



Notes on Life in
Harefield
1878 to 1900

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Harefield isn't one of our pretty villages. Because it has had some industries - mills, brickfields, cement works and lime works, it has perhaps been a little more secure than an entirely farming village. Because it has no railway it has retained its rural character.

In 1636 the Countess of Derby, Lady of the Manor, acquired a son-in-law she did not trust, and so that he should not inherit all her treasures, she went to the trouble of building another mansion in nearby Eastcote, where she planned to hide her treasures. However, the following year, the young man was beheaded for his crimes - and so that problem was solved.

A hundred years ago the petty crimes committed were assault, being drunk and disorderly, poaching ~ six weeks hard labour for taking two birds. In 1884 a boy of 13 took a twopenny bottle of lemonade and received eight strokes of the birch. There was quite a lot of violence on Saturday nights and there was almost one policeman to each pub.

There were several nasty accidents in factories, and injured people had to be carried in horse-drawn carts over very rough roads. The nearest hospital was Hillingdon Cottage Hospital. The bodies of those drowned in the canal or killed in accidents were stored in the outhouses of pubs, where the inquests would

be held. Some publicans complained about this.

Health in Harefield, as in other Villages was a very uncertain affair. People drank water from the ponds. There was typhoid, diphtheria, measles, croup, all potential killers. Only when after much haggling over costs, at last a sewer was laid, and clean water piped in, and a start made with collecting rubbish, did the people's health improve. It cost 5s. a day for a cart and two men to collect rubbish.

In the 1880s entertainment was much what the villagers could produce. Temperance meetings, Church teas, Cricket Club matches and concerts, and of course, lectures. The Vicar had his

own "magic lantern", and one day blew out all the windows of the Memorial Hall, and injured his arm in the explosion. At a lecture on Christ young men were advised to look for "a wife with a good head on her shoulders," and to make use of the Post Office Savings Bank.

A boy could earn 2s. a week scaring birds. Your horse could be shod for 2s. 8d. and a young assistant blacksmith earned 21s. a week working from 6am. to 6pm. A pair of boots cost 4s., a 4 lb. loaf of bread was 5d.

In 1888 dress materials cost $4\frac{3}{4}$ pence to 1s. $3\frac{1}{2}$ d. per yard - ginghams, satens, cambries.

There was a 10s. fine for danger-

dangerous driving - 14 m.p.h. with a
ponyheart qualified for this.

In 1895 the Parish Council put
seats on the Village Green. The one
opposite the Swan was mysteriously
painted with tar, and several people
had their clothes ruined. "Seats," it
was said, "encourage idlers."

One year a party set out to "beat
the bounds." This meant a 14 mile walk
along parish boundaries, and not many
completed it.

In 1878 a letter appeared in the
press complaining of six-inch deep
holes in the roads, and signed "an old
horse." Later the council was asked
to widen the footbridges over the water-
splashes to allow for the perambulators

now in fashion.

The 1881 Census was taken in April of that year. People were advised that "this has nothing in common with the numbering of the people under David which brought the wrath of Heaven upon Israel," and - "heavy fines will be imposed if the papers are not carefully filled up."

By 1900 the Parish Council was discussing the taxing of cars and cycles, and in 1910 motors and motorcycles were travelling through the village "at a dangerous pace" and it was decided that the 10 m.p.h. speed limit must be enforced.

