Paying a price for beauty in popular Kingsland

Treasurer Mr John Ward (left) and chairman Mr Les Benson outside the Coronation Hall.

Post office assistant Mrs Sally Jones and local postman Mr Philip 'Taffy' Evans.

Kingsland fire service sub-officer, Bryan Markham and former fireman parish councillor Jack Preece.

Parish council chairman Mrs Mary Morgan and Mr Norman Sorton at the village centre.

NEARLY 200 years ago Kingsland was as popular a place of pilgrimage as Canterbury had been in the Middle Ages.

Wagons, post-chaises and carriages from the north and south of England were seen passing through Leominster on their way to the "Wonder Woman" or "Kingsland Doctoress."

Mrs Betty Hughes, a labourer's wife, lived at Fowden. She gained nation-wide acclaim as a miracle worker. Cripples are said to have thrown away crutches after being touched by her.

But it is a very different power which makes today's Kingsland one of the most popular residential villages in North Herefordshire.

Pretty renovated cottages, timbered and stone house, the beautiful Church of St Michael and All Angels, the primary school, three public houses, a post office and store, a butchers shop, a garage and the fire station make up the attractive village.

This scene has remained virtually unchanged for decades. But villagers recall that when water and sewage services reached Kingsland about 13 years ago the floodgates for modern development were opened. Since then around 40 new houses have been built in North Road between the crossroad and The Monument, Kingsland's third public house.

The influx of new blood, young and old, has obviously changed the atmosphere of Kingsland. The attractiveness of the village has put property prices up to some of the highest in North Herefordshire. This in turn has prohibited many young Kingsland people from buying a home in the village where they were brought up.

Chairman of the parish council, Mrs Mary Morgan, said the growth of Kingsland had been welcomed. "But," she said, "I think we have had nearly enough now. But we would welcome some council bungalows for old people and perhaps some houses for the young so that they could stay in the village."

There certainly seems to be no shortage of work in Kingsland, on the dozen or so farms and in the nearby hamlets of Shirlheath, Longmoor and Cobnash. For those who don't commute to jobs outside the parish there is a wide variety of work. There are sawmills, vehicle maintenance, building firms, lorry driving, welding, fork lift truck renovation, a car auction rooms, a family milk round, the district highways depot, a wheelwright and an abbatoir.

Someone who has worked in the village for most of his career is the chief mechanic at the Kingsland base of North Herefordshire Garages. George Griffiths, who is due to retire in a couple of years, has worked at the garage, formerly known as Markhams, since he was 14 years old.

FIRE SERVICE

Joint owner of the 50-year-old garage, which also runs a taxi service and has school bus contracts, is Bryan Markham, who is also Sub-Officer of the part-time Kingsland fire service.

Bryan heads the ten man crew of the service which covers the Dilwyn, Shobdon, Pembridge and Aymestry area. The service has existed in Kingsland for 100 years and last year the crew was given a brand new engine. This will hopefully soon be housed in the new station planned for the village.

Local builder, Mr Jack Preece, was a member of the service for 45 years and is the longest serving member of the parish council. He has had his finger on the pulse of the thriving community for over 40 years.

Many people who have moved to Kingsland in recent years have brought with them specialist trades. There is a family of jewellery designers and makers, a cabinet makers producing kitchen and architectural furniture and a specialist in repairing some of the sportiest and most expensive cars on the roads.

Other families run the Glendalph Nursing Home for the elderly, a transcendental meditation centre and a riding school. Vice-chairman of the parish council, Mr Christopher Burleigh, has the area's only horse boutique near his home at Martindale. The village is also lucky to have its own doctor and surgery.

The enthusiastic Rector the Rev. John Williams, believes the church should be an integral part of village life. The whole community joined together to raise money to restore its six bells and buy two new ones and the church has an enviable team of campanologists led by tower captain Reg Summers.

Mrs Valerie Davis runs the Sunday School classes in the nearby school, while teacher Mr David Noone is joint organist with Miss Susan Owen and is chairman of a thriving 30 strong team which practises every Thursday evening.

Mr Bert Allen who now lives in Leominster, spends three or four days a week tidying the churchyard. And the church interior is kept sparkling by Mrs J. Bufton.

There are 90 children enrolled at the church aided school which was built from local stone quarried at Street. Last year the school officially opened new classrooms and extensions and took in pupils from Eardisland when its school closed.

Superintendent of the Baptist Chapel Sunday school is noted sheepdog breeder and trials winner, Shirlheath farmer Mr John James, soon to be the subject of a BBC 2 programme "Living off the Land." He is helped at the Sunday School by two of his daughters, Alison and Margaret.

Members of the village Methodist Chapel are about to start a renovation scheme at the North Road building. Until the project is complete the congregation will continue to meet in nearby houses for monthly services.

The Coronation Hall, so named because it was opened at the time of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, is the hub of many village activities. Mr Len Benson, a caterer who is chairman of the hall committee, explained that the hall was used mostly by village clubs and organisations but hired out for parties, dances and wedding receptions.

INCOME

Mr John Ward, committee treasurer said: "The hall exists for the use of people in the village so we keep the charges as low as possible so as not to discourage use. The income is sufficient to cover costs."

On Mondays the hall is filled with bingo fans and during the day handicraft classes, which are part of the Wigmore Evening Institute, utilise the buildings. On Tuesday there is usually some form of committee meeting. Once a month on a Wednesday evening the village Womens Institute, which celebrates its Diamond Jubilee in May, occupies the hall. President for the past five years, Lady Alethea Eliot, describes herself as an immigrant to Kingsland. "I consider it an honour to be so much a part of the village considering I am an immigrant," she said.

Lady Alethea, the committee and the 70 members are trying to contact founder members of the village WI so that they can join the May celebrations.

ACTIVE

Kingsland members are extremely active on the Leominster Friday WI market committee. Miss Joan Kenon is market controller and Mrs Eileen Griffiths is market secretary. They both join Mrs Elsie Goodman and John James' wife, Jean, to cook for the market most weeks.

The Darby and Joan club, led by Mrs James, also meets on Wednesdays. Monthly parish council meetings take place in the hall on Thursdays. The Air Gun Club also meets in the hall and is greatly enjoyed by all age groups in Kingsland. The lively club is run by Mr William Miles and uses the hall's annexe as a range.

The newest village organisation is proof that Kingsland people never let the grass grow under their feet. In May the Rector will formally open a new bowling club. This self-help club has raised the money to roll and seed the first ever green in the village. Mr Les Millard is chairman of the club and one of the most talented Kingsland bowlers will be Mrs Joan Muffet who, last summer, helped a Leominster ladies team win the Women's National Championship.

Brownie and Cub pack numbers are also on the increase. Brown Owl is Mrs Sally Jones and Akela is Mrs Sheila Speakman.

The non-denominational Women's Own group was started in Kingsland in 1934 with Mrs D. Preece as one of the founders. It meets in the Baptist Chapel and Mrs Elsie Goodman organises the group with help from an enthusiastic team. Mrs Goodman is also organiser of the village Meals on Wheels service. She and treasurer, Mrs Toby Sorton, are in charge of a team of 16 helpers who deliver 14 meals twice a week. The scheme was started in Kingsland in 1972 and also takes meals to Eardisland.

MONUMENT

Mrs Sorton's husband, Norman, was appointed to place a list of Kingsland councillors and a copy of the Leominster and Bromyard News for posterity under the Kingsland monument to the Wars of the Roses, when it was renovated in 1974.

Yet another organisation in Kingsland is the Royal British Legion. The branch president is Mr Hubert Wilkes and Chairman is Mr Reg Bowen.

Kingland's station closed 25 years ago and former station master Mr Jim Savoury is now secretary of the revived Kingsland Flower Show. The show, under the chairmanship of Mr David Bishop and presidency of Canon Peter Eliot, was held for the first time last September after a break of 17 years. Show organisers have now former a sports and carnival committee to organise even more attractions to surround this year's August 30 event.

Kingsland is obiously a bustling happy village. And in the words of its eldest resident Mrs Mary Ann Miles, who used to keep the Angel Inn and will be 99 on March 20, changes have been for the best. Kingsland used to have a lot of poverty in the 1800s," she said.

Mrs Jean James at the Baptist Chapel with her two daughters, Margaret, who plays the organ and Alison, who teaches there.

Oldest resident Mrs Mary Ann Miles and her great-grandson, David Kelly, aged 7.

Local Meals on Wheels organiser Mrs Elsie Goodman (left) and treasurer Mrs Toby Sorton.

REPORT: Noreen Davies Pictures: Brian Hankins

Lady Alethea Eliot and Rector, John Williams outside the Church of St Michael and All Angels.

WI BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

STOKE Prior and District Women's Institute celebrated its 31st birthday with lunch at a Leominster hotel.

Guest speaker was Councillor Mrs Pamela Houston, a former mayor, who described a visit to India.

After a short business meeting, Miss J. Barnforth was presented with the Ida Robinson Cup for winning the bulb competition. She also won the competition for flower arrangement.

The lunch ended with past president and founder member, Mrs Gertrude Mason, cutting her birthday cake.

TOYOTA

WILD? IMPULSIVE? CAREFREE? MARRIED?

If you answered 'Yes' to the first three questions look at the new Toyota Celica.

It's very, very hard to explain its remarkable performance.

The GT Liftback has a top speed of over 110 mph and a 0-60 time of 9.6 seconds.

If you answered 'Yes' to the fourth question don't sigh with regret. For the Celica will carry the whole family in comfort. A five speed gearbox helps make the journey pleasant and keeps down the garage bills.

Standard equipment on both Coupe and Liftback includes adjustable reclining front seats, individual folding rear seats, full carpeting, LW/MW/FM radio, digital quartz clock, an XT cassette with six-speaker system, electrically operated aerial, clock on XT and GT with air-conditioning on the XT.

Convenient to live with. Comfortable to drive. Very, very different from the day you married.

TOYOTA
Everything keeps getting right.

CASTLE GREEN GARAGE
MILL STREET HEREFORD
TEL: HEREFORD 265265

Herefordshire Toyota Centre

bobcat

On the farm, in construction & industry

Bobcat - the compact four-wheel drive skid-steer loader that turns in its own length; works almost anywhere especially low narrow areas such as: poultry houses, deep litter pens, stables and poly-houses. Six models all with multi attachment versatility.

Change the attachments in seconds with the unique Bob-Tach system and go to work.

Lift, dig, level, trench, backfill, load, unload, clean up and move almost anything - anywhere - anytime summer or winter.

Call us for a free demonstration or further details. Main distributor for sales or rentals. Tamworth Plant (South Midlands) Limited. North Littleton, Evesham. Telephone: Evesham 832479.

CLARK