

POLDEN HILLS GARDENING CLUB - Owing to illness, the scheduled speaker was unable to attend the January meeting. His place was taken by Mr S Chambers who entertained the members by showing slides of nine famous gardens, giving details of their formation and present day ownership and maintenance. This was the club's AGM and members decided that, in future, each New Year's meeting would begin in the month of March instead of January. The forthcoming programme was announced and in March this year, the speaker will be talking about 'The BBC's Victorian Kitchen Garden'.

OBITUARY - Maurice Bell was born 79 years ago and grew up in Cossington. He farmed at Westhay and on retirement came back to the village to live at Trelawns, Orchard Close. He had suffered from ill-health in recent years and on returning from a stay in Hospital, he died peacefully at home on Thursday 1st February. His funeral took place at Cossington Church on Tuesday 6th February and was conducted by the Revd Douglas Scholer.

In his younger days, Maurice was well known among the farming community for his humorous 'little ditties' about people and events. Following is part of a poem he wrote on the 'death' of our Big Tree on a sad day in November 1977.

Cossington Big Tree

Today a dear friend passed away,
Not from tempests, rain or decay
But fell, stricken by elm disease,
Your plight told in your dying leaves.

Medicinal help you were given,
No hope to survive was the answer given.
You who had stood there for years and years,
No wonder Cossington folk shed their tears.

The years have rolled so quickly by,
How many? I'll not try.
I've sheltered beneath your limbs as man and boy
Those memories bring a lot of joy.

Memories of going to school,
Sitting beneath your branches in the cool.
Listening to the phlip, phlop of horse and cart
Listening to the bees in your trunk too were part.

We gathered leaves for our bonfire,
Bags and bags full, we didn't tire
And then on the Festive Night
We placed around you candles and lanterns, what delight!

To me, ole friend, you'll always be
Not just an ordinary tree.
My memories will linger long
Into the future although you are gone.

I'm proud to have been a Cossington lad,
To remember all the good times we've had.
May we go on living the ole Cossington way
Until we too just fade away.

Maurice Bell

CHANGING YEARS - Cossington was a very different village during the boyhood of Maurice Bell to what it is today.

Central, of course, was the Big Tree with its branches spreading out across the road. Then there was the

school with its resident Headmistress and only the local children attending. The Church of St Mary sitting picturesquely in the gardens of the manor House. The Rector living snugly in the Rectory and walking over to the Church each morning and evening to say prayers and ring the bell. Squire Broderip, the Lord of the Manor and owner of most of the farms, dwelling houses and cottages in the parish. The Cossington Inn, as now, up on the hill - it has been said that the Squire would not allow a public house within the village! A farming community which provided work for the local men - the women and girls working at the Manor House and other gentlemen's residences.

There was a village blacksmith, a wheelwright, carpenter and laundress. The Registrar of Births and Deaths lived at Hill View, Manor Road and the Squire's head Gardener and Gamekeeper lived at 8 and 9 Manor road. The population in 1921 was recorded as 200 - 77 males and 123 females.

No cars, buses or lorries whizzing through the village, just cart horses pulling their carts, puts and waggons, and ponies trotting along pulling their traps.

No Village Hall until after the First World War when the local community worked hard to provide the existing hall in memory of those who died.

No playing field - it wasn't needed! There was a railway - axed by Beeching in 1953!

Changes started taking place in 1921 when a large part of the Cossington Manor Estate was sold. The Laurels making £420, The School House, cottage and garden £310, the Dairy House £300, Cedarpoint £85. At the sale in 1926, The Grove was sold for £1000, Church Farm for £475 and the Old Post Office for £170.

Can you imagine the village years ago with probably 48 dwellings, washed with yellow ochre or whitewashed to protect the soft blue lias stone from the weather? No Park Close or Crescent, no Broderip, no Manor Close, no Orchard Close, or St Mary's Close, no infilling - no new people! What a small community it would be!

Today we have a population of 555 and 227 dwellings (1991 census). Development over the years has enabled lots of people to come and live in this lovely village - and what would we do without them? With so many of them working on committees, helping with the Church, the School, the Hall and all the organisations, and with everyone so supportive of village events.

One thing certainly hasn't changed - the community spirit which keeps the village alive - let's all go on living 'the ole Cossington Way'!
Audrey Stradling.

WOOLAVINGTON

WOOLAVINGTON MOTHERS' UNION - The February meeting held on the 13th welcomed three visitors and opened with prayers and a bible reading. Our speaker, Mrs G Lewis, was also welcomed. Her talk was about hymns. She explained their origins, often based on the Psalms and old prayers and had been used in public and private worship for many centuries. Hymn writers had drawn their inspiration from events surrounding them, as well as from Bible passages, ancient writings and Church seasons. We were asked what makes a hymn popular - its words, its musical tune, its associations, its theme? All contributed in some way to make our worship more meaningful. She read her list of popular hymns - all great favourites! Mrs Lewis was warmly thanked by Mrs Jean Clark.