

NAPTON HISTORY PROJECT

The anecdotes, stories, indeed the history of the local people themselves, tends to get ignored in the history books and that is partly what this project is all about. It was the Vicar of Napton's idea (Rev. Peter Jackson) to record, either on tape or in writing, the stories people tell before the people are gone forever. It is also through the experience of working people that we can begin to understand what life was like years ago; the hours of work, both paid and unpaid, in the workplace and the home, the size of families, the occasional holidays etc...

Napton is the epitome of an English village; thatched cottages, well kept gardens in full bloom, a village shop and Post Office and a number of public houses. But Napton used to be self supporting in more than one respect, not only for food (most workers kept their own allotment for growing vegetables and some kept a pig) but also for employment; the brickyard, canal and agriculture being the main areas for work. Today the brickyard is closed and the canal is mainly used for pleasure boats.

The old Naptonians, as they like to be called, have been very welcoming, inviting us in for tea and cakes and chatting with us for hours. We have heard how one newly married couple spent their honeymoon in Coventry during the blitz, how one woman became a nurse because she was told how pretty she looked in uniform, the tricks children got up to, the festivities on Carnival Day, what it was like to be in service and lots more...

NICKNAMES AND CHARACTERS OF NAPTON ON THE HILL

This is a tale of folks now passed on
and most of their family are all dead and gone.
Now there was old Sam, with his pony and trap
and old Barber Dick who wore a patched cap.
Pillory Green Toby, always smiling so nice,
had a big family, twenty one twice.
Then Snogger, I can see him now,
stood on the bike saddle from the church to the Plough.
Old poacher Dench always carried a gun,
had a dog with two noses instead of one.
Freelance Joe who never could sleep,
Pickerin Tom, expert at lambing sheep.
There was old Lucy, as deaf as a post,
and old Hughie French who once saw a ghost.
Gayman had two thumbs on one hand,
for hours at the top of the Green he would stand.
Sam Bloxham leaning over his gate,
he was always there, early or late.
Liz gave lessons, kept Toby, her dog
also two cows and a pet frog.
Paddy Tom was lousy by heck,
as kids we watched lice run up his neck.
Then there was Sloper who didn't like work
and Dancer Jim who also did shirk.
Rubber Bill, he wore a top hat
and Mrs Swan kept a ginger cat
shut up in the house far too long
and when he came out - talk about pong.
Boverit and wife looked very smart,
carried to Daventry with Snathleg and cart.
They set up a motor, a Garner I think,
when started up, blimey the stink.
Old Tubby Haycock we pushed in the trough,
And old Billy Wills said Bugger off.
There was old Gadney who's wife kept a shop,
the roof is still bent where the monkey sat on top.
Say No Clem as come to the fore,
He once killed a bear on some distant shore.
Then there was Tibby with shoe mending skill,
Another sly fellow named old Brummie Bill.

Then there was Tity, a chap to amuse,
I've known him go for a week on the booze.
There was Bingo who could lay a few bricks,
and old Spurcion Bull who walked with two sticks.
Roadman Jim sold plants at tuppence a score,
and wats and wabbits was old Tommy More.
Old Dick Malin lived on his own,
would kill pigs and dress them for half a crown.
Tom Malin drove cattle to earn a few bob,
and old Frankie Read drove a good cob.
Then old Matey who travels entires,
he would walk far and wide all over the shires.
He would say he could drink more beer, eat more grub,
walk more miles, tell more lies when he was around
than anyone else in county or town.
And there was Miss Alsop, as she walks up and down,
had all the new fashions from London Town.
Here's a few more names I have got,
Bill Flash, Erslarse and Harry, Snot,
Brasie, Skimmer, Punch, Joby, Jack,
Titch, Shomucks and Baker Mack.
To check my story just contact Sid Hands,
for he knows them like me and will understand.

Den Sheasby.

1976.

A GENERAL HISTORY OF NAPTON

Napton; the name itself is the perfect description of the situation of the village. It is a combination of two words; Nap, meaning 'top of the hill' and Ton, meaning 'the settlement'.

At the time of the Conquest in 1066, Napton was held by the Earl of Mellent whose tenant, Robert, assumed the surname of 'de Napton'. A female descendent of this family conveyed the estate, in about 1370, by marriage to John de Shuckburgh whose family are still connected with the village of Napton and the surrounding area.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Neptune' and 'Eptone'. A priest in Napton is also mentioned in the Domesday survey which was carried out in 1086. By this time Napton was already a thriving settlement with a population somewhere in the region of one hundred and fifty. By 1801 the population had risen to seven hundred and eighty seven and by 1841 to nine hundred and fifty one. A National School for boys was founded in 1821, one for girls in 1843 and an infant school in 1849. In 1891 the population began to decline until it reached a low of eight hundred and five in 1921. During the 30's the population remained static but by the sixties it had begun to increase until it reached a total, in 1968, of over a thousand.

Extracts from White's Directory of Warwickshire, published in 1850, show the Napton of the day to be a thriving village. Listed among the inhabitants are two bakers, two blacksmiths, seventeen farmers, twenty graziers, five inns and taverns, four grocers, three shopkeepers and five shoemakers. In 1985 there is one shop and a post office with shop attached, plus three pubs to serve a population of over a thousand. One of the present day attractions of Napton is the Nickelodeon in High Street. This provides a venue for leading organists to give recitals, as well as housing a private collection of theatre and cinema organs. In 1973 Iron Age pottery was unearthed from beneath layers of Victorian, Medieval and Roman remains. Aerial photographs reveal that the early village was situated around the Manor Farm and that there was a larger hamlet in the Chapel Green area. The mill is the only one of two remaining. The second stood at the top of the Holloway and is recorded on Henry Beighton's map of 1725. Fragments of a Saxon sword and shield boss were found in 1927 at the brickyard. These were presented to the Leamington Museum.