

To the more recent comers to Kingsland and those who have made their homes here over the past twenty or so years, Kingsland is a quiet, serenly beautiful village with a wealth of black and white timbered houses lying in the fertile valley of the Rivers Lugg and Pinsley. A village of lovely walks and tree-lined rivers, a school through whose doors many of the older parishioners got their only education; a grounding in the three R's and a love and respect for the land on which their lives depended and care and concern for their fellow men and women who have always made this a most happy, pleasant place in which to live.

But now, I would like to think back to the past; no - not back to the time when William the Conqueror compiled the first census of England, the Domesday Book - for Kingsland does feature therein - but to the recent past, the last 60 years, to the village I remember as a child. Forty years of work in London and Berkshire has not dimmed my memory of the almost self-sufficient village of the early 1920's. Kingsland then was a lively bustling village, many children walked along its roads from Aston, Shirlheath, Cobnash and Mortimer's Cross to the school where Mr Nock, the headmaster, kept a bright and interesting community of which he and the village were justly proud.

The Church with its square tower dominated the village, and attending the services were the main Sunday activities for our family. My Father was in the Choir, and as children we walked to the Baptist Chapel on Sunday mornings, went to Church Sunday School at 3.00 pm, and again to Church with the family in the evening. What else was there to do?

Here you could meet other families after church, go for a walk, have a chat, and if you were a lad you could even make a date after Church. Many a budding romance began on these hallowed grounds.

The local doctor was Dr Robert Williams, then at the Croase House, and later followed by the Vaughan family at Red House.

I have already mentioned that this was an almost self-supporting village, and in the next issue I will try and show how many crafts and amenities flourished here.

## Part Two

The men were well catered for in Kingsland. Four public houses were there, so that folk from all different sides of the village had a "local". Beginning at the bottom of the village, the 'Red Lion' was nearest for Cobnash and Cholstry, then the 'Angel', the oldest pub in the village, which belonged to my Grandmother, though she never lived there, and then the 'Corners Inn'. These two houses were as popular then as they are today, but whereas the ownership of the 'Angel' has changed over the years the 'Corners Inn' is still in the same family that I remember as a child. Going further along the road towards Mortimer's Cross was the 'Monument', another pub with a long and interesting history.

There were very active sporting activities for the men at this time. Kingsland had an extremely energetic and successful football team, which was known and respected over a very large area. The cricket team was equally good and there was also a Tennis Club for men and women and an active Men's Social Club near Croft Mead.

The women, however, had fewer activities. No "nice" woman would dream of going into public houses, and indeed had they been bold enough to do so some landlords would not have served them. There was a thriving WI, whose meetings were held in the side room at The Bell, and, as I remember, too much hard work at home did not allow for spare time and going out. In the winter Whist Drives offered a diversion, as did the dances held on the upper floor of the red brick barn at the Croase, but little else was available for women and girls.

To put this into perspective you must remember that we, along with most of the houses in Kingsland, had no indoor sanitation, no electricity, so that the week was divided into days to which were allocated different jobs, and no matter what happened these activities never changed.

Thus Monday was washing day. I can still remember lighting the fire beneath the huge iron copper in the corner of the kitchen and the smell of soap suds and boiling sheets and towels and the all pervading steam that billowed from the kitchen door. The job of ladling out all the water afterwards, scrubbing the brick floor and carrying all the buckets of water into the garden seemed endless. This was a full day's work, lasting well into the

afternoon and when that was finished there was not too much energy for fun and games.

Tuesday was baking day, Wednesday was for churning and butter making, Thursday - bedroom cleaning and Friday was the highlight of the week - Market Day. On that day only, a special bus service came up over the Lugg Bridge, round Aston and Eyton into Leominster, picking up the farmers' wives with their large, heavy baskets laden with butter, eggs and poultry and taking them to the market. The fare was 6d each way (2½p in today's money). Kingsland then had three bus services going through the village, to Kington, Leominster and Hereford: there was Bengry's Primrose buses, Yeomans and also the Midland Red, so there were quite a few buses to connect the villages and towns; so essential in the days before the car became commonplace.

But Kingsland had its own shops and crafts. The big store was Brindley's, next to the school and now the Nursing Home.

Then, wide stone steps took you into the shop and adjacent to it was the Bakery where bread, cakes and pastries were cooked and the smell of hot fresh bread drifted in the shop to mingle with the hosts of other smells that even now take me back to my childhood. On the shelves were square green tins with a smaller opening on top covered by a lid, holding tea. Cheese on marble slabs, butter, bacon - real and not enclosed in plastic, sugar in sacks, with a pile of blue sugar-paper beside the highly polished scales, which were deftly turned into neat blue bags to hold white or demerara sugar. The biscuits lay temptingly before the counter, each kind in its own tin box having glass-windowed lids and from which you could choose your own assortment - to be weighed and bagged up for you. Tobacco, loose and in packets, and twists, were there together with myriads of different sweets, humbugs, mints, sugar-mice - white and pink - liquorice and many other delights to tempt the pennies from young fingers. There were cottons, mending wool on the card or in skeins, needles, scissors, thimbles, nearly everything you wanted for home repairing of clothes. I don't think there were many vegetables then as every house had its garden and most folk reckoned to grow enough to provide the basics all the year round. Fresh in season, of course, then bottled, salted, jammed, jellied or pickled in all its forms, to help out the long winter gloom and cold.

### Part Three

There was another sweet shop too, Mary Ann Chapman had that in the little cottage next to the Angel Inn. This shop also opened on Sunday afternoon, specially, I think, for the hordes of children who crowded the door just before three o'clock and clambered into the tiny room to spend their Sunday penny. There were endless different highly-coloured sweets, liquorice all sorts, yards of liquorice string and tape, sherbert packets, toffees, etc., all temptingly displayed; and how we haggled over the various goodies, deciding which we would take with us on our walk to Sunday School just a little way across the road.

There we sat in our "Sunday best" clothes, trying to nibble the sugar mouse or suck a sweet and hoping that the Rev George Jobling wouldn't see us. I'm sure he must have known what the rustling of paper meant but he obligingly turned a blind eye and a deaf ear, and all of us enjoyed the service.

Cobnash too had its own sweet, tobacco and general shop - run by Mrs Goodwin. It was small compared with The Stores but it catered for the homes on the outer fringe of the village. Here Harold Gough had his wheelwright's business. He was a very fine craftsman in wood and was a much respected carpenter as well.

Also in Cobnash was Davies's Forge and blacksmith shop. Here the farmers brought cart horses and saddle horses to be shod, and much fine metal work was done. Albert and Fred Davies were very skilled craftsmen and the metal plates and hinges, door handles and bolts for the new oak door in Leominster Priory Church were made by them.

The other side of the village - Shirlheath - had its shop too. Here Alfred Davis had his Butcher's shop and the station cottage had a licence to sell tobacco and cigarettes, and the Garage had a petrol pump near the old station.

The main butcher's shop was in part of the Corners Inn complex - what has now become part of the Wine Bar. In the yard was the slaughter house where Mitchell & Durdle killed and dressed the animals they sold in the shop. Many of the farmers used to kill their own animals on the farm and the butchers would come round to dress these animals and cut them into joints. Pigs were salted and made into bacon on each farm - I can still see the flitches hanging up in the kitchen and hams too, plump and juicy,



hanging from the large hooks on the kitchen wall at home.

The Corners Inn was smaller in those days; the dining room did not exist. The building then held two shops; one was used by Mr Dykes the cobbler, who mended boots and shoes, and next door was Charlie Sankey, a Saddler and seed merchant for Carter's Seeds.

The Bell House, opposite the Corners Inn, had been a Public House in my great-grandmother's time; she owned it. There was still the brew-house at the back, but the tailoring business and the family shop had long since gone. Now the WI had their HQ in the room with the bay windows and Mrs Perry, who owned it and was related to the original owners, was also the local newsagent. This was a second home to my mother and after church on Sunday evenings we would all call at the Bell for a chat and to catch up with all the local happenings.

In the back of the Bell, Percy Edwards cut the hair of most of the men and boys of the village, 6d a time for a "short back and sides and lots off the top". Styling and shampooing was not undertaken, but a good long-lasting cut was given with considerable more dash than the "pudding-basin" cut.

As I walk along the road from the Coronation Hall today, I can see where the doorway was in the side of the Bell. It is still visible in the brickwork and I have only to close my eyes to see the stocky figure of Reg Hamer standing in the doorway wearing his long khaki coloured slop with the apron atop, waiting for us to take in our bicycles for repair.

#### Part Four

Reg Hamer saw that every cycle was in tip-top condition, he sold rubber patches for the tubes and cement to fix them and carbide - that grey, strange smelling, stone-like substance, that when wetted, gave off acetylene gas and we had it in our bicycle lamps to light us in the dark evenings.

Bicycles were most important transport vehicles; many people used them constantly. My sister and I each had a BSA when we passed our scholarship examination and we rode them to school in Leominster for six years; even though there was a school bus before I finally left the Grammar School.

The Post Office was behind the Croase House then, but later on it transferred to the Brick House next to Vartry House, where on certain days each week the Midland Bank conducted its business affairs.

The village has always been very lucky in its medical care. Dr Robert Williams was the much loved and respected Doctor, living and practising the the Croase House when I was a child; I can still recall picking the first bunch of primroses each Spring to take down to Doctor Bob, and see again the gleam in his eyes as he gave me sixpence. What treasure that was! Dr Morton followed Dr Williams and the Surgery was at the Red House - th a building in the garden, and later on Dr Vaughan worked from the same surgery.

The village boasted its own Policeman living in the village, a man respected by all who would deal with miscreants "on the spot" if correction was needed, which certainly cut down the heavy load on the Courts.

The fire brigade was next to the Croase House, a red fire engine full of awe to the children was housed there, and this did long years of service to the village and local area.

In front of the school steps, in the yard before Stone House was another little sweet shop and years later a hairdressers occupied the same spot.

The District Nurse was in the village too, and we had two music teachers, Ruth Gunnell next to Markhams and later on, Miss Elsie Goodman near Lugg Bridge.

In the days before central heating and electricity, coal, paraffin oil and agents to clean grates were important items in the country areas. Thus we had two large coal agencies in the Station Yard, Passey Nott and the Old Radnor. Coal was delivered by horse and cart early on and later by vans which also delivered candles, matches, wicks, blacklead, Zebo and rotton stone to clean the steps going into the house.

All the work in the home was hard in the time before spray-on polishes and women and girls were usually very tired when evening brought a cessation to cleaning and cooking and gave relaxation in the form of knitting, sewing and the everlasting darning of socks.

The village had two other carpenters "shops" and businesses -

the one of Billy Lewis at the Garth opposite the school gates and the other, Chris Lewis, up North Road. It was with the latter that Mr Jack Preece was working; and he was a very skilled worker and still is to this day. Wheel-rights were both firms and also they were undertakers.

Across the road from Red House was another man who shared the same surname. He was a painter and glazier, named Jasper Lewis, who worked for many years in this capacity in the village.

I must not forget Broomy Hills where there was the Knacker's Yard and this business was of great importance in a rural farming community.

### Part Five

Kingsland Station was part of the GWR line and steam trains chugged and chuffed along its lines linking us with Leominster, Hereford and Shrewbury, and all of the rest of Britain. The Saw Mills nearby was an extremely busy area and fortunately they are still with us today.

Over the years we have seen the loss of many working water mills in this fertile and richly endowed valley with its rivers of Arrow, Lugg and Pinsley. Lugg Mill, which ground the corn for the local farmers, Arrow Mill, the Day House and Waterloo Mill - all were functioning, and Mortimer's Cross Mill also had a representative who travelled round on his bicycle to farmers, taking orders for feeding stuffs, etc., as well as milling grain. Waterloo Mill was a cider mill and very fine cider was made there for many years when the Langford family occupied and worked the mill.

Recently, with modern developments in agriculture we have witnessed the death of many small farms. Eight working farms, each with their farm houses and barns, which supported families and employed workers, have been engulfed into bigger farms, with the loss of hedgerows, wild life and the farming people I once knew. Among them are The Mill, Lugg Green, Sodgley Farm, Powis' Farm at the Knapp, The Home Farm, Reedsfield in Aston, The Arbour, The Willows and Arbour Farm, which was run by two ladies, the Misses Williams.

The advent of the car has made many changes here. Now most people have their own transport and are no longer confined to the small area of the village. The one-time flourishing businesses

and craftsmen have gone - people can travel at will to the towns. Farm workers are fewer due to mechanisation, and jobs on farms are less, so that the young men have had to go to the towns for work. No longer do we have the tradespeople from Leominster coming around in their vans to deliver the week's supply of groceries, the oil man and the butcher delivering to the door; the car and the Supermarket have changed the pattern for ever.

The beautiful well endowed rural community is fast changing. It is becoming a village which is "growing older", as new inhabitants are folk who want to retire here, like me. But we must try to make it possible for our young people to be able to live in their own area, to bring up their children in the beauty and peace of this lovely countryside.

To rejoice that we have young families growing up to keep alive the school and to ensure that there is balance of all the age groups in Kingsland, for it is on them that the future of the village depends.