

In the 1990s, Mrs F. Roberts of Keristsal Avenue wrote this essay about the village

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUNTINGTON VILLAGE FROM 1926

My essay begins in 1926 when I first came to live in this part of Chester. I will begin at a pub and end my journey through the village at a pub. Some may say where better to begin and end a journey, but that is a matter of opinion.

We will start at the White House Hotel. This at one time was an elegant public house whose proprietress was a widow by the name of Mrs. Harvey. She had a strict code of conduct – “No singing” or riotous noises came from her bars! The gentry from the houses along Dee Banks would call at the White House in an evening and sit in the well kept gardens overlooking the river. A regular ferry boat crossed the river at this point and was used by many of the business men from Dee Banks in the summertime as a mean of getting to work. “Jogging” was unknown in those days but a brisk walk down the meadows did the system a power of good.

There were only two houses between the White House and Red House: Rudale on the river bank and Kenwyn opposite. Kenwyn was then the residence of Colonel and Mrs. Read. Colonel Read had recently died but when Mrs. Read died for some reason the house fell into disrepair and stood empty for some years. The Second World War began and the American army occupied it, did extensive repairs to it, painted it and cleared the garden. They left it at the end of the war in a very good state of repair.

Next along the journey we come to the Red House. This was a very much smaller public house than it is today and was more correctly named – it was made of red brick and woodwork was also painted red. It was double fronted with the door in the present positions. One entered by several steps for the road level was lower. This was the pub frequented by the country people and much singing and mirth issued forth!

In the distance between the Red House and the gateway of Carlton Villa were three tiny cottages. These were rough red brick with tiny front gardens and wicket fencing. One cottage belonged to Mrs. James and family whose husband had recently died, but up to the time of his death, had been the coachman to Mrs. Read at Kenwyn. The main road at this point was very narrow with a shallow stream crossing it, whose source was a spring somewhere in the direction of the new Dee High School. There were no other houses, only tall hedges on either side of the road.

My journey towards the village now brings me to what is known as Keristal Avenue. The whole of this land was then owned by a man called Mr. Bloore who came from the Isle of Man.

He came from a point between Douglas and Port Soderick which is marked on the map as Keristal – hence the name. It was first called “Keristal” and was then upgraded to Keristsal Road, such as it was! His bungalow was the only dwelling on the hill at that

time, and is the first one up the hill. Along the road, which was literally two cart tracks, he planted two rows of fine fir trees. My house was next to be built. We had no gas or electricity and depended on paraffin lamps and an oil stove for cooking. We collected milk from Butterbache Farm in the can. Later it came to us in a cart and pony, and was measured from the tankard in the cart to a jug. Very hygienic! The only other inhabitant of the field was a cart horse who regularly stabled himself at night under our bay window and in the morning rose to refresh himself at a bucket of water at the back door. Pheasants, presumably from Eaton were frequent visitors, picking crumbs at the back door. Herons regularly nested in Caldly Brook. We then had an unbroken view to Whitchurch Road at the back and Beeston Castle and Peckforton Castle and towards Eaton. The tower of Eaton hall was visible above the horizon.

Carlton Villa in that time was an 'old world' style house of yellow plaster. It was smaller than the present house, double fronted facing the Red House. After several owners it was occupied by Mr. Grimshaw who was a speculator and began the building in Huntington Village. He also made the alterations to Carlton Villa.

Where the road passes the end of Keristal Avenue and drops to cross Caldly Brook stood a low narrow sandstone bridge. Many fish frequented the stream and were the food for regular kingfishers. Pollution to the water and modern noise seemed to destroy these inhabitants. At the side of Caldly Brook where there is a bungalow now there was a tiny shoeing forge and blacksmiths cottage. The modern bungalow was built on the tennis court belonging to Carlton Villa.

Having crossed the bridge there is a turning off the road to "Brookside". This riverside dwelling was then owned by Mr. Machan who had kennels and bred cocker spaniels for showing and had many successes at Crufts. He also kept hens. In the spring and other times at high tide the meadows used to flood. On one occasion the sons from Butterbache Farm were rowing round in small boats salvaging the floating belongings of Machan! On that occasion 90 hens were drowned.

The main road up to the village was still very narrow at this point and had a slight curve which was later straightened when the road was widened. Very little passed along the road in the day and twice a week cattle were driven on the hoof to the auction at Cow Lane. Buses were very infrequent to Farndon but no Corporation buses came until much later, possibly 1933. The terminus for the corporation was conveniently at the bottom of Keristal Avenue. Crosville buses only stopped at the White House and later Butterbache Farm.

On the right hand side of the hill stretching over the whole area of Butterbache Road and Woodlands Avenue was a beautiful mixed wood and large pond. One night after a gale great excitement ran through the village because two of the trees had been blown down across the road and had stopped "all traffic"! A few of these trees still remain in the grass verge today. Each year the fox hounds used to hunt across these fields. One particular day two foxes were put up in the wood and after a chase one fox was killed in the meadow below my house and the other fox beat back to Butterbache wood and went to ground.

On the brow of the hill stands Butterbache Farm House. The original farm house was a low white building with a large monkey tree in the garden. This building was burned down along with half the monkey tree. The present house was built on the same site and half the monkey tree remained in the garden for many years. The farmyard was cobbled and a duck pond below the garden of the first bungalow was the home of many little ducks. The barns and walls were sandstone and ran alongside the footpath. The owner, a Mr. Stalker, used to show his pedigree cattle at the Cheshire Show and could be seen practicing and schooling the animals to walk in the show ring, in the field which is now overgrown in front of the farm house.

A small wooden single aisle church was built on land adjoining Woodlands Road and the main Chester Road. Its single bell called a very regular congregation to worship morning and evening. It could be heard as far as the Red House and beyond without difficulty, but because of its poor quality of the tone it was referred to as the "tin can". The Church came into the parish of Bruera.

In the farm fields across the road was a caravan which was the home of a lady who was in poor health and needed fresh air. She found the air of Huntington so beneficial she later built a red brick double fronted bungalow which stands almost opposite the butchers shop.

More houses were built and although buses ran more frequently there arose the need for a village store. This was known as Thomas's and supplied all needs, candles, wool, food, brushes, a good general store. It is sad to see the original village shop stand empty for so long, for it was the cornerstone and the beginning of the heart of the village as it is today.

The nucleus began to grow and we were then blessed with another shop and a Post Office. Things were indeed moving fast. More houses, more people and young children.

Most of the young in the district went to Cherry Grove School and thought nothing of walking a distance. A few went to private school in Chester. Demand came then for a village school, and by the 1950s Huntington could be proud of a new well-designed modern school. Things changed rapidly, more shops were built, and land was acquired on which to build the Village Hall. Things were really moving, Huntington was put on the map!

The main road was still only very narrow at this stretch and bounded by tall hedges. There were no more dwellings until one reached the Rake and Pikel. It was very quiet and a typical roadside village pub. Meadows Lane had a few houses but the approach to it was through fields and pretty hedgerows.

The second war necessitated the erection of the large army camp. It was used as a training base from where soldiers were sent abroad. Long columns of soldiers would begin to march in the morning and there would be a continual procession until well into the afternoon. They would be marching to the station to board special troop trains. Bombs

were dropped in the fields at the back of the camp during one raid on Liverpool, killing some cows and doing some slight damage to surrounding property.

Huntington village was a popular courting area for young couples who lived on Boughton Heath, a leisurely stroll on a warm summer evening to a very attractive part of Chester. Today the village is equally attractive but in a different way. The air is still as fresh and clean, and the general atmosphere is still quiet and peaceful here. It is a very select village, the inhabitants taking pride in what they own and share. The verges and the village green are tidy and the shops well stocked, offering a pleasant service to the customer. The thriving W.I. and S.C' sC. give much pleasure to those with time for leisure.

Let us hope his village will remain like this for many years, a pleasant place to live, with thoughtful development.

Let us hope that it will not be swept along in a fast tide of what is known as "progress"

(written circa 1990).