

Memories of Harley

Perhaps the memoirs of Mrs Hilda Preece, one-time infant teacher and a resident of Harley will convey the flavour of this village more vividly than bare historical facts. In the last years of the 20th Century, not long before her death, Mrs Preece was prevailed upon by her neighbours to record her memories of a long life in Harley through the early part of the century. Her book, *A Shropshire Village of Yesteryear*, contains some lovely recollections.



"Old Harley was agricultural. There were five farms and a few smallholdings. The latter were cottages with a few fields, some quite a distance away.

There were two small shops, one being the post office, at the Shrewsbury entrance to the village and the other Old Timbers. There was a windmill, Harley Towers, and a watermill.

The blacksmith had his smithy opposite the school. When in the school yard we could hear the fire roaring and the clink of his hammer as he hammered out the horseshoes. Sometimes he would have a fire outside his shop when he was hooping the great wagon wheels.

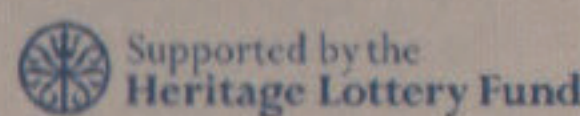
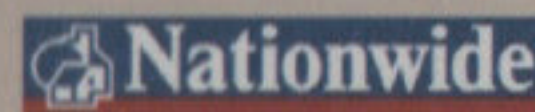
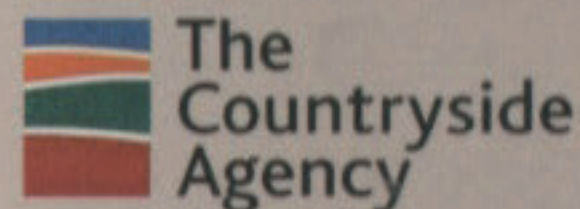
In the blacksmith's garden, Emily's holly is bright with its many red berries. She had a piece of holly in the house one Christmas and stuck it in the ground later. Emily passed on many years ago but the holly tree she planted still stands in the garden."

There still remains some of that tranquility about Harley: the holly tree is still here and the voices of children – real ones as well as the ghosts of the past – are still heard.



Harley, by the way, comes from two Saxon words: har meaning hare, and ley meaning a clearing in the forest.

The thanks of all the villagers of Harley and its visitors are due to the sterling work of Harley Pinders past and present and to those other volunteers who have pursued this project over many years.



www.harleypound.org.uk



Harley Pound

Pinfold, sometimes known as pounds, are small enclosures where stray animals were fastened up.

Welcome to Harley

There has been a settlement on this site or close to it for at least 1600 years. According to the Saxons, the inhabitants of Harley were of the W[r]ocen saetna, people dependent on the Wrekin, referring back to the days when this land lay in the territory of the Cornovii whose tribal headquarters was in the hill-fort atop the Wrekin Hill.

Under the Romans, this settlement developed into Viroconium Cornoviorum, the fourth largest town in Roman Britain.

Harley has a population of less than 200 in around 65 households. These are spread over quite a wide area but centred on the parish church of St Mary, a site of worship for more than a thousand years. There is a pretty village hall, once the school, made of the attractive local Kenley Gritstone and constructed in the style of the Gothic Revival of the mid 19th century. Parts of the Old Rectory, opposite the church, are believed to date from the 14th or early 15th century.

The word pound is of Saxon origin: pund, an enclosure; and so is its near relative: punfald, the modern pinfold. The south and west of England favour the former term, the north and east, the latter. It is becoming harder to find the constructions themselves, but you will find memories of them in many a Pinfold Street, Road and Lane in cities, towns and villages the length and breadth of England.

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Harley's Pound is believed to have been built in the 18th century. Like similar village pounds it was used for the temporary enclosure of animals, mainly sheep and occasionally cows, found wandering in the village. As far as can be ascertained the Pound was never used after the early years of the 20th century.



The decaying village pound had received little attention in 'modern' times until 1968 when a meeting of the Parish Council determined it should be cleaned and taken into use as a bus shelter. However Harley's Pound was designated a Grade II Listed Building in the Listing Survey of 1971 making its reincarnation as a bus shelter doubtful.

Investigations of the structure revealed that it would need much more careful archaeological preservation and reconstruction than was originally thought to be necessary. In 1997 the interest of villagers was stimulated again as a result of the Harley Millennium Tree Project, part of a national campaign for Rural Action for the Environment. Attention was again drawn to the Village Pound as a focus for the tree project and, under the auspices of a small sub-committee, a grant was obtained and work began on the Pound in October 1998.

However, the difficulties of rebuilding such a damaged structure proved too costly at that time and the reconstruction had to be shelved.

"Harley's Pound was designated a Grade II Listed Building in the Listing Survey of 1971"

Early in 2003 the project to restore the Pound was revitalised by the knowledge that we might be able to obtain support from the Local Heritage Initiative of the Countryside Agency and Harley Pinders were established to galvanise support, make the bid for funding, conduct research and supervise the restoration. This reconstruction stage was much more problematic than expected but the task was completed by the summer of 2005 and the Pound was officially opened at a Village fayre on 3rd September that year.

This has been a long and, at times, heavy going project, but we are delighted to have restored the Pound for the village. It is a prominent reminder of the reason this village came into being as

an agricultural settlement. In these days of urban spread, dormitory communities and the fragmenting of communities, it is good to have another clear reminder of our links with the past and our roots in the land.

The restoration project, the website, this pamphlet and all the other means of helping people understand more about the village, are offered in a spirit of friendship and recognition of our common heritage.



Harley Pound before restoration