



## **Hankerton in the 1950's**

Thousand year old Hankerton where Council tenants still drink rain water!

Tucked away amongst the highways and by-ways near historic Malmesbury, is tiny Hankerton, an agricultural village with more than a 1,000 years of history and where the tenants of "modern" council houses still suffer the crude conditions of olden days - through lack of piped water supply their drinking water is collected from the roofs of their homes.

When it rains the water courses from the roofs went into an under ground storage tanks where it is purified before being hand pumped into smaller tanks under the roofs of the houses.

What happens when it doesn't rain? The underground tanks hold sufficient water for 14 days but when that has gone the tenants have to look to the local Fire Brigades. Sometimes water has been carried from as far away as Swindon.

Mrs. E. J. Mansfield a tenant of one of the six houses, said that when she first moved in immediately after the house was completed, water became very precious in the summer months and they often had to ration supplies.

### **1,000 Pulls on the Hand Pump!**

"I have to give more than 1,000 pulls on the hand pump to fill my tank upstairs and then it's only about enough for a heavy day- washing day. Of course we do get our water through the taps, eventually, but I think I would rather draw my water from a well like the cottagers, than have this stunt everyday."

Malmesbury Rural Council's Sanitary and Housing Officer, Mr. S. R. Pierce, confirmed that Hankerton's council houses did have to rely on the weather for their supply. "Most unusual, for modern houses," he agreed, "but we anticipated there would be a piped supply much earlier than this. We have had the usual hold-ups. The nearest supply at the moment is Minety but if it is intended to supply Hankerton on our regional scheme which will run through Oaksey, Hankerton, Charlton, Lee and the Somerfords.

It looks as if the six houses will be at the mercy of nature for sometime yet; Mr. Pierce would not hazard a guess at the length of time it will take to get the regional scheme through. However, I expect Hankerton would rather have council houses with rain water flowing through their village than no houses.

### **Cloatley Manor Built in the 16th century**

The proudest possession the Hislops of Cloatley Manor had was the Spiral staircase made of Solid Oak, it was carved in one piece from one Oak tree.

### **Secret Room**

At one end of the old house is the Cheese room that still contains part of the oak panelling, much of which was carried off to Eastcourt house. Immediately below a tiny room leading off from one corner of the cheese room is a secret room. Probable at one time it was "A priest Hole". Whatever it was it must have been a warm room as one of the walls is adjacent to the huge stone fireplace in the kitchen, now used as a wood shed.

Leaving the Hislops farm, I went across to the village Post Office and shop, kept by Mrs Eliza Musty, whose mother and grandmother were both postmistresses. But for the weather- beaten sign on the wall, the Post Office would have been indistinguishable from any of the cottages.

One of Hankertons oldest inhabitants is 87year old Mr. Jim Gleed, who lives in a cottage at the rear of the council houses. Jim can remember when there were 30 to 40 more cottages in the village. "They have either fallen down or had been pulled down like the one I used to live in", he said.

Jim is well known in the district. He used to travel with a Threshing machine around the local farms. At 87 years of age, people are content to forget work but not Jim; he still keeps in trim by looking after his large garden.

Hankerton's fortunes have improved recently. The inhabitants count themselves lucky to have four buses to Malmesbury and two to Swindon each week. Maybe when there is a piped water supply, more council houses will be built, to replace those cottages that have disappeared.

**The Wiltshire Herald & Advertiser, Friday, 22 December 1950 By Maurice Trowbridge**