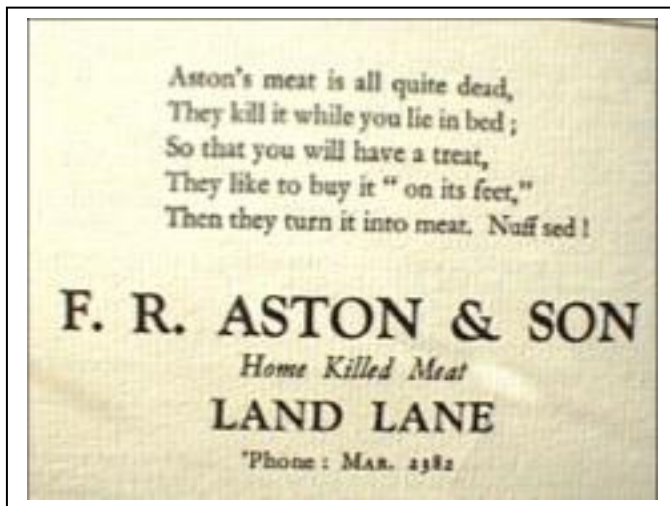


Photograph 39: Early 1950's. Where has all the traffic gone?
Station Road, looking from the island at Holly Lane.



Article 3: King George VI and Queen Elizabeth's Coronation

Local Traders advertised their services with cryptic poems in the presentation booklet for the Coronation in May 1937.



Article 4: Services for all.

The author of the hairdressing poem – ‘Onewho Seezall’ was obviously a keen observer of the local trades people.

H. MELLISH
MARSTON GREEN
STATION

A jolly good tip when you venture forth
In weather you do not relish,
When the wind comes from the Icy North
" You should order Coal from Mellish."

If you have a furnace you needs must stoke,
Poetry could not embellish
Your satisfaction from the coke
You can always get from Mellish.

Sole Agent for
ARLEY AND BIRCH COPPICE
COLLIERIES

'Phone: MAR. 2243

Possibly we serve you,
Only if we don't,
Should you read this advert,
Tisn't that we won't.

Opportunity there is
For a good look round,
Find the line you're looking for,
Inspect and find it sound.
Coltman runs this busy store,
Everyone comes back for more.

N. L. COLTMAN
POST OFFICE, VILLAGE CENTRE

Marion can perm your hair,
Or set the nipper in the chair,
And trim it up, with tender care ;
Very smart stuff comes out of there.

Onewho Seezall.

MARION BLAMIRE
Hairdressing and Chiropody
HOLLY LANE

'Phone: Max. 2116

Chapter 5.3 Medical facilities in Marston Green.

The availability of medical services in Marston Green has been variable during the 20th Century.

The first regular doctor in Marston Green was Dr. Cant who travelled by horse from Coleshill.

Dr. Cant Junior also came from Coleshill and just before the War he used to hold a surgery twice a week in the front room of Hetty's shop near the station. Whatever the weather he always arrived and patients had to wait outside until it was their turn.

A Dr Honisberger practised at no 110 Elmdon Lane but because his premises were painted all white and he was a German, during wartime, it was assumed that it was a marking point for the 'Luftwaffe' planes.

Later, Dr Jenkins opened up a practice in his house in Elmdon Lane, again a system of waiting your turn existed and everyone on the whole was very patient. He retired in the early 1960's and Dr O'Sullivan took over in the same surgery.

Next in line in the mid 60's, when Dr O'Sullivan decided to discontinue his practice, was Dr Beryl Skitt. With the help of the Residents Association and the kindness of Dr Jenkins, who gave her his old equipment to get started, she was installed as the local G.P. The Rev Zair from St. Leonard's Church offered her the use of the vestry at the Church to get the practice up and running. The whole community pulled together to ensure that a Doctor continued to practice in the Village.

A group practice was eventually set up in a house in Chelmsley Lane, with Doctors Cutler, Rayton and Rehmany sharing the work load created by the ever increasing population. A more organised system of appointments was set up with additional reception staff to assist. A purpose built surgery was finally opened opposite the old one in Chelmsley Lane. Practice nurses and other auxiliary staff are now on hand to assist the smooth running of the practice. Early in 1999, the surgery was further expanded and re-modernised.

A baby clinic was established in the village with the advent of the National Health Service in 1948. At first this was held in the Free Church on Friday mornings. A purpose built centre was provided on the site of the Library in Land Lane (after the old school was knocked down).



Photograph 40: The library and clinic, built in the 1960's.

The clinic provided a variety of services to meet the needs of young and old alike in the village.

In the years before the clinic was built, two chiropodists, the Misses Blamire, used to visit the village and they practised in upstairs bedrooms of two properties in Holly Lane. They used to travel by train from their home in Hampton in Arden.

Chiropody for the old folk, as well as physiotherapy and other services are now provided in the clinic, along with the baby clinic.



In 1968 an open day at the clinic provided an opportunity for the locals to see the new facilities.

Photograph 40A: Clinic Open Day.

Chapter 6 The Village School

Education in Marston Green



The education provided for children in Marston Green since 1875 has been undertaken in a variety of conditions over the years, but the best interests of the children have always been the main concern.

A variety of memories from staff and pupils add to this selection of **Tales of Schooldays** in Marston Green.

Chapter 6.1 Schooldays.

Formal education has been available to the children in Marston Green since 1875 and its early history is probably very much the same as many other schools across the country.

In his book, *The English Village* (Penguin 1952), Victor Bonham Carter describes the typical nineteenth century village school.

“.....may be found beside the duck pond, at windswept crossroads half a mile from the village, in dank hollows, on the edges of wild commons or disused sand pits, on steep slopes or the summits of very sharp little hills”.

The siting of the original school house at Marston Green could so easily have been the model for this description.

Perhaps not quite half a mile from the village, but certainly at a crossroads, near the gravel pit. The further description of the actual schools shows a great resemblance to the one in Marston Green.

“From the outside these schools look like small chapels. They have a steeply pitched roof, tall lancet windows some five to eight feet from the ground, little Gothic porches and a bell turret..... Inside these buildings most often contain one long large room – anything up to 1500 square feet – and a small additional room. The walls are often undressed brick above the level of the children’s heads. Sometimes there is a ceiling within sight; sometimes the dim mysterious heights recede far above the children’s heads”.

Again the old school house in Land Lane shared many of these typical characteristics.

The land on which the school was built, belonged not surprisingly to the Digby family, as well as a smallholding alongside. It seems that the family were concerned for the well being of the parishioners as several of the main buildings in Marston Green seemed to have been built on their land, which they gave or sold for a specific purpose.

Until this school was built in 1875, the children of Marston Green who went to school had to walk across the fields and footpaths the three miles to school in Bickenhill.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The relatively small population of the village and surrounding areas would not have presented too much of a problem of space at the original school and it was only the children from ages three to eight who were taught there.

In 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee an additional small classroom was built and the older children were able to stay on until they were fourteen. It was not until the village began expanding in the 1920's after the break up of the Digby Estate that the school population likewise started to grow noticeably.



Photograph 41: The original School and School House

In 1922 there were 97 children on the books and only room for 82 in the cramped school house so in 1924 it was recommended that the infants had a shorter day in order to alleviate the position.

It became necessary to add extra classrooms to the increasingly overcrowded schoolhouse and in 1927, four wooden ex Army huts were purchased, a toilet block added and the old schoolhouse abandoned.



Photograph 42: Miss Tart the teacher of an infant class.

Photograph taken early in the 20th Century. There is also pupil teacher at Marston Green School in the photograph.



Photograph 43: 1921. School Teacher, Miss Tart, with children

During the 1930's with still more pupils enrolling, the old building had to be repaired and re-decorated and bought back into use.

In 1930 there were 118 children on role.
By 1940 the numbers had risen to 270.

More space was needed urgently !!!

In 1943 two prefabricated classrooms were added and opened as a wartime nursery department, this became a separate infant department after the war. By this time the children did not begin school until they were five years old.

The 1944 Education Act stated that the old elementary schools such as Marston Green should change to a three tier infant, junior and secondary system, with the older children moving on to another school at eleven. The choice of senior school was determined by their success or failure at the eleven plus examination.

In 1952 it became a primary school and with the addition to the original school site of a further temporary, prefabricated classroom and hall added by the Ministry of Works, there were nearly 300 children from five to eleven on the registers.

The late 1950's bought plans for the building of a brand new school on a new site in the village centre and in 1962 the infants moved to the first part of the new school in Station Road. In 1964 the junior classes joined them. Ten classrooms were built, but continuing increases in the population meant that yet again temporary classrooms were needed and three mobile classrooms added to the site.

The derelict old school was finally demolished.

Just when everyone thought that the changes at the school were complete, plans were put forward in 1965 for the development of Chelmsley Woods into a huge housing estate to accommodate the overflow of people from the nearby City of Birmingham. It soon became clear that the school would not be large enough and it was decided to build a brand new infant school on the site.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Mr Bate was the headmaster at Marston Green School from 1930 until he retired in 1958. He had a reputation, which preceded him and many a child was known to quake in fear if “Gaffer Bate” heard of some misdemeanour outside of school hours

He worked hard to raise standards at the school and introduced strict practices and guidelines for the pupils and staff to follow.

Photograph 44: Mr Clarence Bate.

Headmaster of Marston Green School from 1930 to 1958.

Mr Enstone (Photograph 45, centre front row) took over as headmaster in 1958 and brought many modern ideas to the school, especially when it moved to the new site in Station Road, in the early 1960's.



Back row
left to right
Mr Morgan,
Miss Smale,
Mrs Thompson,
Mrs. Gregory,
Supply teacher
for Mrs Kay
Mr Spencer,
Front row
left to right
Mrs Hankinson
(secretary)
Mr Cooper,
Mr Enstone,
Mrs Marsh,
Mrs Walker.

Photograph 45: School staff circa 1960

Marston Green - A Warwickshire Village

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL.
EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

MARSTON CREEK C. SCHOOL.

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING MIDSUMMER, 1949. 1949

SCHOLAR'S NAME Stella Holt. CLASS 4

Subject.	MARKS		Remarks.
	Maximum.	Obtained.	
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION	100	86	Excellent. Answers well.
ENGLISH: POETRY.	50	39	Very Good. } writes well, with expression.
READING	50	35	
COMPOSITION	100	87	Excellent. Has good ideas, well expressed.
SPELLING	50	49	Excellent. Maintains a high standard.
ARITHMETIC	100	94	Excellent. } is methodical and neat.
	50	73	
	20	17	
ART	100	65	Good.
HISTORY	100	88	Excellent. } Has a fine memory and
HANDICRAFT	100	58	Fairly Good. } answers all questions
GEOGRAPHY	100	82	Very Good. } easily and ably.
NATURE STUDY	100	82	Very Good.
HANDWRITING	20	17	Excellent. All her work is beautiful neat.
ADJUNCTIVE DRAWING	100	45	Excellent. This was the B paper. Such a
PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES			result is highly commendable.
NEEDLE WORK			Good.
GENERAL REPORT	Very Good. Has maintained her interest and keenness to learn, and has worked very hard. She should go for. <i>Charles D. Morgan</i> Class Teacher.		

NUMBER IN CLASS 26 POSITION IN CLASS

ATTENDANCES OUT OF

Excellent Progress
Chate.
Head Master.
Misses.

Article 5: 1949 School Report.

A wide curriculum reported annually.

Chapter 6.2 The Land Lane School.

My thanks go to Mrs Marsh and Mrs Walker for a wonderful insight to life and times at Marston Green School in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. Mostly tales of times spent in the old school, but expectations of a new school and finally the move to the school add to this wealth of information.

Mrs Marsh says:

Whatever else is talked about in recollections of life at the old school, the one subject, which is constantly mentioned is the heating!

Coke stoves, which stood in the corners of the classrooms, appeared to have a life of their own. In the old wooden classroom block, a large coke stove stood in each room, mounted on a large concrete slab and surrounded by a very large robust fireguard.

Mrs Marsh recalls, "Arriving at school soon after 8:30 am on a winter's morning my first duty was to make sure the stove was burning and if necessary top it up with coke through a hole in the top covered by an iron lid. Stoves were lit by the caretaker, in the early morning. Sometimes the stove had gone out, then I had (if I could not rake and poke it into life) to re-light it. Sometimes the room was filled with fumes — a sign that the flue was blocked and the fire was not "drawing" - this meant trying to clear it by pushing the flue brush up it".

The 'coke boys' (boys from the top class) had to fill up the coke hods for each of the classes from a coke heap at the far side of the playground.

"At 11:45 the 'coke boys' collected the hods and made their way across the playground to the coke dump to refill them. (Rain, snow, hail come what may coke hods had to be filled). They lumbered back with them knocking the paint off the door as they came. (They should never have had to carry such weight)".

Again in the freezing cold winter days the crates of school milk would be stood beside the stoves to thaw out. The lumps of frozen cream finally settling into the watery milk and impossible to suck up through a straw, (as well as tasting disgusting!!)

Like the milk and the children, the toilets also froze regularly.

The toilet block was added to the school in the 1930's when the wooden classroom block was built. Before then the pail system was used with the pails being emptied by the boys onto the school field. The only water available was collected by the boys, again, from a well at nearby Chelmsley Farm.

Mrs Marsh adds, "The toilets were at the end of the playground, near the school house in a wooden building. Every winter these froze. One of the first duties of the headmaster each morning was to de-freeze at least some of them.

He could be seen proceeding across the playground, boiling kettle in hand.

Next in line was senior master Mr Cooper, with another kettle of boiling water.

They both went across the playground to the toilet block on their first job of the day."

By the 1950's the older buildings on the school site and the school house were becoming increasingly dilapidated, but the hard work that went on there, despite difficulties and poor conditions was a credit to all of the staff who worked there. The children on the whole worked hard and were well behaved and also a credit to the school.

Marston Green School was a happy school, with a friendly atmosphere.

Mrs. Marsh's Memories.

Odd tales of the Land Lane School.

The old wooden classrooms had mice (or rats) under the floor. Consequently there were holes in the floor. Very convenient to put Mental Arithmetic Test papers through instead of the paper basket. Hazardous if the dinner money rolled down one!

The Coke boys' discovered that if they filled the hods from the wettest part of the heap, the classroom soon filled with awful sulphurous fumes.

A great joke!

Mr Spencer always wore a suit and immaculate white shirts. Many times he was seen first thing on a winter's morning, jacket off, sleeves rolled up, working a flue brush up the chimney of the stove trying to get it going.

Again, Mr Spencer was once vividly describing Julius Caesars' landing when an enthralled child asked

“Were you there Mr Spencer?”

The stoves in the classrooms caused constant problems. The children at the front of the room roasted while those at the back almost froze. I used to rotate the children around the room in very cold weather to give everyone a warm. Normally by about 10:00 a.m. the room was reasonably warm.

The teacher's desk stood in the front of the classroom and was about a metre high with a sloping top. The chair was high to match, with a built in step to help you up. **An excellent vantage point.** On the class side at the front of the desk were shelves, always stacked with red backed Bibles.

**Whatever else we were short of
(e.g. interesting children's reading books)
we were never short of Bibles.**

A couple of years before the move to the New School.

We had been told many times there was going to be a new building. Each time our hopes were dashed. On one occasion a huge shelf like toadstool had grown on the doorjamb of the kitchen-staffroom. We heard reporters were coming from the Coleshill Chronicle to report on the state of the school. For about a week staff walked sideways past the toadstool in case they broke it off before a reporter could photograph it!

Happy Days!

Reminiscences of Marston Green School.

By Mary Walker

In 1936 the only school in Marston Green was called Bickenhill Marston Green School. It was situated in Land Lane — where the clinic and library now stand. There were 150 pupils whose ages ranged from 5 -14 years (the then leaving age). There were four wooden classrooms facing Land Lane. These were heated by coke stoves —teachers seeing that they were kept burning — boys bringing hods of coke.



Photograph 46: Pre 1943. The old school

Looking from Elmdon Road.

The wooden classroom blocks and the toilets had been added to the old school, but the infant block has not been built.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

There was a school house for the headmaster Mr C Bate and his family. Attached to the school house were two old classrooms. This was the Old School. There was a row of toilets at the edge of the playground, also a bicycle shed. In those days children came from Tile Cross, Cooks Lane and later some from Elmdon. There were five teachers including the Headmaster, for five classes.

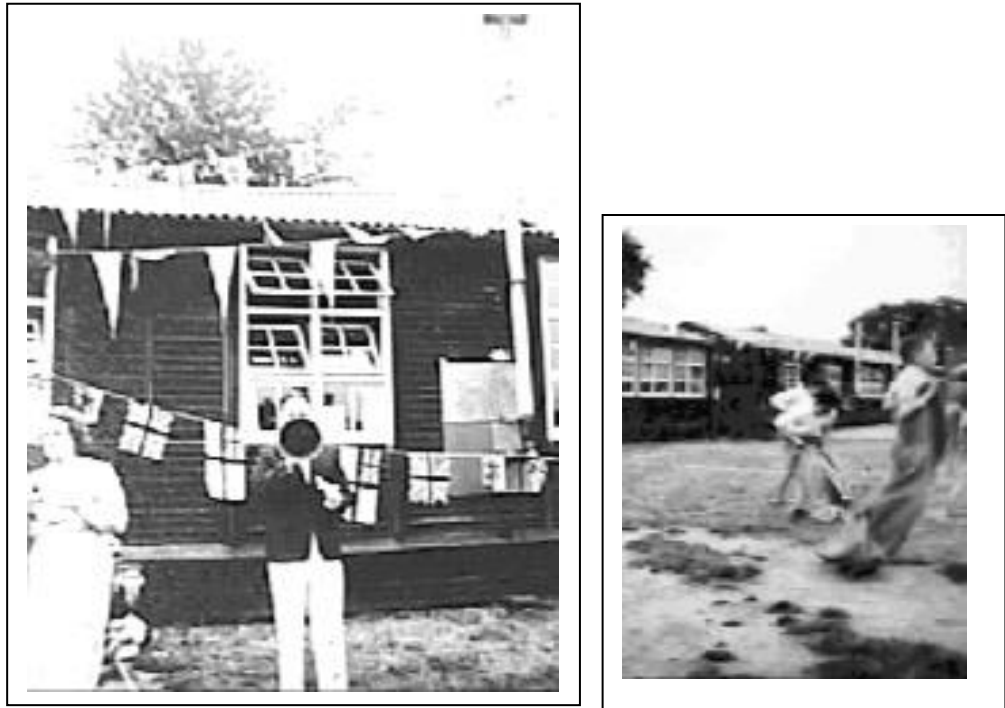


Photograph 47: The ex-army wooden classrooms.

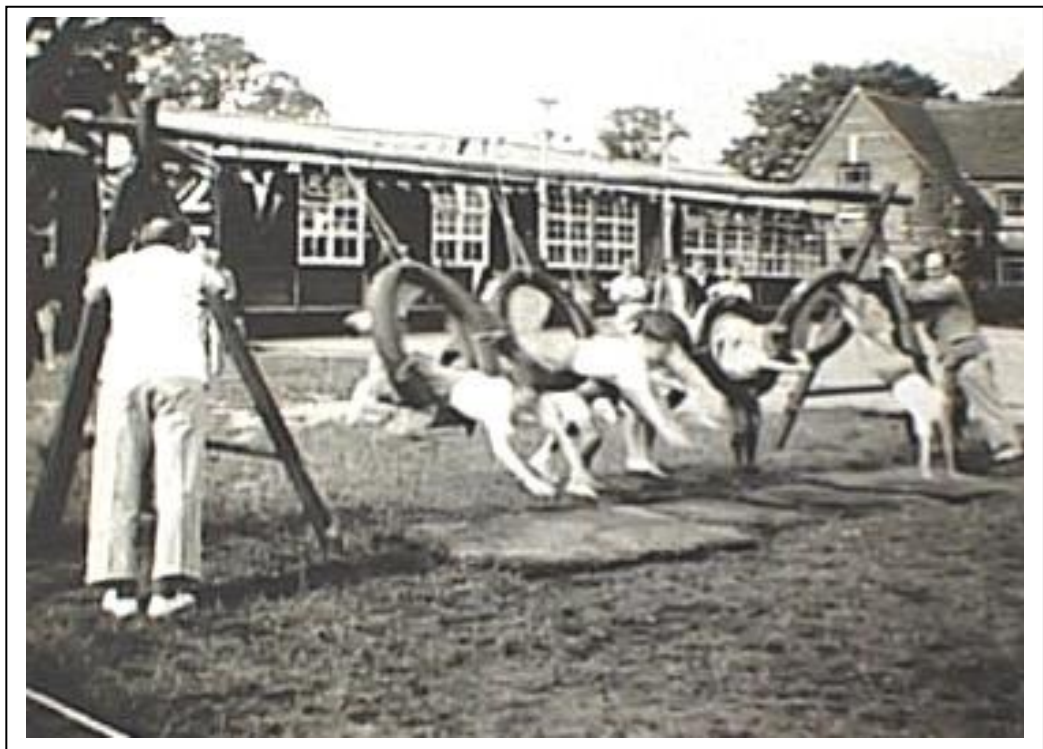
Much needed space was added when they were built.

The highlight of the year was Sports Day. The classrooms were decorated with flowers. Parents helped with setting up tyres, to be scrambled through, sacks for races etc. The school field extended all the way to the church boundary, so there was plenty of room for races.

Winners were given prizes — and afterwards there were tea parties in the decorated classrooms. Also there were plenty of sweets for all. These were given by Mr Moseley who had a toffee factory in Bell Lane.



Photograph 48: Important announcements on Sports Day!
Take your marks, get set.....GO!



Photograph 49: Working together at Sports Day.

A variety of games and races were organised to entertain everyone.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

One of the rooms in the Old School had been used for woodwork but, as the numbers of children grew, this had to become a classroom again. As a result, every Friday, the senior children went to Coleshill, the girls to do Domestic Science and the boys to do Woodwork.

Many will remember Miss Peel who taught the infants. Seven and eight year olds were in another room, then nine and ten year olds, then eleven and twelve year olds. The big (!) boys and girls were taught by Mr Bate in the Old School. After war was declared no one quite knew what was going to happen. The weather was perfect, and permission was given for the children to go on nature walks provided that these were no more than five minutes (running) distance from the school.

These usually consisted of a walk down Bickenhill Road to the Recreation Ground, a short stop there and back down Coleshill Road, or the other way round.

Later two more permanent rooms were erected, one an Infant room, the other a Nursery complete with beds and its own toilet. Mothers on war work could leave their little ones in the Nursery. A large underground air raid shelter was dug facing Elmdon Road. The children soon became used to spending time underground singing, reciting poems and learning tables. The siren was on the post at the corner of Land Lane and Elmdon Road.

A typical day in the Junior department of Marston Green School in the 1950's and 1960's.

As told by Mrs Marsh.

“The children arrived at 9:00 am. The register was taken then followed prayers and scripture until 9:30. On Mondays after register I sold savings stamps. These were stuck on a card and when the card was full (15 shillings worth) it was exchanged for a National Savings Certificate.

Another day after register I took milk money, tuppence halfpenny for a third of a pint bottle each day. That was 5d for one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Friday's saw the collection of dinner money. I seem to remember at first it was 10d per day (paid a week in advance) but later went up. For some years in the 50's and early 60's I think it was about 5 shillings a week.

Then followed arithmetic for about 45 minutes, starting with 'mental', which involved knowing:

number tables,
tables of money (100d = 8s 4d. etc)
tables of weights and measures – pints in a gallon
yards in a chain
ounces in pounds etc

We also taught the penny halfpenny table because stamps cost a penny halfpenny, so they knew you got 8 stamps for a shilling, 3 for fourpence halfpenny etc.

Then might come spelling, not only words but also spelling rules; e.g. 'i before e, except after c', making plurals, adding 'ed' and 'ing' to verbs etc.

Next at 10:45, Break, preceded by '**MILK**'.

The crate of 30 bottles plus any extra's needed was delivered by the 'big boys' acting as monitors who carted it in from the school gate where the crates were delivered. It was drunk through straws, pushed through the lids by the class 'milk monitors' who then washed the third pint glass bottles in the minuscule wash basins in the cloakroom. (Not an enviable task in the winter because there were only cold taps).

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

In the 60's, biscuits were sold, with profits going to School Fund. I remember Wagon Wheels and Jammy Dodgers!

After a 15 minute break, racing around the playground screaming their heads off, lessons resumed. (In Mr Bates' day balls were not allowed in the playground - probably in deference to the windows!)

After break it was usually English, comprehension or composition, reading, grammar etc.

At 11:15 the coke boys' appeared to fill their hods from the coke dump.

Then followed dinner. This was delivered ready cooked in heat retaining containers having been cooked at a central kitchen. In the 1940's this was served up by dinner ladies in the two classrooms of the old school and eaten sitting at desks. These desks were of course the old dual ones, which incorporated a tip up seat and a cast iron frame!

When the new classrooms were added in 1952 a dining hall and kitchen were built as well. The hall was used for other purposes e.g. PE, so again, just before 12 noon, boys from the top classes had to go and put up the trestle tables and folding leg benches. These were stacked at the end of the hall - and they had to take them down again (with much banging and crashing) after dinner. At this time the dinner ladies served the contained food from the kitchen. The meal consisted of a main course with meat and veg. and a pudding. (Packed lunches were not allowed, but children could go home for their dinner).

Afternoon school was devoted to things like History, Geography, Nature Study or Art. Craft for boys, Needlework for girls etc. Each class had at least two 30 minute PE lessons a week and a one hour games session."

The school day ended at 4:00 p.m. and any children who had a long walk home were allowed to leave fifteen minutes earlier in the winter so they could arrive home before it got dark.

A teacher was on bus duty for those children who travelled to Tile Cross or Sheldon by service bus, which called specially at the school. If the weather was bad, or the bus did not turn up, the teacher walked the children to the village and somehow or other had to ensure they got home on a regular bus service.



Photograph 50: Mrs Marshes class in 1959

Pupils were 9 -10 years old

Back Row left to right:

Lynne Holden, Valerie Macey, ? Holder, don't know, Richard Wardle, Gordon Hart, George Marsh, don't know, John Osborne, Timothy Kedge, Joanna Roughton.

Middle Row:

Robert Halton, Martin Lomasney, Kelvin Price, Ivor Francis, Rosemary Elliot, Christine ?, ? Musson, Peter Owens, don't know, Ian Pugh, John Clarke.

Front Row:

Elizabeth Morgan, Susan Cuthbertson, Pat Dyche, don' know, don't know, Graham Woodward, Robert Witherington, Stephen Gutterie, don't know, Stefan Lang, Lynn Pitt.

(I think that the faces recognised have the correct names,
but apologies for any errors)



Photograph 51: Mr Cooper's class in 1960/61

The pupils were 10 – 11 years old.

Back Row left to right:

Jeremy Marlow, Linda Brazier, Jane Cooper, Keren Rose, Frances Hart,
Susan Witherington, Tyrone Power.

Middle Row:

Kenneth Billington, Colin Hastings, Michael Evans, don't know, Richard ?,
James Cooper, don't know, Peter Maxwell, Eric Shropshall, Steven James.

Front Row:

Alan Whitaker, John Brown, Graham Russell, Robert Harrow, Nicholas Glen,
Mr Cooper, Barbara Johnson, Jayne Cooper, Lynne Weaver, Margaret Baugh, Carole
Thomas.

(I think that the faces recognised have the correct names,
but apologies for any errors).

Mrs Marsh continues "Until Mr Bate, the headmaster, retired in about 1958—the teaching in the school remained very traditional and formal, perhaps old fashioned, but standards of attainment remained very high.

Mr Bate was a strict disciplinarian and not averse to wielding the cane. (Children nicknamed him Gaffer Bate or Basher Bate). My stepson, who was about ten, was caned for spelling blackberries with 'ys' instead of 'ies' at the end. (For the rest of his life he could spell blackberries correctly !!!)

In Gaffer's day there were few discipline problems with the youth of the village because they knew misdemeanours round the village would get back to 'Gaffer' and punishment would follow.

With the coming of Mr Enstone in about 1958 things changed (gradually).

The buildings got progressively more dilapidated (the County were reluctant to do repairs because the building of a new school was supposed to be imminent — to the staff imminent' seemed to go on for years. Towards the end my classroom door knob was held on with a length of string!).

Despite all this the new head had a much more 'with it' approach. A more modern reading scheme was introduced and much more varied and interesting children's books were bought. Whereas Mr Bate bought 'sets' of 36 books, Mr Enstone tended to buy sets of 6, so there was much more variety of children's books.

Rather than policy being laid down by the Head and followed by the staff — staff co-operation was sought, and consideration shown."

At this time at Marston Green there were seven teachers plus the Head and everyone worked hard to achieve and maintain the high standards which had become expected at the school.

(NB. Mr Enstone came to Marston Green from a previous post as class teacher at Elkington Street School in Aston. Ivor Francis had been in his class there until his family moved to Marston Green. It was quite a shock for both of them to discover they were back together when Mr Enstone got his headship!)

1950's and 60's

(Highlights of the School Year)

The Christmas Play

Every year, just after half term preparations were started for the Christmas play. Each class did a play and it was felt that every child should take part, so plays were chosen with lots of choruses or parts that needed to be 'dressed up' for, so everyone could appear on stage in front of their parents.

Most of the rehearsing had to be done in the small space at the front of the classroom with the final performance being done in the Old Village Hall down the road. The chief characters were chosen more for their loud clear voices than for their acting ability, to enable them to be heard at the back of the Hall.

The Big Day.

When the great day came the children were dressed in their costumes at school, then whatever the weather, would walk down to the old village hall in procession. Sometimes it rained; sometimes it even snowed as the procession of tinselled fairies, china men, red Indians etc. made its way along Elmdon Road.

The first to appear on stage were the reception class — some not quite five, followed in age order by the other classes. The audience of parents were always very generous in its applause and the children had a lovely time.

Memorable Incidents.

One year a band of dusky maidens in grass skirts and hula hoops, had been made up with cocoa at school. It rained — the cocoa ran!!!

One 'angel' in mum's nightie had to go up some steps, unfortunately stepped on his nightie and as he went up the steps it wound him up. So the higher he got, the smaller he became. He finished in a crouching position — thoroughly cocooned.

Once, when the curtains had not parted for the Reception Class play, Mrs Marsh peeped round to see what was going on. Mrs Thompson was revealed resting on a mop with a bucket nearby.

A fairy had been sick!

Christmas Parties

Parents contributed the food, which the children brought in on party day. During the morning the classroom had to be transformed, the heavy iron-legged desks had to be heaved around to make tables and the classrooms decorated with paper chains. An entertainer called Uncle Percy came in, who seemed to tell the same jokes each year

The Christmas Post Box

There was a post box into which the children could post cards to each other and the staff. The teachers used to send a card to each child in the class so no one would be card-less.

The Sports.

The school used to take part in the Coleshill and District Sports each summer (and often did very well). There was nowhere to practice or test children for flat races, skipping, relay etc so 'Gaffer' would stand in the road near the Land Lane crossing, to stop the traffic (if any) with another teacher likewise down Elmdon Road. The children practised on the road. (There was very little traffic anyway and Digby Drive and Hall Drive had not been built then).

(A personal memory from the author)

I was good at 'sports' and in preparation for the 1962 District Sports; Mr Cooper used to take those of us in the team for extra practices in the afternoons, while the rest of the class got on with their work. At the end of the school year I was amazed to be presented with a silver cup for the best athlete in the school (I dropped it with the shock) but, I believe, it was the first time a girl had ever won the sports cup!

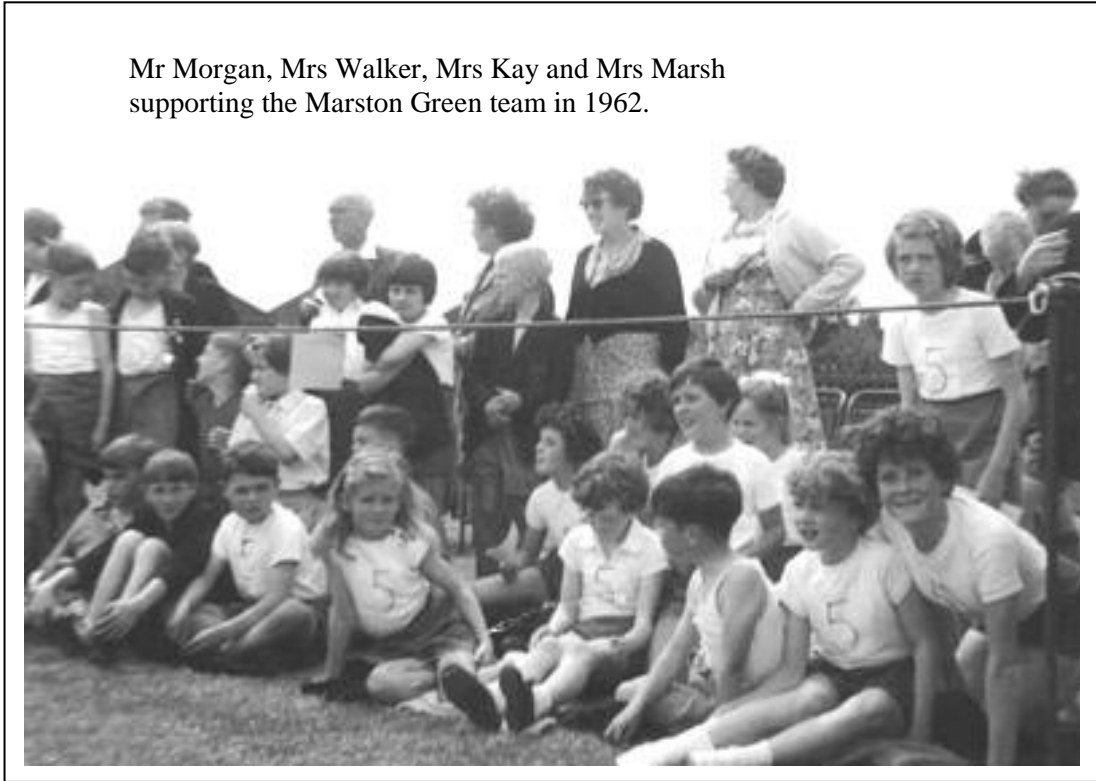
School Outings.

In Mr Bates day, school outings were made by train. Sometimes these outings were to London. They would be met by coach at Euston and taken on a tour of the City to see various famous landmarks, then on to Regents Park Zoo for the afternoon. Sometime during the day, there would be a meal at a Lyons tea room.

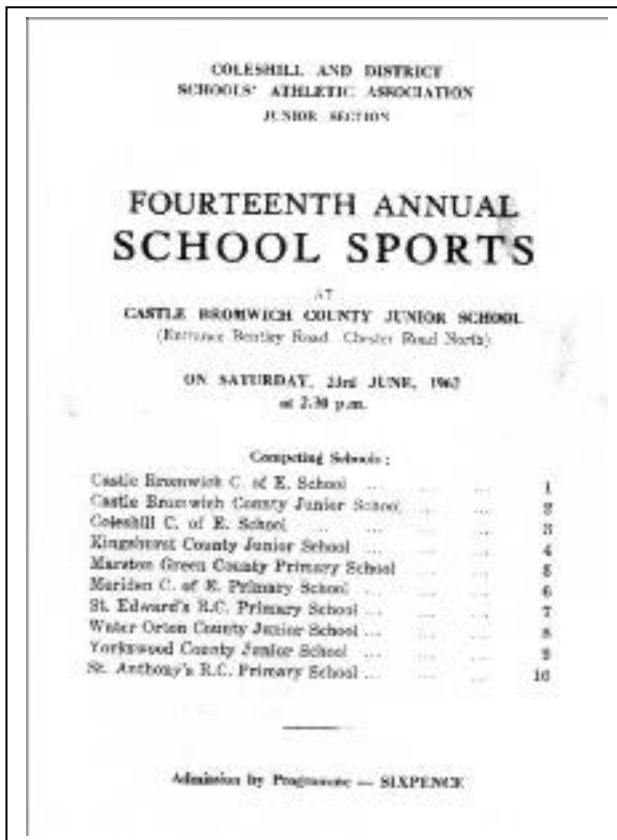
On one London visit, after the 'head count' at Euston a child was found to be missing !!! A teacher remained behind and eventually found him (how? no one knows!) and they followed home on a later train.

Coach trips to Bristol Zoo and Weston, after Mr Enstone joined the school, involved a very early start and late arrival back for the children.

Mr Morgan, Mrs Walker, Mrs Kay and Mrs Marsh supporting the Marston Green team in 1962.



Photograph 52: Sports Day 1962.



Marston Green School participated in the Annual County Sports, with the 10 and 11 year olds making up the teams.

Marston Green School was team number 5.

The Move to the New School — 1965.

Mrs Marsh recalls:

“At last a site for the new school was purchased behind Elm Farm Avenue, and the houses in Station Road as far along as the Tennis Courts.

First of all in 1962 two infant classrooms were built and the younger children from the school moved in. They were on their own there for about two years while the rest of the school was built.



Photograph 53: The original Infant Classrooms - 1962

Eventually the buildings were completed and all the **NEW** furniture was moved in.

We moved in 1965.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

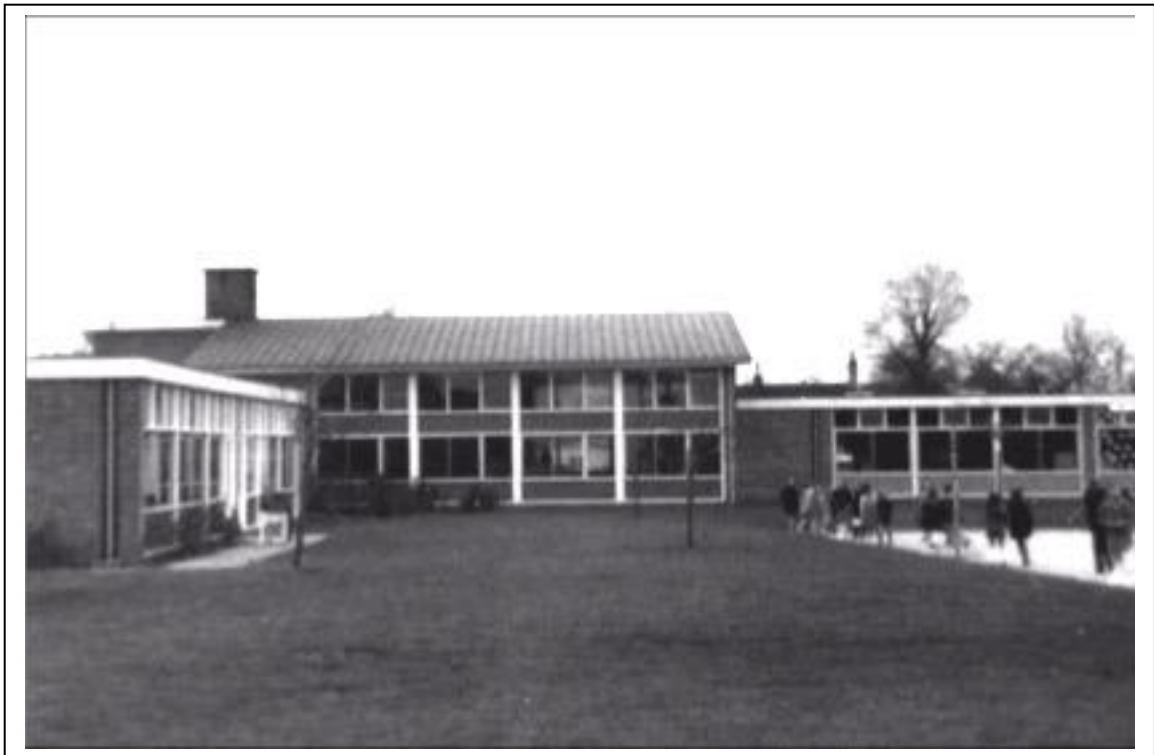
As many books and equipment as possible had been moved, but so that school work should not be interrupted. The children's books used everyday, remained in their desks.

Each child was told to bring a grocery box on the day of the actual move, so they could carry the contents of their desks to a new desk at the new school.

Each class in turn lined up at the school gate, each child grasping a grocery box and off they set in procession.

My class was last to leave. A reporter from the Coleshill Chronicle was recording the scene and a photographer asked if I would look back nostalgically at the old school, '**NO** I will not' I replied, 'we have been waiting years for this departure'."

The end of an era!



Photograph 54: Marston Green Junior School.

The early days at the new school. Late 1960's.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Sadly, once the old school was vacated it was vandalised and the old school log books were destroyed, losing a valuable, historical record of life and times at Marston Green School.

In 1971 the infants moved to their own school.

School building in Marston Green was complete for the time being.



Photograph 55: Marston Green Infants School.

Headmistress, Miss Jean Thompson with some of the new infant pupils in 1971, at the newly opened Infant School.

Chapter 6.3 The New School.

To the staff — after many years of coping in a building that was falling about their ears — the new school seemed absolutely wonderful.

They were determined to keep it so.

There were 3 classrooms and cloakroom facilities for the infants, 5 for juniors, a room for the Head and another for the Deputy Head. There was a staff room, secretary's room, and a wonderful kitchen, where excellent meals were cooked by Mrs Moulds who used to go in late at night to put the turkeys on for Christmas Dinner

There was also a big playing field and the HALL. This was equipped with gymnastic apparatus — what a change from just hoops, balls, skipping ropes etc and individual rush mats in the playground.

Mr Enstone was determined to set very high standards academically and otherwise. He introduced school uniform, the girls had grey skirts and white blouses with grey cardigans and green and yellow striped ties. The boys wore grey SHORTS (Mr Enstone would not allow long trousers).

He was very musical and introduced first of all recorders, then violins for the pupils to play. He conducted the Birmingham Schools Music Festival for many years and Marston Green performed at many of these and their contributions were of a very high standard indeed.

They continued to do very well at the District Sports and often hosted them, as they had an excellent field. Other schools were keen to come to Marston Green to share the wonderful new facilities. All the Marston Green competitors were now equipped with bright green shorts and white 'tee' shirts proudly displaying a number 5.

School standards remained high, largely due to a hard core of very experienced and very hard working staff, which did not change for years.

Mrs Marsh gives a brief description of them all:

Mr Cooper, Senior Master, successfully steered many, many children into Grammar Schools. He spent all his teaching life in Marston Green.

Mrs Marsh had the class before this and they co-operated so that she got them as far ahead and well prepared as possible to hand on to him.

Mr Spencer was a teacher of many talents and great humour. The other teachers envied him as he had a hearing aid, which he could conveniently switch off when supervising a class during a wet dinner time. Many years previously he had experience in the building trade and was invaluable with his practical knowledge in many emergencies.

Mr Morgan had a talent for detail and organised 'the track' for Sports (and he was excellent at demonstrating and training competitors for the sack race).

Mrs Walker was a most versatile and talented teacher who could take any age group and make a success of it. She was very good at bringing on the shy children who lacked confidence. She once had a class of so called 'backward' children withdrawn from several classes and got one of them to Grammar School.

Mrs Thompson was for years the delightful reception teacher who eased the break from home to school (before pre school days). She gave the children an excellent start, ready to go on to.....

Mrs Kay — she too was an excellent experienced teacher, who could be heard the length of Elmdon Road (or so it seemed) when she was shouting at the children.

Mrs Hankinson was the secretary for many years and did more than she ever got paid for. She took part very whole heartedly in all the school activities.

Mrs Marsh goes on to mention the very long-term helper:

Mrs Guttery She could turn her hand to anything from secretarial work to sick nurse as well as being able to take charge of a class very efficiently in an emergency.

In addition at the new school there was a changing body of really good enthusiastic young teachers full of new ideas which the 'oldies' found refreshing, whereas the younger staff valued their stability and experience.

Mrs Marsh retired in 1976 and by 1980 all the old 'hard core' staff had handed over to a new generation, to continue and build on the good work.

Chapter 7 The Garden of Memory

Changing Times.



What was once an eyesore and probably a health hazard, The Garden of Memory has been created and developed into a tranquil and attractive area in the centre of the village of Marston Green.

The old gravel pit was worked out over the years in the 18th and 19th Centuries to provide materials for the local roads and the railway.

The elegant clock, which is the latest acquisition to the site, stands as a reminder of times gone by.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

From a smelly old gravel pit in the early part of the Century to a crossroads sporting a magnificent clock, the area now known affectionately as the Garden of Memory, has changed little in shape and size over the years.



Photograph 56: The Gravel Pit in Station Road pre 1949.

A bone of contention for many years was the old gravel pit on the site of the present Memorial Gardens. There were constant complaints about the smell from refuse dumped in it. In 1935 the County Surveyor was asked what were the future plans for the pit which had then been filled in.

The matter appeared on the Parish Council agenda at virtually every meeting and in September 1937 when some councillors were obviously getting bored with the pit, a proposal to discontinue the minute was put to a vote. The proposal, however, was defeated.

Criss Cross

May 1988

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The gravel pit had stood in Marston Green for many years, probably dating back to 1555, when, under the Highways Act it became the responsibility of the locals to build and maintain the roads and Highways. This responsibility was directed by the Surveyors of the Highways and by 1837 local agricultural labourers were employed and paid at a daily rate of between 10d. (old pence) and 2 shillings. This was a compulsory task in the local population.

The main materials needed for the roads were stones and gravel – the gravel being principally supplied from the Parish gravel pits, as in Marston Green.

The building of the railway in the 1830's, added further to the demands for gravel and the old pit in the village centre provided a source for this.

The old Chapel built on land belonging to Colonel Wingfield Digby was situated at the Land Lane, Station Road corner, opposite the school and close to the gravel pit. Over the years the Chapel fell into disrepair and was finally demolished.

During the Second World War there was a National Fire Service (NFS) depot built on the filled in gravel pit. It was manned continuously and then it was demolished after the war.

After a mixed history the gravel pit was filled in and the plan to change the old pit into a Garden of Remembrance must have come as a great relief to the local population and Parish Councillors alike. It provided an attractive area in the village and was finally dedicated on Sunday July 17th 1949 when a service to unveil the Memorial Tablets took place.

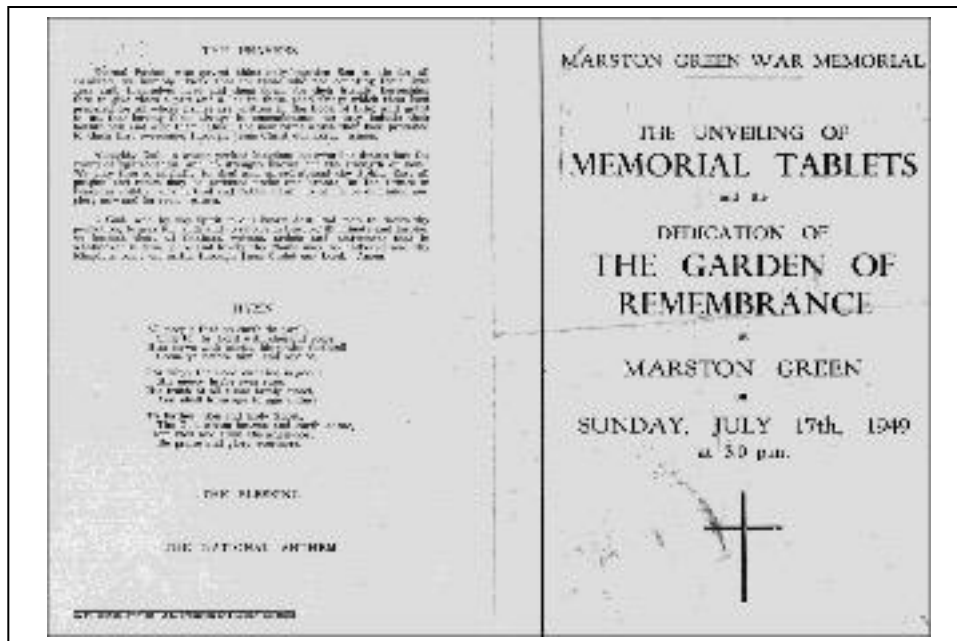


Figure 11: Dedication Service, July 17th 1949.

Dedication of the Garden on of Remembrance on July 17th 1949.



Photograph 57: Garden of Remembrance in Station Road.

By 1965, the area had become so attractive that it featured the centrepiece for the Best Kept Village Competition, in which the village was entered. It had been judged as the best kept large village in the Meriden Rural district and along with seven other finalists was to be visited by county judges, in the competition sponsored by Warwickshire Rural Community Council.



Article 6: Best Kept Village finalists in 1965.

Over the years the Garden of Memory has always been the centrepiece of the Remembrance Day Services, where representatives from both churches gather together with their congregations in an Act of Remembrance.



Article 7: 1968. Return to St Leonard's Church.

After the Service of Remembrance at the Village War Memorial, the choir and congregation returned to St. Leonard's Church.

Also at Christmastime a large Christmas tree is erected on the Garden of Memory and the general public invited to gather around for the singing of Christmas Carols. This has always been a popular, festive occasion.

It had been felt for a long time that there was something missing in the village - some kind of timepiece. It was with the death of the well-known local butcher, farmer and Parish Council Chairman, George Aston that a plan was instigated to erect a clock in his memory at the Garden of Memory.

The Aston family farmed in fields bordering the Airport and Elmdon Lane at the end of Digby Drive. They fattened up the cattle bought at local markets for sale in their village butcher shop in Land Lane.



Photograph 58: Warwickshire Longhorns ready to show.

Mr Aston Snr. (right), with George, his son in the centre and Peter Moseley circa 1969 getting ready for a Show. Aston's cattle won many awards.

On Sunday September 14th 1997 nearly 200 people witnessed the dedication and formal unveiling of the Village Clock on the Garden of Memory. It marks the Centenary of Bickenhill Parish Council and is dedicated to George Aston, the past chairman of the council.



Photograph 59: Unveiling of The Village Clock. 1997.

Prayers of dedication were led at the ceremony by the Priest in Charge of Bickenhill, the Rev John Eyles and the Vicar of St Leonard's, the Rev Roy Allen.



Photograph 60: Inscription on the Village Clock.

George Aston's widow Sheila, unveiled the inscription on the clock and it was pledged by former village resident Robert Taylor, who was once Director of Birmingham International Airport, that the airport authority would maintain the clock.



Photograph 61: The clock dedicated to George Aston.

The Village clock situated at the corner of The Garden of Memory.



Photograph 62: The clock viewed from Station Road.

Chapter 8 The Hospitals in Marston Green

The Cottage Homes



The Lodge entrance to the Cottage Homes.



The school at the Cottage Homes

In 1875 it was decided to provide a safe haven for the children who were destined to a life in the Asylum in Summer Lane, Birmingham. A site was chosen in the countryside at Marston Green and by 1879, the Cottage Homes in Coleshill Road were opened to the first of many children.

By 1937 it was taken over and became Chelmsley Hospital and mentally handicapped patients were cared for in the old Victorian Cottages.

Finally as the 20th Century closes all of the land now has a completely different use. A new housing development is planned for the hospital site and a new 'Marston Green Park' is to be developed on the part of the original farmland.

Chapter 8.1 The Hospital Sites in Marston Green.

The land bordered by Chelmsley Lane and Coleshill Road and originally backing onto Chelmsley Woods, has since 1879 been owned by the Birmingham Union and more recently the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board. The buildings there were built in response to a need to separate children in the 'Asylum for Infant Poor' in Summer Lane in Birmingham from the adults in other parts of this mixed institution.

In 1852 it was felt that it was 'not suitable for the children to be in the same precincts and in the proximity of undesirable relatives in these places'.

Until 1937 the institution was known as the Marston Green Children's Homes and catered for many children over the years. The Homes were run by a committee, with a Superintendent and Guardians ensuring the best upbringing for the children in their care.

From the initial buildings constructed in 1879, several additions were added over the years to cater for the many children and provide accommodation for their carers.

The population in Marston Green village itself may have been relatively small, but a far greater population existed within these 43 acres on its borders.

In 1937 the Birmingham Regional Hospital Board took over and the Homes were shortly afterwards catering for the patients with Mental Deficiency (later called Subnormal) and by 1950 the site had become known as Chelmsley Hospital. It now caters for new patients with learning difficulties and has become known as Brooklands.

Many new modern buildings have been added to the site in recent years and the woods, which bounded the area, were developed in the 1960's to create the massive Chelmsley Wood development, thus opening up the site on all sides.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

In the 1950's and 60's it was not unusual to see several of the patients around the village - going about their daily business. These who were able would do little jobs for the locals, gardening, delivering newspapers and in one case, at least, collecting up the glasses at the Tavern. It was a good two-way arrangement, both allowing the patients to mix in the community and providing a service at the same time. There were occasions though, when the siren would sound and the nurses could be seen running up Coleshill Road, after a patient who had escaped!

The school, built as part of the Children's Homes was still in regular use for the education of the younger patients and older residents who were able, used to work in various departments in the hospital. Laundry work was carried out by the patients under a supervised team of paid workers at Chelmsley.



**Article 8: Local people and businesses supported the Hospital
in a variety of ways.**

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The annual Fete was an opportunity for the locals and the patients to meet together in their more familiar surroundings.

CHELMSLEY HOSPITAL'S LEAGUE OF FRIENDS FETE

July 1972

It was our first breath of Spring when Miss Ann George (Amy Turtle of 'Crossroads') came along to open The Friends of Chelmsley Hospital's Fete. The Fete was well attended and Miss George mixed freely with the visitors and staff. She also autographed photographs of herself and raised quite a sum of money in this way for the 'Friends'. Miss George visited most of the stalls and chattered with the stall-holders, she also spoke to Mrs. Coward, the Chairman and Mr. and Mrs. Davidson, joint Secretaries. After Miss George had visited the children's wards she told me this was a very touching experience.



Through the medium of the 'Newsletter' I would like to thank Miss Ann George for giving up her Saturday to come along to open the Fete and also to all members of the 'Friends' and stall-holders who made the day such a success.

Article 9: Summer Fete at Chelmsley Hospital.

CHILDREN'S HOMES,
MARSTON GREEN
Near BIRMINGHAM

SOUVENIR

OF
CELEBRATION OF THE FIFTIETH
ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LAYING OF THE
FOUNDATION STONE
12TH JULY, 1928

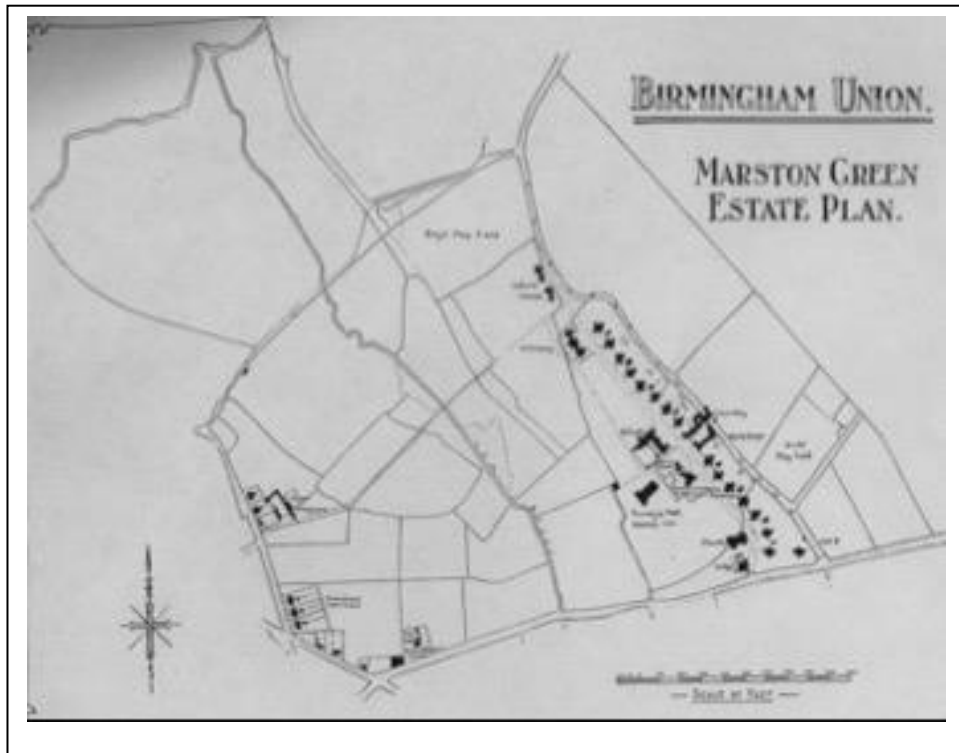


Figure 12: Celebration of laying of the Foundation Stone.
The 50th Anniversary on 12th July 1928.

Marston Green Children's Homes.

For many years my great Uncle Jim Rhodes was the Superintendent of Marston Green Homes, which was an orphanage for children from Birmingham.



In March 1878 the Children's Department Board of Guardians in Birmingham purchased 43 acres of land in Marston Green, on Coleshill Road and on 8th October 1878 the foundation stone was laid. By the end of 1879 there were seven houses for boys and seven houses for girls, each house to accommodate 30 children. There was a house for the superintendent, houses for the staff (in Chelmsley Lane), a school for 420 children, an infirmary, store, workshop, a bakehouse and a swimming pool.

The first children arrived in 1880 and in 1881 a lodge was built at the entrance gates, a laundry was provided in 1899 and in 1905 two more houses were erected as well as a church to seat 550 people. Previously religious services were held in the schoolrooms.

In 1913, a convalescent home was built for 12 children and named Ivy Lodge. A new swimming bath with recreation hall was provided and the old swimming bath converted into stores and offices. Due to declining need, Marston Green Homes closed down in 1934.

The building and site were eventually bought by a Regional Hospital Board and after a nurses home was built and other alterations made, the whole was opened in 1937 as Chelmsley Hospital for the mentally subnormal". It could accommodate 700 patients.

By the late 1970's the patient numbers were down to 400.
The place is now known as Brooklands.

Les Bridgwater - 1998



Photograph 63: The original Cottage Homes site in Coleshill Road.

The photograph above shows the extensive grounds.



Photograph 64: Enlarged shot of the Cottage Homes.

It shows the laundry, workshops, swimming pool and school in the centre.

A Short History of the Homes.

with extracts taken from the souvenir booklet of the 50th Anniversary of the Homes,
kindly lent by Mr George Kitson.

“There is ample evidence that, throughout the past Century, the care of children whose circumstances necessitated their maintenance at public expense, received very careful consideration by the Authorities charged with that duty”.

It would appear that from 1797 to 1852, such children were provided for by the Guardians (or their predecessors, the Overseers of the Poor) in an “Asylum for the Poor” in Summer Lane, which had accommodation for 400 children. A report states that: “They were fed, clothed and educated and taught to earn their cost in part by pin making, straw plaiting, lace making etc.”

Several systems were tried from 1852 onwards, to provide for the children, intending to separate them from the adults. A boarding out system was tried but the results were not found to be very satisfactory.

The experiences gained, led the Guardians of the time to consider an entirely new system which involved creating completely separate Children’s Homes. The objective was to separate Poor Law children so far as possible from contact with the adult population of the institutions. It was intended that they should be placed in “conditions, which were more favourable to the development of their physical and moral powers”.

As a result, in March 1878, forty-three acres of land were bought in Marston Green and steps were taken immediately to provide the necessary buildings. On 8th October 1878 a foundation stone was laid and by the end of 1879, the following buildings were completed at a cost (including equipment) of £41,857:

- Fourteen Cottages (seven for boys and seven for girls) each to accommodate thirty children and rooms for Foster Parents.
- House for superintendent and school assistants
- School for 420 children
- Stores
- Workshops
- Bakehouse
- Swimming Bath

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The first children were transferred to their new accommodation in January 1880, but the move was not met with approval from all.

A Mr.J.J.Henley, the District Inspector of the Local Government Board, was very critical, as was reported after a meeting with the Guardians in June 1881.

It was reported that “he was not an advocate of the system - not that he had any distrust of the Guardians of Birmingham in trying such an experiment, but he shrank from the difficulties which he anticipated”. He said, “It was entirely left to the Guardians and the Committee who managed the matter to decide for themselves whether they should adopt the Cottage System or something else, quite different. Therefore he was an impartial observer of the condition of the Homes”.

It appears though that his visit had a profound effect and afterwards he “candidly admitted that he had entirely altered his opinion and he believed that the Guardians had been wise in what they had done”.

Ultimately, however, the innovation proved to be a lead for the whole country and the Local Government Board in 1913 made the separation of children from adults compulsory.



Photograph 65: The Foundation Stone

Laid on October 8th 1878 at the Marston Green Children's Homes.



Photograph 66: The Lodge

At the entrance to the Marston Green Children's Homes.

Margaret Harding, has compiled a booklet containing a collection of memories from the Marston Green Children's Homes from 1917 –1933. Some of the former residents recall here their memories from their childhood at the Homes.

There were many opportunities for the children to learn trades and play musical instruments and they were kept busy with useful, organised activities and tasks.

A few short extracts here can maybe give an insight into what was essentially a safe and happy childhood environment for many of the children.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Jack Heath who lived at the Homes from 1920 –1928 recalled some of his time there.

“ The children were woken at 6.00 a.m. They got washed and dressed and ready for breakfast by 7.00. After breakfast each child had a job to do before going to school at 9.00. All subjects were taught – along with gardening and carpentry as well as needlecraft for the girls.

Music lessons were given from the age of 5 and after school, which finished at 4.20, the junior and senior bands practised in the Engineers Block.

During the winter months, many boys and girls went to Night School from 7.30 to 9.00 p.m. but in the summer lessons continued on the sports field. Children were taught tennis, hockey, football and also swimming. Everyone was taught life-saving.

When swimming finished in October, the pool was boarded over and the children started rehearsals for the Christmas pantomime. One year the pantomime lasted for four hours and each child had to learn forty carols.

During the four weeks summer holiday from school, all the children went to Prestatyn, North Wales for one weeks' holiday. The children walked to the station at Marston Green where a special train was waiting. The girls went one week and the boys the following week. The remaining two weeks were spent scrubbing and dusting the school and helping to pick potatoes.

In 1926, at the time of the General Strike the children at the homes were more fortunate than many others. Being self sufficient, the girls helped to bake their own bread and the boys took a horse and cart up to Marston Green Station and shovelled coal straight from the train.

Some of the buildings on the site today have quite different uses.

Outside the General Office and Stores once stood an old oven and bakehouse.

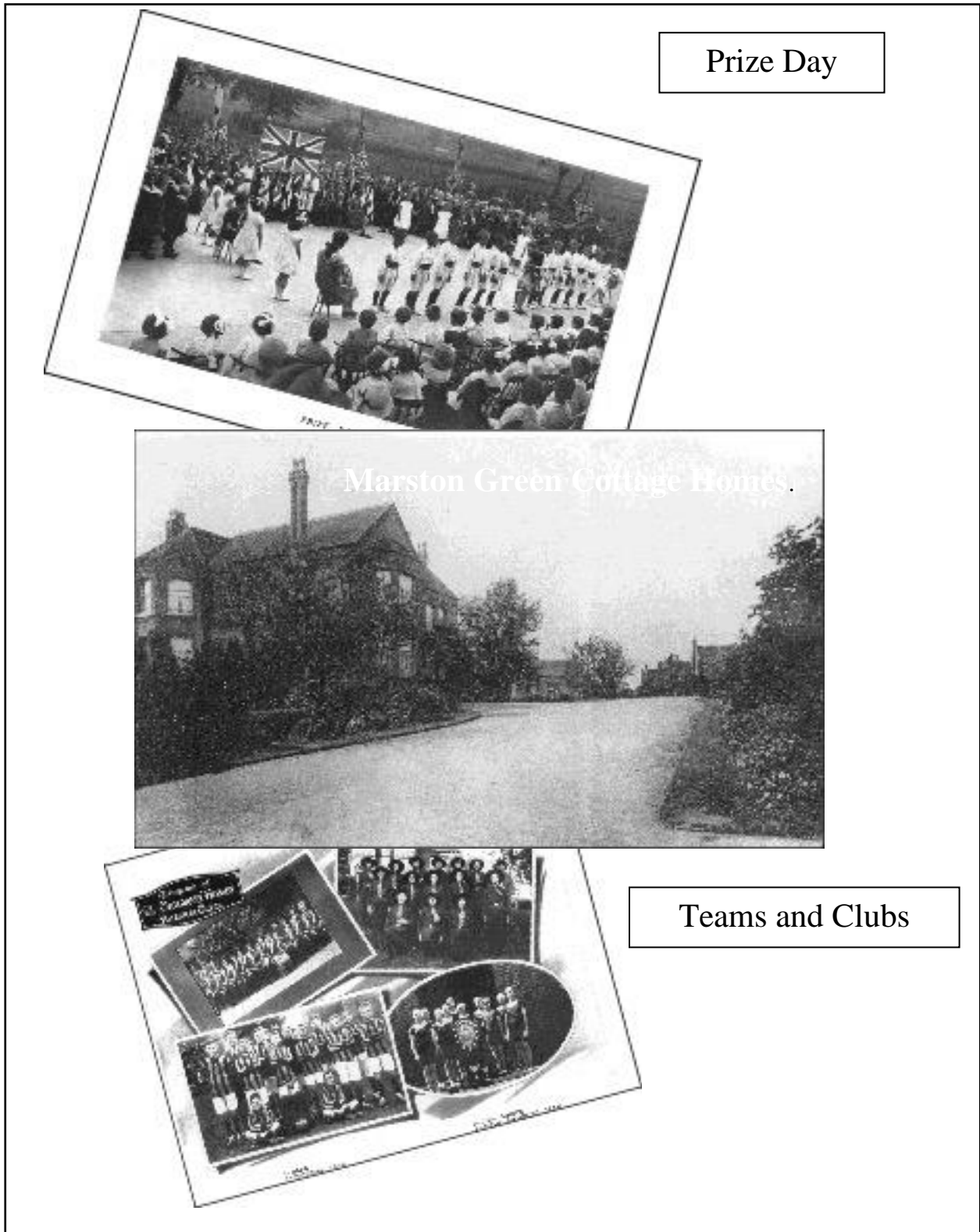
The car park in front of the General Office had a lean-to shed, which housed the Fire Engine.

The rear of the Stores was used for storing tents, cases, footwear etc. Beneath the band room in the Engineers block was the Tailor's shop where all the boys' suits were made.

There was an old well in the Laundry Yard where the water was pumped into a tank on top of the Engineers block.

”The well, may still be there today.”

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 67: Community Spirit at the Cottage Homes

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Mrs Florence Banner and her brother **Mr Alec Roberts** also share some of their memories.

Flo remembers Sundays, which she loved, as the children were allowed an extra half hour in bed. 'Mother' would bellow while walking through the dormitory which slept eight or ten in black iron bedsteads on either side. There were spotless white sheets, pillow cases and counterpanes and crock 'poes' under the bed. All the beds had to be turned back for inspection to see if anyone had dared to wet the bed, punishment for that crime, or for failing to get out of bed at the command, was no cake for tea.

Breakfast was porridge, delightfully cooked in an old fashioned porringer. Fried bread was also a treat and either bacon or an egg. 'Mother' and the deputy foster mother sat at the tables with half of us at each. I always admired mothers' china cup and saucer.

With breakfast over we had a little playtime in the yard, while the older ones made the beds and cleaned, then another shout and we all ran in for another wash and to get ready for Church. "Sunday best" was a nice velvet dress, little white collar, velour hats, navy coats and highly polished shoes.

We all lined up for inspection, then in two's marched across the main drive to Church.



Photograph 68: The Church at the Children's Homes.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Back from Church for Sunday dinner which was usually roast and veg. and oh! **pudding**. If it was rice everyone wanted to scrape the brown from around the side of the tin. Again the 'older ones' did the washing up.

Sunday School in the afternoon was a bore – but then came **tea**.

Flo loved home-made cake for tea, chewing every mouthful for what seemed a thousand times before swallowing it. After tea came washing up again, before a walk in 'houses' in the summer evenings. They would be allowed outside the Lodge gates to walk to either Bickenhill or through the bluebell woods at Chelmsley. The 'mothers' joined them and they walked in twos, the older girl being responsible for the younger girl.

After the walk it was back through the Lodge gates to the 'homes'. Sunday best clothes had to be packed away neatly in the box room. Shoes in the boot room (to be polished by one of us next day for school). A cup of cocoa and a 'swill' of hands and face, then up the stairs into the dormitories, into the white sheets for a 'good night' wish and no talking allowed (so we whispered!)

**If we were found talking it usually meant extra duties,
spud peeling or perhaps a smacked bottom.**

Alec Roberts was at the Homes from 1925 to 1933 from the age of two to ten. He describes the Homes thus:

"Imagine an establishment situated quite near Birmingham but as yet still in the heart of the country. This place was surrounded on three sides by Chelmsley Woods and farmland. On the fourth side there was a minor road.

At the main entrance, on the left hand side was a building called the Lodge. A main drive ran straight through the establishment and ended in a field, which served as a recreation ground or playing field.

The place was completely cut off from the outside world. The school, church, swimming baths, laundry, bakehouse and various maintenance establishments were situated in this environment, also an infirmary.

This then was the Marston Green Cottage Homes of over sixty years ago. This children's home consisted of large detached houses situated all along the drive."



Photograph 69: The main drive running through the grounds.

There was a babies' home next to the infirmary. Alec started his life there in this babies' home at the age of two.

The main thing he remembered about the infirmary was being treated for ringworm. This consisted of having one's head shaved, black ointment being smeared on the head and a white bonnet being firmly tied on. Various other children's ailments were treated there.

At about five or six years of age the children were placed in one of the houses containing either the boys or the girls.

The ground floors were mainly stone-floored and contained a scullery, pantry, a kitchen with a large black coal fired cooking range, a bathroom with one bath and about six wash basins. There was a large dining room on the side of the hall entrance and a large recreation room on the other side of the hall.

Off the hall was a large stone staircase leading up to two large dormitories for the children and a separate bedroom for the Housemother.

At the back of each house was a large playground with a hard surface. There was no contact between each of the playgrounds because there were 'no mans land' spaces between them.



**Photograph 70: One of the cottages at the Cottage Homes.
They were home to the many orphans who lived there.**

The toilets were outside the house and provided one of the less pleasant duties for those who lived there. They consisted of a block containing four or five toilets, which were very large buckets with two handles on, over the top of each was a wooden seat. (All this was pre – chemical and pre – water flush).

The boys marched along, stretched across the width of the drive carrying these buckets between them, on their way to the ‘stank’ as they called it, i.e. the disposal pit.

Mr. White was the headmaster and a strict disciplinarian. A minimum of ‘four of the best’ with a stick across the hand was one of his favourite punishments – especially if you were late for school. There was a willow tree in the corner of his garden, which was the source of his canes. (Easily and regularly replenished).

Alec felt that they were better off in Marston Green than many children who were not in care.

Mr David Hipkiss spent three and a half years at the Home and remembers the duties, which everyone had to perform. He lived in Cottage number 9 with Mr and Mrs Baker the houseparents. They were strict disciplinarians, but fair.

Each morning before school every boy had a duty to perform according to his age. That duty had to be done properly, otherwise he did it until it was, which possibly made him late for school.

Being late for school meant ‘four of the best’ from Mr White, the headmaster. This was administered at assembly time in front of the whole school.



Photograph 71: The School at the Cottage Homes.

Dinner was prepared before school by the boys and Mrs Baker cooked the meal for their return at lunchtime. Washing up had to be done before the return to school. Tea was prepared after school by certain boys.

Within each home there were boys (or girls) who were of working age - 14 plus and instead of school they were taught a trade within the perimeter of the Cottage Homes. Trades included baking, tailoring, making and mending shoes and farming. When they had finished their jobs, they too had duties to perform

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

An hour before tea was set aside for the boys to darn their own stockings. It was **not** to be **codged!** Stockings were inspected by Mr or Mrs Baker and if a finger went through it had to be done again until the mend satisfied Mam or Sir (as they were addressed).

If the darn was satisfactory they were allowed tea (there were boys who went without tea!)

Although David was only at the home for just over three years he realised that they took him from the slums of Birmingham, taught him discipline and gave him another life – **a better life.**

Although he had bad moments, he also remembered that he had many good times in Marston Green Cottage Homes which he felt was a well run, well maintained and well disciplined orphanage.

Chapter 8.2 Marston Green Maternity Hospital

As well as Chelmsley Hospital there was another significant large institution in Marston Green. This was the hospital in Coleshill Road.

Originally the hospital there was built at the beginning of World War 2. The Canadians took it over and it was used for British and Canadian troops. It was the number 1 Military Hospital.

After the end of the war the buildings remained empty until 1948, when the National Health Service took it over as Marston Green Maternity Hospital. It was said to be the largest Maternity Hospital in the country and many thousands of babies from Birmingham and the surrounding areas were born there.

When the Canadians were in residence at the Hospital during the war, the local young people at the time enjoyed and joined in the social events held there. Music and dancing were popular pastimes held by the troops at the hospital with many of the local girls also joining in. By the 60's and 70's the young trainee nurses at the Maternity Hospital proved as much of an attraction to the local youth.

By the 1990's, Marston Green Maternity Hospital finally closed and was demolished. In September 1997, the land and that of Chelmsley Hospital was put up for sale.

NHS Estates *By Joint Direction of the NHS Executive - West Midlands acting as agents for the Secretary of State for Health and the North Warwickshire NHS Trust*

MARSTON GREEN, WEST MIDLANDS

BROOKLANDS AND FORMER MARSTON GREEN MATERNITY HOSPITAL

A FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITE

Gross area 34.7 acres approx (14 ha) to include a minimum of 2.1 acres (0.85 ha) of Public Open Space

with the benefit of Agreed Development Briefs for Residential Development

OFFERS ARE INVITED FOR THE FREEHOLD SITE

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**Figure 13: 1997, Brooklands and The Maternity Hospital Sites.
Both sites were offered 'For Sale' in September 1997.**

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Several areas of the land on which both of the hospitals stood have gradually been developed for private housing and for various medical purposes in recent years, but the wholesale change of status to the area was not finalised until 1999. The Chelmsley Hospital (Brooklands) and Maternity Hospital site was not sold initially and gradually since 1997 it has been offered for sale firstly as a complete package (Fig 13), then as just the buildings. As there were no takers for this plan either, the site finally was sold for redevelopment, with the majority of the existing buildings being demolished.



Photograph 72: The bulldozers clear the hospital site

February 1999.

Chapter 8.3 The Future

The end of the 20th Century begins to see a further change in the land bordering Chelmsley Lane and Coleshill Road and now backing onto the Chelmsley Wood housing Estate.

The land at Brooklands has been sold and plans are afoot to build private houses on the site.



Photograph 73: The Brooklands site about to be developed.

The old Cottage Homes site was finally sold for housing development.
Spring 1999.



Photograph 74: A few of the remaining buildings

The Brooklands site, prior to demolition. Spring 1999.

The area to be built on is that which housed all the cottages and administrative buildings and in the Spring of 1999 the bulldozers moved in to demolish the structures.



Photograph 75: The derelict site

The former Children's Homes/Chelmsley Hospital awaiting demolition.
Spring 1999.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Along with the plans to develop the area for housing, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council produced a Public Consultation Document in March 1999 outlining plans, by them, to create 'The New Marston Green Park.'

In early 1999 the views of the local population were being sought and a leaflet outlining plans was sent to all the households within a 15 minute walking distance of the new park – some 3,500.

The planned site for the park is on land which once made up the farmland and rural part of the Cottage Homes and borders the new housing development area. The builders of the new housing development will pay for the creation of the park and the land is to be transferred to the council. The site is set in the valley of Lowbrook (one of the streams bordering the village) and bounded by Coleshill Road, Chelmsley Lane and Moorend Avenue.

A public exhibition was set up in the libraries at Marston Green and Chelmsley Wood with ideas of how the park could look. The two options for discussion were for a formal park or for a more natural, less formally landscaped area to be created.



Photograph 76: The proposed Marston Green Park site.

Looking from Chelmsley Lane.

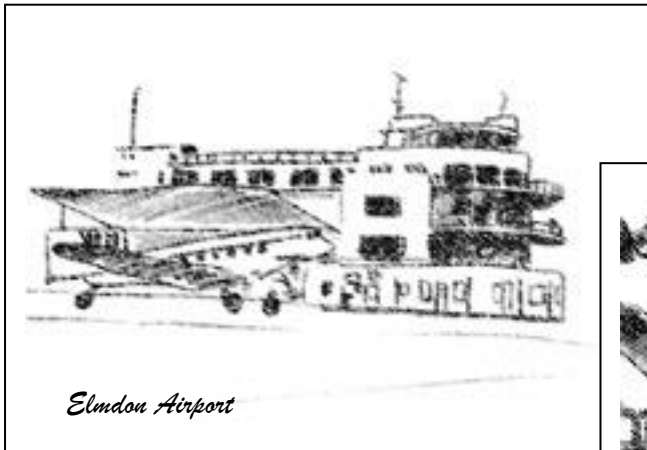
Both existing ancient features, such as old farm tracks, mature trees and hedgerows are to be retained along with new trees and rich meadowland being developed.

The Lowbrook stream is to be established as a wildlife corridor and is to form one of the borders of the site.

Chapter 9 The Development of Transport Services

The Airport and The Railway

Both the railway, running through Marston Green and Birmingham International Airport have had an effect on the village.



Elmdon Airport



Signal Box and Level Crossing

The excellent regular train service had the effect of providing access to the countryside of Marston Green and beyond to the people in the City of Birmingham.

The International Airport, built on land which would have been part of Wavers Marston, opens up the area to the World.

Chapter 9.1 Elmdon Airport



**Photograph 77: Elmdon Airport. Circa 1960's
A BEA (British European Airways) Trident at the terminal building.**

Birmingham Civil Airport at Elmdon, borders onto Marston Green and was the cause of Elmdon Lane being closed to through traffic.

The Airport was opened by the Duchess of Kent in 1939 and was requisitioned for Defence purposes during the War. Aircraft were built at the local Metropolitan Cammell works in Bickenhill Lane during the war and moved across a wide bridge over the railway, down onto the runway.

After the War the Airport was handed over to the Ministry of Civil Aviation for use as a European terminal and the Airport was finally returned to Birmingham Corporation. It officially became Birmingham Airport and with the expansion in the 1980's became known as Birmingham International Airport with services to all parts of the World. Plans are in place for further expansion of the Airport.

The decision to build a Municipal Airport at Birmingham was first considered in 1928, but for a variety of reasons the scheme was shelved until 1933, after a special committee had visited many of the leading continental airports in Europe. Arrangements were subsequently made for the purchase of land in Warwickshire along with arrangements, which were made for development of the Airport.

Although the airport was opened for traffic on 1st May 1939, by 16th September of that year it had been taken over by the Air Ministry.

During the war, two permanent runways were constructed. One was 5,006 ft. long and the other 1,700 ft. and the airport was used as an Elementary Flying School. The Metropolitan Cammell works situated to the south of Marston Green on the northern side of the railway, were used for building and repairing Aircraft during the war and a runway was built over the railway line and used for access to the airfield.

On 19th June 1946 the Ministry of Civil Aviation took over the Airport, but control did not revert to the Municipality until 1st April 1960. Since then a continuous programme of expansion and development has been undertaken and a new International Terminal was opened in 1961. In 1967, an extension to the main instrument runway was completed to provide a total length of 7,400 ft.

The development of the National Exhibition Centre amongst other factors indicated the predicted increase in numbers coming to the area. This encouraged further growth and expansion of the Airport and in the 1980's a completely new terminal building was constructed, providing modern facilities and services to the site.

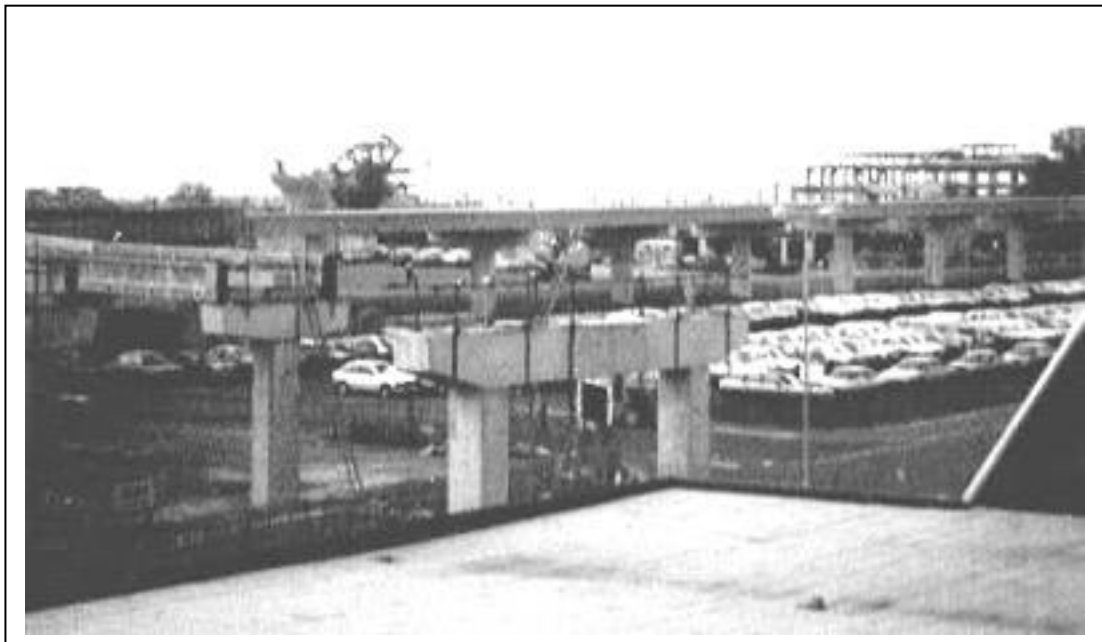
Unfortunately, Marston Hall, the 17th Century Manor House of Wavers Marston stood in the way of the planned development. It was demolished.

The latest phase of development in the area began in 1997 with alterations and extensions to the departure/arrivals areas. No changes are to be made to the runways but a new pier for the aircraft is in the plans. The changes should be completed, with work each year, by 2007.



Photograph 78: Building work at Birmingham International Airport.

In 1982, work was well underway with building the new terminal.



Photograph 79: Maglev link and Airport construction.

The new airport buildings and the new rail link leading to and from Birmingham International Railway Station. May 1982.



Article 10: Plan to save Marston Hall.

In 1979, plans were put in place to try to save Marston Hall from demolition, when the Airport was developed.



Article 11: Marston Hall prior to demolition.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Newspaper reports outlined ideas put forward by The Chelmsley Local History Society to restore and convert Marston Hall to a special study centre and museum.

According to the report:

“The Hall is faced with demolition if West Midlands County Council’s plans to expand the airport are approved.

Society chairman Mr Jeremy Dutton says the Hall, which is included in the expansion area, is an important building, which should be retained at all cost.

And he has slammed Solihull Council for ‘ignoring’ protest petitions and objections during a meeting to discuss demolition proposals”.

“To demolish this historic building is an idea to which the Society is totally opposed”, Mr Dutton said. ” We must have our heritage preserved and conserved for posterity rather than having it whipped out by purely commercial interests of people who do not live in the area”.

A 360 signature petition had been presented to Solihull Council, but no mention was made of this at the meeting and none of the councillors was prepared to discuss the fate of Marston Hall.

Mr Dutton continued: “No investigation into alternatives to demolition was even thought of.....also.....there was no provision for a museum anywhere in Solihull Borough”. He concluded by saying, that “The council should consider the feelings of local residents and the lack of a museum, by renovating it and making it into a museum and local history centre. I feel certain that we of the Society would be pleased to co-operate in such a venture and that a centre would attract visitors from the National Exhibition Centre”.

Marston Hall was finally demolished when the expansion of Birmingham Airport went ahead in the early 1980’s.

Chapter 9.2 The Railway

Schemes for a London to Birmingham Railway had been projected for many years since 1824, but they were strongly opposed by coaching, canal and landed interests. Eventually in 1833, Parliamentary sanction was obtained to build Britain's first major railway line. Robert Stephenson was appointed as chief engineer.

The railway cut through a series of ridges and valleys for 112 miles. It cost £5.5 million and took 20,000 navvies four and a half years to build. Their only tools were picks, shovels and gunpowder.

On 9th April 1838 the line was opened from London to Denbigh Hall and from Birmingham to Rugby. The latter section containing the station at Marston Green.

The railway superseded all competitors.

The journey by coach took twelve and a half hours, by stage wagon it took sixty hours and a canal barge took three days.

The trip by train took just five and a half hours.

Road carriage cost 10d. per ton per mile while railway rates ranged from 1d. to 3d. per ton per mile.

Second class passengers travelled at 2d. per mile.

Although a benefit to the farmers the railway line had relatively little impact on the local community at Marston Green, despite the station, until the present Century.

By the 1970's overhead electrification had been added to the line. Steam trains had become a dim and distant memory and the faster, more efficient electric engines had helped to reduce the journey time to 90 minutes from Birmingham to London. The section through Marston Green was one of the fastest on the journey as it is part of a completely straight section.

The journey in 1970 cost between £3/10s and £4/10s depending on the class and time of day.

During the 1940's, 50's and 60's the railway had acted as an easy means of transport into the nearby City of Birmingham. With the Increasing population it was not uncommon for families to move to Marston Green, which was still very much in the countryside, while family members worked in the City.

By the 1970's and beyond the busy railway line had become part of the daily life of many of the local residents. Easy transport to work and for shopping trips was provided on a regular reliable basis.

With the building of Birmingham International Station at the National Exhibition Centre in the late 1970's it became even easier for locals to travel to London by train from the village.

By the late 1990's though the fares to London had increased somewhat.

In 1999 it cost 25 pence per mile for a second class ticket. A return ticket on any train at any time is £59.50p although special fares exist outside of the rush hour with an advanced booking fare being just £14.00.

Changes through the years.

Although the railway line itself has not moved there have been a variety of developments and changes over the years at Marston Green Station.

Originally the sleepers on the track were made of stone as there was a fear of arson from wooden ones.

The station, at the end of Elmdon Lane, had a level crossing for easy access into the village centre. As well as the roadway for traffic there was a small wicket gate which was for the pedestrians to cross in safety.

The signal box at the old station was the control point for the level crossing gates and points as well as the lever type signals along the track. The signal man being very much in charge of the safety of all concerned.

With the electrification of the line all of the bridges in the village needed to have their tops removed and the roads lifted higher for the gantry's to fit underneath. The signals changed to the electric 'traffic light' type.

By the early 1970's, Bickenhill Parish Council were in discussion with British Rail regarding the possible closure of the level crossing at Marston Green station. There were plans for increased train traffic from May 1972.

Prior to that date there were approximately 250 trains running daily along the line resulting in closure of the crossing for at least 15 minutes in each hour during the day and for longer periods during the morning and evening rush hours. There was a proposed increase to a half -hourly express service to and from London, which would result in an increase of almost fifty trains of that type alone, as well as local and freight services. The possible development of the National Exhibition Centre was also likely to add extra railway traffic at the time of exhibitions.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Several possible solutions were discussed to ensure a right of way for pedestrians at least. The matter was unresolved for quite a time but eventually the long sloping bridge at the station was built when the old station and signal box were demolished. The level crossing was removed and Elmdon Lane effectively became a cul de sac.



**Photograph 80: The signal box at Marston Green Station.
It is viewed from the Coal Yard (now the Station car park).**



Photograph 81: The signal box and level crossing.



**Photograph 82: Site of the level crossing and signal box.
Both were removed in the 1970's.**



**Photograph 83: The Station viewed from Holly Lane.
Late 1990's.**

Disaster

On the morning of Thursday 27th June 1963 disaster struck at Marston Green Station.

The 12.01 a.m. fast freight service carrying meat carcasses from Willesden to Curzon Sreet, Birmingham was derailed at Marston Green at 4.27 a.m. The station was practically demolished when the wagons from the freight train were flung either side of the station. A report in the Birmingham Evening Mail told how the derailed wagons were dragged along by the train. One tore into the signal box ripping brickwork away.



Article 12: Signal Box damage due to the Derailment.

Workmen were soon busy clearing away debris after the train derailment tore this gaping hole in the signal box.

The signalman on duty Mr Thomas Hubbocks of Kingshurst had a very lucky escape, as the signal box was left standing on just half of its foundations. He escaped without injury.

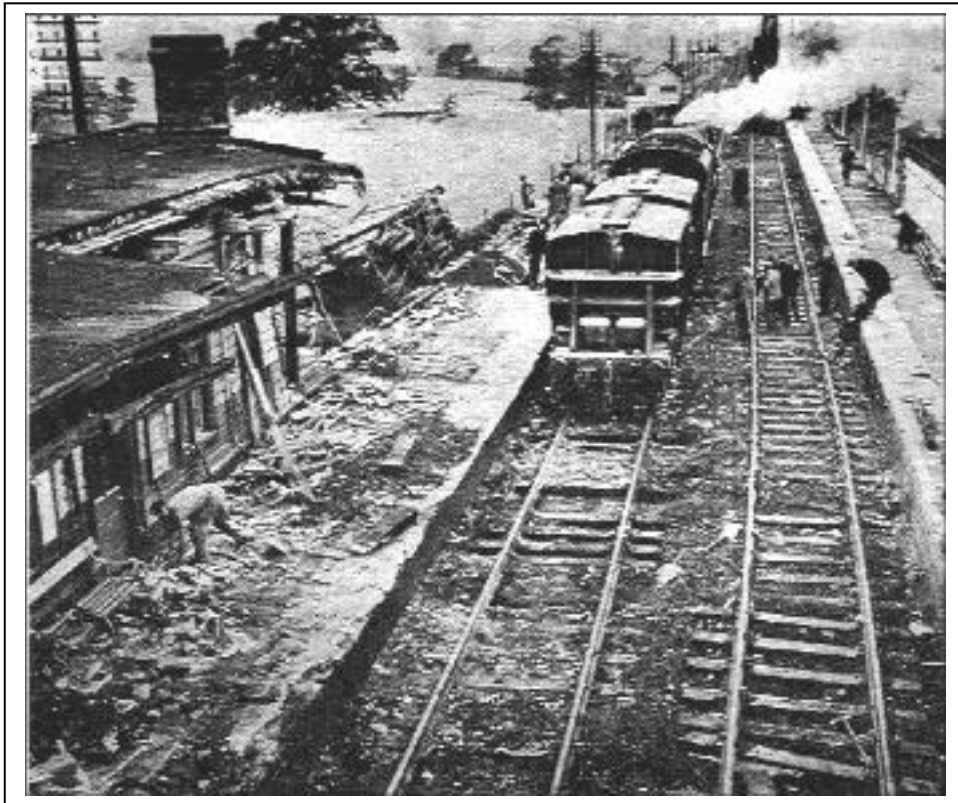
Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Mr Hubbocks said:

“There was a terrific crash and I saw a wagon fly up into the air and crash against my box. I ran into the furthest corner and the whole building trembled. The air was full of dirt, dust and debris. The crash shocked me and the engine crew came to ask if I was all right”. He had to let New Street know that the lines were blocked. It was fortunate that the telegraph system had not been put out of action.

The report in the Birmingham Mail continues to describe the positions of other wagons. One was hurtled over the platform and down an embankment onto the Golf Course. Others were strewn across the tracks and on the embankment. Meat carcasses were everywhere.

The canopy over one platform was wrecked and another wagon flew into the air and mounted a platform. Another crashed into a wooden building used as an office at the city end of the station.



**Photograph 84: The crash site viewed from the footbridge.
The view is looking towards Birmingham.**

**Marston Green Railway Station on the morning of
June 27th 1963**

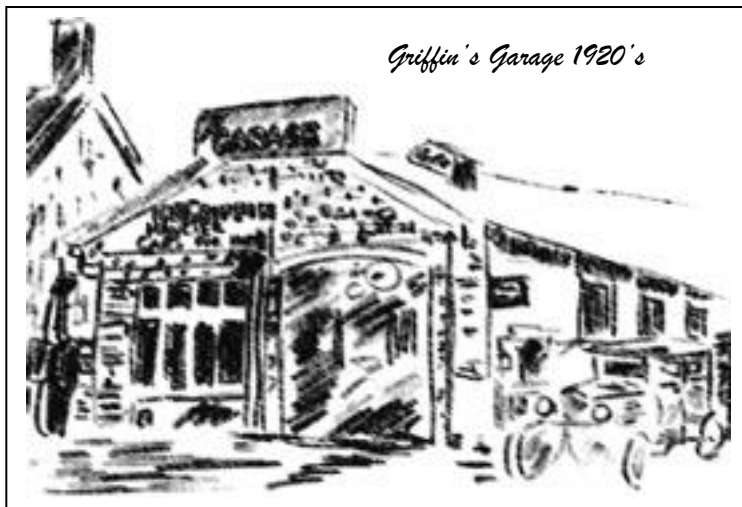


Photograph 85: Damaged track and platforms.

**There was debris everywhere after the 4.27 a.m. crash
at Marston Green Station.**

Sadly over the years there have been several accidents and fatalities in and around the area of Marston Green Station, but with vigilance and strict adherence to rules of safety these have been minimal, given the potential danger of the area.

Reminiscences and Memories



An appeal for information and memories of life and times in Marston Green, bought an interesting and varied response from folk still living in the village and from folk who have moved away.

This selection of miscellaneous tales goes to show aspects of life in Marston Green which are not necessarily linked in the other sections.

In 1841 there were 65 householders in Marston Green, many of them as part of a squatter settlement and there were many smallholdings.

Two thirds of the 65 householders were involved directly in agriculture.
13 were farmers and 30 more were agricultural labourers.

Did you know?

There were 3 carpenters, 2 shoemakers and 1 mason, but as the work on the railway was not completed there were 7 railroad labourers and 1 railway policeman.

There was an innkeeper, but no shopkeeper mentioned.

By 1850 though, 2 grocers a maltster and a blacksmith could be found in Marston Green.

In 1690, **Holly Lane** leading up to Marston Green from the Bell was known as **Pig Lane** because it was a common sight to see herds of pigs being driven along from various farms in the village to the Birmingham markets.

Marston Hall, the Manor House of Wavers Marston, which was built before Tudor times and demolished for the extension of Birmingham Airport was probably the first site of the settlement in the area. During restoration of the hall sometime after 1918 a fine minstrel gallery was bought to light.

The old Chapel in Station Road was heated by open fires and lit by paraffin lamps. A mechanical organ played 36 tunes, now and then, owing to a defect it would startle worshippers by slipping from the chant of a psalm, to a hymn.

Marriages were not allowed there.

Until the break up of the Digby Estate after WW1, Marston Green was still officially a hamlet and not a village.

The 1891 Census for the area was conducted in “All that part of Bickenhill Parish lying near Marston Green including The Newlands, Marston Hall, the Black Firs near Coleshill Heath known as the Marston Quarter”.

There were 61 properties enumerated in Marston Green, in the 1891 Census with a total of 274 inhabitants. There were 131 males and 143 females.

The English Composer Rutland Boughton lived in the village between 1905 and 1911, whilst he was employed by the Birmingham Midland Institute.

He was born in Aylesbury in 1878 and died in London in 1960 and studied at the Royal College of Music. Later he was on the staff at the Birmingham School of Music.

The two large semi-detached houses in Elmdon Lane opposite St Leonard’s Car Park, Prospect Villas, were used as a hospital for war wounded, during World War 1.

In the 1891 Census, the Cottage Homes were counted separately from the Village.

The Enumeration Book is for “Pauper Children from the Birmingham Workhouse, situated In Marston Green Cottage Homes, Coleshill“

In 1891 there were 381 paupers at the Cottage Homes and 66 staff, 27 of whom were Officers.

All of the Foster Parents at the Cottage Homes had a profession, which they then taught to the youngsters.

There was a painter and plumber, a baker, a carpenter, a shoemaker, a bricklayer and a tailor and many more who taught their trades to the children at the Homes.

Many of the children in The Cottage Homes had brothers and sisters there too. Louis, Bertie, George, Edith and May Hands aged from 5 to 13 years, were one of the families. They would not have remained together as a family.



Photograph 86: Ash Tree Cottage.

Ash Tree Cottage, which still stands today, was the original Tavern in Marston Green on the corner of Station Road and Coleshill Road. In a description of buildings in the village in about 1840 it was described as 'Beerhouse, stable and garden' and was on land owned by Charles Thornley.

On the opposite corner of Station Road and Land Lane was the Chapel used by the Digby Family. It was said that the Digby's did not wish to worship so close to an inn. As a result another inn of the same sign was built in 1862 to replace the Ash Tree Cottage Tavern, this was built on land further along Station Road (the present site) owned by the Earl of Digby.

This has since been succeeded by the modern Tavern built in 1961.



Photograph 87: Hall House.

Hall House (above), which is in Hall Drive behind the Free Church, was originally built on land in Elmdon Road.

It stood between numbers 13 and 17 and it was taken down by Mrs Walker's father in law and rebuilt in its present position. The site in Elmdon Road was then used for workshops, which are still there.

(1999 – the site was cleared at the end of 1998 and two detached houses are being built on the plot)



Photograph 88: 13 Elmdon Road with the workshop.

(Original site of Hall House) is to the left of the building.



Photograph 89: Prospect Villas.

Prospect Villas in Elmdon Road were built in approx. 1870 and were the first buildings erected in Marston Green which were not directly linked with the agricultural life of the community.



Photograph 90: Prospect Villas from the Church Car Park.

Campaigning and Caring in the 1930's

Bickenhill Parish Council in the 1930's was mainly concerned with keeping public footpaths open across the airfield, buying the Recreation Ground, filling in the gravel pit on the corner of Station Road and Elmdon Road and the provision of street lighting.

Birmingham Airport was in it's infancy at the time and the council was anxiously trying to keep footpaths open to the Coventry Road.

This, like most other issues , stretched over several years and were discussed as vigorously as important environmental issues are today by the present Parish Council.

In September 1937 the council dealt with a complaint that one resident had been told not to use the footpath across the airfield by Marston Hall. At a later meeting it was established that the footpath was still open and there continued to be frequent references to the problems relating to footpaths.

A big issue in the latter half of the 1930's was the purchase of the Recreation Ground. Fourteen acres were offered in 1935 at £120 an acre and in 1936 the council decided to buy the land at more than £1,800 after a parish meeting attended by nearly 130 people. Some opponents said that was "inopportune and an unjustifiable charge on the rates which are already excessive". The decision to buy was carried by 76 votes to 50.

The matter of the old gravel pit appeared on virtually every parish council agenda and a proposal to discontinue the minute was put to the vote in September 1937. This proposal was however defeated.

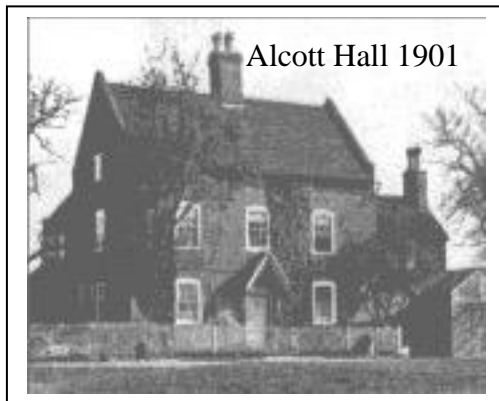
Street lighting came to the village in the late 1930's. A scheme was drawn up to provide 22 lamps in Marston Green out of a total of 36 for the whole parish which was to cost £90 a year. The first lamps were installed in early 1938.

Extract taken from Criss Cross Church Magazine

A delicate child

I was born in Marston Green in October 1926 and do not remember much of life before going to the village school at the age of five. As I recall it was in a wooden building near to St. Leonard's Church. The headmaster was a Mr. Bates and lived next door to the school.

On nice days my mother would meet me out of school holding onto the pushchair in which she would push me down Coleshill Road past the Children's Homes and on to Berwicks Lane which was just a rutted dirt road and led to my grandmothers house. Grandmother lived in Alcott Hall Farm - a large (well, large as I remember) red brick house which seemed to be between two woods, Chelmsley Woods. One way led to Marston Green the other to Coleshill.



Photograph 91: Alcott Hall.

My grandfather had farmed the surrounding land until his death in, I think, 1931 or 2. My father's two brothers continued to work the farm, but my father worked on the farm belonging to the Children's Homes. This farm was in Chelmsley Lane, where I was born at number 6.

On Sunday afternoons we would take off again in the push chair, this time through the wood from Chelmsley Lane to have tea with Gran. It was very dark when we went home and very cold in the wintertime. The frost made the ground very uneven and I was more often pulled than pushed and almost bounced out of the chariot, but I was not allowed to walk as I was, I understand, a delicate child.

On warm summer days I would walk with friends Peggy and Dora to the brook in the wood to paddle and catch minnows.

For King George V Jubilee in 1935 a fancy dress parade was arranged for the children of the village. I wore a silk and calico dress, altered to fit me by my grandmother, a poke bonnet and boots. We were judged in a field behind the school and I had 2nd prize.

The first prize was given to a boy named Leonard Knibbs who dressed as a Belisha Beacon. He was encased in a black and white cardboard tube with a yellow dome over his head. It was a very hot day and during the judging Leonard fainted due to lack of air.

The prizes were 10 shillings for Leonard and 5 shillings for me. It had to be spent in the village. I had a pair of shoes from a shop in Land Lane.



Photograph 92: Betty Hall in her Jubilee costume

King George V Jubilee celebrations in 1935.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Shortly after this we left Marston Green because my father took a Farm Managers job in Sutton Coldfield and since he never owned a car we did not go back to Marston Green very often. It has changed considerably from the Village I remember.

Chelmsley Woods is now a huge housing estate, but I believe the old farm house is still there amongst all the modern boxes.

The Tavern and Griffins Garage were still there the last time I drove through.

Betty Dalman (nee Hall) 1997



**Photograph 93: Griffin's Garage in the 1920's.
On the corner of Station Road and Alcott Lane.**



Photograph 94: Path leading through Chelmsley Woods.



Photograph 95: Coleshill Road, Marston Green.

Recollections

By Cyril Driscoll

My recollections of Marston Green are in 1927 to 1930. I was a pre teenager when my family came to live here and my first impression of Marston Green was that a 100 yards walk took me straight into fields and pastures new, to Alcott and Chelmsley Woods and far beyond.

On Sundays we attended morning and evening services at Church and Sunday School in the afternoon. We children accepted it without question. The Huddleston family were very active in the Free Church, David Huddleston was my Sunday School teacher. He had a 00 Gauge model railway in the garage which was a great attraction to me.

It was said that another generation of the Huddleston family, had a religious inspiration, by one of the many large trees that grew in Land Lane. He prayed for guidance and henceforth a Free Church came about. It was established at the end of the 19th Century. The original building (now the Hall) was built around 1923.

Richard (Dick) Huddleston was the Sunday School Superintendent and Scout Leader of the 2nd Marston Green Troop at Tile Cross. Meetings were held in the tiny old church with oil lamps for lighting. In the Boy Scouts I was leader of the Peewits. I remember trekking through the countryside at Scout Pace, camping near the footpath to Coleshill and cooking to obtain a Test Pass. One Scout cooked peas that were so hard we couldn't eat them so we practised throwing them through the air vent of our ex World War 1 Bell tent.

We often camped at the rear of Mr Clifford's house (County Commissioner) who lived at the junction of Tile Cross Road and Mackadown Lane. While there, one of the Scouts was sent to Marsh's Farm at the junction of Bell Lane and Tile Cross Road for some eggs. He arrived back with just one egg left. Looking up the lane we saw broken eggs at intervals, they had fallen through the bottom of the bag. We all laughed, but he didn't.

For one Gang Show we did I had to learn to knit. I was a young Matron who was knitting for Arthur Palmer who was dressed as a mature Matron. Another item in the show was the Denizen from Outer Space played by a very young Cub Scout, Ken Greenway. His only words were cheep, cheep, so we explained in sign language where he landed with a flag pole on grass hence Ma(r)s -t on Green. His departure back to Space was produced by an old 1920 Velocette motor bike revving like mad under the Village Hall. The result was the audience choking on the fumes creeping through the cracks.

There was great excitement when Tom Drakeley's Fair was set up in a field in Alcott and Chelmsley Lanes. I loved to watch the Gallopers being hauled into position by the magnificent Burrell Showmans Steam Engine together with it's Marengi Fair Organ (this Organ is still in existence and resides in Lincolnshire). I lived just 100 yards from the field and the noise and tunes on the Organ were very exciting. One tune that sticks in my memory was Bye Bye Blackbird. I think the steam engines at the Fair nurtured my interest in steam preservation some thirty years later.

It's hard to imagine now but I remember Jack Griffin and I played Cricket across Station Road from Griffin's Garage to the Elm Farm buildings (when it was still a farm) and putting a ball through the window of the bungalow opposite.

A quick sprint ensued.

Life was slower then, when deliveries of milk, bread, coal etc. were still made by horse drawn vehicles.

MASTON GREEN CELEBRATIONS

On the occasion of the

**Coronation of
Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth II**

On

TUESDAY 2nd JUNE

1953

*

“God Save the Queen”

COMMITTEE

Chairman: MRS LEAH MARTIN

Hon Treasurer: MR G.F. KAY

Hon Secretary: Mr C. BATE

MESDAMES R BLIZZARD, D COWLEY, W CHALKLEY,
O THOMPSON, PAT SMITH, MISS H KNIBBS, REV S D CUTHBERTSON
AND REV H R SPROULE. MESSRS F ALLCOTT, G CUTHBERTSON
C. DRISCOLL, G . FOSTER, J HAMAR, H MELLISH,
J D MAYNARD, G D NORMAN, F PRIESTLY, F TEAGUE,
L THOMPSON

**Preparations in hand for the 1953 Coronation
Celebrations in Marston Green**

Route of the Carnival Procession

STARTING FROM THE SCHOOL AND
PROCEEDING VIA STATION ROAD
LEVEL CROSSING, ELMDON LANE,
ELMDON ROAD, FINISHING
IN VILLAGE HALL
FIELD.

*

REFRESHMENTS
WILL BE PROVIDED FREE
FROM THE BUFFET.

*

THE COMMITTEE
WISH TO THANK ALL THOSE WHO
HAVE HELPED IN ANY WAY TO MAKE
THIS DAY A SUCCESS.

—Programme of Events

TELEVISION OF THE CORONATION PROCESSION AND SERVICE IN THE VILLAGE HALL

- 2.p.m. Assembly of Fancy Dress Parade and Carnival in Elmdon Road
2.30pm Procession moves off
3.30pm Procession finishes at Village Hall Field
Presentation of Prizes
4.pm – 6.pm Children's tea in the Village Hall
Presentation of Souvenirs
4.pm – 7.pm Sports for children
Sports for adults
In Mr Thompson's field and field adjoining
Village Hall
7.pm Punch and Judy in Village Hall Field
8.pm Old Folk's Supper in the Free Church Hall
8.pm – 12 Dancing in Village Hall and adjacent field
DUSK Bonfire and fireworks.

**DURING THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING MARSTON GREEN
MODEL ART'S AND CRAFT'S CLUB MODEL RAILWAY WILL
OPERATE WITH FREE RIDES**



Photograph 96: Coronation Celebrations 1953



Games and activities were held in the Village Hall field, where winners would receive a special commemorative medal.

Photograph 97: Coronation Games Medal

Jazz Brought Club new Life

FORMED less than four months ago, the jazz section of the Marston Green Village Club is the only youth organisation in this near-neighbour of Birmingham. Its activities have infused new life into the institution, which was founded as the village war memorial for World War I.

The section meets every Thursday evening, and the capable way in which members manage their own affairs makes it difficult to believe that the first meeting was held as recently as September 16.

This gathering followed an approach by several youngsters in the village to Mrs. Leah Martin, with a request that they should be allowed to form their own Jazz Club. Subsequently Mrs. Martin, supported by the younger generation, saw the village club committee, who gave permission for the club premises to be used on one evening a week, providing all the youngsters joined the village club as members.

Games and Drama

Membership entitles the young people to take part in every-day activities at the club, including billiards, snooker and table tennis. They also support the strong drama section, which produces four shows a year.

The members, who number about 40, are not content, as many jazz clubs are, to rely on gramophone records. They prefer to make their own music. They have formed a Dixieland style band, led by 20-year-old Bob Oliver on trumpet, with the jazz section chairman, John Gardiner, who has just completed his National Service, on soprano and alto saxophone. The band, which played for the first Christmas party a fortnight ago, uses a washboard in the rhythm section.

Although parents are not barred from club nights, the members have made it known that they would prefer to manage their own affairs. The only adult present, Mrs. Martin, is regarded by the youngsters as



Miss Sylvia Waine (top), who is secretary, and Mrs. Leah Martin, who took the initiative in forming the jazz band.



an ally and friend. She told Youth Page:

"The boys and girls are aged 16-20. With their own committee, they govern themselves, provide their own refreshments on club evenings and arrange their programme. From such a simple beginning, it is a splendid example of modern youth doing something for itself. They vote for what they want to do, and when the question of "Bop" was raised they decided to allow this form of dancing, providing it doesn't go too far or get out of hand.

Self-supporting

"One of the splendid things about the jazz section is that it is self-supporting and by supporting the other activities of the Village Club, has infused new life into it. We hope that shortly we may be given permission to extend the age-limit of our members to include the youngsters of 15. We feel that a boy or girl leaving school at 15, and old enough to earn their own living, should be old enough to join our section and mix with the other young people of the village."

The business of the jazz section is in the hands of a committee consisting of Mr. Gardiner, Miss Sylvia Waine (secretary), Miss Jean Watts, Roy Roberts, John Knibbs, Bob Oliver and Mrs. Martin. Miss Waine and Mrs. Martin represent the jazz section on the Village Club committee.

Article 13: Jazz Club.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The youth of the village were keen to form a jazz section in the local Village Club. Leah Martin helped them to establish the Youth Club in 1953.



Photograph 98: The Youth Jazz Band.

The youth of the village and surrounding area were keen to find themselves an activity in the 1950's. With the help of Leah Martin, they were able to form a Youth section of the Village Club and a Jazz Band.

As shown in Article13, there were a range of criteria which had to be met before the young people, aged from 16 to 20, would be considered as members of the club. They were able to join in all of the club activities, but the jazz section was self supporting.

A wonderful comment in the 1953 report says:

"We hope that shortly we will be able to give permission to extend the age limit of our members to include the youngsters of 15. We feel that if a boy or girl leaving school at 15 and old enough to earn their own living, should be old enough to join our section and mix with the other young people of the village".

What a difference half a century makes!

Happy Memories of the 1950's

“In the 40's and 50's I lived just across the fields from Marston Green in the near part of Sheldon to the Village, but as many of our friends lived in Marston Green we all congregated and roamed there and in Chelmsley Woods (when they really were woods).

In the early to mid fifties there was a great lady, Mrs Leah Martin, who lived in a wonderful old cottage in Station Road. She helped to create a Youth Club for us in the local Village Hall, this was much appreciated and a great success.



In the Youth Club Photograph I am 16 years old and the fifth from the left on the back row wearing glasses. “Old Jack” is on the extreme right of the back row, he used to look after the snooker tables at the Village Club and Leah Martin stands behind the drummer. Bob Wilcox is on the left of the band with Phil Hodnett next to him and the two ‘Oliver’ brothers (wearing glasses) are in the centre.”

Roy Roberts.
1998



Photograph 99: Marston Green Flower Show , August 1958



Chapter 11. Mrs Morley's Story



A Village Family.

Many thanks to Mrs Ethel Morley who has shared her memories of life growing up in Marston Green, where she has lived all her life.

Mrs Morley recalls tales of her family, who have lived in Marston Green for many years. Her stories and photographs give a personal view of life in and around the village.

“My Great Grandmother lived in a cottage next door to the Tavern. When the village was sold in 1919 she made a bid to buy it, but being a widow with poor means, stood no chance whatever. A clause was put into the purchase, stating that at the death of Mrs Waldron should any of her family wish to rent the property, then they must be given first consideration. That is what eventually happened.

My mother had lived with her grandma (Mrs Waldron) from the age of 10 years until her marriage in 1921, her sister then took over her duties towards my Great Grandma – until her eventual marriage and then another sister did likewise. I am very proud of the way my family cared for its elderly.

Grandma, was the lady who the villagers called on the “lay out” the deceased, to deliver the babies and generally care for the sick and ailing folk.

My mother had so very many tales to tell of those days.

One that I remember is of the afternoon when she was sitting in the front garden (which in those days extended to almost the central reservation of Station Road as it is now, but then, was a narrow lane with high banks bordering Elm Farm).

She was playing records on her gramophone which had a big horn; this must have been facing up Station Road towards the Station.

The Village itself would have been silent, no cars, no aeroplanes, just birdsong. Suddenlyfrom out of the ether:

“Roses are blooming in Picardy”, my mother was dumbfounded, who was talking to her?

Then: “Lizzie – play Roses are blooming in Picardy”.

It was the signalman using his megaphone to make his record request! I used to tell her, she was one of the first disc jockeys.



Photograph 100: Station Road seen from Holly Lane.

Station Road, in the days before modernisation. The chimneys of Mrs Morley's Great Grandmothers' cottage are on the far left.

The "For Sale" sign, next to Wrensons is for High Elms Farm, behind the huge tress. (Now it is Elm Farm Avenue).

There are so many stories, I just wish I could dredge them up.

"Grandma was called out one evening to nurse an Irish labourer, a young boy who had developed pneumonia (gangs of Irish labourers worked on the railway tracks in those days). The labourers were living in a barn in Coleshill Road. Mother went with grandma and she told us when it was obvious that the poor lad was dying, grandma made mother leave the scene and walk all the way back home to the cottage. She was alone and frightened. There were no lights, poor pathways and the picture, in her mind, of the poor lad surrounded by his fellow friends haunted her throughout her journey.

All this kindness by my great grandma was done without monetary reward, just caring for fellow humans – BUT – I sometimes feel in doing so, she sometimes forgot her own. I do know my mother never forgot that experience.

The mother of the Irish lad, wrote and thanked great grandma for looking after her son, my mother remembered that with great pride.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

The village in those days must have been a lovely united place in which to live.

Grandma stored bicycles for a small sum each week for the people who were using the train to travel into Birmingham to their places of work. I can remember as a very small child while staying at weekends and holidays, the friendship and neighbourliness of the folk. Not only Marston Green people but Coleshill people left their cycles and everyone to me as a young girl seemed so happy and jolly.”

The life in and around the 'Old Tavern' has left lasting memories for Mrs Morley.



Photograph 101: The corner of Alcott Lane and Station Road.

“Our Cottage stood where the present Tavern in Marston Green now stands. My Great Grandma – Mrs Maria Waldron – lived there until her death in 1933. Afterwards, my family (the Whiteheads) were there until its demolition and that of the Old Tavern .”

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

“Not only was the Tavern demolished, but also a gentlemen's and a ladies' bowling green, a putting green, a rose arbour and a chalet where weddings were catered for. Also above the cellars (where the beer was stored) was the meeting room of the, then thriving, Cyclists Touring Club – cycling being a very popular pastime. They held regular meetings there.

I remember as a child the Birmingham Master Bakers coming to bowl together on Tuesday afternoons. It was considered quite an event and my mother always went round to help Mrs Castle, the publican's wife, with the catering. The following day we would have fresh salmon salad and sherry trifle as a treat.

Another memory was of all the cyclists in the club room. As a child, to me, there seemed to be hundreds: they seemed such friendly folk. I believe that the Cyclists Touring Club still meets once a year at Meriden Cross.”



Photograph 102: The Cottage in Station Road.

It was knocked down when the Old Tavern was demolished.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Mrs Morley has very kindly allowed me to reproduce copies of some of the collection of pictures which she has of Marston Green. The stories which she has added give a wonderful insight to the life and times of folk in Marston Green, earlier this Century.



Photograph 103: The Village Shops.

The original village centre. Note, no pavements. The rooks used to congregate in the trees and make such a noise. If we got behind the cows going to be milked, we risked being late for school.

The sign on the tree is advertising the tea garden at Osbornes Stores.

Photograph 104: The same site in the late 1990's.

Two new houses now stand where the tea garden was found. Cows walking down the road nowadays would be newsworthy!





Photograph 105: The Old Church and Ash Tree Cottage.

Ash Tree Cottage was the original Inn at Marston Green, but when the Digby family took over the Church, they did not wish to worship so close to an Inn, so they provided the new site for the Tavern in Station Road.



Photograph 106: The Garden Of Memory.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



from this,

to this,



to this.



Photograph 107: Station Road, throughout the Century.

To the present day, 1999

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 108: The level crossing and Station at Marston Green.

The Station Master's house is in the background.

In front of that is the weigh bridge and coal yard and Mr Mellish's office where coal bills were paid. It was a very busy little area with coal being off loaded from the train goods wagons. The signal box can be seen on the right hand side.



Photograph 109: The same view in the late 1990's.

Overhead electrification wires and the high level pedestrian bridge now fill the skyline.



Photograph 110: The Station Master's House

The Station Master's wife, Mrs Palmer is outside with her daughters.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



**Photograph 111: Elmdon Road, leading from the Village Centre.
Heading towards St Leonard's Church and the Village Hall.
The photograph above was taken before Jack Walker built
his house, next to the cottage, where John Mowe lived.**



Photograph 112: Elmdon Road, late 1990's.



Photograph 113: Cottages in Chelmsley Lane.

John Holmes' cottage on the left with Sid Tipper's on the right. These cottages stood in Chelmsley Lane where Moored Avenue begins.



Photograph 114: The Smithy.

On the corner of the Radleys, almost opposite to Moseley's Toffee Factory.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Finally, from Mrs Morley, a photograph which shows her family enjoying the everyday pleasures of life of the Village.



Photograph 115: The wooden bridge leading to Chelmsley Woods.

'My Aunt Rose Lane, the girl in the dark dress, bought as many copies of this post card as she could, because she had to wear steel rimmed specs and hated that. This card is a rare one and shows the old wooden bridge. My aunt and cousin, Jack can be seen on the bridge. Had he lived he would be 78 years old' (1998).

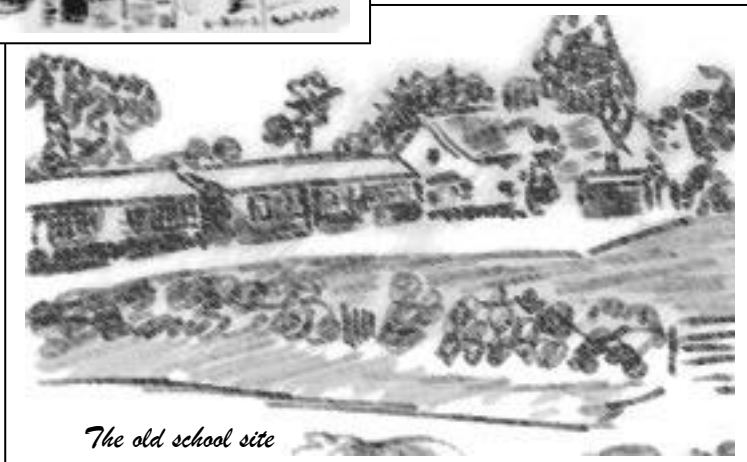


Photograph 116: Rose Lane



Photograph 117: Cousin Jack

Chapter 12. Where are they now?



The Changes Continue.

A small selection of some of the cottages and homes and buildings which still exist in Marston Green today and some which have long since disappeared

In the 1920's and 30's, much of the land which had belonged to the Wingfield Digby Family was built on and developed. In the 1960's and 70's several small cottages, farms and woodland areas were knocked down to make way for new housing estates and other developments in and around the village. As we enter the 21st Century who knows what the future holds!

The following selection of pictures and articles had been acquired from a variety of sources and are shown in no particular order.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 118: Cottages in Malthouse Row.



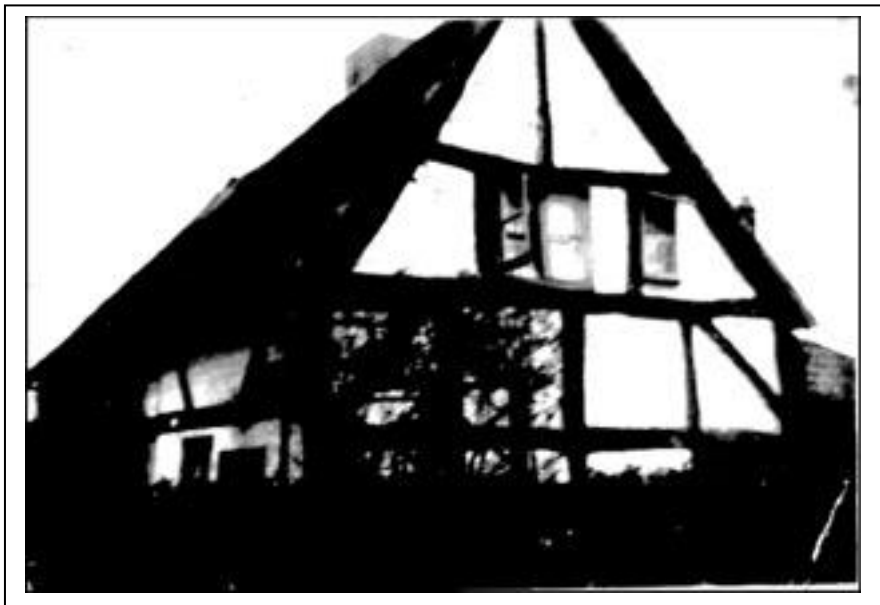
Photograph 119: Chelmsley Lane.

Both pictures taken at the turn of the Century.



Photograph 120: “The Church Rooms that nobody wanted”.

The article above was reported in the Coleshill Chronicle in 1961. “The old Church, which had been used most recently as the Library, Scout Hut and meeting place was waiting to be demolished and the site used as an addition to the adjoining Garden of Memory”.



Photograph 121: Cottage in Chelmsley Lane, taken in 1955.



Photograph 122: 5 Elmdon Road.

Once a pair of Elizabethan cottages, which now overlook the Garden of Memory.



Photograph 123: The Cottage, Elmdon Road and Land Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 124: Cottage in Station Road



Photograph 125: The Old Police Station in Holly Lane.

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village



Photograph 126: Bakery and General Stores in Land Lane.
This stood opposite the Old School and was taken about 1910.



Photograph 127: The same Cottage in 1998.



Photograph 128: The Old School.

The old school stood on the corner of Elmdon Road and Land Lane.



Photograph 129: The Library and old people's bungalows.

After the school was demolished in the mid 60's, the site was cleared and a library and old people's bungalows built on the area.



Photograph 130: Chapel House Farm.



Photograph 131: Early 1960's at the Free Church.

Building of the new church was about to begin.



Photograph 132: Houses in Lyndon Croft.

The first council houses to be built in Marston Green.



Photograph 133: Moarend Avenue at Chelmsley Lane.

Moarend Avenue was one of the first roads to be built into the “new” Chelmsley Wood Estate in the late 1960’s.



Photograph 134: The Telephone Exchange and Garage

The photograph is dated 1998, but plans are in hand for possible changes to this area of the village centre.



Photograph 135: The Village continues to grow

The photograph shows a building site between numbers 13 and 17 Elmdon Road, where two detached houses are being built.

Postscript

The dramatic changes, which have occurred in and around Marston Green in the past 20 – 30 years, have produced a suburban community from what was a small agricultural settlement for many centuries.

The clocks cannot be turned back, time will go on and further changes are bound to occur as technology and life styles continue to change and develop.

I have enjoyed finding out so much about the area and there are obviously many, many more tales and photographs which could be featured.

I hope that I have provided a little education and maintained a balance of both entertainment and enlightenment within the pages.

By reading snippets maybe you may be reminded of Albert the 'Co-op' baker, with his cheery whistle, as he delivered his fresh loaves. Tom, the milkman, who seemed to know everyone and was always prepared to quietly help anyone in need. The postmen, who could deliver the mail, even without an address on the letters. Everyone knew everyone!

Marston Green was a village in the true sense of the word.

As life goes on, I am sure there are lots of other bits and pieces of information, photographs and mementoes that people have and would like to share. All too often this wealth of information is lost.

Margaret S. Francis

13th September 1999

APPENDIX

List of Articles. Figures, Maps and Photographs

Index of Articles

No.	Title	Page
Chapter 2 – Marston Green – The Early Years		
1	St Leonard’s Church 60 th Anniversary	13
Chapter 5 – The Local Services		
2	The Tavern published in The Coleshill Chronicle	43
3	King George VI and Queen Elizabeth’s Coronation	57
4	Services for all	58
Chapter 6 – The Village School		
5	1949 School Report	67
Chapter 7 – The Garden of Memory		
6	Garden of Remembrance	93
7	1968. Return to St Leonard’s Church	94
Chapter 8 – The Hospitals in Marston Green		
8	Local people and businesses supported the Hospital	100
9	Summer Fete at Chelmsley Hospital	101
Chapter 9 – The Development of Transport Services		
10	Plan to save Marston Hall	125
11	Marston Hall prior to demolition	125
12	Signal Box damage due to the Derailment	131
Chapter 10 – Personal Tales		
13	Jazz Club	152

Index of Figures

No.	Title	Page
Chapter 2 – Marston Green – The Early Years		
1	Opening and Dedication of the Free Church	14
Chapter 4 – Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate		
2	Sale Poster for the Wingfield Digby Estate	30
3	Specific Properties for sale in Marston Green	32
4	Property acreage and rental rates	32
5	The Sale details of Lot 38	33
6	Details of Lot 47 – The Site of Birmingham Airport	34
7	Details of Chapel House Farm	35
8	Details of Sale of Chapel House Farm	36
9	Details of the Dairy Farm on the site of Elmdon Airport	37
10	Sale of Marston Hall and Marston Hall Farm	40

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Chapter 7 – The Garden of Memory

11	Dedication Service, July 17 th 1949	92
----	--	----

Chapter 8 – The Hospitals in Marston Green

12	Celebration of laying of the Foundation Stone	102
13	1997, Brooklands and The Maternity Hospital Sites	116

Index of Maps

No.	Title	Page
Chapter 1 – Introduction		
1	The Location of Marston Green	6
Chapter 2 – Marston Green – The Early Years		
2	The Land Holdings in 1839	17
3	19 th Century Road Layout	18
Chapter 4 – Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate		
4	Map of the West Midlands area	29
5	Properties for sale in Marston Green	31
6	The main Sale Lots in the Marston Green area	38

Index of Photographs

No.	Title	Page
Chapter 1 - Introduction		
1	The 1953 Coronation in White Road, Sparkbrook	2
2	Aerial view of Marston Hall	3
3	The Village Road Sign at Holly Lane	7
Chapter 2 – Marston Green – The Early Years		
4	Chapel House Farm, the site of the Golf Course	10
5	The Pond at Chapel House Farm	10
6	St Leonard’s Church consecrated in 1938	11
7	A View of the Wingfield Digby Chapel	12
8	The Chapel, beside the Gravel Pit	12
9	The Free Church – Pre 1963	15
10	The Free Church and the Hall – 1990’s	15
11	Oil Painting of “The Barracks”	16
Chapter 3 – Growth and Development		
12	The Level Crossing, seen from Elmdon Lane	20
13	Elmdon Airport 1939	21
14	Birmingham Airport Emergency Exit Gates	21
15	The Old Public Footpath to Bickenhill	22

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

16	The old Post Box at 109 Elmdon Lane	23
17	Lyndon Croft in the early 1970's	24
18	'Limited in – filling' in the early 1970's	25
19	Chelmsley Wood	26

Chapter 4 – Sale of the Wingfield Digby Estate

20	Lot 35 "Chapel House Farm"	34
21	Marston Hall	39

Chapter 5 - The Local Village Services

22	The Marston Green Tavern in Station Road – pre 1961	44
23	The replacement modern Tavern	44
24	The Tavern early in the 20 th Century	45
25	The Old Tavern	45
26	The Bowling Green at the Tavern	46
27	The Rose Pergola in the Tavern Grounds	46
28	The Tavern Tea Room	47
29	The Blacksmith	48
30	Wrenson's Stores	50
31	Flair DIY	50
32	Shops in Station Road in the 1950's	50
33	Jones Suburban Stores	50
34	1950's. The Village Centre	54
35	1950's. Holly Lane	54
36	Shops in the village centre of Marston Green	55
37	The Village Centre in the late 1990's	55
38	Station Road and Alcott Lane – 1990's	56
39	Early 1950's. Where has all the traffic gone?	56
40/40A	The Library and Clinic, built in the 1960's / Clinic Open Day	60

Chapter 6 – The Village School

41	The original School and School House	63
42	Miss Tart the teacher of an infant class	64
43	1921. School Teacher, Miss Tart, with children	64
44	Mr Clarence Bate	66
45	The School Staff circa 1960	66
46	Pre 1943. The old school	72
47	The ex – army wooden classrooms	73
48	Important announcements on Sports Day	74
49	Working together at Sports Day	74
50	Mrs Marshes class in 1959	78

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

51	Mr Cooper's class in 1960/61	79
52	Sports Day 1962	83
53	The original Infant Classrooms	84
54	Marston Green Junior School	85
55	Marston Green Infants School	86
Chapter 7 – The Garden of Memory		
56	The Gravel Pit in Station Road pre 1949	91
57	Garden of Remembrance in Station Road	93
58	Warwickshire Longhorns ready to show	95
59	Unveiling of The Village Clock. 1997	95
60	Inscription on the Village Clock	96
61	The clock dedicated to George Aston	97
62	The clock viewed from Station Road	97
Chapter 8 –The Hospitals in Marston Green		
63	The original Cottage Homes site in Coleshill Road	104
64	Enlarged shot of the Cottage Homes	104
65	The Foundation Stone	106
66	The Lodge	107
67	Community spirit at the Cottage Homes	109
68	The Church at the Children's Homes	110
69	The main drive running through the grounds	112
70	One of the many cottages at the Cottage Homes	113
71	The School at the Cottage Homes	114
72	The bulldozers clear the hospital site	117
73	The Brooklands site about to be developed	118
74	A few of the remaining buildings	119
75	The derelict site	119
76	The proposed Marston Green Park site	120
Chapter 9 – The Development of Transport Services		
77	Elmdon Airport. Circa 1960's	122
78	Building work at Birmingham International Airport	124
79	Maglev link and Airport construction	124
80	The signal box at Marston Green Station	129
81	The signal box and level crossing	129
82	Site of the level crossing an signal box	130
83	The station viewed from Holly Lane	130
84	The crash site viewed from the footbridge	132
85	Damaged track and platforms	133

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

Chapter 10 – Personal Tales

86	Ash Tree Cottage	139
87	Hall House	140
88	13 Elmdon Road with the workshop	140
89	Prospect Villas	141
90	Prospect Villas from the Church Car Park	141
91	Alcott Hall	143
92	Betty Hall in her Jubilee costume	144
93	Griffin's Garage in the 1920's	145
94	Path leading through Chelmsley Woods	146
95	Coleshill Road, Marston Green	146
96	Coronation Celebrations 1953	151
97	Coronation Games Medal	151
98	The Youth Jazz Band	153
99	Marston Green Flower Show, August 1958	155

Chapter 11 – Mrs Morley's Story

100	Station Road seen from Holly Lane	158
101	The corner of Alcott Lane and Station Road	159
102	The Cottage in Station Road	160
103	The Village Shops	161
104	The same site in the late 1990's	161
105	The Old Church and Ash Tree Cottage	162
106	The Garden of Memory	162
107	Station Road, throughout the Century	163
108	The level crossing and Station at Marston Green	164
109	The same view in the late 1990's	164
110	The Station Master's House	165
111	Elmdon Road, leading from the Village Centre	166
112	Elmdon Road, late 1990's	166
113	Cottages in Chelmsley Lane	167
114	The Smithy	167
115	The wooden bridge leading to Chelmsley Woods	168
116	Rose Lane	168
117	Cousin Jack	168

Chapter 12 – Where are they now?

118	Cottages in Malthouse Row	170
119	Chelmsley Lane	170

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

120	“The Church Rooms that nobody wanted”	171
121	Cottage in Chelmsley Lane, taken in 1955	171
122	5 Elmdon Road	172
123	The Cottage, Elmdon Road and Land Lane	172
124	Cottage in Station Road	173
125	The Old Police Station in Holly Lane	173
126	Bakery and General Stores in Land Lane	174
127	The same Cottage in 1998	174
128	The Old School	175
129	The Library and old people’s bungalows	175
130	Chapel House Farm	176
131	Early 1960’s at the Free Church	176
132	Houses in Lyndon Croft	177
133	Moorend Avenue at Chelmsley Lane	177
134	The Telephone Exchange and Garage	178
135	The Village continues to grow	178

Marston Green – A Warwickshire Village

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"Many a child was known to quake in fear if 'Gaffer Bate' heard of some misdemeanour outside of school hours!"

Dorothy Marsh

"I can remember as a very small child while staying with grandma at weekends and holidays, the friendliness and neighbourliness of the folk of Marston Green."

Ethel Morley

"On warm summer days I would walk with friends Peggy and Dora to the brook in the wood, to paddle and catch minnows."

Betty Dalman



"There was a terrific crash and I saw a wagon fly up into the air and crash against my (signal) box. The air was full of dirt, dust and debris."

Thomas Hubbocks

"There was great excitement when Tom Drakeley's Fair was set up in a field in Alcott and Chelmsley Lanes. I lived just 100 yards from the field and the noise and tunes on the Organ were very exciting."

Cyril Driscoll