



THE STORY OF OUR VILLAGE

Compiled by
STON EASTON W.I.

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STON EASTON is a pleasant village some 500 feet high on the uplands of the north-eastern slope of Mendip, lying on the main Bristol to Shepton Mallet highway some 13 miles south of Bristol, 14 miles south-west of Bath, 8 miles north-east of Wells and 7 miles north of Shepton Mallet. Its northern boundary is the parish of Farrington Gurney, and its southern the main Bath to Wells highway.

In early history the village was known as Easton or Estone, and was in all probability so named on account of its position east of the hundred town of Chewton. The word "Stone" was prefixed no doubt on account of the many strata of stone which abound here as in all the Mendip area. It is mentioned in Domesday Book as "Estone" and must have been a place of some importance before the Norman Conquest, for at that time William the Conqueror gave it to his favourite, Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances, and the Norman Survey records that "Azelin, holds of the Bishop, Estone ... there is a mill which renders thirty pence and 40 acres of meadow and 40 acres of pasture. It was, and is, worth seventy shillings." When the word "Stone" was prefixed the manor was known as Stone Easton, Stoneston and even Stonyeston. In the reign of Charles II it is written as Stony Easton with reference to a running of coal 2 miles south-east of the village, and it seems likely that there were owners of its own name, for the last Abbot of Keynsham was John Stoneston, probably a native of the village.

From early days until the time of Henry VIII there seem to have been two manors or hamlets, "Ston Easton Major and Ston Easton Minor, otherwise Hay Street or High Street, which latter place was formerly lands of Chaffin, then of Tooker, then of Mogg. They both now belong to the same possessor." Ston Easton Major was the property of Bartholomew Peyevyn, whose issue granted the manor to Robert, Prior of Brewton (Bruton). John Hippisley had the manor on a lease from the monastery of Brewton and renewed the lease to cover the life of his son. After the dissolution of the monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII he bought the manor from the Crown for £500 and it has remained in the family from that time.

The present owner of Ston Easton Park is Comdr. R. J. B. Hippisley, C.B.E, O.B.E.(Mil.), T.D., D.L., J.P., R.N.V.R.(retired). He succeeded his grandfather, Mr. John Hippisley, in 1898, his father, Mr. Ivan Hippisley, having died in 1885.

It must be remembered that until comparatively recent years the two manors or estates continued to exist, the main road roughly dividing them. A tablet in the south-west corner of the church commemorates a family of the name of Greenhill, who owned and lived at Ston Easton House. At a later date Squire Naish possessed it, having married into the Greenhill family. Some forty years ago a Mrs. Hooper, the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Naish, still owned a little property in the village, but Ston Easton House had been acquired by Mrs. Ivan Hippisley, who renamed it Clare Hall. Mrs. I. Hippisley was mother of Comdr. Hippisley of Ston Easton Park, and on her decease in 1923 it became part of the Ston Easton estate.

The oldest traces of civilisation are to be found near the north-west boundary of the parish. In 1941, when there was talk of an aerodrome being constructed on Chewton Plain, the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works excavated six barrows, three of them within the boundaries of this village. Skeletons of the Bronze Age were found, with Romano-British remains as well, showing that the original burial ground had been interfered with and used for burials of a later period. In one barrow a Roman coin was found of the time of Constantine I (A.D. 307-337) and a Roman tumulus lies at the northern entrance to the village. Relics from the excavations are to be seen in Taunton Museum.

Having written about the probable derivation of the name of our village and its early associations, let us now take a glance at the village itself with its winding main road well known to motorists of today, and its two by-roads, one diverging at a point called the "Rounder" in the centre of the village, and the other turning eastwards by the church towards Midsomer Norton. It is perhaps an unusual village for its size, for apart from the church on the main road and the residence of Comdr. Hippisley (Ston Easton Park) there are four other houses of consequence, once no doubt known as "gentlemen's houses", and called today Clare Hall, South Lawn, Midway House and Oddgest. After relating what one knows of Ston Easton Park, the Parish Church and the central point of the village, "The Rounder", we will take an imaginary stroll and call to

mind the history, changes and alterations remembered by old inhabitants or handed down by word of mouth.

Ston Easton Manor, or, as it is now known, Ston Easton Park, has undoubtedly been the most important place from early days. Perhaps it was in the early days of the nineteenth century, in the time of Sir John and Lady Hippisley, both well known in the political as well as the social world, that its prestige was greatest. One of the best written histories in recent years of "The Park" is no doubt that written by Bryan Little and published with illustrations in three consecutive numbers of *Country Life* (March 23rd and 30th, and April 6th, 1945), on reading which the late Queen Mary, then living at Badminton House during the Second World War, expressed a wish to see it and came in the summer of 1945.

On an early eighteenth-century map of the estate of John Hippisley Coxe (the sole heiress of a Hippisley had married a John Coxe of Wiltshire, and in later days a Mrs. Hippisley Coxe, a widow, married a distant cousin, Sir John Coxe Hippisley, who had been created a baronet for arranging a marriage between a member of our own royal family and the house of Wurtemberg, and so by this later marriage the family name of Hippisley was restored) the house is shown surrounded by small closures of land evidently named after their respective owners – e.g. Robins' closure, Dory's closure, Mogg's freehold, Mrs. Beaumont, Lord Waldegrave, etc. etc. These must all have been bought at various times to add to the estate and their boundaries removed to form the Park, which today has mostly wire fencing. This old map is interesting, too, as it shows the old road before the present main road (from the lower part of the village to Rush Hill) was made. This old road went through the present estate yard, over the bridge in front of the gardener's cottage which did not then exist, and across the fields to the top of Rush Hill where the stone stile stands today. The present road to Rush Hill is thought to have been made about 1760. Someone has traced it in pencil on the old map just mentioned.

While writing of Ston Easton Park it is interesting to record a few recollections which the older inhabitants have in connection with it. During the hard winter about 1882, when the village was snowed in, neither walls nor hedges being visible, the late Mr. Ivan Hippisley, father of Comdr. Hippisley, hired a wagon and horses from Manor Farm. The farmer and Mr. Jacob Gait went to Robbins' bakery at Chilcompton to get bread for the village – Robbins'

bakery being the only one in existence in the neighbourhood. In the late Squire's time the schoolchildren used to go to "The Park" for their annual treat, taking their own mug and plate. They used to enjoy themselves with pillow fights, swings, see-saws and races; and were given Sunday-school prizes and a large piece of cake on their plate. Until food rationing came in with World War One, there was always a dinner for the tenant farmers in the servants' hall on rent days, when roast and boiled beef, chicken, ham etc. and various sweets were in plentiful supply, as also churchwarden pipes. There was always a snow-plough available from "The Park" to clear the roads for traffic, and Mr. Ivan Hippisley had a horse-drawn fire engine remnants of which still exist. Then one can remember the searchlights of Comdr. Hippisley some 50 years ago and the "cups" of the private telephone lines between Ston Easton Park and Oddgest where Mr. Ivan Hippisley lived, and between Clare Hall and their gardener's cottage, all still evident today, showing the use of private telephones long before such things were in general use. Soup could always be had from "The Park" kitchen by anyone who cared to fetch it twice a week – 16 lb. of sticking beef being used each time – and a maternity bag was always available for any mother when a new baby was expected.

Mrs. Ivan Hippisley used to give the girls red cloaks with hoods bound with black braid, while Mrs. Naish at Oddgest, and later of Ston Easton House, used to give the older schoolchildren 2d. and an orange every year, and the younger ones 1d. and an orange.

Standing at the south-eastern end of Ston Easton Park and looking eastward, one looks down a valley where a small stream, the Nore, flows through Millmead, more commonly called today the water-meadow. Traces can still be seen of the miniature waterfalls over which the stream tumbles, and a millrace still exists, definitely proving the existence of a one-time mill. The stream forms a pond before leaving Millmead, and in this pond trout used to abound. To the right of the pond is a boathouse almost covered with shrubs, in which there used to be a small boat. Nearby is a ruin known as the "Old Dairy", which used to be Lady Hippisley's model dairy with land attached, the whole known as Dairy Farm. Here too was the laundry, but only a few bits of the old walls remain. Behind Millmead and these ruins is Terrace Wood, and behind the wood a solitary house now known as North Lawn. At the top of the wood was once a well-kept walk coming from the gardens and at the end a door, still

there, leading into the pastures towards Cliff Farm. A short distance from where this path leaves the gardens, on the left is a mound, and this is the ice-house of olden days which took the place of the modern refrigerator. Masonry can still be seen showing the entrance to this underground "frig.". In Millmead resided John Dory, who had a right of way past the Hippisley residence to his own abode, of which today there is no trace. This John Dory left a sum of money known as the Dory Charity 1760, vested in the vicar and churchwardens, for educational purposes. Another charity, known as the Pollexfen Charity, also exists, and was left to apprentice poor lads of the village to a trade.

And now to tell of the Parish Church. It is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and is evidently of ancient date, as shown by the Norman arch between the chancel and the nave and the huge girth of two yew trees in the churchyard. This arch was originally regarded as of Saxon origin with zigzag mouldings, but is today generally acknowledged to be of late Norman period. Little seems to be known about the church before its restoration by Mrs. Ivan Hippisley, 1890-1, except that it was in a very bad state of decay. Prior to the restoration, which was in the hands of Sir A. W. Blomfield, A.R.A., the church presented a very different appearance from that of today. The land immediately surrounding it was much higher – the mark of the original height may still be seen on the tower. The present outside stones were part of the old flooring of the church. Inside the door, to the left, one step down, was the old-fashioned family pew of the Naish family, then residing at Ston Easton House. Two steps down again was the main part of the church, with its stone floor and heating stove in the centre; it was the duty of the Squire's page-boy to stoke the fire each Sunday before the sermon. Then up two steps on the other side was the Hippisley family pew, and up a third step was the door. This North door still exists as the back door of a house at Stratton-on-the-Fosse. The vestry was beneath the belfry, which was approached by steps from the outside. Two steps down from the belfry was a gallery which was above the present back pews of the church. Music for the services was supplied by a flute played by the village schoolmaster. Later an American organ was carried between the school and the church as needed, until a new organ was given by Mrs. Ivan Hippisley in 1893. The choir-boys were paid *1d.* each per service. In the chancel, pre-restoration, the altar rails were of mahogany, and each side of the altar were the Ten Commandments, white lettering on a black background. Light oak was used at

the time of the restoration, and it is interesting to record that the late Mr. J. G. Elford could tell of the part he played in the task. As a lad he was loaned by the Ston Easton estate to the firm who had the contract, and he would tell that each stone of the Norman arch was numbered as it was taken down, and was told himself that he would be able to tell his children and his children's children that he had helped with this noble piece of work. When it was replaced the arch was as it had stood for centuries, with the exception of the addition of the two trefoil head squints, one on either side. During the restoration services were held at Clare Hall, the home of Mrs. Ivan Hippisley. For years the church was annexed to Chewton Mendip, being mentioned with Emborrow as chapels of ease, but in 1867 the living was declared a vicarage with Farrington Gurney annexed. The living is in the gift of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. The register dates back to 1572, and the first pages are quite illegible with the exception of a few dates – e.g. 1573, 1578.

When room for burial was getting short, Comdr. Hippisley gave an adjoining piece of land for extension to the churchyard, the deed of conveyance being dated June 1943.

In connection with the church one feels bound to mention Mr. and Mrs. A. Ham, who carried out for thirty years all duties connected with the church – sexton, churchyard, cleaning, surplices etc. – for the sum of £10 per annum, retiring in 1946. Mr. Ham succeeded his father-in-law, Mr. Roberts, as sexton and his daily work was that of village postman, in which connection he walked 18 miles per day.

The next point of interest is the Rounder in the centre of the village, where the by-road diverges to Worlbury Gate on Chewton Plain. An old elm tree once stood here, surrounded by a wall. When this wall was in a sad state of repair, no one knew to whom the piece of ground belonged on which the tree stood, Squire Hippisley or Squire Naish, so these two had a gentleman's agreement that when one of them died the survivor should have the plot. Thus it came into the Hippisley estate. And this spot is in all probability the scene of the introduction of Methodism to the village. Some preachers came to hold an open-air service and decided on this central spot. A Mrs. Miles, wife of William Miles, a lawyer, living at the house now known as Midway House, came into their orchard to laugh and jeer at the preachers but became very much impressed. The tombstone in the churchyard shows her decease in 1797,

and when her husband died in 1803 he left a sum of money to bring in an annuity of £40 for the benefit of the ministers of the circuit. This William Miles was clerk to the magistrates, for papers exist at Old Down Inn showing that he arranged for Petty Sessions to be held there. And in the lower end of the orchard mentioned the South Lawn of today was built, and the shed at the top of the garden, with a window looking towards Midway House, was the solicitor's office.

Midway House itself has had a variety of owners and tenants. It is known to have been a schoolmaster's home, a shop, the vicarage (a Rev. Leakey lived there and at that time the Hippisley family was paying £120 annually towards a curate's stipend), estate office, and for some years now a private house.

A somewhat amusing story in connection with Methodism is related. A certain old worthy named Jacob Gait, in his misplaced fervour, told his wife to put bricks in the oven and to have faith and they would become bread. Hence her nickname "Faith" Gait. He himself was nicknamed "Balaam" after the prophet in the Bible, because he used a donkey and cart for his daily tasks. Faith and Balaam Gait – two village worthies!!

The earliest record of a Methodist society in the village is in an old pulpit Bible with this inscription on the fly-leaf: "Ston Easton Wesleyan Society 1854." When the only support was one small family the services were discontinued. This would be about 1920.

And now to record items of lesser interest let us take the imaginary stroll through the village. Approaching it from the northern end, leaving the adjoining village of Farrington Gurney, one ascends Rush Hill, the place of highway robberies in olden days. On the left, halfway up, is "The Lodge", once an entrance of the private drive to Ston Easton Park, and now the approach to Cliff Farm. On the top corner is the stone stile where the original road turned to Ston Easton village. Continuing over the brow of the hill one gets the first glimpse of the stone walls of Mendip, locally known as "Roman walls". And halfway down the gently sloping road, with its rows of beech trees on the left hand side, was once a toll-gate, and one hears that Lady Hippisley, to avoid paying the toll, would drive across the fields to the main road further on, and that the late Squire, not being allowed to pay a lump sum of money for all his

vehicles passing through, had a gateway made each side of the toll-gate and so evaded the tax altogether.

At the entrance to the village on the left is the Roman tumulus, and on the eighteenth-century map mentioned before a road is shown here leading to the present North Lawn and the other houses which then existed there behind Terrace Wood. Also, on the other side of the present main road, what is now a trackway with a dead end was a roadway too.

Turning the bend we come to cottages on the right and the dairy of Home Farm, once a haybarn. This property, when sold by Mrs. Hooper, was called "Oldhills" after an adjoining field. Continuing, on the right is a gateway which could take us to the excavated barrows, and here too is the watershed of the River Nore, between Chewton Plain and this lower part of the village. The stream flows beneath the road and at least one cottage on the other side, and emerges to flow through the Park gardens and Millmead, and on to Welton, where it joins the Somer. On the left is the bend of the old road, and then, rising, the lodge at the present entrance to Ston Easton Park. Opposite this is the entrance to Clare Hall, once the home of the late Mrs. Ivan Hippisley, who had the front of the old stone house cased with bricks, and the back, on the road, made imitation Tudor. Owing to the decay of the woodwork, the period appearance has been done away with recently and now only colour wash gives one an idea of what its appearance used to be.

Passing on, still on the right-hand side is a row of cottages, the first of which used to be a small shop, the home of the late Mr. J. G. Elford. Almost opposite was the parish well. It still exists but the wall which originally surrounded it has been straightened so that the well now lies in Parish Wood. The last of the row of houses just mentioned borders on "The Rounder" and is the home of Mr. G. H. Gait. It is known to have been a blacksmith's shop, the floor level of the kitchen and its two windows supporting the fact. Mr. E. Robbins' father could remember it. Opposite is South Lawn, built by Mr. Henry Hippisley, uncle of Comdr. Hippisley, in 1874.

We will now wander up the by-road, known as Green Street leading to Worlbury Gate. Passing the upper entrance to Clare Hall and a high wall we come to a gateway where once on the right stood the parish pump. This gateway leads to the Red Room, and on the right of the approach are two

modern agricultural cottages. The Red Room, so called because of its one time red roof and now wholly red outside, lies behind a row of cottages, and behind the room is the modern playing field with its sandpit, swings, cricket pitch and tennis court. The room is the village hall and the property of Comdr. Hippisley, and is the scene of the social life of the parish. It was originally in a yard at the upper end of the village, and Comdr. Hippisley's sister, Miss Ivy Hippisley, held numerous dances and dancing classes there for the pleasure of the villagers. It was moved to its present position about 1908.

Passing the row of cottages mentioned, one sees now new council houses, a sign of modern times, and beyond these at the approach to Chick Lane lies an old cottage, a more modern one, and an old barn, now a ruin, which once had a tall chimney. This barn was built by Squire Naish for a sawmill, but it is also remembered that artificial manure was made there. The schoolchildren used to collect bones for Squire Naish and take them to the barn to be incinerated. In recent years agricultural machinery has been stored there during the winter months. Today it is just a ruin, and the chimney demolished. Just past the cottage was once a lime-kiln; signs of the quarrying are still evident and the second field up the lane on the right-hand side is still called Lime-kiln Field.

This has reached the western boundary of our village, so now we return to the Rounder and traverse the main road once more. Passing the two picturesque cottages on the corner and Midway House on the left, we come to Oddgest on the right, named after the adjoining field – “geste” being the Saxon word for meadow. This house has seen several changes within living memory, and it seems fairly certain that a Mogg once lived there (Mogg's freehold is marked on the early eighteenth-century map and the last of the initials on a house opposite is “M.”). Also a certain charity at Farrington Gurney left by a John Mogg of Ston Easton is administered today. One tenant of the house was Captain Rouse Boughton, one-time Master of the Mendip Hunt, who kept the hounds there for a season.

Right opposite is the village stores, once kept by a Mrs. Holbrook, great-aunt of the present occupier, Mr. D. J. Elford. When this good lady left the village the little old shop lay vacant for some time, until it was rebuilt in its present state and occupied by Mr. J. G. Elford who had previously kept the small shop in the cottage near Clare Hall. On the counter was always a place for the “poor bread” – poor relief in those days being one loaf of bread and half a crown per

week. Talking of bread, the majority of people made their own, but previous to the severe winter of about 1882, Robbins' bakery of Chilcompton was delivering bread to the shop at Ston Easton, from whence people could fetch it, and after 1900 a Mrs. Lewis of Chewton Mendip was bringing her home made bread in a three-wheeled perambulator to the village to be sold. An amusing tale is told of a Mrs. Clark who lived in the cottage near the barn. Being short of bread she had to bake on a Sunday, and is known to have exclaimed "Never again! Never again! When I took that bread out of the oven the devil was looking at me!" – this, of course, for committing the sin of making bread on the Sabbath!

The post office today is attached to the stores, and almost adjoining it is the business of J. Gait & Sons, carpenters, etc. The yard is still cobblestones, and the one-time Methodist chapel lay here in the upper room of an old cottage approached by outside stairs with a handrail. Adjoining this yard, too, was a cobbler's shop kept by a Mr. Roberts. The same family kept the off licence premises adjoining but facing the road, and an Edward Roberts was trumpeter in the North Somerset Yeomanry. All tenant farmers were expected to belong to the North Somerset Yeomanry, of which there was a Ston Easton Troop.

Making our way up the road towards the church, on the right-hand side we pass the village war memorial, on which is inscribed the names of those who sacrificed their lives in the two World Wars. We have written of the Parish Church still further to the left, and almost opposite to this today is a small modern house attached to an older one. Here was once the village post office before it was removed to its present position. Continuing our way upwards we come to two modern houses on the left, built on the foundations of old ones. In the old house where South Hayes, (Zootays) now stands, a family by the name of Roberts lived, and he, too, was a cobbler, and Louisa Roberts of the same address made Lady Hippisley's dresses.

In the corner of the paddock opposite, near the entrance to the yard where the Red Room originally stood, was placed a reading-room as a memorial to those who fell in the First World War. Its cost was about £108. But for lack of use the room was eventually sold to Mr. Mark James of Home Farm, who placed it in his yard for office use.

Beyond the two old cottages lay two shops kept by the Horler family. One was a butcher's shop, and over the other, a draper's store, was the inscription "Anne Horler, Court Dressmaker". Miss Horler used to buy her stock from a Manchester firm, and the value of each order had to be at least £100.

On the right-hand side a little further up lies the village school, built by Lady Hippisley in 1841, and it has only recently ceased to be private property. In 1952 Comdr. Hippisley gave it to the Church, the trustees being the Bath and Wells Diocesan Education Committee, and today it is known as the Ston Easton Voluntary Controlled Primary School. Previous to 1841 a small school was kept in Green Street where Mrs. Thayer now lives, in the last of the cottages in front of the Red Room. No trace of it exists today, for it was approached by an outside staircase.

The rules of the new school are interesting, and are still in existence. The heading and rules are:

RULES
FOR STON EASTON SCHOOL
1841

No Child to be received into the School under four years of age.

One Penny to be paid every Monday Morning to the Master or Mistress for a single child, and Twopence for two or more Brothers or Sisters. Those who do not bring the money for three weeks together, are not to be admitted till it be paid.

The Children to be at School every day from Nine to Twelve, and from Two to Five, except Saturday, which is a holiday.

The Children must go to, and return from School, in a quiet and orderly manner.

Each Child must appear at School with clean hands and face, and the hair and nails cut short, and the hair well combed.

No Child to be absent from School without leave of the Visitor, or the Master, or Mistress.

The Children must take great care of the Books, Slates, etc. or they will be required to pay for injuring them.

The School-Rooms are to be well dusted, and cleaned, every Saturday, and, whenever wanted, by two of the elder children in each School.

Each Child on leaving School must give a week's notice, or the weekly payment must be considered due from the parents of each child.

In the minutes of a school managers' meeting dated July 20th, 1904, it is recorded that "prizes were awarded to all children in the mixed school who had made 99% attendances and to all infants who had made 97% attendances and over", so the children of 50 years ago were expected to make regular attendances as today.

Almost adjoining the school are two houses, both in turn serving as the schoolhouse. The father of the late Mr. J. G. Elford once had a shop here, and the first house was once a tavern. In these days with only an "off-licence" house in the village itself, members and their friends go to the club attached to the Red Room, where there is also a skittle alley, or those wishing to go further afield take the bus to Old Down Inn.

The Upper Lodge, opposite a farm of the same name, was the other end of the one-time Hippisley private drive, and the old woman who lived there to open and close the gate received one shilling per week in Lady Hippisley's time. This private drive extended from the lodge in Rush Hill across the fields to Ston Easton Park and continued through fields again to the Upper Lodge. Traces of the latter part of the drive are still in evidence today and it is known as "the old coach road", as Sir John and Lady Hippisley used to drive along it with their coach and four. Women were hired to help keep it weeded.

Beyond Upper Lodge the main road continues for perhaps a mile until it reaches the Bath-Wells road. On the right of the bend was once a smithy and wheelwright, five or six men being employed, and on the left is a covered reservoir, the source of the private water supply of Ston Easton Park. It still serves also one or two houses in the lower part of the village. Having turned the corner one comes to Old Down Inn, once a well-known coaching inn on this main Bath-Wells road. The old inn was partially destroyed by fire in 1879,

and Mr. Ivan Hippisley's fire engine was sent to help extinguish it. An illustration of the old inn may be seen in the Bristol Art Gallery.

This southern boundary has been extended in recent years to include the cottages on the left of Lynch House Hill. The hamlet of Clapton was included in Ston Easton parish at the same time, but is still ecclesiastically attached to Midsomer Norton. Also included was a narrow strip of Binegar parish which lay between Ston Easton and Clapton, and this still belongs ecclesiastically to its original parish. Being a mile distant from our village Clapton seems to be a parish of itself, and has but little connection with us except representation on the Parish Council and School Management Committee.

And now we follow the second by-road eastward past the church towards Clapton and Midsomer Norton. Separated from the church only by its garden is Manor Farm, built some ninety years ago. The old farmhouse stood behind the present one – part of the old walls still stand as pig-sties today. Just beyond the farm cartshed was the village pound abutting on the road, and down the hill on the corner stands Hay Street Farm – the name is interesting as in the fourteenth-century Ston Easton Minor was “otherwise Hay Street or High Street”.

Close to the farmhouse is a stable on the outside of which is a cross which indicates that it was probably once a place of worship. The story told is that a farmer by the name of Beaumont once lived at the farm and went to Salisbury market to buy cattle, engaging a drover to bring them home. This man was a Roman Catholic, and the little church was built for the Beaumont family and the drover to worship in. This seems a likely story, for Father Ethelbert Horne of Downside once related that a certain vicar of Hinton Blewett, by the name of Brooks, married a Popish wife of the name of Beaumont, daughter of Mrs. Beaumont of Wells. In time the vicar himself became a Roman Catholic, and sold the advowson of Hinton Blewett. He was buried in the churchyard there about 1802, but there is no record on the tombstone of the burial of his wife, who was probably buried in the Beaumont vault at Ston Easton, where many of her family lie. Hence one may surmise that the Ston Easton Beaumonts were possibly Roman Catholics and that the origin mentioned of the place of worship may be correct.

Continuing, one sees the postman's cottage, where once stood two cottages, the demolished one known to have been a dame's school, and just beyond is the vicarage, built in 1895. To build it the stone was quarried locally, probably in what is now the vegetable garden. A Frome firm had the contract, and someone went down the well at the postman's cottage to find which was the best stratum of stone to quarry for building. George Comer, in after years a mason on the Ston Easton estate, was in charge of the masons building the house.

Further on past the vicarage a small lane leads off to the left, and a new house has just been erected where old cottages stood some forty years ago. Lower Hay Street Farm is just beyond, and nearby an ever-running spring of water from whence the farmers used to haul water for their cattle before the main supply was brought through in 1906. The lane descends to a valley through which the Nore winds its way, and here we find the sheepwash. To this spot farmers used to bring their flocks to be washed, and it is remembered that a Mr. Watts of Farrington Gurney and a Mr. Keen of Chewton Mendip also brought their flocks.

From the entrance to this lane the road winds on to Clapton, passing on the left Whitchurch Farm, a seventeenth-century house thought at one time to belong to the Friary of Charterhouse. There are ponds near the house which could well have been the fishing grounds of the monks, and the front door is heavy studded oak. This farm was originally in Binegar parish, being on the tongue of land which lay between Ston Easton and Clapton. And so on to Clapton, and we cease to recall past history and changes in "our village".

What is written gives some idea of what our village used to be. Some fifty years ago life revolved round the "big house". It was a peaceful secluded spot, and the tenants of the Squire and his lady were looked upon as their big family. Even in 1910 the villagers still dropped a curtsy to the gentry when they saw them, and to a stranger, newly come, life in this picturesque village seemed like a remnant of the feudal days. But today it is a very different tale. The main water supply of 1906 has done away with the parish pump and the parish well, electricity came in 1930, a public telephone service in due course and a bus service from Bristol to Shepton Mallet. A new bus shelter, commemorating the coronation of our present Queen, stands where the old elm tree once grew.

There is a playing field, Cricket Club, Tennis Club, Working Men's Club, branch of the British Legion, Guides and Brownies. The Women's Institute, organised in November 1924, still keeps alive the festive spirit of Christmastide by giving the small children of the village a party and old-time Christmas tree, and taking the older children to the pantomime. The recent social revolution and the introduction of modern amenities have completely changed this once secluded spot, but perhaps some day, if the village be bypassed for the benefit of modern traffic, it may regain a little of its old tranquillity.