

HISTORY OF GODSHILL

Godshill is one of the ancient parishes that existed before the compilation of the Domesday Book, the first recorded spelling being Godeshulle. The church was given by William Fitz-Osbern, who died in 1070, to the Abbey of Lyra in Normandy.

In 1090, Richard de Redvers, Lord of the Island, gave the Manor of Appuldurcombe, which comprised the best part of the parish of Godshill, to the Abbey of Montebourg in Coutances, Normandy. It was originally a small priory of Benedictine monks, situated a short distance from the present ruin.

The house and lands came to the Worsley family through the marriage of Anne, daughter of Sir John Leigh to Sir James Worsley. In 1557, Dame Anne willed 20 marks for erecting a free Grammar School in Godshill but this was never built and the old Chantry Priest's House continued to be used. In 1824 the old school was pulled down, the Old Vicarage built in its place and the school rebuilt in its present position by Lord Yarborough and restored in 1848 as a misappropriated Grammar School under a scheme of the Charity Commissioners. The school records for the 1880s show that children paid between 1d and 4d per week to attend, depending upon the father's occupation and were kept at home to work in the fields during harvest times. The headmaster was paid £13 per quarter.

Stenbury Manor, originally surrounded by a moat was the seat of the de Aula family soon after the Norman Conquest. It was pulled down and rebuilt in the 16th century and the moat was filled in during 1727.

Various other smaller manors include:

- Bagwich, which is listed in Domesday under the name of Abaginge and is situated on high ground overlooking the

valley of the eastern river Yar to the north west of Godshill;

- Bathingbourne, an ancient manor first mentioned circa 960. In the 16th century, the owner, Mr Basket, exchanged it for Apse Manor;
- Bridgecourt - not a Domesday manor - was first mentioned in the 13th century, taking its name from a bridge over the river Yar;
- Lessland – one of the manors reverting to the crown in 1075 following the rebellion of Roger de Breteuil. The current building was erected in 1722 with the front being rebuilt in 1829;
- Roud – originally a Norman manor, which was rebuilt in the 17th century and later Victorianised;
- Sandford – one of the many valuable manors owned by the king in 1086 and previously owned by Edward the Confessor. It is now a small farmhouse with good stone outbuildings.

All Saints Church dates largely from the 14th century and is the fourth on this site. Sir John Oglander, historian of the 17th century, says in his memoirs that the first church “wase bwylt in ye rayne of King Edward the Confessor”.

The hill on which the church stands was once a place of pagan worship and legend tells that the building of a church was begun at the foot of the hill but that on three successive nights the stones were removed unseen to the site of the present church. Work was restarted on the first two mornings but on the third day it was assumed that God wished the church to be built on the hill, hence the name Godshill.

All Saints is renowned for its mid-15th century mural of the Lily Cross. Painted over during the Reformation, it was rediscovered in 1842.

Godshill church has a peal of six bells. They were recast in 1887 from the old peal which had been recast in 1815 with the village gun of 1543 being cast into the tenor bell. The bells are regularly rung by local and visiting bell-ringers.

The cluster of cottages by the church are reputed to have been built in the 15th century, possibly to house the masons rebuilding the church. The Old Bell was once the Bell Inn and continued as a public house until the late 1920's; Church Hill Cottage was a smallholding with dairy produce being sold from a room at the front; whilst Church Gate Cottage may have been the Sexton's cottage.

The present Hill Cottage was originally four labourers' cottages but was purchased between the wars by a Madame Beryl Dupigny, the niece of the Earl of Shannon, who operated it as an antique/show cottage. Queen Mary visited on a regular basis and took tea at Essex Cottage. Hill Cottage is no longer a listed building.

Tea rooms have long been a standard attraction in Godshill with charabanc trips – the forerunner of today's coaches. Another royal visitor was Princess Beatrice bringing her daughter, Queen Ena of Spain to the Griffin, also for tea.

Bridgecourt Mill was shown on a map of 1759 as Bridge Mill but now only the ruined walls remain. A long mill-pond was created west of Bridgecourt. Bridgecourt Cottage was a former brewhouse.

The Poorhouse in the village closed in 1770 when St Mary's Hospital was built to house all the poor of the Island.

The Hermitage, built in 1813 was the home of Michael Hoy, a merchant trading with Russia, who was Sheriff of London 1812/13. He erected the Hoy Monument in Chale Parish to commemorate the 1814 visit of Tsar Alexander. The house was

burnt down in 1860's but rebuilt in 1895. A later tenant added a further plaque to the north side of the monument in memory of soldiers in the Crimean War. The Hermitage subsequently became the first Island Youth Hostel in 1935.

In the 19th and early part of the 20th century, as well as the Old Bell Inn, there was the Griffin Hotel; a blacksmith (now the Old Smithy); a carpenter/undertaker; a grocers and clothing store (now the Batswing); two stonemasons; and a bakehouse (now the Taverners) getting its flour from Bridgecourt Mill.

The post office has been at several venues, starting in Leal's Bakery Shop (The Taverners), moving to Syringa with all dealings being carried out through the window of the building, then to Welcomes (now Chocolate Island) and finally to its current location.

The area around Godshill was made up of smallholdings with cattle but very few sheep. Families would keep a pig for Christmas.

Godshill became a Civil Parish under the Local Government Act 1894, which enabled parish councillors to become elected in all rural parishes with more than 300 electors. In the 2001 census, there was a population of 1465.

During World War 2, four bombs fell on Godshill Park Farm, causing blast damage, whilst a Junkers Ju88a crashed near Bridgecourt Farm resulting in three captured and one burned to death. The casualty was the highest ranking Luftwaffe officer shot down on the Island - Oberst Dr Fisser, Kommodore of Orly-based KG51.

The searchlight site at Godshill was bombed and a high explosive bomb from a Focke Wolfe Fw 190 fell near disused Bridgecourt Mill, seriously damaging the building but causing no casualties. This was the last bomb dropped on the Island by

a manned German aircraft. The First Aid point in Godshill was the Parish Hall.

During the war, British soldiers were billeted at the Hollies whilst Italian prisoners-of-war were housed at Godshill Park.

The railways arrived in 1875 but ceased running through Godshill in 1952 when the Merstone to Ventnor West line was closed under Dr Beeching.

Godshill Model Village was opened in 1952 depicting Godshill and Shanklin Old Villages on a scale of 1:10.

Candles and oil lamps were the main source of light until gas came from Shanklin. Electricity did not arrive until 1956.

On the hill to the south of Godshill is the obelisk erected by Sir Richard Worsley in 1774 in memory of his ancestor, Sir Robert. Originally 70 ft high, it has been badly damaged by lightning on 13 March 1831 but was restored in 1983 by Gen Sir Richard Worsley with assistance from the Isle of Wight Council and Godshill Parish Council.

New house building began in the 1960's leading to the building of Dubbers, Hollow Glade, Jubilee Close, May Close, Moor View, School Crescent, St Catherine's View, Ternal Mead, Yarborough Close and Worsley Road.

In August 1968 the first IW Festival was held at Ford Farm, attended by 10,000. On a stage constructed of two trailers, acts such as Jefferson Airplane and T Rex performed. It was considered the first great UK rock festival, even though only running for one day.

Current hamlets are Roud and Sandford and until the 1970's, Rookley was a ward of Godshill Parish Council.

The War Memorial was originally situated directly opposite Godshill School in the frontage of Rosebank but was moved to the Garden of Remembrance on the brow of Church Hill in 1999 after the land was donated for a peppercorn rent by the Earl of Shannon after approaches by the Royal British Legion.

Godshill has many listed buildings, the majority being Grade 2 but All Saints Church, Godshill is Grade 1.

Appuldurcombe

Freemantle Lodge Gateway

House, park and garden

Ice house

Lodge

Stables

Walls NE, NW, SW and entrance wall

Worsley Obelisk on Stenbury Down

Bridges

Bow bridge

Bridge over River Yar at Beacon Alley

Church

15 chest tombs

Monuments to Rebekah and Thomas Hardley; John Combs and 3 unnamed

Billingham Memorial and Memorial to Anne Garde

Old Cross

Buildings

Bagwich

Bridgecourt

Bridgecourt Cottage

Cherry Thatch, Roud

Churchgate Cottage

Church Hill Cottage

Coach House (Natural History Centre)

Essex Cottage
Fairfields
French Mill
Gatcliff
Godshill School
Godshill Park House
Great Appleford
Lessland Farmhouse
Little Stenbury
Methodist Church
Nodyhill
Roud Cottage
School House
Sheepwash Farmhouse
Standen
Stenbury
Stone Cross Cottage
Syringa (Christmas Cottage)
The Bat's Wing
The Cottage (now the Herb Cottage)
The Cottage, Sandford and pump
The Griffin
The Homestead (Yeomans)
The Old Bell
Welcomes (Chocolate Factory)

Farm buildings covered by listing are:

Barns at Bagwich, Fairfields, Great Appleford, Lessland, Old Vicarage, Sainham and 2 at Stenbury
Former barn at Stenbury – now a store
Former Hackney Horse Stables with hayloft above at Lessland
Row of 6 former pig sties east of Stenbury
Stable block to the Hermitage
Stable and hayloft at Fairfields

Whilst the village of Godshill is famous as a tourist destination, the majority of the parish is farmland.

There were two fruit farms during the 1970's at Lower Elliotts and Squirrels and the former still carries on at Apple View. Organic farming began on the edge of the Arreton Valley during the last 20 years with Godshill Organics only closing during 2012, re-opening as a Chilli Farm. A flourishing Cherry Orchard is sited on the slope behind the Griffin

There are still areas of sheep farming and during the 1980s deer were kept at Sainham Farm – reminiscent of earlier times when there was a deer park on the adjoining estate of Appuldurcombe. The dividing wall was partially restored by voluntary labour also during the 1980s.

Sheepwash Farm has a farm shop selling chicken, duck, beef, lamb and pork, with turkey, geese and game being available over the Christmas period. Free range eggs are produced by Chestnut Farm in Bagwich Lane; whilst more local beef is reared at Godshill Park Farm. These all feed into the growth of locally-sourced eating venues for which the Island is becoming renowned.

Much of local land is under arable use by the East Anglian company, Staples, producing a wide range of vegetables which are sold nation-wide. The eastern part of the church mound between Chocolate Island and Bramble Cottage was also a very productive market garden during the war and the land forming part of the school grounds and Ternal Mead was used for allotments. Part of School Crescent, (Rongs) behind Welscroft, was another market gardening business until the early 1970s.

An application was approved in 2004 for a Continuing Care Community on Scotland Farm land at the rear of Yarborough Close but due to the economy, work has not yet started. It is a major scheme and would involve alterations to the junction of Yarborough Close and Newport Road.

Many redundant farm buildings have been converted to holiday accommodation as tourism becomes one of the main Island businesses and the holiday experience is enhanced locally by well-favoured eating houses of the Taverners and the Essex as well as the Griffin family pub.

Horse riding is also a popular local activity, with Allendale offering horses for hire as well as many private stabling establishments.

The Sunshine Trail for cyclists runs through the parish and walkers are catered for by both the Stenbury and Worsley Trails as well as numerous other footpaths and bridleways.

In the 1950's, land off Newport Road was donated by the late Mrs May for the use of the youth of the village. This is now the village playing field. An area of the field for a scout hut was granted by the Charity Commission, with a covenant that its use should be restricted to the youth of the village. A triangular portion of this land to the south was sold to a local landowner with the monies received being invested in the playing field.

A second open-space in the village – (Rongs Field) now Central Mead – was under the Trusteeship of the Horticultural Society until 2013, when responsibility was handed over to Godshill Parish Council. For many years, this was where the successful Summer Horticultural Shows were held on the first Wednesday in August and was also home to Godshill Cricket Club, until its move to Rookley in search of better facilities.

The Old Smithy was the first additional attraction to places such as Essex Cottage, The Hollies, The Old Bell, The Old World, Shamrock Cottage (opposite The Griffin and now burned down) and Willow Tree serving teas, with the forge selling its first lucky horseshoes in the 1950s. This complex grew steadily over the years, incorporating the Herb Cottage (currently empty) with the eventual expansion on the car park of the present buildings.

The Glebe area belonged to the church until the 1920's, previously also incorporating the land at Squirrels together with an adjoining field. Early maps show a Parish Room on the north-west aspect of the Glebe and this was presumably the forerunner to the current Village Hall, which opened in 1928. Part of the Hall had been a boot repair shop, which ran into financial difficulties. It was bought for £300 by a local benefactor, Sidney Luniss from Redhill Lane who extended it to make it the hall it is today. The kitchen and cloakroom areas were added more recently. The downstairs area has been variably the Doctor's Surgery, Parish Room, Godshill Sports & Social Club, a dance school and presently an accountancy practice.

Daisy Daisy in the Square was at one time the garage to Pound Farm with the house and village pound itself being situated at the top of Church Hill (now Pound Cottage). The farm itself at that time ran right down to the Whitwell Road.

The Homestead (now Yeomans) was the farmhouse for the Glebe.

Tor Cottage (once Orchardcroft in West Street) was a farmhouse using land in the Jubilee Close and St Catherine's View area.

The Newport (IW) and District Rifle Club owns a fully Home Office licensed 20/25 yds outdoor range with covered firing point at Sainham Farm. Prior to their purchase of this land in the early 1950's, they used a portion of Rongs in the village. The IW Gun Club also operates in the Sainham area.

With its large free car park, Godshill is the most visited village on the Island with many of the local attractions remaining open all year round.

Author: Rick Diment

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