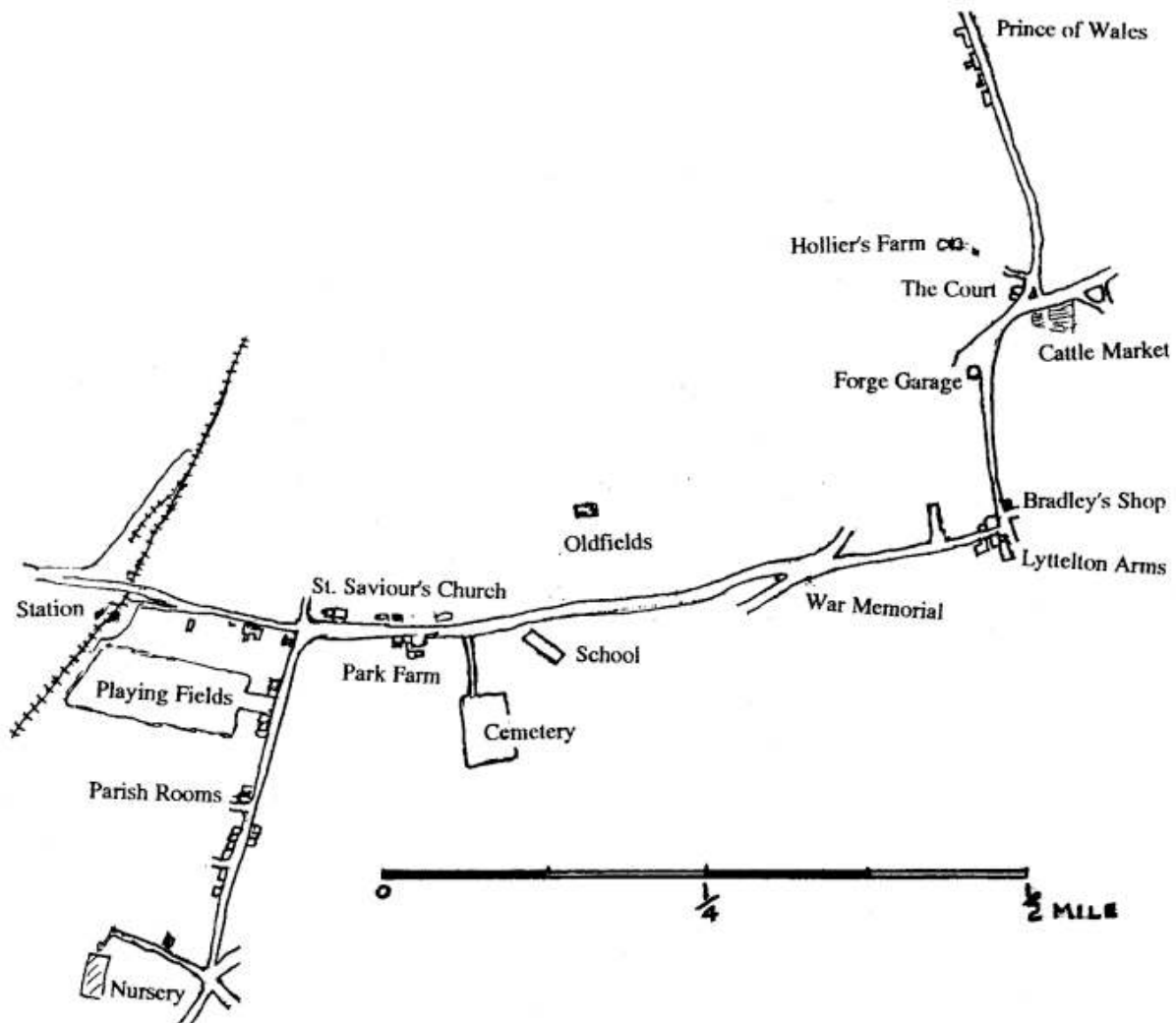


HAGLEY IN THE 1950s

ROUTE OF OUR WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE



DOWN MEMORY LANE

We are taking a walk in Hagley in the early 1950's, before the post-war developments, through the memories of several villagers. Remember, at this time the population was half that at the millennium.

"We caught a 311 bus which leaves Stourbridge every half hour for Kidderminster and set off to show my friend round Hagley. At the Midland Red Office they gave us a leaflet which claimed that "1800 buses weekly serve this village" to the local towns like Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Bromsgrove, Birmingham, Tenbury and Ludlow. Besides these there are daily services to Oxford, Bristol, London and all parts of the South Coast and South Wales.

We left the bus on the Stourbridge road at the Prince of Wales. This is an old pub, unchanged for many years, but comfortable with a cosy fire in the Snug. For a single carriageway this is a very busy road.

Walking along the road we passed a number of cottages on the right, including John Miller's new photographic studio which used to be kept by two old ladies, the Miss Thawleys, who sold almost everything from chocolate to wool.

Just before the turn to Hagley there is a path on the right which leads to Holliers Farm where the Tates live. They are an old, local farming family. Next is 'The Court' which in the nineteenth century was occupied by J.P.Grazebrook, an architect and designer of the Parish Church altar. During the war this was a nursing home but is now an hotel (used more for dining functions than for sleeping). On our left, at the road junction, is a triangle of grass where there is a drinking fountain erected in 1915 to commemorate the Grazebrook Diamond Wedding.

Across the main road is the Cattle Market, busy today (Monday) selling all kinds of livestock – cattle, sheep, geese, ducks and so on. Just past it is the Spencer's Arms which was rebuilt between the wars and is busy now – with farmers on market day.

Walking round the bend into Bromsgrove Road we pass the Forge Garage on the right, run by Mr.Moulder and opposite it is one of Hagley's two Police Stations and then the Post Office further along.

At the corner of Hall Lane, on the left hand side, was Bradley's shop. A nice old-fashioned shop which used to have a bakery at the side because Mr.Bradley was a baker. Since his death it has been run by his wife and daughter.

As you turn into Park Road, on the left hand corner, is the Lyttelton Arms well used by people in the locality for private functions, especially weddings. This is also the meeting place of the Boxing Day Hunt. The

smell of horses leads you to look to the right at the Livery Stables opposite. Walk on past Lyttelton Place with its impressive row of houses to the crossroads at the Kidderminster Road.

Cross over to the War Memorial (erected by the council in the 1920's) and continue along Park Road with fields on the left and Oldfields House on the right. During the latter part of the war American G.I's worked and ate here, in huts in the extensive grounds, and were billeted in the village. Already you can hear the noise on the left from the County Primary School. The pupils are taking a break. This was built in 1939 and now has 300 pupils. Next lies the path to the cemetery, altogether a quieter spot. Park Farm, usually known as Green's farm after the family who live here, is close to the road with its fields reaching to the Worcester Road and the Kidderminster Road. Opposite are villas built at the turn of the century and at the crossroads with Worcester Road lies St.Saviour's Church. Now a landmark, the church was only built in 1908 to serve the community in West Hagley. That it was built in stone and not brick was due to the generosity of Miss Hazelhurst and others.

Crossing into Station Road the aroma of coffee leads one to Strickley's a long-established grocery store. Parked outside is the bicycle used for deliveries. Then comes Jane's a paradise for ladies who are fond of handwork. In the tiny shop are stocked the most amazing selection from knitting wool to lace makers' cushions and every hue of embroidery thread. At No.21 the Newsagents run by the Bridgewater

Along the drive past the railway workers' cottages is the present station, which was built in 1884, some thirty years after the railway. The footbridge is famous as the one modelled by Hornby in its train sets. Standing on the road bridge you can watch the passengers board a train for London via Worcester, or Shrewsbury via the Severn valley. Looking in the opposite direction you can see the signal box and the busy goods yard. There are four coal merchants with their offices and heaps of coal. The farmers use it to move animals and produce. Up Brake Lane there is Brake farm and you can glimpse a few houses across the fields in Brake Lane and Sweetpool Lane.

Returning to Worcester Road turn right passing 'Wayside'. The End Shop is a general store where Lorna and Frank Jenner sell groceries, fruit and vegetables. You must pop in for some of the highly regarded dairy produce, especially its excellent cheeses. Next to that is Mrs.Myra Crumpton's superior 'Ladies Dress Shop'.

The playing fields, five acres bought by the Parish and a further three acres added through the good offices of Lord Cobham lie next. The slide here is famous in the locality as the tallest and therefore the longest. I know of families in Lye whose children catch the train to spend an afternoon in Hagley for the treat of using that slide.

Next on the right is the shoe shop owned by Mr. James Wyse, then Ambrose Lees hardware store, selling seeds, fertilizers, implements, paints, distempers and enamel ware. They are very helpful and their goods are reasonably priced. Next is Marsh and Baxter's, famous for its pork products, next door to Yates, another butchers. Last, before the villas, is the Hairdressers, Mr. Trevor and his brother Mr. Barry.

Bridges sweet shop and tobacconist was the first shop to sell ice-cream in Hagley and very nice too. Then next the Parish Rooms, which were built in 1882; village life revolves around them. Used by all for meetings, film shows and as a welfare clinic. Lloyds Bank runs a service from here and you can also pay the rates. Cross Church Street and just past the cottages is George Mason's, a grocery store.

On the opposite side of the road is the chemist, run by Mr. Greenwood and Miss Hesleden. There one is always glad to stand by the open fire on a cold winter's day. A back room is used by the doctors for dispensing as the surgery is only next door. Dr. Gosling lives adjacent to this at No. 98, 'The Ferns'.

Central Garage, across the road, is distinguished by its swinging arm for petrol. Ben Cutler, the owner, not only does repairs but runs a taxi service. Vaughan's newsagent is also the booking agent for Midland Red and Associated Motorways Coaches. You can travel to most places in the country, especially in summer, from the village. Then past the old-fashioned shop run by the Miss Gales. Cross Chapel Street and pass the 'Station' pub to the Free Church. It was opened in 1905 and was only the second in the country to be a 'Union church' with preachers from a variety of Christian denominations.

On reaching the main road turn right and right again past Spire House, with the M.E.B. showroom on the other corner, into the short road leading to the Nursery. On the right is the hutted 'Bible Hall' and across the road, up a rough drive Lily will sell you tomatoes from the greenhouses. Doug and Lily Vaughan sell their produce on Blackheath Market. Old Mrs. Vaughan (always saying 'Blessed by the Lord') sells produce when Lily is in Blackheath. If you want a plant you have to search for it through the weeds!

Then we walked back to the bus stop to catch the bus home for tea, with our purchase we can have our favourite of tomatoes sliced on hot buttered toast."