



# Parish News

## *The Village of Worton*

Approaching Worton from Seend you might miss a most unusual thatched farm as you sweep around one of the bends which guard this approach to the village. If you do miss the farm it is a shame and a return journey on the same road would be advisable. For this is Marsh Farm, displaying a rare example of early 19th century picturesque taste. A 17th century timber-framed farmhouse was altered and the thatch swept down low over a deep veranda and held up by five rustic supports. A little further along the road a turning to the right leads down Mill Road, past The Old Mill of c1850 now converted into flats, to the attractive village of Marston which is linked to Worton in many ways.

As you enter Worton you are conscious of modern housing and indeed this is true at both the eastern and western approaches. For it is basically a street village, and one which suffers in the early morning for being used as a 'rat run' to avoid considerable traffic delays in Devizes and, at other times of the day, from heavy vehicles travelling from the Salisbury area into western Wiltshire. To drive through Worton is to miss many architectural delights and pleasant footpaths and it is well worth parking, thus slowing down that through traffic, and spending an hour walking in the parish.

At the western end are what can be thought of as the public buildings - Worton and Marston Village Hall, black and white, with a war memorial to the three local men who died in the Second World War; and Worton and Marston County Primary School in an attractive rural setting for learning and with good playing fields. Opposite is the former Wesleyan Methodist chapel of 1848, which replaced the original one of 1829, which is now the Anglican Catholic church of St. Brithwold. The large modern house next door nicely retains the original link by its name, Wesley House.

Church Lane leads off from the village hall and at the end is the lovely little hidden Christ Church. For many years I had not realised that there was a church in the village; indeed there was not until 1843 when Christ Church was built as a chapel of ease. The path is lined by 14 lime trees and from its platform graveyard the church looks out across fields and a small lake. I have never rated the diocesan architect T. H. Wyatt highly but here, with the help of David Brandon, he has designed a most fitting simple church in a Gothic style. A simple cruciform plan, plain stone ashlar, wide nave, no stained glass so plenty of natural light, box pews and a small west gallery are a far cry from some of the excesses of the 19th century. The total cost was £1,100 and the builder was Mr Jones of Bradford on Avon.

Both Worton and Marston were formerly tithings of the parish of Potterne and it was not until an Order of Council in 1852 created the district chapelry of Worton, from the tithings of Worton and Marston, that they became an ecclesiastical parish in their own right. It was in this year that Christ Church became an official parish church and in 1894 Worton civil parish was placed under the aegis of a parish council. Although local administration is new the landscape is old. The land is generally flat, about 200 feet above sea level, and both watercourses and village development are roughly on an east-west axis. The village extends from Mill Road in the west to Cuckold's Green in the east. The latter was so named by 1773 and one feels sorry for the man who lived there and has had his misfortune remembered for more than 200 years. The name for the village itself comes from the Old English for herb enclosure or kitchen garden which conjures up a far pleasanter domestic scene.

The area is well blessed with footpaths. From the church, Church Lane becomes a footpath, crosses the substantial waters of the Lavington Brook and continues to Marston. From the High Street many paths begin, some cross Worton Common while others head towards Potterne and Poulshot.

In the High Street are many fine houses and cottages and there is much use of Bridgwater tiles. From the 16th century is the timber-framed Manor Farmhouse, encased in the 18th century and now rendered. More remain from the 17th century. The timber-framed Rose and Crown, refronted with red brick a century later, still with a cobbled area in front and providing both a skittle alley and a function room; The Old Forge; The Grange; Park Farmhouse; and Ashton House, all timber-framed and the latter two with hipped thatched roofs. The 18th century saw many alterations to existing houses and also the building of The Little House, Worton House and The Old Coach House. Both 17th and 18th centuries must have been prosperous times here but the real surprise comes from 1912.

A century later than the alterations to Marsh Farm is Prince Hill House. It is an unusually elaborate neo-Georgian house with elaborate detailing outside and fine fittings of early 18th century style inside. It has been very nicely renovated recently and the roughcast painted timber facings are in very apt and subtle shades of blue and grey.

Two others deserve mention. The Old School House is of brick and vaguely ecclesiastical looking with its pointed windows. Not surprising as it began life as the Sunday school room of 1844 and became the village school by 1859 when 50 children were attending class. It was not until 1931 that responsibility was transferred from the church and parish to the county council. Next door is the attractive Fowler's Cottage of brick with stone decoration.

#### **NB**

The village information above is taken from *The Wiltshire Village Book*, written by Michael Marshman and published by Countryside Books. Click on the link [Countryside Books](#) to view Countryside's range of other local titles.