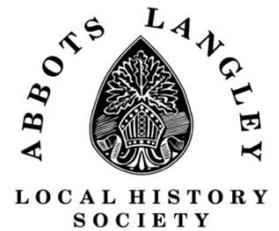


Bedmond History Tour



This self guided history tour begins at the Breakspear Memorial on the Bedmond Road. It is approx 500 metres. Most of the photos are around the turn of the C19th and generally relate to the Ordnance Survey map of Bedmond c1880 (left).

The map on the last page shows the locations mentioned in the text.

Introduction

Life in Bedmond could date back as far as the early Stone Age as findings of one or two Palaeolithic implements were recorded in the last century. In the mid 19th century, 'Bedmont' was a hamlet of about one hundred cottages with a population of 400 and was recorded as being larger than

Abbots Langley but by 1900 Bedmond had only grown to 500 compared to Abbots Langley's population of 2000. The roads were gravel tracks and there was no electricity, running water or sanitation until quite late.

As an out-lying village at the turn of the C20th, Bedmond relied on local traders such as Mr Clavert from Gibbs Bakery who walked from Abbots Langley with a hand cart loaded with bread in the 1920s. Mr Davis bought churns of milk up by horse and cart, Mr Knight drove a vehicle full of soap, oils, wicks and other household goods, Mr Mazzio brought fruit from



Watford, the "hat-man" bought hats from Luton, a tradesman sold winkles on Sunday mornings and a trader walked through the village with a tray of muffins on his head.

Bedmond was a typical small rural community at the turn of the C20th comprised of farms and worker's cottages mostly owned by the local Squire from the Solly family. (Photo: hay sweeping at Millhouse Farm c1910).



Serge Hill House: Sollys and Hendersons



The Squire of Bedmond lived in the only substantial house in the area, Serge Hill, built c1720 which still remains today. (photo left) Mr. Samuel Solly was resident from 1792, succeeded by Mr. Samuel Reynolds Solly, born 1814, followed by William Hammond Solly in 1866 who died in 1897. The Sollys leased the property to Mr.W.H. Henderson from 1901-1919.

At its peak, the Serge Hill Estate was extensive, stretching to 3000 acres comprising eight farms: Winches, Plaisters, Searches, Millhouse, Tenements & Ninnings, White House Farm, Capital and Breakspear.

Many men of the village worked on the Estate in one capacity or another until it was sold in 1919. From 1859 -1914 the farm was worked by John Bailey and his family, Mrs Bailey also ran Searches Farm from 1901 and G Bailey kept Tenements Farm whose buildings date from the C15th. Mr. Solly died in 1886 after founding the Solly Trust which was the investment of a large sum of money, the profit of which was to be divided among the five most needy and worthy villagers twice a year.

When the Solly Estate was sold on 24th September 1919, the sale deeds listed a family residence, 5 Farms and "practically the whole of the Village of Bedmond" which covered the majority of the houses and buildings in Bedmond and mentioned in this tour. The Motion family purchased the house from Major Thomas Aubrey Shepherd-Cross. (Further information on the Solly and Henderson families on the ALLHS website)

1. Breakspear Farm

History records that Nicholas Breakspear, the only English Pope, was born in Bedmond about 1100. He became Pope Adrian IV from 1154-1159. (For more details on Pope Adrian IV see the ALLHS website)

In 1860 Breakspear Farm covered 96 acres and was part of the Solly Estate worked by Daniel Mead. The Farm was replaced by modern housing in the 1960's and the site is now commemorated by a plaque to Pope Adrian IV. (Photos of Breakspear Farm right and below right)



In the grounds of Breakspear Farm was a spring, marked on early maps as a Holy Well. It was said that the water contained healing properties for the eyes and it became a place of regular pilgrimage throughout the centuries. (Photo of N Trent's painting of the Holy Well left and an annual Pilgrimage by The Salvatorians in the 1930s centre)



2. The Green Man

Continue up the hill a little, pausing just before the corner of East Lane where the Green Man Public House stands. Note the very narrow road entering Bedmond (photo c1950 left). The Green Man was once a Freehouse but now converted into a private dwelling. In 1861 the

landlord was Mr J. G Chalk and the last landlord was Mr Cecil Stephens (1932-1942). (Photos below)



3. Blacksmith

The local Forge was opposite the Green Man which had outbuildings on either side of the forge yard.

Charlotte How worked as the local blacksmith in 1826 and from 1906-1942 the farrier and blacksmith was Mr Frederick Sherfield. (Photo above)



4. The Bell Pub

Walking on a little past East Lane, on the right hand side of the lower High Street we arrive at the Bell Pub. (Photos below)



Originally called "The Blue Bell", it dates from 1618 when Christopher Newman was the landlord and in 1826 it was kept by Charlotte How, the village Blacksmith mentioned above. From 1900, the Pub was managed by Mr and Mrs E.A.Reed, followed by George Parr from 1912-42. (Photo of George Parr outside the Bell Pub above right)



The bus stop was formerly located outside the cottages on the corner of Bell Lane. There are four C16th cottages before no 32 which was the site of the Village Woodyard.

5. The Woodyard

Edwin Gentle bought and felled trees and underwood from the surrounding area and a travelling steam engine came to help cut up the larger timber when necessary. The Woodyard also supplied logs, bean poles, peas sticks, props and faggots to locals during the winter. (Photo above right)



Hats were made in the outbuildings as George Gentle (father of Edwin) had been an apprentice to the Hat trade in Luton. Locals were employed to plait straw for many years and these workshops were amongst the first to also dye the straw. The straw came from the continent, was brought from London to Kings Langley by canal barge where George Gentle collected it by horse and cart up Toms Lane. The front room of the Gentle's house at the Woodyard was used as a small shop which became the Village's first Post Office run by George Gentle's daughters, Kate and Liz until around 1910. The large cellar of this house was used to hang sides of bacon. The Post Office moved up the High Street to No 57 by the time of World War One.

6. The Village Shop



Beyond the Woodyard at No 36, there was a small general store, known as Barts, when it was run by Mr.W.J.Bartholomew from 1934-52. This is now a private residence). (Photo left)

7. The Village Hall, Allotments and Lyme Tree Cottages

Across the road from the Woodyard, there were Village allotments which covered the land between Mr Sheffield's forge to Lyme Tree cottages which stretched to the corner of Toms Lane.



The allotments were known as the "Garden Fields." There was a Well on one side of Lyme Tree cottages which residents used for drinking water. (photo of Lyme Tree Cottages below left and centre/the allotments and the old Village Hall right)



The Village Hall was built in 1930 on the site of the allotments with money raised by the local community on land donated by Lady Elizabeth Motion of Serge Hill. (photo right)

The Local Women's Institute founded in 1922, still meets here. The "Bedmond Pioneers" pictured were a very active group who banded together in 1939 at the outbreak of war after the WI president, Mrs Murrell asked members to knit blanket squares for those sleeping in air raid shelters. Mrs Gwen Woods was chief organizer for many years and maintained a very active programme after the war, fundraising for local and national charities. They were disbanded in 1960. (Photos: right - the Bedmond Pioneers – Mrs Gwen Woods pictured 3rd from the right)



8. Toms Lane Cottages



Just around the corner in Toms Lane, there was a row of cottages with small windows facing the road, which had a "wash house" built at the back. Roughly opposite these, on the corner of Toms Lane was Capital Farm which was unusual as there never was a farmhouse. (Photos showing the Land Army Girls on Capital Farm during WW1 – 1914 centre and right, the entrance to Capital Farm on the corner of Toms Lane with the High Street decorated for a Henderson family wedding).



9. Toms Lane School

The original village Infant School was situated near the top of Toms Lane, donated by the Solly family, which taught children until the age of seven. Older children had to walk to Abbots Langley C of E School along the Bedmond Road in all weathers. Bedmond school opened with 50 infants in 1871 with the Headmistress being Miss Armitage in 1878 and was enlarged to 66 children in 1886 under Headmistress Miss L.A Scrivenor. (Photos right showing Miss Curtis on the left and Miss Kennedy right c1950).



10. High Street Cottages



On the right hand side of the High Street opposite Toms Lane at No 52, stood a house occupied by Mr Walter Gentle who was the Estate Agent to the Solly family of Serge Hill which also comprised his workshops for his estate work (photo below right). There was also the home of Mr Sidney Brown, a London antique dealer who was prominent in the local community and a trustee of the Village Hall. Behind this house in Millhouse Lane, Walter Gentle extracted gravel from a field for road construction. Next door, was a cottage where Mrs Sweeting was the tenant, sold haberdashery and was also Headmistress of

Bedmond School from 1891-1924.



Next to the Cottages, there was Longhouse Farm run by Ben Reed until 1960 when the garage, Longhouse Service Station was built.

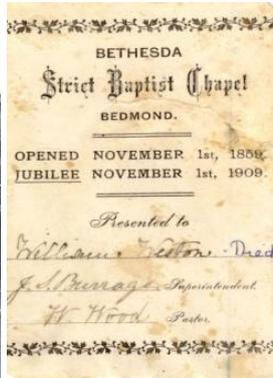
Across the road, there was another row of cottages. One was a Corn Chandlers run by Mr Tom. Thomas (1908-28). There was also the General Store and Post Office at No.57, run by the Weston family from 1921-1944 and by Mr and Mrs Bond from 1944-1949. Sid Bond was

also the local Chimney Sweep. The Post Office was then managed by Jock Quigley and Sid Manderson until 1976 as seen in photo left.

Between the Post Office and the Wheelwrights (shown in photo right c1900) was a Reading Room which was built by the Solly family for the men-folk of the village who could go there to play darts and discuss matters.



11. The Chapel



Next to the Wheelwright's Shop stood the strict Baptist Chapel built in 1859 which officially closed in 1959 although continued until 1973 and has now been replaced by housing. (Photos left)



12. Bank Cottages

At the corner of Serge Hill

Lane looking down Church Hill and next to the Chapel was a row of houses built on a steep bank with steps up to their doors known as the "Bank". (Photo left and above right)



13. The Crossed Keys Pub, the Travellers Rest and the Old Farmhouse

On the western side of the road there stood a cottage in whose garden stood a huge Yew cross. The owner, Mr. John Botwright, who was a master carpenter and also keen on topiary, planted three Yew trees which he intended to train into the shape of the Prince of Wales feathers. Unfortunately one tree died and he wired the remaining two together in the shape of a cross which reached 20 feet high with a circumference of nearly 35 feet and this became a famous local landmark.



Next to Mr Botwright's cottage, there were three more half timbered cottages which dated from the C16th. On this site too stood the Crossed Keys Pub opposite the Tin Church later known as Ivy Cottages. (see photo left).



Further down Porridge Pot Hill on the left hand side stood the Old Farmhouse (photo right), previously the Traveller's Rest which was built C16th which was reputed to be the most notorious pub in Bedmond and reputed haunt of the notorious Highwayman, Dick Turpin. Apparently there was a fireplace with steps leading up a very large chimney to the roof where Turpin would hide and the cellars had been converted into stables but the space was so limited that there was no room for the horses to turn and they had to be led out backwards!" The Travellers' Rest Pub stood in Porridge Pot Hill. One explanation for that delightful name is that porridge seems to have been the staple refreshment for travellers. The name was changed by the Council to Church Hill.

Further down Porridge Pot Hill on the left hand side stood the Old Farmhouse (photo right), previously the Traveller's



Rest which was built C16th which was reputed to be the most notorious pub in Bedmond and reputed haunt of the notorious Highwayman, Dick Turpin. Apparently there was a fireplace with steps leading up a very large chimney to the roof where Turpin would hide and the cellars had been converted into stables but the space was so limited that there was no room for the horses to turn and they had to be led out backwards!" The Travellers' Rest Pub stood in Porridge Pot Hill. One explanation for that delightful name is that porridge seems to have been the staple refreshment for travellers. The name was changed by the Council to Church Hill.

14. The Tin Church

Bedmond is recorded as a hamlet in the early C19th but qualified for the name 'village' in 1880 when its own Church of England was built: the Church of the Ascension. Before this there was the Baptist Chapel but villagers who wished to worship in a Church of England had to walk the mile to St Lawrence of Abbots Langley.





The building of the iron church in Bedmond, unique because it is the only one of its kind with a spire and a bell, was financed at the cost of £80 by Mrs Solly, wife of the Squire of Abbots Langley who lived in Serge Hill House in Bedmond. It was built 'so that the spiritual lives of those residing in Bedmond shall go forth with increased vigour'. It is a Grade II building and an early example of the use of corrugated iron in building work. The Church was closed in 1974 when it was



sold to an evangelical Christian group, the Bedmond Fellowship, before transferring back to the Diocese of St Albans under the care of St Lawrences' in 1983. Services are held weekly. (For more information on the Tin Church visit the St Lawrence Website)

15. The White Hart



The White Hart may have been an ale house since 1733. In 1779 the pub was owned by a Watford brewer, William Smith, followed by another leading Watford brewer, Edmund Fearnley Whittingstall who lived at Langleybury House. The Hertfordshire or the Old Berkley hunts would often meet here. From 1854-1886, the pub was run by Benjamin Botwright followed by Ben Botwright Jn until 1900, followed by Mrs Emma Botwright until 1906. From 1908, the landlord was Jesse Spencer, Benjamin George Francis in 1930 and Mrs Louis Atkins from 1942.



The Bedmond Court of Forresters had a "Perseverance Branch" and was first established in 1878.

The local Order of Forresters commenced their annual village parade at the White Hart where they held their regular

meetings. During the parade a large banner was carried which stretched across the street. (Photo right).



The Lodge for the Serge Hill Estate sits a little way down the lane from the White Hart where there were wrought iron gates at the start of a half mile carriageway to the house. There was also the village playing field owned by Major Motion, and a cricket pitch and pavilion further down Serge Hill Lane on the left hand side. This field was also used for fetes and other celebrations. Serge Hill House is situated around ½ mile down Serge Hill Lane.

16. Bedmond Pond and Pond Cottage



The Bedmond Pond stood on the corner of Serge Hill at the crossroads of two major Roman Roads. (Photo left)

The name of Bedmond probably originates from two old English words: 'Byde' meaning depression or hollow and 'Mont' meaning on a hill which may refer to the deep hollow behind the White Hart which was the site of the Bedmond pond or "docks".

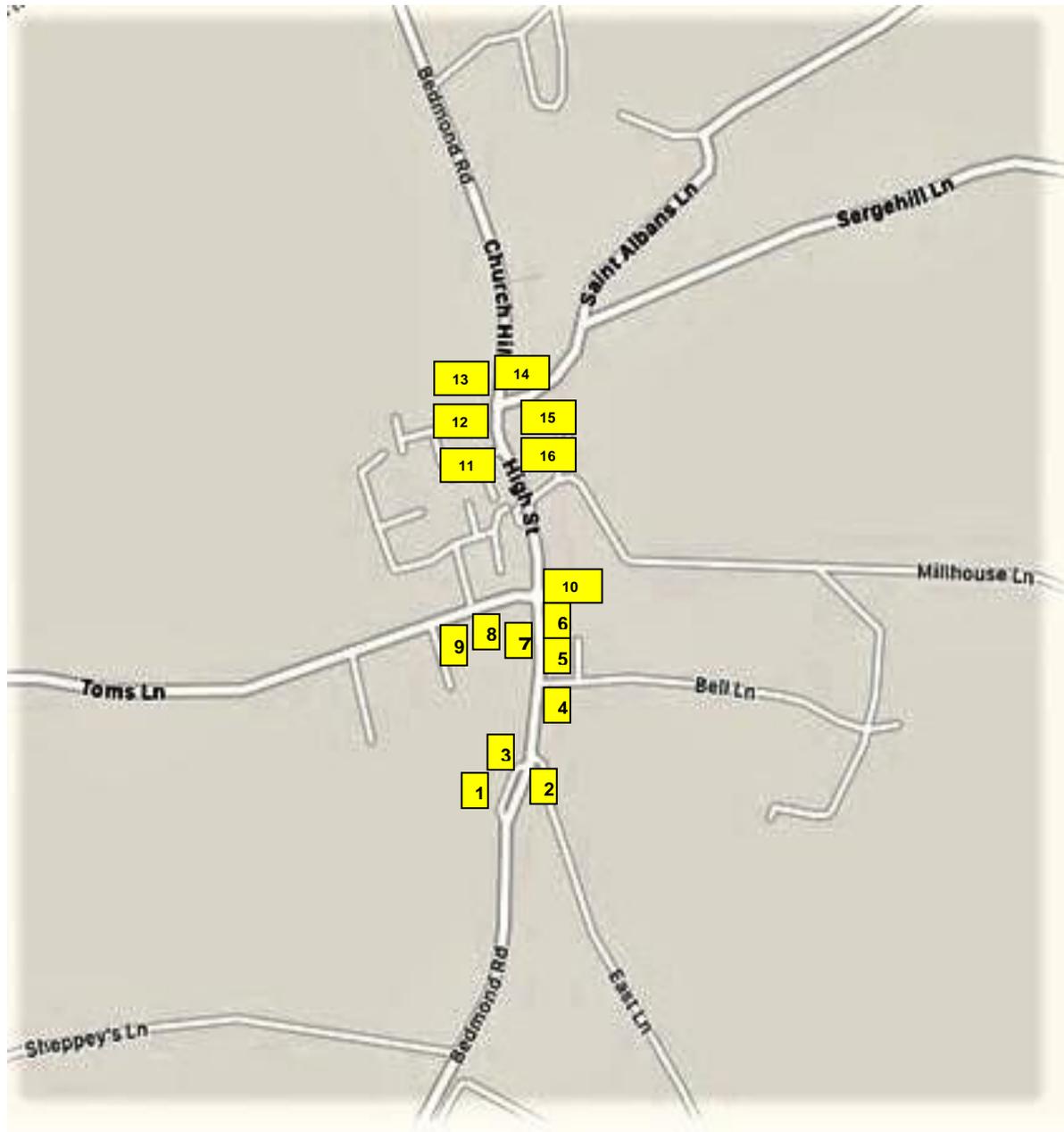
Farmers would fill their water carts and sheep were washed prior to being driven along the road to market in Watford or St. Albans in the large deep pond where it was rumoured the gravel was dug from that area by French soldiers to help in the building of St. Albans Abbey and that the huge dip left behind was gradually filled up by springs to form a natural pond. The pond attracted people from miles around to fish in

what jokingly became known as “Bedmond Docks” and children used to skate on it when it froze over during harsh winters. When the artesian well was sunk in the grounds of Leavesden Hospital it was believed to have drained the wells and springs. The pond has now gone and the area is planted with trees and known as the “Plantation”. Pond Cottage was situated in the hollow behind the White Hart (photo right).



We hope you enjoyed the Bedmond History Tour.

Map of Locations



References:

List of references: Abbots Langley – “A Hertfordshire Village” written & edited by Scott Hastie; The St Lawrence Church website; “The Hertfordshire Village Book”, written by members of the Hertfordshire Federation of Women’s Institutes and published by Countryside Books.

All photos from the Dr Dyer Collection, John Noonan and Collection: Parish Archive, Source: David Spain

John Noonan and Wendy Ball

15th August 2020