

THE REMINISCENCES OF MRS. STRANGE OF WEIR VIEW, BREINTON COMMON, BETWEEN 1924 AND 1988

I was born at "Weir View" Breinton Common. My father, Thomas Ward Clarke, was a chemist in Hereford. He bought "Weir View" just before the First World War, simply because it was so near the river and he was a very keen fisherman. He built himself steps to go up and down the river cliff (which was nearly vertical) to his boat which he kept moored at the bottom. He often took the village children for rides in it.



Breinton Common (Google Earth, 2009)



Weir View, in 2009 (Google Earth, 2016)

I have seen a great many changes in Breinton since my childhood. Quite a number of cottages have been taken down or built onto. An old lady called Mrs. Moss lived at "Memorial Cottage". She wore long black dresses which reached the ground. Before her was Emma Preece, known as "Little Emma" because she was so small. An old couple called "blind Fred" and his wife followed Mrs. Moss. He played the accordion at concerts in the Mission Church Room. Mr and Mrs Baker were the next occupants. Mr Baker had been the Farm Bailiff for Mr Wadworth at "Breinton Court".

When I was nine I had to stay in bed for three months with a bad heart after a severe attack of measles. Mrs. Baker used to come and read to me and lend me some lovely books. I thoroughly enjoyed her visits.

The Bustin family lived at "The Gables". Mr. Bustin was a well-known photographer in Hereford. He took wonderful pictures of Hereford cattle. Their eyes seemed to follow you all round the room when you looked at them. His one daughter took the Sunday school and very good she was. *(At a meeting of the Breinton History Group on June 14th 2016 Robin Thorndyke told us that these photographs were in Friar Street Museum Resource Centre and that Mr. Bustin had been an albino.)*

Further up the lane the Davies family lived at "Bowerwood" (or maybe "Park View"). A family called Pugh lived at Eaton View. Their uncle and aunt, also Pugh, lived at "Bay Tree". They were related to the Morris family who lived at "Rosedene", a black and white cottage opposite "Weir View" which has now been taken down and two bungalows built in the garden.

The Warringtons lived at "Ford Villa" which has been renamed "Mullions".

When I was young the Sanitary Inspector for Hereford lived at "Rose Bank", the bungalow which has been turned sideways. Their name was Prothero.

The Bromages lived at "River View" followed by Mr and Mrs Squires. Mrs Squires was related to the Warringtons.

Mrs. Bennet kept the Post Office. I don't know what it is called now. It was just known as "The Post Office" It is the cottage opposite Bay Tree. Her mother, Mrs Portman, lived at "Wallace Cottage"(now demolished for two bungalows). She was the old midwife in the village and a very good one too. She brought me into the world before the Doctor arrived.

Breinton had no pub (and still hasn't) so all the villagers went to the Boat Inn, Sugwas, near the river. My mother told me that one day, old Mr. Portman hadn't come home by mid-day so one of his sons went down with a wheelbarrow and brought him home "flat out."

"Wallace Cottage" had a cider still and they used to make their own cider. A travelling press also came into the village for the use of people who hadn't one of their own. When the cider was first made it was lovely but when it had been kept awhile it became very potent.

Old Mr and Mrs Prosser lived at Wye View where the Dawe family now live. I remember seeing Mrs Prosser wearing an old “hern” apron (which looked like very fine sacking) pottering around feeding her animals. When I was small she used to send me dear little antique cups with jam in for my tea. I still have one of the cups.

Mr and Mrs Hendry lived at Chapel House. He was a horticulturalist. He had greenhouses and grew the most beautiful early double pink and yellow tulips as well as Parma violets and many other hothouse plants as well. His vegetables were always in perfect condition. I have vivid memories of his cucumber house, because I love cucumbers! He would never allow you to go in there and leave the door open for one second because it had to be a certain temperature and humidity. So when you went in to choose your cucumber you were shut in quickly and let out again just as smartly!

The Beaumont family lived at Heath Villa now called “Heathfield” Everyone in the village bought their milk from them.

There used to be a black and white cottage and a house up in the Park belonging to Sugwas Farm, both sadly demolished, although the well remains. Old Mr and Mrs Dodd lived in the cottage until they died and there were several families afterwards.

The Mutlow family lived in the house and he worked for the Marshalls. There were quite a few sons and daughters. I think Robin Morris mentioned Violet who was a grand-daughter. *(Gill Wall initiated a project where she asked many local people at the time to write down their memories and reminiscences of Breinton. This from Mrs. Strange is one of them.)*

When I was a child we used to have Flower Shows and Sports in the field opposite the school. I remember winning the most races one year, because I could run like a hare in those days, and being presented with a lovely blue and white doll’s dinner service which I still possess. The flowers and fruit displayed in the marquee were quite professional. Everyone took such an interest and the dinner table floral decorations were fantastic!

Before the first World War my parents rented a weekend cottage near Breinton Court on the edge of the river. In those days it was owned by the Lewis family (Wyecliff Court) but was afterwards bought by Mr. Wadworth. The people who lived in it ran a tea garden for people coming up the river in boats. It has long since been demolished.

At the top of Crinkham Pitch are two black and white cottages belonging to Wyecliff Court Farm which has been in the Lewis family for three generations. They are called Crinkham Cottages. At one time there were two families living in the one Bill Morgan now lives in: old Mr and Mrs Brush one side and old Mr and Mrs Lucas in the other. During the war the Lucas’s son and grand-daughter worked at the General Hospital when I was a St. John’s nurse working in Casualty.

For many years the Thornycroft family lived at Wyeclyff House. Two of their sons were killed in the last war.

The Dodgson family live at Breinton House. Mrs Dodgson was extremely keen on amateur dramatics. We had great fun performing on their lawns. We used to have quite a lot of concerts in the village hall too. Mrs Parker, the vicar's wife, was a talented violinist and played lovely music. She was the sister of John Masefield, the Poet Laureate.

During the war someone ran a youth club once a week in the village hall and asked me if I would teach the little dears ballroom dancing, which I did! Derry Brooks (Manor Cottage) became very good and continued in Hereford after the class "packed up." Also living in the Manor Cottages at that time was a family called Lloyd. There were five sons and two daughters all serving in the forces. Quite an achievement! So many people have moved away from Breinton since then.

I was asked how many vicars I had known. The first was the Rev. Stanley but I was too young to remember him well as he left in 1924. The next was the Rev. Gatliff. I always thought he was very fierce but my mother said he was nice so maybe it was my imagination. Preb. Parker came next and after him the Rev. Quinton Morris. After the war the Rev. Redmund came and was followed by the Rev. Bill Haynes who was our vicar until he died in 1985. The Rev. Chris Scott is our present vicar.

So many things in my life, good and bad, have been connected to Breinton Church. I was christened and married there, my two daughters, Netta and Fiona, were christened and married there too. My one grand-daughter, Natasha, was christened there. My one grandmother, both my parents and my husband are buried there.



Breinton Lodge in 2009 (Google Earth)

My husband, a doctor, bought Breinton Lodge in 1950 and I have lived here ever since. You can imagine that I have seen a considerable amount of change; too much for me to record.

Mrs J.W. Strange 4th February 1988

Edit and comments by Bronwen Wild, November 2016