

Bradworthy in the twentieth century



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Introduction

The folk of the village of Bradworthy in Devon are known locally as 'horniwinks', this being the name of a small bird that once inhabited Bradworthy Moor. This book presents a view of the life and times of the horniwinks in the twentieth century. We hope that the book gives you as much pleasure as we had putting it together.

The development of this book has been a lengthy but fascinating collaborative process, beginning in February 1993.

Most of the initial words and photographs came from Tom Cann and Cecil Collacott. However, the sections on the *WI* and the *School* are based on the research of Angela Yeo, those on the *Football Club* and the *Memorial Hall* are based on the research of Alan Cann, and those on the *Village Traders* and *A Changing Occupation* are based on the research of Tom Cann. Parochial material and the section *A Changing Way Of Life* is mainly the work of Cecil Collacott.

Editing, design and DTP of the finished product is the contribution of Phil Mayhall.

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Preface

Bradworthy's beginnings take us back to a time well over a thousand years ago when it became a place of some importance, in a land recently subdued and occupied by the Saxon invaders. The spacious centre, the Square of today (or 'towne-place' as it was formerly called), and the general layout of the

village (one of the best examples of Saxon planning in Devon) point to its having been a fortified settlement with domination over a wide area. Whilst establishing themselves in their farming activities, the Saxons would have been alert and ready to deal with any uprising from the indigenous Britons.



With the Norman Conquest and the great land redistribution which followed, a prominent Norman lord, Ralph de la Pomerai, was rewarded by the Conqueror with a large number of manors. Bradworthy was the most important of the Pomerai estates in North Devon and was known as the Barony of Bradworthy. It was also referred to in early records as the 'towne and borough of Bradworthy'. Later the manor passed by purchase to William, Lord Brewer.

From being held by these Devon barons, Bradworthy's lords became even more remote when the estates descended to the Stanleys, Earls of Derby. About the year 1600 the Stanley heiresses sold their Westcountry property to Smyths of Exeter, and there were to be no local lords of the manor for many years to come.

This could not have been good for the distant tenants in Bradworthy. The importance of the village would have long diminished, and the minority would have had little wealth and less power, resulting in a stagnant society with low standards of life persisting for generations.

There is no record of what life was like here in medieval times, but information began to emerge in the works of the 18th and 19th century historians. Polwhele wrote at the end of the 18th century:

This parish is about four miles long and four miles wide. It is inclosed, but so destitute of wood that the chief fuel of the inhabitants is furze and turf. The houses are in general built of mud and straw and thatched. The farms are small and badly cultivated.

He adds however, a surprising comment 'The inhabitants are healthy and live to a very advanced age'.

The local Press referred to the 'backwardness' of Bradworthy in the second half of the 19th century. A phrase 'Out of Bradworthy into England' indicated that the inhabitants did not move with the times.

The upturn seems to have come near the close of the 19th century and the turn into the present century. Enterprising families went into business ventures which have prospered through subsequent generations. Several old and squalid cottages were replaced by new houses and shops. Perhaps today we would have preferred that some of the cottages

had been preserved and restored, yet it is inevitable that something must be lost if any progress is achieved. We have today an unusually thriving village and a pleasant place to live at a time when, sadly, so many small villages are declining.

We cannot resist quoting the lovely description of Bradworthy written by the novelist Miss M.P. Willcocks in the early years of this century:

The low-roofed, whitewashed houses of Bradworthy have never heard the whistle of a train, and the cry of a flock of seagulls storm-driven inland, is the wildest sound usually heard in this place of old-world peace. The four-armed directing post in the grassy quadrangle round which the houses cluster, suggests the leisure of pack-horse travelling and is as full of romance of the past as the magical phrase 'the great north road'.

Difficult to recognise our village perhaps. It is hardly 'that place of old-world peace' now, but the romance remains - the romance of a long history, during which forty generations of village folk have lived and loved, toiled and played, through the sunshine and shadow of twelve centuries around the great 'towne place of Bradworthy'.

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