

"THE PARISH MAGAZINE FOR ALBURY AND ST. MARTHA" dated December 1897 (price one penny) contains the first instalment (in very small type) of the Notes and Recollections of Newdigate Burne entitled:

ALBURY PAST AND PRESENT

As these memoirs (in the relaxed prose of the time) are likely to be of interest to all parishioners, extracts will be included in this and some future issues of the Parish News.

Newdigate Burne was in charge of the congregation of the Catholic Apostolic Church in Albury.

His first chapter concerns local roads and railways. (He calls the latter rail roads - and spells Farley Heath, Farleigh).

In speaking of our general landscape, we might well have included the roads, especially the railroad, which is a prominent feature in every country view in England, with the long tails of white steam following behind the trains, and their distant rumble drawing attention to the ceaseless activity of our population, and the immensity of our commerce.

To lie on the green sward on the top of St. Martha's Hill on a summer's day is interesting, not only on account of the glorious view of hill and dale, stream and lakelet it affords, but to watch these serpentine trains of loaded vehicles coming from east and west in constant and regular succession.

Good roads are doubtless a distinct evidence of civilisation. They promote neighbourly intercourse; they enable us to see a world beyond our own noses. The savage tribes in the interior of Africa have no roads - the wandering Arabs have no roads, and only the elements of civilisation - the Australian natives, the lowest type of the uncivilised have no roads - the hill tribes on the north-west frontier of India have no roads - they regard as enemies all who live beyond their own borders, and raid murder and rapine seem to be the main objects of their existence. I hope we shall make some roads for them before we say "goodbye"!

Sixty years ago - yes, and less than that - we had no such thing as a railroad through the parish; but then we were a quiet people and our repose had not been thoroughly broken by the many interventions which have since revolutionised our habits. Sometimes one almost longs for the quiet time; but one cannot put back the clock. Growth, increase, progress. Such is God's Eternal Plan, and to disregard it, is to be left behind in the race, and to lose the many advantages and blessings which go far to counter-balance the personal discomfort of all this heat and pressure.

If, as I have said, good roads are an evidence of civilisation, then I think we Albury people may pat one another on the back, and "wash our hands without soap" in self-satisfaction, for we have splendid roads, thanks first to the Roman occupation, then to the waywardens of former days, later on to the crushing and levelling effects of the steam roller, and now to the vigilance of our almost brand-new Parish and County Councils.

Without roads we could not go to Church or to the market, or have easy intercourse with one another.

The roads claim our first attention. Sixty years ago our roads to Guildford were up by Newland's Corner, and over the Downs - a mere cart track, such as it remains to this day. Another entering by the gate opposite Weston House and coming into the track below Newland's Corner, entered Guildford down the steep hill past the old semaphore, (the house still stands from which the semaphore signals coming up from Portsmouth were passed on to London - the great events

of the past century, the French Revolution, the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo, and so forth, brought over by sailing vessels to the coast, were passed on to London by these great swinging wooden arms, and thence all over the land until the invention of electric telegraph).

The lower road to Guildford was then only in existence in part, and was often inundated to such an extent at Shalford and by the Chilworth ponds (then called Magnays, after Sir William Magnay, a Lord Mayor of London, who lived at Postford, when I first knew Albury) that communication with Guildford by this route was uncertain and dangerous.

The narrow bit of road running round from Vale Cottage by the Paper Mills was a private one, and the Proprietor of the mills had a gate at the Vale Cottage end, which he often closed in order to maintain the right - but necessity and long use, must either have softened his heart, or given a sort of prescriptive right to the public, for the gate was long since removed, and until the new cut was made on the south side of the larger ponds, it was in general use, though often times the scene of accidents and awkward predicaments on dark nights, or two bulky vehicles had the misfortune to meet midway.

This bit of road joining the rise up to Postford, was made in 1874/5, and those who remember the difficulties of the old way, it has proved one of the greatest improvements to our neighbourhood.

The new road referred to in our last number, was made by Mr. Drummond after the consecration of the new Parish Church in October, 1842. The outline of the old road from Brook may still be traced across the Heath, down past the keeper's lodge to the stream, where it joined the "street" from Weston (as the present Albury village was then called) which entered at the present gate of the Lodge garden, and on to the "Little George" Inn. At this Inn (kept by Richard Jarlet in 1800) Mr. Cardale told me he put up his horse and chaise on first coming to Albury in the year 1832.

Thence it turned up, and by a devious course came out into the main road close to where the Model Farm now stands - a branch road came up from the "George," passed through the stable-yard of the Grange, on behind John Frost's Cottage and coming out also by Sherbourne. This road is in the recollection of many now living.

Then about sixty years ago or a little more (I am not absolutely sure if this comes within the range of the Queen's reign, but it is not far off) there were no bridges over the Tillingbourne, either by the Park Lodge or the Rectory; people had to drive through the stream, and walk over a log for a footway, as at the "Chantry Bridge" at Shere, and as it used to be at the Gomshall Mill. There was a bridge built in 1793 by the Hon. William Clement Finch (who then had Albury Park) over the stream at the foot of the old road leading up to the "Little George," and passing by Cook's Place (now the Grange) as mentioned before.

Now we are so awfully refined and luxurious. Our horses mustn't wet their feet poor things, and we have to pay the piper too in big rates.

What changes we have seen! These tracks - for they were little better - superseded by good macadamized roads. What would people say now if they were thumped and bumped over the boulders that were laid down forty, even thirty years ago, and less, for our post horses feet to hammer in and our carriage and cart wheels to level? And yet people grumble, (as is the nature of Britians) and our bicycle friends are become so dainty and exacting in the manner of good roads, that I verily believe they will soon expect the Parish Council to provide footmen in livery with brooms to sweep a path clear for them.

ALBURY PAST AND PRESENT

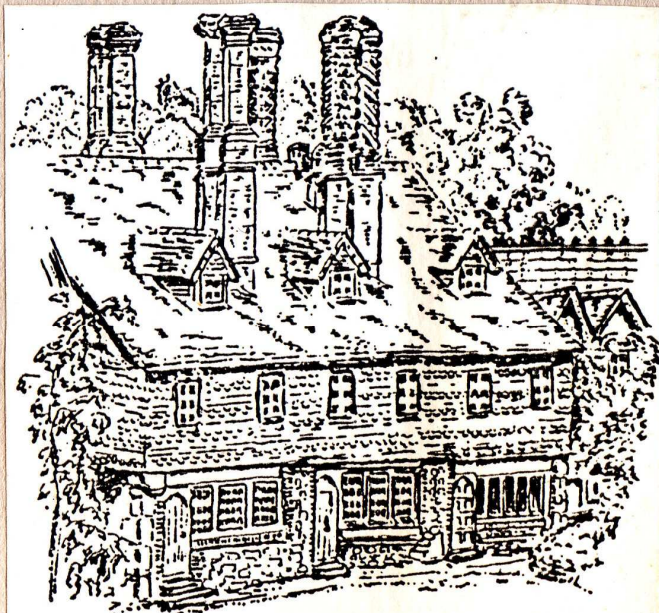
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The oldest road in the place is probably the lane running up from the "Round House" (we used to call it "Windsor Castle" after that pretty rosy-faced Mrs. Windsor who lived there) to Farleigh Heath. Tradition says the Romans made it to get down to the valley for water from their camp at Farleigh. Why shouldn't we call it the "Roman road" or the "Roman way"? Why should it be "Birmingham lane" and "Birmingham farm"? We like Birmingham in its way, and the Brumagen tea-pots and other metal ware we get there so cheap, but we are thankful that it is a good hundred and fifty miles away. Why bring it any nearer?

Now we come to the railroad. First, the railroads and next, the Electric Telegraphs, have been perhaps the greatest factors in the changes brought about in our habits and national life.

Just fifty years ago - in the summer of 1847, the year the line running through this parish was opened - I came to Albury from London for the first time to pay a visit to my



The Street, Albury.

godfather, the Rev. John Hooper, the then Rector. For the fun of the thing, I travelled with a few friends in a third class carriage - we got very little fun out of it however - the third class carriages of those days were mere open trucks with rather deep sides and wooden benches across them, exactly like the coal trucks of the present time; and what with the thumping and bumping every time we stopped, the hard narrow seats, the bad springs, and the horrors of the "middle passage," by which I mean of course the Merstham tunnel, sitting behind a screaming fiery furnace belching out steam and smoke, the noise so deafening that we couldn't hear the sound of one another's shouts, and the meeting an up train midway in the tunnel, which seemed to be coming straight into us - it was an experience one didn't care to have over again!

Look at the third class carriages of to-day, and there you have some idea of the progress in the art of comfortable travelling during the Queen's reign!

Broad Gauge

In 1843, I came from Plymouth to Taunton outside the "Nonpareil" Coach, driven sometimes by Lord Huntingtower. The G.W.R. did not get further from London than Taunton then, and oh, the blissful experience of a first class broad gauge carriage on to Bath, our destination, after crossing Dartmoor, through wind and snow in the month of March.

There were no railways near Albury then; the only way to get to London was to take your chance of a seat in the coaches passing through Guildford, or to post in your own carriage by way of Ripley, Cobham, (where you changed horses) and Esher; if you couldn't afford either, you had to go on Shank's mare, and I know of some old inhabitants of Albury who actually did walk to London more or less frequently, stay a few days, and walk back.

It was some time before railway travelling "took on" with our country folk. Many will remember that fine handsome specimen of an Englishman, Henry Dean, the mole-catcher, who lived at Farley Green. He never went further from the parish than Guildford, or as far as he could follow the hounds (he was at every meet). I recollect his being pressed to go to London by rail; tears came into his eyes, and he said he had "never rode in an engine train, and never could".

By the way, Henry Dean, John Humphreys, the sexton, and Sherlock, the Duke's shepherd, were about the last who continued to wear those picturesque and beautifully stitched white smocks which in the old days were so universal; I think however, Humphreys generally wore a brown one, but it doesn't matter - a smock's a smock for a' that

When the great main lines of rail were opened in the thirties and forties, the companies took on the drivers and guards of the old mail coaches into their service as guard, and fine trusty fellows they were, as indeed their sons and grandsons are to this day. Any Albury mother may with perfect confidence send her baby to Edinburgh or the Land's End in charge of a guard, and he will take as much care of it as if it were his pet kitten..

A journey to London or beyond, when the Queen began to reign, was a business to be thought out and planned days, and even weeks before it came off. Now you get a telegram, say at 8 a.m. and whisk off to London or elsewhere by the 8.40 and think nothing of it.