

Chapter 1

Village features



The view from the Broad Hill towards the Post Office in the 1910's.

The parish of Bradworthy is situated in rural West Devon and is bounded to the north and west by two of the major rivers in the South West region. The landscape reflects the ravages of the often fierce south-westerly winds that blow in from the North Atlantic.

The village itself, standing above the little River Waldon, boasts what is reputed to be the largest square in the west country, a green, a Church

dating back to Norman times, a school, a Memorial Hall and a War Memorial, an Inn, a bowling green and playing field, a modern industrial estate, a number of long established village stores, as well as a range of services such as Post Office, garage, doctor, and vets.



The Square, viewed from the church tower in 1995. This was taken during the VE Day celebrations - hence the 'V' of the tables.

The Square

The Square was originally a grass covered 'towne place' around which the invading Saxons sited their settlement, circa 700AD.

Today the great quadrangle, measuring 150 yards by 50 yards, has been easily adapted to modern needs. By arrangement with the Parish Council, Devon County Council



The Square, viewed from the church tower in the 1960's.



The Square full of cars in the mid 1980's. Notice the old bus shelter is still there.

assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Square in 1961, when it was also given a tarmac surface.

Situated on the Square are a war memorial, a pump-house, a bus shelter and a telephone kiosk.

The first trees were planted on the Square by the Coronation committee in 1913. These were replaced by Mr. Elliott in 1936 with 3 Cornish Elm trees. Protective palings were erected at the same time.

A road enters the Square at its south-east corner, runs along the east side of the Square past the Inn and a number of houses, then continues out of the north-east corner of the Square. Another road crosses the Square just below its



The Square in the 1930's.



The edge of the Square with the War Memorial and the road leading to Lower Village in 1959.

Village Parking

At the recent meeting of the Parish Council it was reported that the Chief Constable of Devon had granted the Council permission to prescribe an area on the village square, within the limits of which cars will be allowed to park without lights at night during the hours of public lighting. Major E.J.W. Spread was deputed by the Council to supervise the marking out of the area for parking. (June 1939)

Presumably not a lot came of this, because the Parish Council later reported that:

The Chief Constable of Devon had granted permission for the whole area from the Jubilee Pump to the south end of the Square to be used, when adequately illuminated, for the parking of cars without lights. (March 1949)

north-east and north-west corners. The Square is bounded to the north, west and south by shops and houses.

Bus shelter

The first bus shelter, presented to the parish by the Bradworthy Women's Institute to commemorate the Queen's coronation in 1953, was built on the Square and opened in 1955 by Mr. J.C. Hilton of Clovelly. The site originally selected for the bus shelter had been where the entrance to the Memorial Hall now stands - but this was changed to its present site to accommodate the Memorial Hall.

The original structure, featuring much glass, was a target for repeated attacks by vandals. It was replaced with a more robust structure in 1987 by builder Alan Balsdon.



The pump-house in the 1930's.



The opening of the original bus shelter in 1955 featuring Mrs Hilton, Mrs. W. Seldon, and Mr. J.C. Hilton.

Pump-house

The pump-house, situated on the Square, was built to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897.

Public seating

The first public seats appeared in the village in 1935. One was bought by the parish council and



Part of the Square, showing seating and the new bus shelter in 1995.

positioned opposite the Old Forge. Another was positioned on the Berridon road, but it was brought back into the village the same year as it wasn't used very much. Other seats have been added since.

Playing field

After the last war it was thought that a playing and sports field was needed. The School already owned an adjoining small field. Ground next to this field, at Tucker's Park, was owned by the local Rural District Council who agreed that part of the land could be used as a play area. An intervening hedge was removed,

creating an area that was large enough for both a football pitch and a play area for the children.

Slides, swings and other equipment was purchased and a small shelter erected. A grant was obtained from the Devon Playing Fields Association and in 1957 their Chairman, Colonel Wadham, presented the cheque; whilst Miss Coham Fleming officially opened the playing field.

Ever since its opening the playing field has been used by Bradworthy Football Club, who previously played

on Bradworthy Moor. In about 1970 they erected a Club Room with changing area and shower facilities.

For many years a sports day was held on the playing field at the end of May.



Planting a tree on the Broad Hill to celebrate the Coronation in 1937 of George VI. with A.G. Elliott, Mrs. R.L. Ashton, R.L. Ashton, Miss Grace Ashton, Miss Allen, Mrs. Alfred Slee.

Broad Hill

The name probably survives from the 'broad estate' of the Saxons, which has remained as an open green. The Broad Hill was formerly used by the cottagers for stacking their wood faggots and for their clothes lines.

A complaint was brought forward pertaining to matters concerning the green in Lower Village known as Broad Hill. It was contended that no one could monopolise this green. The children had always played there and it was ideal for that purpose. The Councillors were unanimous in the resolution that steps should be taken to ensure the free access of the children to the Broad Hill. Another complaint lodged regarding obstruction by cars in Lower Village was left on the table for another meeting. (June 1939)

The copper beech tree was planted to commemorate the coronation of King George VI in 1937. Two cherry trees were planted on the Broad Hill to commemorate the Coronation in 1953. It was cleaned up, levelled and re-seeded in 1966 to commemorate the death of Sir Winston Churchill.

Bradworthy Moor

Bradworthy Moors are the common lands of the ancient manor. Last century some local landowners tried to enclose some of the commons, but the hedges which were built by day were demolished by villagers at night.

During the Second World War the moor was requisitioned by the War and Agricultural Committee who ploughed up some of the land and planted wheat and potatoes. The western moor of Bradworthy Common was released by Devon War and Agricultural Committee in December 1946, with other sections returned to the possession of the village as late as October 1950.

Of fond memory was the unofficial practice of *swaling*.



In the early 1960's Ray Ham's donkey, Arabella, roamed the Broad Hill. Here with J. Burrow, G. Burrow, A. Elliot, S. Jennings and L. Elliot.

This involved burning the furse on the Moor and was supposed to take place on Good Friday - usually a bunch of kids put a match to it!

Bradworthy Moor was designated a site of special scientific interest in 1992. Sadly, the moors are no longer the haunts of curlews and peewits (horniwinks).

Public Conveniences

In 1949 the Public Conveniences were built on the site of the old Carlyle cottage, which was bought by the Council for £680 and demolished.

Footpaths and Rights of Way

There were originally 14 designated footpaths within the parish, but the one connecting the churchyard to the Holsworthy Road was withdrawn by the Parish Council to enable the Men's Institute to be constructed in the early 1920's.

The footpath from Bradworthy Mill to Little Ford was redesignated as a bridleway in 1971.

From	To
Northmoor	Lower Dinworthy
Westash Cottage	Quoit Gate
Crosspark	Whiteley
Village Square	Holsworthy Road
Bradworthy	Cleverdon-Silworthy
	Cross Road
Waterland	Sutcombe
Silworthy	Field Irish
Dinworthy Road	Blatchborough Road
Dinworthy	Maddocks
North Worden	Worden
Stowford	West Stowford
Bradworthy Mill	Little Ford
Stoneford	North Wrangworthy

Land, rivers, woodlands and trees

The village stands above the valley of the River Waldon, but the parish is bounded on two sides by the two important rivers Torridge and Tamar. These rise on high sedgy ground, known as Woolley Moors, which the great artist Turner chose as a subject for one of his landscapes. Their sources are

in Morwenstow parish, only a few hundred yards from the Bradworthy border.

The Tamar flows due south to Plymouth and the English Channel, the Torridge south-eastward making a dramatic loop to empty into Bideford Bay, only a few miles from its source.

There are two notable beech tree lined avenues in the parish - at Berridon and Blatchborough. These were planted in the last decade of the 19th century. The Berridon avenue was damaged during storms in



Mill Valley in the 1920's.

1989, when 22 trees were felled, but a programme of stock replenishment is currently underway.



The tree lined avenue leading to Blatchborough in 1990.

A Devon Starling Roost

One of the biggest starling roosts in North Devon is to be found in the park of Berridon Hall. The birds began to congregate there about five years ago. Each season they have increased a little, but it is only this year that the roosting flocks have risen to such enormous proportions. (November 1953)

In the 1920's Mrs. Desmond Humphreys, a celebrated novelist who wrote under the nom de plume 'Rita', travelled throughout Devon and Cornwall. She was undoubtedly impressed by Berridon Avenue as in her

Nightingales Heard

A nightingale which is reputed to have been heard in Lake valley has kept a number of people from their beds until the early hours. A few have been fortunate, apparently, in hearing the elusive songster, and some consider there are two pairs of nightingales nesting in the valley. (May 1953)

book
Asenath
of the
Ford she
wrote of
'the long
lovely
avenue
that
leads to

Bradworthy' where 'the trees bent towards each other on either side entwining bough and branch with loving intimacy, as friends link arm in arm, or lovers clasp hands'.

Much of the parish is high (732 feet at the highest point on the Great Ridge at Blatchborough), affording magnificent

views,
away to
Dartmoor
and far
down into
Cornwall.
But these

In December 1935 it was reported that a period of hard frost brought a number of skating enthusiasts to Tamar Lake. Older people were able to recall a season many years earlier when, after exceptionally hard frost, hundreds of people visited Tamar Lake. The ice was nearly 2ft thick, and besides skating, bicycle races were held on it, whilst a gentleman residing in the vicinity rode in a sleigh drawn by a horse around the lake.

heights are swept
by south-westerly
Atlantic gales

(the sea being about seven miles away), with
consequent dearth of trees and foliage.



A bridge over the River Tamar in the 1950's.

Tamar Lakes

The Lower Tamar Lake was created early last century as a reservoir to supply the old Bude Canal, and subsequently to provide Bude with drinking water. It covers about seventy acres and was made a bird sanctuary in 1949. It is a feature of scenic charm unique in this area.

The reservoir known as the Upper Tamar Lake was constructed in 1973 and is about eighty acres in extent. It cost £1.5 million, and was opened in October 1977. Fly fishing, sailing, and other water sports are catered for. There is good parking space, a picnic area, a cafe and shop.

About 80% of the Tamar Lakes are actually in the parish of Bradworthy.

St. Peter's Well

A Holy Well in the lane named for it, not far from the Church. From early records it would appear that at one time the Church was dedicated to St. Peter.

The well in the lane frequently overflows during heavy rainfall, and the Torridge District Council has been approached regarding the possibility of the well being connected to the main drainage. (December 1978)

Industrial Estate

In the late 1960's Devon County Council drew up what was known as the Devon Structure Plan and Bradworthy was one of four parishes in the Holsworthy Rural Council area that was selected as a 'key settlement'. The land south of North Road was included in the plan for Bradworthy as land for industrial use. In the early 1970's after Holsworthy Rural District Council was disbanded and Torridge District Council was formed the owner of the land set aside for industry offered it for sale.

As District Councillor for Bradworthy and hearing that the land was for sale I made an appointment with the Chief Executive to let him know that the land was for sale and asked him to prepare a report to put before the Development Committee with offer to purchase. After much opposition from a few Bideford members it was passed to be purchased and the Planning Officer was told to prepare a plan and layout. At that time Dartington was interested in rural industries and Torridge District Council invited them to undertake the industry part of the plan. Torridge would do the layout of the drains, roads etc. Half the site for houses and half for industry with the site which is now the Bowling Green to be kept as an open space. When several of the houses were built close to where the bowling club is now, it was seen to be the ideal site for bowls. Then the fun began. Again I approached the Chief Executive for help as the

original plan had been for this area to remain as an open site. Bradworthy now wanted it as a site for bowls. I asked Torridge Council if they would sell it to the Parish Council with a view to then selling it to the bowling club when they were in a position to purchase it. When this proposal was put before the development committee there was strong opposition from many members who felt that the land should be kept for building houses on. With the support of the Chief Executive and the Planning Officer the Parish Council bought the site to be passed on to the bowling club.



The view from the Church tower to the north-east, with Lew in the background.