

SERVICES AND AMENITIES - THEN AND NOW.

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IT WOULD be safe to say that Eardisland has always been well placed in the matter of communications. Watling Street does, in fact, form the Eastern boundary of our Parish and it is probable that in mediaeval times the river was forded at Eardisland and what was then the main road (the road now known as Lyme Lane) joined Watling Street and the vast Roman network a mile distant at Street.

Coming down to more modern times, since 1857 (until its closing to passenger traffic last year) we have had the advantage of the Leominster-Kington Railway, the station at Kingsland being only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant. There is no doubt that the rail services were very extensively used in the early days, by those who could afford them, and one reads of many outings which involved walking to Leominster Station (5 miles away) before dawn, and returning in the small hours of the following morning.

For market and shopping occasions there were, in addition to the railway, carriers varying from one to four in number: the Directory of 1868 recording that such a service was available, from Pembridge to Leominster, every Monday and Friday. In the 1905 Directory we are said to have had four carriers in operation to and from Leominster on Fridays; and many remember this function being carried out by "Mammy" Lloyd and by Mrs. Galliers, surely a sign of the emancipation of women! At one time, too, we had an 8-seater horse waggonette; and the cost of the return journey was 2/6d.

Very soon after the end of the First World War we had our first taxi service in the village, and in the Twenties the Midland Red Bus Company started the first bus service, on market days only. It was not, however, until 1931 that we had a full bus service. This was operated by Mr. Bengry and provided a daily service to Leominster, and Yeomans' Buses provided a service to Hereford on three days a week. Later on Yeomans' Buses also started to run through the village on certain days, but recently this Leominster service has been suspended and only the Hereford service (on Sundays, Wednesdays and Saturdays) is operated by them. Children attending school in Leominster can now do the journey each way by bus, and services to Leominster are in every way adequate, linking up as they do with long-distance buses.

Quite recently our rail services were reduced by the closing of the Leominster-Bromyard line: those wishing to travel to London by rail must now go via Hereford to Worcester, instead of direct. We are, however, compensated by a bus service ('Back & White') to and from London, and this passes through the village every day throughout the year.

Our mechanical amenities were further enhanced in 1925, when Mr. Gransmore opened the first (and so far the only) Petrol Pump in the village. In addition to the Pump we now have a good taxi service and car repair service at the village Garage. We have had an A.A. Box at Legions Cross since about 1925.

As to postal amenities, it is certain that we had a sub-office 100 years ago, one Henry Bullock rejoicing in the offices

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Robinson's Row - before the fire of 1917.



Same View, 1955.

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The Old Mill, Glau Arrow.



Upper Mill.  
1900.

of "Post Master, Schoolmaster, Parish Clerk and Shopkeeper". The Post Office continued to function as a shop until fairly recently; sometime before the First World War it was promoted to Post, Money Order and Telegraph Office, and since 1916 to a Telephone Exchange Office. This last function will cease in August this year (1955), when we are due to go over to the automatic system. For the last 100 years at least we have had one delivery of letters on week-days, and since 1937 we have had two deliveries; for some time, until the First War, we had a Sunday delivery also. Letters were first delivered by van in 1937, and many can remember the days before the bicycle and the motor cycle, when the letters arrived "by foot messenger" at 8 a.m. from Pembridge, the same foot messenger doing the return journey from Leominster in the afternoon, arriving at Eardisland at 5.40 p.m. and going on to Pembridge carrying the outgoing mail. Nowadays the morning letters arrive from Leominster by van, and are delivered by our own Postmistress on foot or on bicycle; the afternoon delivery is by van direct.

As to shops and Craftsmen, the analysis which we show elsewhere shows that 100 years ago we were very much a self-contained community, having - in 1856 - 2 shopkeepers: 2 shoemakers: 2 tailors: 2 millers: 2 blacksmiths: 2 carpenters: a basket-maker, a cooper, and a stonemason. Nowadays we have two shops, and most adequate though their stock is the custom has developed of going further afield, to Leominster or Hereford, for a part of one's shopping. Daily and weekly newspapers, periodicals, etc., have for some time been delivered every morning by one of our shopkeepers, and our Sunday papers are delivered to each house by van from Leominster. Recently, too, a daily supply of bread (including sliced and wrapped) and cakes is delivered by a Worcester firm to one of our shops, and Ice Cream (kept in a refrigerator) is available in both shops throughout the Summer.

In the early days the advantage of three Mills in the Parish, and one just outside, must have been considerable when it came to feeding man and beast, and the last of the Mills to grind corn operated until only a few years ago.

While on the subject of bread we were rather surprised to find, from a Diary of Mr. Kington, of Riverside (then named 'Wayside'), that in 1874 he made several purchases of bread from Mrs. Caldicott, the village shopkeeper, one of the entries reading: "2 loaves of bread and cake, 1/1d." Normally the Kingtons bought their bread in Leominster - and one wonders whether even in those days, when most country women made their own bread, the village shop had occasional deliveries of bread from the market town. Certainly in the early days of this century there were frequent deliveries of bread - by cart - from Leominster and neighbouring villages, the price then being 2½d. for a 2-lb. loaf.

Other entries in Mr. Kington's Diary which indicate the range of goods kept in the village shop in 1874 and 1875 are the following:

"Mrs. Caldicott - thread, etc.: string, etc.:  
brush, etc.: 6 hampers: 2 glasses: flour, etc.:  
tea, etc.: sugar: oatmeal, etc.: salt, etc.:  
saltpetre, etc."

How one wishes one knew what the etceteras were, and their cost! However, it seems clear that all one's everyday requirements were kept by the village shop then, as now; and one had to go to Leominster for only such items as "flannel (1/4d.)... stockings (9d.)... calico (7/-)... dress for Minnie (3/4½d.)" -

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The Shop by the River : before 1927.



Mr Harvey, Nancy and  
The New Front. 1927.



Same  
Premises.  
1955.



The Oldest Shop  
in  
Cardisland; 1955.

and of course one's wines (£1. 7. 2d.) and one's gin (2/-d.) And even in those days it seems to have been customary to give a weekly order to Saxby, Grocer, Leominster - who, for all one knows, may have had a delivery service to the villages.

All this sounds very advanced - but there are many who well remember having to walk to Leominster to fetch the Doctor or the Vet., those gentlemen in turn having to make the journey to Eardisland by pony and trap. Indeed it was not until 1914 that a Call-box was installed inside our village Post Office; and the Kiosk in the village street did not arrive until 1947.

Comparatively recent innovations, too, are the Stock Lorry and the Trailer. As recently as 25 years ago it was customary to take a calf to market, 5 miles distant, in a cart, the cow walking behind - and the journey with other animals, especially if the farmer did not sell, must have been even more tedious. But what a glorious unhurried sight the country roads must have presented on market days, compared with the present era of noise and unrest and speed!

When Mr. Harvey opened his shop in the village in 1914 he stocked all the commodities Mrs. Caldicott stocked 40 years before, and a great deal more besides. Tinned foods of every size and description: overalls, stockings, vests, pants, boots, shoes.... the village cobbler had gone and there was no longer any place for him. But the travelling salesman had arrived, and had been on the scene for some time, and Moulshers' of Leominster and Millers' of Hereford called round every week to measure men for their suits and collect the instalments.

Throughout the 100 years milk, eggs and butter seem to have been available at several of the local farms, for those who wanted them; and even to-day, in spite of the fact that most of our milk goes to Cadbury's, we have daily deliveries from two local producers, and also from a retailer from Leominster. As to other commodities, various vans - meat, groceries and bread - deliver from Leominster and neighbouring villages regularly; paraffin and other household goods, available also at the village shops, are delivered by van from Leominster every week; the Laundry calls every week; and since the War a Fish-and-Chip Van has become part of our rural scene, calling at present two or three times a week!

Coal, also, is delivered when it is required nowadays. In the old days, however, fuel must have presented quite a problem for those who had no horse and cart of their own and the facilities provided by our Coal Club, started some time before 1970 and continued till comparatively recently, must have been a real boon to those who could ill afford even the toll\*charges.

Long before the turn of the century Eardisland had its Maternity Club, run by the Vicar's wife for the benefit of the poorer mothers. The Club maintained a stock of sheets, night-dresses and layettes which could be borrowed when required. This Club was in a sense the precursor of an event which took place in 1904, and which must have been very advanced for a village in those days: this was the appointment of a full-time resident Nurse. The Parish Magazine for 1904 states: "Through the good offices of Mrs. Clowes a long-felt want in the Parish has been at last supplied. We now have a Nurse,

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Council Houses (Green Cross)  
Built 1934-55.

to whom all will give a hearty welcome. Copies of rules as to visiting and charges (where made) can be obtained". Unfortunately we have not been able to obtain a copy of the original rules, and we dare not trust to memory in the matter of charges, but we do know that for 21 years we had our own Nurse and we can be sure that the charges made were very small. Nowadays, of course, we have all the benefits of the Welfare State on our doorstep, including the District Nurse, and though we have no resident doctor in the village there is no lack of medical men around us, and there is a Surgery in the village once a week.

We have never had a Village Hall. Since 1872, however, we have had our own Reading Room for the use of the men of the village. From 1876 until it closed in 1936 it occupied premises in the Old Grammar School, lent by Mr. Clowes, and daily and weekly newspapers, periodicals and various games were available for the use of Members. It had, in fact, become a very flourishing Men's Club, and filled a great need in the village, and it was a great disappointment when, in 1936, Mrs. Clowes had the building converted into two cottages for farm workers.

Another innovation introduced by Mr. Clowes was the "Burton Court Lending Library". We do not know when it started, but we do know that it was going strong in 1871, when 189 volumes were available and the subscription for 6 months was 6s. Later on it merged with the Reading Room, and did not come to an end until about 1913. Nowadays and for some years past we have a fortnightly visit from the County Travelling Library, a service which is very much appreciated.

We now have a Recreation Ground, a field on the Burton Court Estate, previously lent by Mrs. Clowes as a School Playing Field, having been bought by Mr. Harvey at the time of the Sale of the Estate in 1950 and subsequently handed over to the Parish. £150 of the purchase price was raised by public subscription, the remaining £150 having been given by a local farmer. It is hoped to equip a Children's Corner and later on to have a Tennis Court and Bowling Green.

For social functions and evening classes we use either the School or the Smithy - the latter being a very comfortable room, let to the Women's Institute and administered by them.

The coming of Mains electricity in 1931 did, of course, bring developments in many directions, not least of them being the turning out of old-type cooking stoves and oil lamps and the installation of modern appliances for cooking, heating, lighting, etc. Although our pubs had shrunk in number over the years the two which had survived - the 'Golden Cross' and the 'White Swan' - were not slow to take advantage of modern amenities; and now each, in addition to wireless, Darts, Shove-Halfpenny, Bagatelle, etc., has added Television to its attractions. A great number of private houses also are equipped with Television; our nearest Cinema is at Leominster.

We must, reluctantly, end on a sad and humble note. In spite of the recent building of 19 Council Houses and an inexhaustible supply of water we are still without either mains water or mains sewage. We shall hope that when our little story is read in 2055 this will be a matter of incredulity and very much ancient history.