



Under The Beer Tree

Memories of Thurlaston

by

Edna Mitchell

Foreword

This booklet has been compiled to raise money for the restoration of our village hall, which has served us well but is now a little decrepit. It was originally two army huts purchased in 1948, with money subscribed by the people of Thurlaston, and erected on land given by Miss Stanley, who lived at the Mill House. She was Sunday School teacher and organist; a memorial plaque to her is in the church, also one to Miss Sutton her aunt. The railings were given and the gates, suitably inscribed, bought and hung for the coronation in 1953.

Now follow a few facts and reminiscences about Thurlaston

Thurlaston in Warwickshire is situated on the edge of Dunsmore Heath, 350 ft. above sea level, and to the south there are delightful views. The ground is of gravel and sand, and the valley is all clay - which was so suitable for holding a reserve of water, named Draycote Water.

The field below the church known as Thornhill Field has or had a saline well, now overgrown, the water having the same mineral content as Leamington Spa water, and was used as a common well for the inhabitants of Thurlaston.

The village is of long standing, mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, then called TORLAVESTONE, the name probably originally Thorlaf's Tun. It is also one of the 25 parishes that contribute annually to Wroth Silver at Knightlow. At sunrise on November 11th an ancient levy is paid to The Lord of the Manor, his Grace the Duke of Buccleuch. Thurlaston's contribution is about 2½ old pence. One conjecture is that it was a medieval tax for keeping the roads of the day in repair, or for grazing rights on Dunsmore Heath. The few pence are thrown into the hollow base of an ancient cross, the total amounting to 9s.4d.. After this the party return to the Dun Cow Inn at Stretton-on-Dunsmore for breakfast, to smoke a clay pipe of shag and drink a toast with rum and milk. This custom is about 800 years old, and the entire ceremony is unofficial, private individuals coming forward to preserve tradition. For non-payment the fine is 20s. for every penny, or the forfeiture of a white bull with red ears and nose - a descendant of the original wild cattle of Britain.

Thurlaston passed from various owners including the Monks of Pipewell in Northamptonshire in the 13th century until 1538, who built a Grange here ("grange" meaning farm). This was confirmed by Richard of Thurlaston, reputed Lord of the Manor. Old records of 1315 state it was the home of John de la Bygging - built on a field named Stokeswell Furlong. No-one is sure of the site but signs rather point to the site on which stands Biggin Hall farm. There is part of an old moat in the orchard, and old vaults (now filled in) at the back of the farmhouse.

Four new houses have been built in the old moat field and their address appropriately is Moat Close. Large stones found in the brook nearby may have been part of a dam or mill, probably feeding water to the moat, which no doubt held fish at that time. The present owners of the moat restocked it, but unfortunately herons from the nearby reservoir have poached most of the fish. At one time the lane known as Biggin Hall Lane did not exist - the road ran from opposite Gray's Orchard to Biggin Hall and the so-called Green. Early maps show a road surrounding Gray's Orchard, and houses or sheds in the orchard. There was a way or Common Churchway leading from Thurlaston to Dunchurch across the fields from what we now know as The Gardens; this had to be no less than 8 ft. wide for the use of bearers at funerals - there being no churchyard at Thurlaston. At the beginning of this century no less than 20 thatched cottages were in the village, 7 on the top road, the A.45. Now there are only 2, and 2 more tinned over the thatch. Thatched cottages once stood sideways onto the footpath where now stands the last house before crossing the fields to Dunchurch. One housewife allowed the pot containing ham on the fire to boil dry and set alight. As one old man said, "It were a good thing it were a Sunday", the men being at home to put out the fire and save the thatch. I have never heard of any building burning down in the village; no doubt a close watch was kept on the thatch. A beam which once ran inside the house chimney in the Old Forge started to smoulder, but was promptly put safe.

When fire insurances for houses, farms, buildings, etc. were first introduced, plaques or metal discs representing the insuring society were fixed on the house wall of houses insured. A fire insurance disc can be seen on the front wall of Stanley's Farmhouse, the house next to Church Lane, and also on the house wall of Redgates down Church Lane. Before lights were installed in the village it could be very dark on winter nights. One man who did a little lay reading, returning home on very dark nights from some distant chapels and being of a nervous disposition, would sing hymns at the top of his voice. From as far away as the Coventry Road he could be heard approaching the village. No traffic sounds disturbed the quiet of the countryside. In 1931 electricity was brought into the village, and 7 street lights installed in 1952. The first public telephone in the village was placed openly on the wall inside the Post Office, a great inconvenience and an embarrassment to the user, conversation having to be conducted amidst shoppers. How rightly named a public telephone!

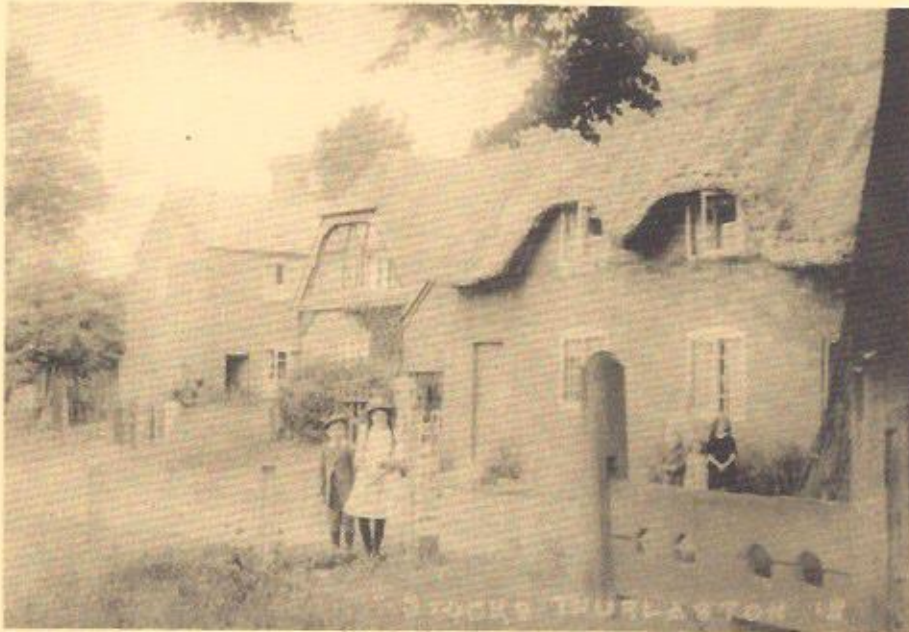
An Elizabethan house once stood near the end of our Main Street. Some years ago an old lady of ninety told me her uncle lived there and had a wonderful grape vine, the grapes of which the headmaster of Rugby School was very fond, sending his coachman for a supply, but failing the coachman she had to walk into Rugby with them and walk back home again. Grapes grow well in the village also walnut trees of which there are a few. The water table is high keeping the roots moist.

Mrs. Crofts' delightful cottage Pipewell is thought to be the oldest in Thurlaston. Old deeds stated this property belonged to a charity at Willoughby, who were expected to supply two men for the King's Army complete with uniforms. Part is 15th century, having cruck beams from ground to apex or ridge of the house, and some of the walls are of wattle and daub - which are lathes of hazel twigs, nailed and filled with daub, a kind of mud plaster, which is filled in between the lathes and spread over. There were a number of cob walls in the village. Cob walls are composed of mud, dung, hair, and straw was used to bind it together. The long brick wall behind the 'bus shelter and what is now the garden wall of the Old Forge were made entirely of cob, and there stood the cart shed of the blacksmiths. They had a coping of straw to keep the walls dry and wild bees used to burrow into the walls to lay their eggs.

An inner wall at The Malt House was found to be a cob wall when renovations were in progress and the wall taken down and one could see how it was constructed. Apparently 2 ft. high lengths of wall were built, allowed to dry and added. To demolish the wall, which could not be taken down as one would do with bricks, it was cut in large slabs like cutting cake.

An older church once stood in the village dedicated to St. Edmund as now. The site is unknown. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth I licence was given by Robert Stretton, Bishop of Coventry, to the inhabitants that they should have divine service for two years - but Lord Berkley's officers pulled it down. Here and there in the village one may find a dressed sandstone, believed to be part of the old church, as there is no local sandstone nearer than Bubbenhall or Kenilworth. The present church (used for baptisms but not marriages or funerals) was built around 1849 costing £1,000 and was paid for with public subscriptions, the site given by Lord John Scott. During weekdays the church was used as a day school and on Sundays for divine service. In the 1880's over 50 children attended the school. (There were larger families in those days.) The teacher lived in the house attached to the church until 1905 when the day school was closed.

For several years the village fete has been held on a delightful setting by the church; always looking so gay with its colourful stalls and garden umbrellas, with flags flying from the games area, its skittle alley on the church lawn, the beautiful flower arrangements in the church. Ice cream is on hand, and teas to be had in the village hall. This to the accompaniment of music played by the excellent junior members of the Dunchurch Silver Band. All this entails a great deal of work happily undertaken by the ladies of the village, not forgetting the gentlemen, to raise money on behalf of the church and village hall funds.



The stocks in Main Street were used into the 19th century and became very dilapidated, but were restored by my husband about 2 years ago - a "new" seat being made from old well seasoned oak, the original seat long ago ousted with the growth of tree trunk. Behind the stocks is Stocks Lane, at the end of which was a pond (since filled in when the motorway was built). It was believed to have had a ducking chair which was removed and placed in the Rugby Museum, but of which there is no trace.

Three communal pumps served most of the cottages, one in Pudding Bag, one on the corner of Church Lane, and one Stocks Lane. It was quite a way to carry water from Stocks Lane pump to Pudding Bag and Church Lane, whose pumps always seemed to be the first to go dry. Some shared a pump between cottages, but most farmers owned one. One farm had a 60 ft. well, and the wife of the farmer - after churning the butter - would suspend it in a basket down the well keeping it cool until such time as she was ready to take it to market. The mains water was brought to the village from Rugby about 1939, and all public wells condemned.

Before the motorway was built a straight lane led into the village (no bridge), and just where the motorway crosses a large shallow pond was used for watering the horses on their way home and to soak cart wheels making them firm in hot weather. This pond was known as the Town Pit.

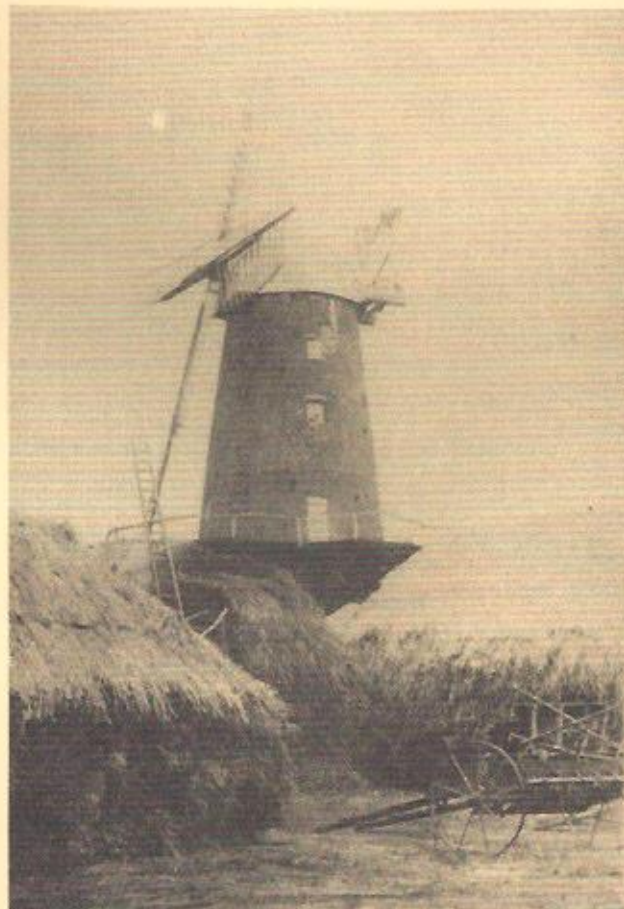
Before 1717 strips or "lands" as they were called were cultivated on the common land; there villagers were also allowed to gather wood off the common. You can see these ridges or lands near old villages. A good example is seen from the last house in the village Main Street. The tops of the ridges grew corn and the furrows hay. After the harvest was gathered, free grazing was allowed over the stubble. During the winter, only young stock and a few milking cows were kept. The remaining stock was driven on the hoof to large towns, there killed and salted down. This was necessary as hay was in short supply and there was no refrigeration. If you see an old road with very wide grass verges they were the roads mostly used, called "drift" roads, the cattle grazing on their journeying.

Most villages were self-contained relying on packmen to supply hardware and clothing etc.. Some of the villagers kept a pig and grew their own vegetables. Can you imagine anything nicer than boiled ham, fresh vegetables and parsley sauce followed by a boiled apple pudding or a fruit pie, all your own grown produce? Don't shudder at the number of calories, their work was not sedentary but hard manual labour. In the "Rugby Advertiser" of March 8th, 1913 mention is made of a bacon pig weighing about 35 score fed by my father-in-law of Biggin Hall farm, the animal excited great curiosity and was finally knocked down to a Rugby butcher for £16.15s.. This was thought to be a record price for a single pig in Rugby Market at that time.

In May flocks of sheep two or three hundred at a time were brought from the villages around to Biggin Hall farm for the annual sheep wash. The sheep wash is a walled pit alongside the footpath between Main Street and Biggin Hall Lane. This was flooded and from the moat the water showered onto the sheeps' backs. The sheep were picked up and thrown into the wash swimming out the other side. The man who did not release a sheep in time was just unlucky and went in along with the animal. The cost was sixpence a score for washing the sheep - the objective was for cleaner wool for which you were paid a higher price.

In the early 18th century (1717-1729) an enclosure act was passed; this was an act to enclose the common land cultivated by the villagers. Thurlaston was not a parliamentary inclosure in the strict sense. It was an agreement between the Duke of Montagu as Lord of the Manor, principal landowner and owner of the great tithes. The vicar of Dunchurch was entitled to the small tithes and other freeholders. (These tithes were redeemed in the 1950's.) This act caused great hardship to the villagers, having no land for corn or cattle they were forced either to work for the Lord of the Manor or to move to the towns to find work, and numbers took to tramping the roads. In its favour can be said that agriculture improved, hedges were planted dividing owners' property and larger areas were cultivated with improvement in husbandry.

To relieve the poor in Thurlaston, 43 acres of land were set aside and are still used, the land to be seen turning right out of Thurlaston, the first fields on the left past the cottages. These acres were let and rents and profits from the same were divided amongst the needy, usually in the form of coal at Christmas time. This was discontinued after 1939 when coal became so expensive and money was given instead. This charity known as The Poor Plots Charity still exists, but this scheme was revised in September 1970 following a review of charities in Warwickshire under the Charities Act, 1960. The object of the charity is to relieve persons resident in the Parish of Thurlaston who are in need, or hardship.



Thurlaston had its fair share of tradesmen. The miller ground the local farmers' corn in the 18th century windmill which had a gallery around it from which the sails could be folded. It worked with sails until 1910, afterwards changing to

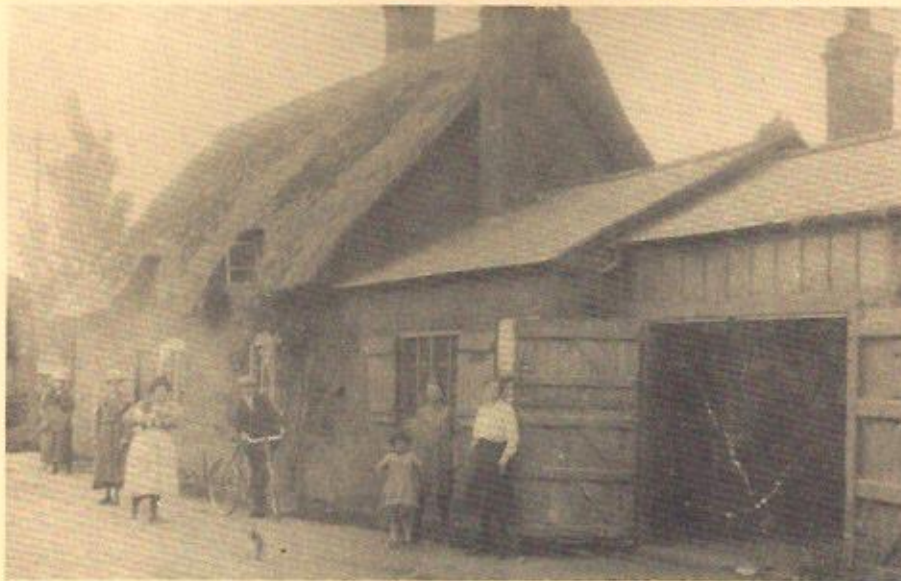
steam grinding. Flour was carted to Coventry (a day's journey there and back) and continued working until 1917, the sails being taken down in 1924. The bakery was also part of the miller's trade. His oven was approximately 10 ft. deep and 6 ft. wide, and heated with faggots (bundles of small twigs). At the back of the oven was a stone called the tell stone, which indicated when white hot that the oven was ready to receive the bread. Firstly the ash left from the burnt twigs was brushed out of the oven, and the loaves pushed in with long wooden "paddles". Oven heat at this temperature would cook two batches of bread. On Sundays the baker kept his oven heated, giving the villagers the opportunity to have their Sunday dinners cooked for a charge of 2 old pennies for the joint and 1 penny for cakes. During the first world war the bakery was converted into a private house. The sitting room in Mill House now stands where once was the bakery.

The last butcher was Mr. Burbage, who also sold milk. He lived in the first house past Pudding Bag Lane, and his shop is now the garage to the house.

The last house on the left of the village Main Street was built by Lady Scott (her husband's statue is in Dunchurch) as a sick or convalescent home for her staff, an excellent position for views.

The village inn, The Plough, is now a private house renamed Stocks House. This inn was closed by order of the Duke of Buccleuch in 1900, whose property it was and who owned most of the village. The reason given was excessive drinking and drunkenness. With beer at 2 pence per pint no doubt it was quite possible, and at that time it was a strong brew. Afterwards it became a temperance hotel and working men's club. During the first world war a number of Belgian refugees were housed at The Plough.

Several men from Thurlaston served in H.M. Forces in the 1914 and 1939 wars. A memorial tablet in the church records the names of the fallen.



Blacksmith's House

Travelling scissor grinders and tinkers who would mend your pots and pans visited the village, the blacksmith mending other domestic tools - broken spades and forks etc., anything needing iron repairs. The blacksmith's house is now the Old Forge, and the smithy end of the house has been converted into living quarters. As great care was taken to match the old bricks and thatch it has made a charming residence. In the early 1900's a Mr. Teddy Daniels was the local blacksmith, and the smithy was of interest to the village boys who saw the blacksmith working on iron gates, railings etc. and the shoeing of horses. They anxiously watched the smoke filtering through his beard when shoeing the horses for the day when it might be set alight - it never was. The cost to shoe a horse was one pound a set of four shoes, or five shillings each. The smithy closed down in 1928. The blacksmith's wife at that time sold Post Office stamps and postal orders. The post office then

moved to the farmhouse in Stocks Lane, coming back to the Malt House (when a shop) and now to the shop on the corner of Church Walk (or, as I like to think of it, Kiln Lane). Where the shop now stands there stood a Malt Kiln. (Every year in the hedge on the left of the lane hops can still be seen growing.) Part of the kiln drying floor, which consisted of perforated clay tiles, was found when digging to lay the foundations for the present shop.

That is why I think the old roads and lanes should retain their old names, giving a mental picture of what went before:-

Pipewell Cottage - Monks of Pipewell
Kiln Lane - Malt Kiln
Biggin Hall Lane - Biggin Hall
Gray's Orchard - once owner
Stocks Lane - the stocks
Patrick's Field - field rented by the baker for his horses
Pudding Bag Lane - very descriptive: you come out the same way as you entered, as in a bag
Church Lane - was Crow Lane before the present church was built.

A basket maker lived on the top road (A.45) and the little cottage is still there, the walls built of cob now rough cast over. His canes were cut from osier beds - one on the plot behind his house and osier beds near Biggin Hall, the willows growing 6 ft. in a year. These canes were soaked in a pit on the plot which can still be seen, soaking softened the canes making them more pliable for use. He also made potato skips and repaired cane furniture. A lace maker lived nearby. Lace was made on a cushion with bobbins; and a builder lived next door to the basket maker. All busy people in a row.

The grocer's shop was part of what is now the White Cottage, Main Street, and transferred later to The Plough. Many cottages have been enlarged, 2 or even 3 cottages bought and converted into one. The White Cottage just mentioned was composed of 2 cottages, one shop and a trap house. The Manor House, now so named after alterations, was the bailiff's house and dairy for Biggin Hall.

It may be of interest to note the difference in prices of houses now and in the 1920's. Biggin House (an 8 bed roomed house, built for my father-in-law in which to retire) cost £2,450. The present smaller new houses in the village cost over £40,000.

There were two Marl Pits. Marl is a limy clay of manural value. They were dug out yearly and spread on the light soil to give it body. One pit was filled in and is now under the M.45, while the other pit at the end of the village on Mr.Hossack's ground was for a time used for the village refuse; no dustmen came to the village and all rubbish was taken to the pit.

A carrier left the village twice a week for Rugby and once weekly to Coventry. At the beginning of the century a horse and cart was used by the carrier, changing to a motor vehicle during the 1920's. This was a truck covered with a canvas hood, with two wooden forms one each side of the truck seating about 8 to 10 people. Eventually a motor coach took over, and gave excellent service until the Midland Red 'Bus Company bought them out. Few people left the village to go shopping or visiting unless, like the farmers, you owned a horse and trap or possessed a bicycle or travelled in with the carrier. Your shopping list could be safely handed to the carrier who would purchase your goods for you and charge you for the service. A certain farmer in the village whose farm lay across the fields would come home from market having had a good day with convivial company, would fall asleep on the way home, and the horse - knowing the way - would bring him safely back having carefully negotiated all the gateways, the farmer deliberately leaving all gates open on the outward journey. People in villages, never moving far from home, seemed to have their own accent, folks in Thurlaston declaring they knew from which village a stranger had come, Bourton, Broadwell or from thereabouts, each village having its own pronunciation.



May Queen

Village life in Thurlaston has completely changed: almost all the farmland was taken for the reservoir, and old customs have gone. The village had its own May Queen who was wheeled around the village in a flower bedecked pushchair, with her attendants, after which a splendid tea was provided by the ladies of the village. In the winter sparrow catchers came around at night bringing with them a lantern and a large net between two poles. The net was stretched over ivy covered walls, and the ivy beaten with long sticks. The roosting sparrows, dazzled by the lantern, flew out into the net which was then folded up and the sparrows caught. These were then made into sparrow pie. It would be a very small pie nowadays so few houses are ivy covered. The idea was to reduce the number of sparrows, who were a plague on the corn crops. As of old carol singers, children of the village and Sunday school, entertain us each Christmas with Christmas hymns, delightfully sung and the Waits (The Dunchurch Silver Band) give us splendid renderings of carols. Some years ago hand bell ringers also came.

It was interesting to note the type of prizes given to the winners of races held during the coronation celebrations of 1911. For the men - spades, forks, saws, hammers, etc.. For the women - basins or linen, the calico having been used previously to cover the tables at the sit down meal, and run for afterwards. What a meal! This is the list of food provided for the dinner.

80 lbs. of Salt Beef	30 lbs. Roast Beef
4 Legs Mutton (Large)	2 cwts. of New Potatoes
2 Hams (20 lb. each) Home Cured	50 lbs. of Boiled Plum Puddings
10 lb. Good Cheddar Cheese	5 lbs. Leicester Cheese
55 Small Loaves from Patrick's Bakery, Baker to roast the meat.	
Fruit Tarts, Blancmanges, etc.	12 Bottles Mixed Pickles
30 galls. of Ale - Note: one shilling per gallon (5 p.).	
12 doz. Mixed Mineral Waters	

18 galls. of Extra Beer, given by Mr. Claud Mitchell of Mitchells and Butlers, who lived at Thurlaston Grange.

Also ordered were 100 coronation mugs at 5s.6d. per doz..

In 1917 the Duke of Buccleuch sold part of his estate, to which most of Thurlaston belonged, and afterwards great confusion was caused to visitors, tradesmen and any new postman. The lot number of each cottage in the sale was stamped on a metal disc and nailed on the door. They remained for years afterwards, but were not consecutive, so that 200 may be next to a far lower number.

The Blue Boar area as you may know is on the boundary of Thurlaston Parish where seven parish boundaries meet - Church Lawford, Stretton, Bourton, Cawston, Wolston, Dunchurch and Thurlaston. This area on old maps is marked as The Meer. Guy Earl of Warwick is traditionally said to have slain the Blue Boar, a terror of the district, on the outskirts of the village. He is also supposed to have

slain the Dun Cow on Dunsmore Heath. What a brave man he must have been.

At times the North Warwickshire hunt used to meet in the village in the winter; it was a most colourful sight, but ceased to come when the motorway and reservoir were built, the motorway being too close for the dogs who may have run onto it, and the reservoir covering most of the land and fox covers.

My Valley

(Now called Draycote Water)

A valley I once did know
luscious green or white with snow,
as a child I played for hours
in meadows bright with birds and flowers.

Men of the soil came and went
their heavy toil now is spent,
Nature blossomed in unspoilt grace
in what was once a covertly place.

Oh memories memories I have my fill
of fields twixt Thurlaston and
Hensborough Hill,
early mornings with hay to mow
soft brown earth where corn did grow.

Alas alas it all has gone
for now there water lies upon,
little men decisions make
with stroke of pen the land did take.

Cart horse in it's heavy toil
dust from hooves in dry parched soil,
creaking wheels and harness rattled
scene where man and nature battled.

Bulldozers came, with trees did battle
the valley echoed it's death rattle,
barns and hedges all did go
and soon water started to flow.

Walked 'neath trees that stood so high
with leafy limbs that kissed the sky,
grassy lanes with shade and sun
old sheep trail and rabbit run.

Childhood memories in old heads die
as boats now go sailing by,
beneath those waters deep
sleep my valley sleep.

Foxes cover named Lester's Piece
Rabbit and Badger burrowed 'neath,
Boy and dog with endless days
watched butterflies dance in shimmering haze.

John Mitchell, 1967.

Lester's Piece (mentioned in the preceding poem written by my son) was a spinney of 8 acres, a good cover for rare birds to nest. Nightingales could be heard singing there. It was planted with oak and blackthorn, the latter becoming so thick that every 20 years half was cut out and cleared. In the spring large areas were covered with wild violets. This spinney provided a cover for foxes, and an artificial earth was built for them. Incidentally a double hedge and double ditch marked the parish boundary behind the spinney. One day quietly approaching a large foxhole alongside the spinney we came upon four to five fox cubs the size of little puppies, out of the hole playing around as puppies do. The next day they were gone, the vixen scenting us had carried them a field away. There were plenty of rabbits and vermin for them as food, before the rabbits died of myxomatosis. Now they raid any yard or field where hens are kept. Several people have lost fowl this year, myself included. Now the spinney and fields are under water, the fox breeds nearer to the village. Although I believe rabbits are increasing in numbers, having built up a resistance to the disease, let us hope the fox will prefer rabbit to chickens. One day our sealyham dog went down a fox hole and came out covered in ticks (blood sucking lice). It took us hours to get him clean again.

Before electricity was brought to the village there could be seen and heard on hot summer evenings flights of swifts swooping and shrieking along the street. After electricity was installed with overhead wires the swifts seemed to depart, no doubt the wires were a hazard when flying, but now the wires are placed underground the swifts are returning, and the appearance of the village is much improved. The reservoir has attracted many birds we rarely saw beforehand - gulls, swans, wild geese and wild ducks, herons we would sometimes see in the field ponds. The bullfinch we see more often, it is a handsome bird but very destructive in the spring when food is scarce, nipping off the buds from fruit trees and ornamental shrubs. Sparrows are also very destructive, they pull off the crocus flowers and strip the wisteria, not forgetting the pigeons on the vegetable garden.



Main Street, 1917.

A friend in the village who keeps geese told me of a wild goose who spends the summer along with her tame geese, has done so for 2 or 3 years - most unusual. There are several keepers of bees, to whom a hurried 'phone call is made from any recipients of swarms of bees in their trees or shrubs.

Near the village end of Biggin Hall Lane stood a huge elm tree. Before the last war, under the tree on Sunday mornings, a group of men, mostly from Draycote and a few from Thurlaston, would congregate. The outdoor beer licenced shop in the village opened from 12 noon to 2 p.m. and there they would sit gossiping and drinking the draught beer from old quart bottles, which went back again and again to the shop for a refill, with a final refill to carry back home to Draycote. What time they would arrive home for their Sunday dinners I would not know. When local people spoke of the beer tree, it was well known. Unfortunately in 1978 gale force winds blew the old tree down. We miss it as a landmark, but I like to think it was brought down by the elements it had withstood for so many years and not killed by disease caused by a wretched beetle. A number of elm trees around the village have died with Dutch elm disease leaving the countryside looking bare. Now young trees of different species have been planted in their place so once again we should have shady lanes. The elm tree behind the stocks was replaced with an oak tree, which is growing quite well, not that we need shade for any delinquents in the stocks, where no doubt a leafy tree was welcome shade for wrongdoers placed and locked in the stocks years ago.

In 1740 the right noble John Duke of Montagu was also known as John the Planter. He became a great planter of trees, planting a six mile avenue of trees from Stretton to Dunchurch and beyond. Pine trees were planted from Dunchurch to the Blue Boar part of which is in Thurlaston parish, continuing with an avenue of elms to Stretton (the A.45). The avenue of elm trees was there when King George V reviewed the 29th division of the Seaforth Highlanders and other regiments on March 12th, 1915 before they embarked to Gallipoli. A monument was erected on the site and can be seen on the A.45 near Stretton. While waiting for the King to detrain at Dunchurch Station his charger on which he reviewed the troops was taken to Bagshaws Barn to drink from a freshwater spring. The barn lay back from the road opposite Dunchurch Station, belonging at that time to Biggin Hall farm. The barn was sold eventually to a bacon curing factory, followed by a milk factory, again taken over by a 'bus repair depot and at present belongs to Parkside Garages. This and The Laughing Dog biscuit factory are the only two industries in the parish.

In the 1800's the branch line of the railway was built nearer Thurlaston than Dunchurch, Lord John Scott objecting to the railway being near to Dunchurch. It ran from Rugby to Leamington. The passenger line was discontinued during the Beecham

railway closures. When the line was under construction between Dunchurch Station and Draycote fields, the workmen came upon running sand; the sand ran out so fast it left a large hole. The hole is still there, called Brandy Hole, the name given when the workmen finally stayed the flow of sand, and all were rewarded with a tot of brandy. The last field on the right when leaving the village and joining the A.45 is called Townsend. Thurlaston being thought of as a town, the name Townside is given to the field below Gray's Orchard. I should imagine the largest number of houses were that end of the village. Now there are only two farms left and no farm workers. At one time mostly farm workers occupied the cottages, others were occupied by workers on the railway and around 1904 by factory workers in Rugby. About 9 cottages were tied cottages. I suppose you could call a farm a small industry. My husband remembers 7 men working for his father and 2 women in the house. The women also gave help in the fields, hoeing, potato planting and picking. Strips or lengths in the field were measured off and a peg placed to mark the length. The worker was paid according to the number of rows worked. There were some very skilled hedge cutters, a hedge cut and laid by them was a joy to behold. One hedge cutter had been working away for sometime, and on his return he brought back with him a wife. When seeing a bachelor friend of his he said - "When I gus agin, I'll bring un back for ya" - to which his friend replied, "If hers anything like yourn ya needn't bother" (old village dialect). Another interest to the men and boys was the arrival in the village of two huge steam traction engines, now only seen at traction engine rallies. These were hired and stood one each side of a field, a steel cable working a 5 or 6 furrow plough, or implement across the field, the implement was reversible, therefore could work back again. How cumbersome when one thinks of the present day tractor, but no doubt a very advanced idea, from a man, a horse, and a two furrow plough.

Now no more do wagons loaded with sheaves of wheat or later (after the introduction of combine harvesters) loaded with grain, or the hay cart piled high, go through the village, leaving wisps of hay on the grass verges, all smelling so sweet. I enjoy the poem by Matthew Arnold (son of Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby School) so like a summer's evening after a day of hay making. Maybe you will too:-

The evening comes, the fields are still,	And from the elder-blossoms white
The tinkle of the thirsty rill	And pale dog-roses in the hedge,
Unheard all day ascends again;	And from the mint plant in the sedge,
Deserted is the half-mown plain,	In puffs of balm the night-air blows
Silent the swathes! the ringing wain:	The perfume which the day fore-goes.
The mower's cry, the dogs alarms,	And on the pure horizon far,
All housed within the sleeping farms!	See, pulsing with the first born star,
The business of the day is done,	The liquid sky above the hill!
The last-left hay-maker is gone.	The evening comes, the fields are still.
And from the thyme upon the height,	

At one time only two parties sat in Parliament, the Conservatives and the Liberals. Thurlaston was very Conservative and Dunchurch mostly Liberals. It seems on the eve of one election men from Dunchurch came to Thurlaston and called out some of the men. A few had already gone to bed. Then battle commenced around the stocks, blood flowing freely. Dunchurch must have been hard pressed for they committed the unforgivable sin of pulling up for weapons the bean sticks from the garden of Rose Cottage, belonging to a Mr. Hedgecock. I suppose satisfaction was had by all, for the next morning the waggoner from the farm took off his cap seeming quite happy proudly to display a large dent in his head caused by the corner of a brick.

The River Leam is the boundary on the southside of the parish, Thurlaston Bridge spanning the Leam between Thurlaston and Kites Hardwick. This bridge replaces one which was destroyed during the Civil War in 1642 for the safety of the county. In 1648 the county had to pay £16 for its repair. Twenty-four people of the 274 on the Register of Electors for Thurlaston February 1979 live that side of the reservoir. The only recreational areas are the Draycote Sailing Club and the Country Park. Incidentally Draycote Water is mostly in Thurlaston parish.

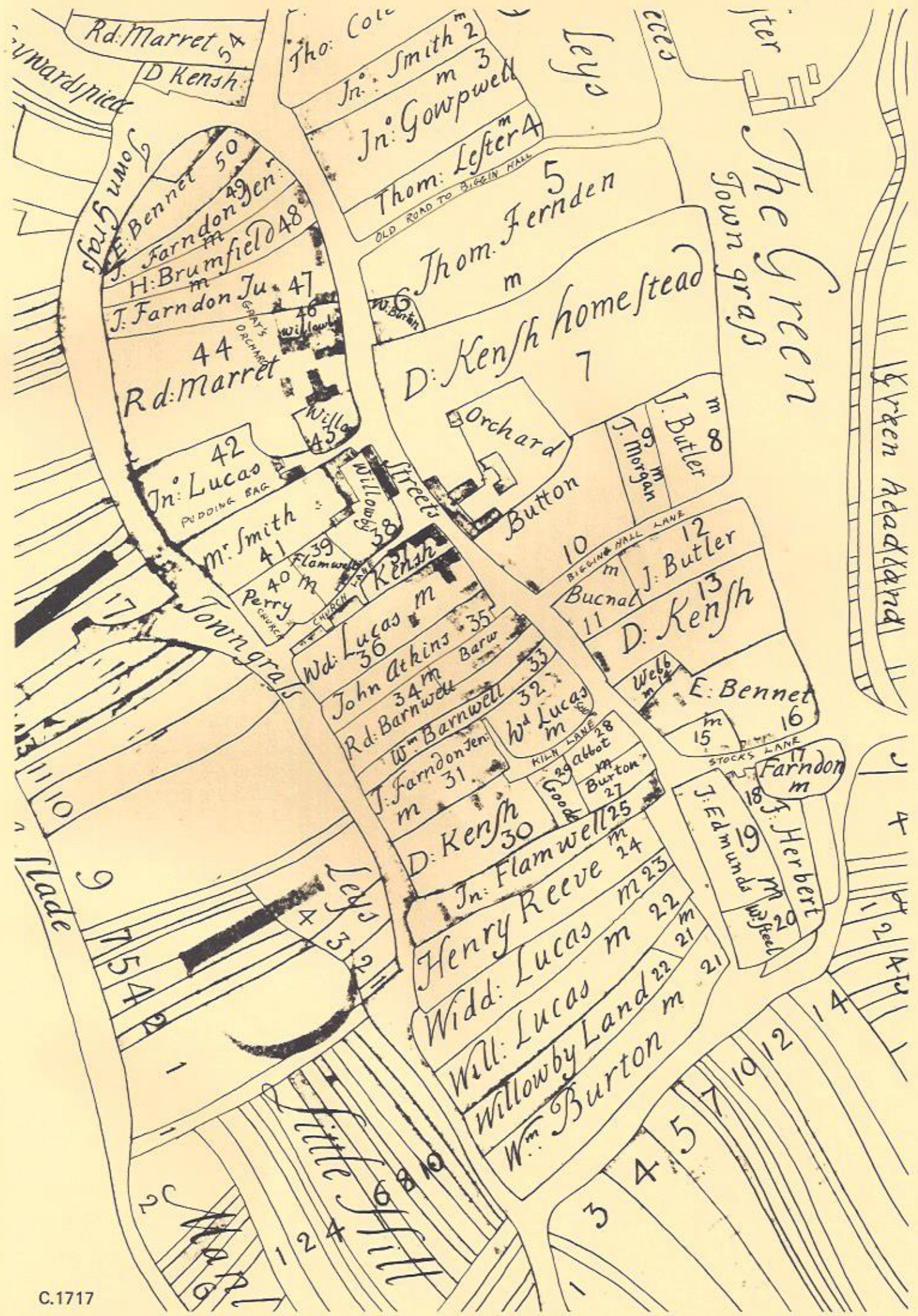
We have lost our grass verges to the bridge, our lovely walks in the countryside were lost to the motorway and reservoir (around which we are not allowed to walk, despite the fact that each night hundreds of thousands of seagulls fly back from the towns' rubbish tips, where they have been feeding all day, to roost on the water). A stretch of water does not change with the seasons as the countryside changes. We have lost out with one exception, the people of Thurlaston, many of whom are newcomers, are happy to live here and to take an interest in the old village. To belong.

The Manor of Knightlow

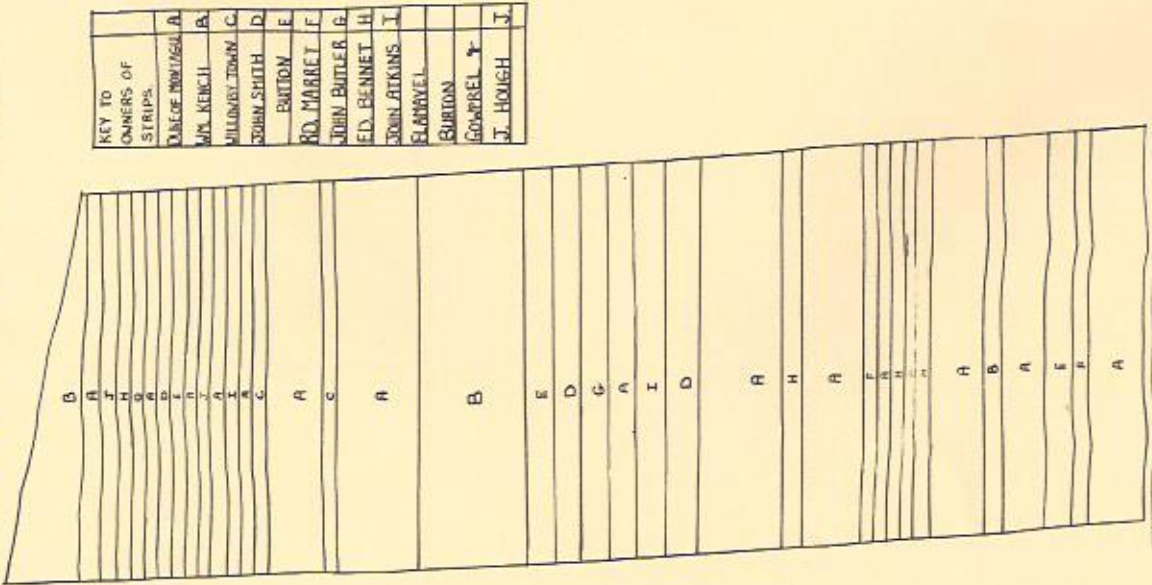
Charles I in 1629 gave the lordship of Knightlow to Sir Francis Leigh, whose granddaughter Elizabeth married her second husband Ralph Montagu, created Duke in 1707. He was succeeded by his son John - John the Planter (already mentioned in the booklet) who died in 1749 and his younger daughter Mary inherited his estates. In 1766 the dukedom was revived for her husband George Brudenell, 4th Earl of Cardigan upon whose death the estates went to his daughter, yet another Elizabeth. She married Henry Scott, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch and 5th Duke of Queensbury, and on her death in 1827 her Warwickshire estates and the lordship of the Manor of Knightlow devolved upon her grandson, Lord John Scott (he of the Dunchurch statue), the 3rd son of the Duke of Buccleuch. He married Alicia Ann Spottiswoode from Berwickshire. She composed the air to "Annie Laurie" published in 1839, and also attributed to her is the tune of "The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond". The lordship of the Manor of Knightlow still rests with the Duke of Buccleuch.

Biography

Edna Mitchell was born in Worcester and first came to Thurlaston in the mid-twenties. There she met her husband Bob Mitchell of Biggin House. Though of Scottish parentage he was born and lived at Biggin Hall farm until his father retired. After the last war and some years away from the district, they returned to the village where they are still living. (June 1979)



LAND IN 1717 UNDER STRIP SYSTEM BEFORE ENCLOSURE POORS PLOT THURLASTON LAND AFTER ENCLOSURE 'AS AT PRESENT TIME 1919



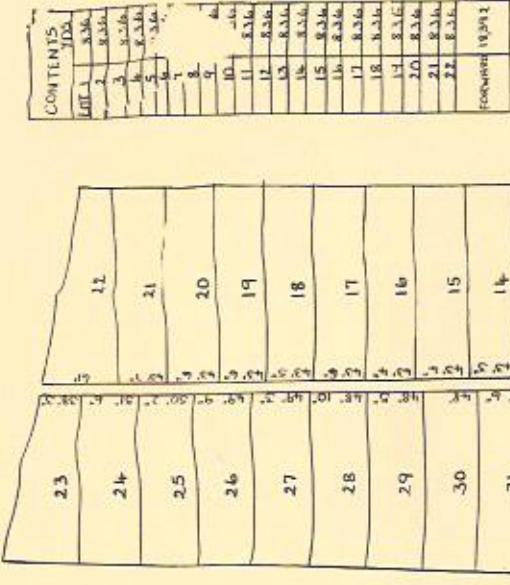
In the people of Thurlaston like the majority of village folk in England farmed their land as their fathers had done for the last 600 years. Under this old system each man held certain strips of arable land in the village fields, had grazing rights in the meadowland, enjoyed the right of estovers, i.e. to take wood for implements and fuel, the right of turbary or cutting turf and of clearing.

The 18th century brought many changes greatly affecting the lives of the countryfolk. Landowners were beginning to regard farming as a business, undertaking new methods & machinery, rotation of crops & improvements in stock were being introduced and could only be obtained by revolutionising the whole farming system. The old strip system was doomed. This change resulted in the substitution of large enclosed farms for the system of strips, the disappearance of the small farmer who was unable to meet the heavy cost of enclosure and appalling distress in rural areas. The people dispossessed of their lands & ancient rights were at once reduced to the state of landless labourers, without the means to supplement their low wages or any incentive to work. In a few cases something was done to help those most affected by the change. In Thurlaston when the land was enclosed in 1728 a plot of 43 acres was set aside as follows:-

Poor's Plot, that a plot containing 1/3 acres, laid out for the poor and all lishes and lenthis issuing therout and all rents and profits of each plot, shall be employed and disposed of to the poorest inhabitants of the town of Thurlaston as the Churchwardens, and Overseers of the Poor shall think proper & fit, for providing fuel in winter for the said Poor, and the said poor inhabitants are to have free liberty to cut bushes from the said plot as often as they have occasion for the same. Abstract of the award of Thurlaston 1728

This land, Poor's Plot, remains today and the money obtained from the rent is paid to the people of Thurlaston once a year at Christmas-time. Happily there is no real poverty in the village today and all persons who have resided in the village for three or more years are eligible for this charity. Approximately £55 is paid annually.

Thurlaston in 1729. 1716 acres in village.
 1304-a. Duke of Montagu 1/30 Poor's Plot.
 1049 Willonby Charity 8/4 Church Land.
 90a Chris. Harvey Esq. 10/6 Various Owners



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FROM COVENTRY TO DUNCHURCH ROAD AFT.

SCALE 60 FT. TO 1 INCH

OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND IN THE VILLAGE OF THURLASTON WARWICKSHIRE

