



Appleford Village History

Introduction

It is hoped that this document will provide some interesting background to Appleford. Most of the information on these pages was taken from "Appleford 2000 - A Village Shaped by Time." Written and put together by:

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Our thanks for their hard work putting the book together and for allowing us to publish parts of it here.

Contents

Please use the links below to navigate to the relevant information:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Old and New	3
Event Timeline	5
Population over the years	11
Memories of Post War Appleford Cricket Club.....	12

Old and New

This is a look at some old postcards of various scenes in Appleford compared to how they are now. If you have any old pictures of Appleford please [contact us](#), we'd love to expand our collection!

All these pictures are from the Packer collection and were taken between 1910 and 1940.

Click on the image for the full sized version.

Old	New
 <p data-bbox="368 801 708 837">Holywell, Church Street</p>	
 <p data-bbox="325 1003 748 1039">Carpenter's Arms, Main Road</p>	
 <p data-bbox="317 1137 762 1173">Church Cottage, Church Street</p>	
 <p data-bbox="330 1361 743 1397">Black Horse Pub, Main Road</p>	
 <p data-bbox="322 1675 751 1711">Thatched Cottage, Main Road</p>	



Thatched Cottage, Main Road



Appleford Halt

Coming Soon

Event Timeline

By Brian Seyer

c.320 - 350 AD There is some evidence of a Roman Settlement near the present village during this period (see 1890, 1956 and 1968).

871 - 90 The first mention of Appleford, as such, was during the reign of Alfred the Great when his faithful subject Deormed was granted land here. (Victoria County History Berkshire, Vol 1).

1086 Entry about Appleford (sic) in Domesday Book in a list of Abbey properties.

12th Century The Church was rebuilt.

1496 Appleford Church first linked with Sutton Courteney.

1538 Surrender of Abingdon during Henry VIII's reign - end of Appleford's connection with the Abbey.

1551 Manor of Appleford granted by the King to Sir John Mason

1563 First recorded baptism Joan Whitfield

1564 First recorded burial Thomas Hunnybunne

1567 First recorded wedding Higges - Whicheloe

1566 Sir John Mason died - Manor of Appleford passed to Anthony Weekes, who took the name Mason.

1579 Leases were granted to Anthony Wykes (alias Mason) and John Trulock to run for 200 years from the decease of Elizabeth Mason. They covered much of the lands and property in Appleford. The leases were still extant in 1878 but have subsequently lapsed and most properties are now freehold.

1594 The Manor passed to the Reade family until about 1820.

1607 Edmund Bradstock died. In his will he left an endowment to provide education in Appleford. This resulted in a "free" school being built.

1660's Probable date of building Old Thatch, also original parts of Barnards.

1700/1799 The Justice family gave several endowments to benefit Appleford.

1749 Appleford Churchyard licensed for burials.

1752 Church acquired its Communion Plate which is still in use today.

1801 Population 200.

c. 1820 House now known as "Kingsweston" built.

1840 Bridge Farm House built, after the railway divided the farm at that time owned by Arthur Napper's grandfather.

1855 The Samuel Green organ (Originally at Sutton Courtenay since its building in 1777) installed in Appleford Church.

1876 55 pupils on school roll.

1878 200 acres in Appleford, together with a Villa, Farmhouse, Public House and 30 cottages, sold by auction.

c. 1880 The old wooden railway bridge over the Thames replaced by a girder bridge.

1885/86 Church nave rebuilt and lengthened. New tower and spire built. Three new bells cast and added to the existing three to make a ring of six.

1890 Evidence of a Romano-British settlement found in field south of the Church, together with skeletons and pottery of the same period at Manor Farm.

1891 Carpenter's Arms opened.

1896 Appleford school enlarged.

1914/18 About this time the Post Office was moved from Church Lane to a site at the junction with Main Road.

1918 Hundreds of tiny toads descended on the village during a heavy rainstorm.

1920/30's 3 bakers, 6 butchers, 4 coalmen, 2 milkmen, 2 fish and chip vendors had round in Appleford.

1926 Churchyard extended. Packer Studios of Chipping Norton produced a series of local postcards. The plates for about 20 Appleford views still exist. Mr and Mrs Berry retired from the Post Office. Mr and Mrs Jackson bought Post Office and Shop.

1929 Mrs Mary Hilsdon appointed headmistress of the school.

1933/34 Appleford halt built.

1933 John Faulkner died in his 104th year. Perhaps Appleford's most renowned inhabitant, he was a successful jockey until his 70's. Twice married

he fathered 32 children!

1935/36 Electricity installed in school as part of general improvements. 1935 Mrs Grace Fidler became post woman for Appleford until 1969. Mrs Dorothy Skinner of Sutton Courtenay appointed infant teacher at the school.

1937 From Parish Council minutes. "Decision to cut and lay hedge at recreation ground and to notify police of the malicious damage continually being done by the youths of the village."

1938 Bungalows north of the allotment built (PCM) "Concern expressed about dangerous bend at foot of railway bridge", Council asked for a 30 mph limit.

1939 Mr Harry Pullen died after farming Manor Farm for 20 years. His father had farmed there since the end of last century. The farm was then worked by Mr Bill Diamond who lived at Orchard house.

1942 Rail crash at Appleford. An express train and goods train collided at Appleford crossing on the 13th Nov.

1944 Parachute exercise prior to D-Day. Many parachutists landed in Appleford and three unfortunately drowned in the river. An Appleford resident was fined "for receiving a parachute from a soldier."

1945 Mrs Stuart~Monteath of Barnards became a school governor. End of World War II. Electricity came to Appleford.

1946 Struggle for restoration of the recreation ground after its wartime use for agriculture - finally achieved in 1950.

1947 Electricity installed in Church.

1948 Councils houses by Carpenter's Arms erected.

1949 Rev. G.R. Dunstan was appointed vicar.

1950 Arthur Napper's challenge that his "Old Timer" could beat another traction engine in a race marked the beginning of the annual rallies - and of the national Traction Engine movement.

1951 Attempts by the Parish Council to have Miller's Bridge, a packhorse bridge on the footpath between Appleford and Long Wittenham restored.

1952 September - another rail crash at Appleford. A freight train demolished the signal box which had to be rebuilt.

1953 Mrs Mary Hillsdon ceased to be Headmistress of the school. (SMM)

1954 Miss Helen Williams appointed as new headmistress - formally senior assistant at Steventon. (PCM) Complaints about smells from piggeries at Barnards.

December-The Church was endangered by fire due to lack of water nearby. Mrs Cunliffe appointed to the school for 2.5 days a week.

1955 School troubled with flies and pig smells from Barnards. (SMM) Leslie Williams of New House (now Five Elms) appointed school governor. Rev. R.G. Dunstan left - succeeded by Rev. W. Littlechild in 1956.

1957 More nuisance from Barnard's piggeries. (SMM)

1959 End of long campaign by the PC to have mains water laid to the village - resulting in difficulties with drainage. (PCM) Resignation of Mrs Cunliffe from school post. (SMM)

1960 Boy from school won a place to attend Wallingford Grammar School. Only 16 on school roll.

1961 May 10th. Miss Williams told by the vicar that the school was to close in July - which it did amid a certain amount of confusion due to indecision at Count Hall. (SMM)

First hints of the beginning of growth - application for Chambrai Close development was vigorously opposed by the Parish Council but was eventually passed. (PCM)

Mrs Jackson who had run the Post Office since 1926 sold to Mr Bull.

1962 End of train service from Radley to Abingdon, ending the rail link from Appleford to Abingdon. (PCM)

1963 Mains drainage in village (PCM). Proposal for erection of Power Station at Didcot by CEGB.

1964 Proposal to erect houses on old school site.

Proposed development at Barnards - now Holmwood and The Croft. Two extra houses proposed at Main Road end of Chambrai Close (Glaros and Waydown). (PCM)

1965 Black Horse Public House demolishes. Houses and bungalows proposed for the site.

Proposed erection of 12 houses at the junction of School Lane and Church Lane.

Proposal to demolish the old chapel at Barnards and erect a dwelling alongside at end of School Lane.

1966 Cottages demolished in the paddock between the railway and Barnards. Meadow House erected behind site. Development at Barnards started.

1967 Half of the tree on The Knap blown down early on October morning.

Internal roof timbers of the Church were renewed.
Gas was brought to Appleford. The last of the utilities was in place.

1968 The "Appleford Hoard", a set of pewter bowls and plates, 24 in all, discovered along with some ironwork including tools, chains and a padlock. Pottery fragments and a shoe found in an old collapsed well shaft, all believed to date from the 4th century AD. Placed in Ashmolean Museum.
Rev. W. Littlechild retired ~ replaced by Rev. G. Jager.
School demolished. School Lane, Manor Close and Church Lane development. (PCM)

1969 "Littleworth Cottages" in the Main Road were derelict and had to be demolished. (PCM)
Abingdon Bypass - East or West route controversy. Council and most residents in favour of Western route which was adopted. Was this the first "West is Best" campaign?
Grace Fidler the post woman retired. Her daughter, Iris Harris took over her duties until 1972.
Mr Fozzard gave up Post Office, which was taken over by Mr and Mrs J Margetts.

1970 Barnard's 15th century chapel demolished.
Appleford Meadows built at the end of School Lane.

1971 Proposal for Council Housing on allotment site - opposed by Parish meeting. (PCM)

1972 Construction of Oxford phase of M40 - proposed route through village for heavy lorries. String opposition - scheme abandoned.

1974 Tree at Bridge Farm blown down in February gale and squashed bus (GJO 628F) on approach to railway bridge. Mercifully it was half term so no school children were on the bus.

1975 Rev. George Jager retired - succeeded by Rev. Freddie Denman.
Parishes of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Culham temporarily combined.
Priest in charge resident in Culham.

1976 Margetts family gave up Post Office and moved away from village.
Temporary loss of Post Office and Shop. Freddie Denman became vicar.
WI formed. Original WI had lapsed many years ago.

1977 A dispute over plans for the recreation area divided the village. The issues were finally resolved with a referendum. Rebuilding of Village Hall - completed.

1978 Rev. C.G. Clarke was appointed vicar.

1979 Queen's Silver Jubilee. Exhibition of Appleford history in the Church organised in part by the WI.

Mrs Paul opened Post Office (Main Road site).

Loss of nearly all public transport to Abingdon. Buses to/from Abingdon are now routed via the new Power Station road, however there were 14 stopping trains per day to/from Didcot. This is a reversal of the situation in the 60's and early 70's when train services declined and for a time there was a reasonable bus service to Abingdon.

Amey excavations came ever nearer to the village. Rubbish tipping into the pits caused problems. Appleford plagued with flies - residents collect bags full and dumped them on Council. Some villagers claimed sickness caused by flies. Months before problem solved Mr and Mrs Paul gave up Post Office and moved away from the village.

1985 Rev. John Walker was installed as vicar.

1987 (June) Final closure of the post Office and Shop. Brenda Jones remained a resident.

1989 Neighbourhood Watch Scheme set up in the village.

1990 Rev. A. Leighton Thomas became vicar. Widespread gales in the south east affected Appleford. Trees blown down, some structural damage to properties, electricity failure through the village, some properties without power for days.

1991 New electric lighting installed in the Church.

1993 New service of two buses a week. Trains cut again, no Sunday service. Suggestions for Conservation Area within the village.

1997 Fire at the side of the railway by the old pumping station burned for days - pumping station demolished and also the shrubbery at the back. Barn restoration and conversion to a house and erection of two new houses at Manor Farm.

1998 Land on either side of the Carpenter's Arms sold and two houses built thereon. Refurbishment of the Carpenter's Arms.

1999 New threat to the village. One of the two alternatives for the Didcot expansion would bring development up to Appleford's boundary. Much opposition in the local villages. A campaign was launched with the slogan "West is Best".

2000 New village signs erected changing the name of the village to "Appleford on Thames."

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the first Traction Engine Rally which took place in Appleford.

30 mph speed limit imposed through the village.

Population over the years

By Brian Seyer

Year	No.	Comment
1801	200	
1811	160	
1821	161	
1831	179	
1841	187	
1851	272	
1861	288	
1871	299	Figures reflect the Victorian tendency for large families.
1881	346	
1891	301	
1901	251	
1911	233	
1921	240	
1931	284	
1941	?	No census - Second World War.
1951	299	
1961	263	
1971	783	(423 in village), The leap in population here is partly because of the Power Station builders whose caravan site was just within the boundaries of Appleford, accounting for this anomaly. During this decade houses rose from 79 to 130, when Chambrai Close, School Lane and Manor Close were built.
1981	393	
1991	355	

Memories of Post War Appleford Cricket Club

By Alan Sharpe

In the winter of 1945, unknown to a small boy, the talk amongst villagers after the war years was how to return to peacetime normality. For some that normality meant the resumption of village sport. Before the war Appleford had football and cricket teams, apparently capable of giving a good account of themselves.

There would be difficulties, particularly for football which was not played again until the mid 1950's. The reason for this was the recreation ground, purchased before the war, had been ploughed up for the war effort and was still being used for agriculture.

However, for cricket the meadow next to the railway behind Meadow House was pressed into service with the blessing of the owner, Mr Bill Napper of Bridge Farm. In those days a row of cottages housing his workers stood where Meadow House now stands. Behind them adjacent to the boundary with Barnards in a small fenced-off garden stood a green wooden caravan. This was the home of Mr Taylor, the retired landlord of the Carpenter's Arms, who acted as the water bailiff on the stretch of the river fished by the London Angling Association. He was a kindly man. Fishing was a popular pastime for village boys, in summer along the river, and in winter the "Ballast Hole" over the railway line from the recreation ground. If Mr Taylor found you fishing without a permit on his regular patrols along the bank he would always remind you that this was illegal, whilst at the same time giving tuition on bait, tackle, and the best spots of fish.... "but not at weekends lad when the London fishermen come."

So here in this meadow from the summer of 1946 until 1951 Appleford Cricket Club made its home. There were no facilities, players and spectators sheltered under the Elm trees when it rained and the boundaries behind the wickets were very short due to the width of the field. Nevertheless, rudimentary cricket was played against local village teams, both home and away.

Early stalwarts, amongst others, were Roly Ayres, "General" Prior, Gordon Jennings, Bill Reynolds, Claude Biddle, Fred Nash and the Meadham brothers. Each summer weekend they would drive the cattle or sheep off the playing area down towards the river, brush and cut the pitch with small battered old hand lawn mower and mark out the wicket. The stumps were pretty ancient along with the rest of the team kit that obviously had been lovingly stored away at the outbreak of the war. There was not much of it, two or three bats, a couple of pairs of pads, and a pair of wicket keeping gloves. All of this had been much repaired and it was common practice to wear only one pad and no batting gloves. I suppose if nothing else it soon taught one that the object of the game was to hit the ball with the bat, before the ball hit you.

In that era cricket balls were like gold dust and two maybe three balls would be a club's most treasured possessions, with little possibility of replacing them if lost. At Appleford stoppages were frequent and lengthy to find a ball if hit over the boundary. The railway embankment and its rabbit holes were the greatest hazard. A major tragedy occurred early in the team's life when a ball hit for six landed in an empty coal truck going north along the railway line. That ball was probably used by a Colliery team in Staffordshire for years after. From that time play was suspended when bowling from that end of the ground if a goods train was passing.

Tea was a grand affair. It was a point of honour that the hospitality extended to visiting teams should be beyond criticism and the teal ladies, all related to the players, took great pride in their efforts. The tea ritual took place in Barnards Chapel which was situated at the end of School Lane. The Chapel was used for a variety of village social events and would have been a long walk from the pitch had it not been for the generosity of the residents of Barnards. So it was on most summer weekends that twenty two motley, sweating, cricketers and sundry others would go through a little side gate from the meadow into Barnards' garden and trudge to and fro across the gravelled area at the front of the house. It all seemed perfectly normal at the time, just a facet of village life.

In 1950 the Ministry of Agriculture re-seeded the recreation ground and handed it back to the village. It was rough but the club moved back to its former home in 1951, two years before the Queen's Coronation which was marked by planting the Copper Beech tree still standing around the edge. There was no car park, the roadside hedge had only a small gate by Rose Cottages and a large gate opposite Sinodun Row.

At least in the meadow the grass had been cropped and fertilised by countless sheep and rabbits, resulting in a thick fine turf. The recreation ground had been sown with rough rye grass that did not and would not make a good wicket. Once again, there were no facilities, visiting players either arrived ready to play or changed behind the hedge. Tea was still provided in the Chapel but the tea break was extended due to the longer journey there and back.

I seem to recall that the club had a good first season on the new ground. Despite borrowing a road roller from Amey's Asphalt Company, where Les Budden the Managing Director was a cricket enthusiast, the pitch left much to be desired. It was heaven for a bowler, hell for a batsman, especially during hot spells when the ground dried out and the ball did unimaginable things. Visiting teams came, looked at the pitch, lost the toss and were put to bat but were psychologically beaten before a ball was bowled! I remember we dismissed a team, who shall be nameless, for eight run that season. It was rather embarrassing but we had a leisurely tea and they beat us in the ensuing beer match. In the Carpenter's Arms later, most of us wished it had been the other way round.

That winter, club members were rather busy. Under the guidance of Claude Biddle the rough turf at the two ends of the square was removed. On Sunday mornings a tractor and trailer was borrowed and turf dug up from the edge of the copse, long since gone, which was situated on Mr Napper's land on the right hand side of the road to Sutton Courtenay. This turf had also been cropped by rabbits for years and with the help of Amey's roller soon bedded down into a playable surface. The cricket square was fenced off and became a "no go area" except for players on match days and those who tended the ground.

Equipment was becoming more plentiful thanks to the efforts of those who ran winter Drives in the Chapel for the club. Apart from playing kit this enabled the purchase of a second-hand set of gang mowers. On match days the ground became very smart and on sunny afternoons quite a few spectators would turn up and sit around the boundary in deck chairs. Television, cars and distant holidays had not yet become the norm.

Club dinners were held at the end of each season in "The Big Room" of the Black Horse Pub where Mrs Harvey the landlord's wife catered in style. Ale was "de rigueur", served in large enamel pitchers, as wine was not yet fashionable. As the team's reputation grew so did the fixture list as teams from farther a field were added. This presented a problem for some, particularly the younger members. It was quite a cycle ride to the outskirts of Oxford and would have been even worse to Lambourne or Ilsley. However Bill Nash who farmed Radcot Farm, (the farm buildings were over the Level Crossing where offices now stand), had an open-backed Ford Lorry which his son Fred could borrow most Sundays. It was a bit draughty and bumpy up on the back but in retrospect that was a blessing in disguise. Bill Nash's passion was greyhounds.

He had kennels at the farm, raced them at all the local tracks, and trained them in his field by the Level Crossing. They must have taken some feeding, for the lorry was used to pick up offal and meat scraps from local butchers and abattoirs. Despite Fred hosing the lorry down, it could pong a bit on a hot day and deodorants were not as plentiful then as they are now!

After two or three years the club realised they should be offering changing facilities to players and visiting teams. In the mid 1950's building materials were still scarce and the club's resources would not stretch to anything more than a self-build job. Quite a bit of begging, borrowing, but no stealing went on to get the materials, much of it generously supplied by Amey's After gaining Parish Council permission, team members turned out on winter Sunday mornings, some with hangovers but fortified by hot drinks supplied by Mrs Reynolds and her daughter Vera, to commence building. The "professional" bits were carried out to the instructions of Ted Ballard who worked for a builder in Didcot.

So it was that we gained a "pavilion". It was not Lords or The Oval, in truth it was just a hut. Approximately 14' x 10', built with a single skin of concrete blocks and topped with a flat, sloping, corrugated asbestos roof. There was a

door and two windows in the front. At the rear, tall players had difficulty in standing upright because of the slope of the roof. Inside on a concrete floor stood two wooden benches, one for the home team and one for the visitors. There was no electricity or water but we did build a men's latrine in the corner of the recreation ground with a few second hand sheets of corrugated iron. In summer the building was extremely hot and in winter very cold and damp. As far as I know no photographs of this magnificent structure exist and it was never entered for an architectural award! The photograph now in the village hall is not the original building. "Taffy" Spiller and Bill Lincoln enlarged it in the late 1960's for the village football team and this is shown in the photograph.

In 1959 mains water came to the village and the club had a metered supply installed to water the pitch. Things were really looking up but other factors were influencing outlooks. On the playing side league cricket was becoming fashionable but Appleford's players were rather conservative, preferring traditional club matches which became increasingly difficult to arrange. Team members began to acquire Ford Anglias and Austin Sevens. Their wives and girlfriends wanted to be out and about at weekends rather than watching grown men in white flannels chasing a cricket ball.

So the club suffered a lingering death in the 1960's, finally expiring around 1966, leaving the legacy of its "pavilion" to the village. The cricket square, so lovingly nurtured, has long since disappeared. The water supply and its meter now record the consumption of the Village Hall and Allotments but for years after the bill still arrived addressed to the Cricket Club. Nostalgically, the roller covered in grass sits rusting away by the railway line and the concrete practice wicket, once covered with matting and surrounded by a net, slowly crumbles.

Some players still live in and around Appleford. Sometimes I wonder if the score books, recording their names and deeds survive - like my trusty pads, which lie out of sight but not forgotten, in a dark corner of my loft.

Old Village Pictures

Do you recognise anyone? Is it you?! If you know anyone in these pictures please let us know.

Click on any of the images to see the full sized version.



Contact: applefordpc@googlemail.com

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