

# A Potted History

## Of

### Ashchurch Parish Council

---

The Ecclesiastical Parish of Ashchurch which in the past had responsibility for both Religious and Secular parish affairs managed by the vicar, overseers and churchwardens, covered an area of 4201 acres stretching from

On the West: The Turn Pike on Walton Cardiff Lane

On the East: Brickfields Farm near Teddington

On the North: Carrant Brook

On the South: The Tredington Boundary

A Civil Ashchurch Parish Council was formed by the Local Government Act of 1894 which created Civic Parish Councils as units of administration within the County with responsibilities for such items as Drainage; Lighting; Burial Grounds and Allotments.

The Original Civil Parish of Ashchurch in 1894 was the same as the Ecclesiastical but over time Boundary changes meant that although St Nicholas is still the Parish church

for the original tithings or hamlets, the hamlets themselves are governed by different parish councils.

The Parish consisted of several Hamlets - and in 1891 there were some 710 inhabitants:

Aston also called Aston on Carrant - 145

Fiddington (inc. Natton ) - 187

Northway and Newton - 260

Pamington - 118

The area was mainly agricultural although the railway provided an alternative source of employment.

The first Parish Meeting was held in Ashchurch School Board Room on December 4<sup>th</sup> 1894. The 7 elected Councillors were:

Messrs. Steward; Jordan; W.T. Boughton; Chave; Prew; W.H.Greening and Phillips

The higher authority in 1894 was Tewkesbury Rural District Council and in the main the duties of the Parish Council appeared to be urging this authority to act in mending roads; extending water mains to Aston, Pamington and Fiddington; providing allotments and distributing coal through the Charity Trustees.

Under the County Review Order of 1935 the Tewkesbury Rural District Council was abolished and Ashchurch became part of the Cheltenham Rural District. At the same time the properties west of Gannaway Lane became the Newtown part of Tewkesbury.

The Population until this time had been fairly stable but the Ministry's decision to site an Army Camp in the Parish, occupied firstly by British troops and then Americans, together with the use of the railway for movement of troops and transport; evacuees and a Prisoner of War Camp at Northway caused a population explosion.

Towards the end of the war John Wyeth & brothers (later to be called International Chemical Company) applied to set up a modern factory near an adequate supply of fruit and vegetables for the production of penicillin and concentrated foods.

It had the support of Tewkesbury who wanted to attract industry to a "suitably zoned area to the east of the town with ample room for expansion." They were concerned that the return of the Ashchurch Depot to its original occupants after the war would raise female unemployment to 79% and of both sexes to 31.25%.

The application was turned down by the Board of Trade in a reply by Mr Jay stating: "Tewkesbury was not an area with surplus labour - The Forest of Dean was much more suitable."

Dowty Engineering which spawned many smaller ancillary engineering firms were initially based in the former railway provender store originally repairing aircraft components

during the war continued in business in Ashchurch. The required labour force came from local people and those who had been posted to the area and chosen, through various reasons, to stay here.

Shortage of Housing nationally at this time was acute, labour and materials for the past six years having been diverted for the war effort, so in Ashchurch the vacant huts at Northway were taken over as a temporary measure and in 1949 the Northway Housing Estate was built by Cheltenham District Council with Government assistance.

Ashchurch Parish Council had their meetings in the School room up to 1937. There are no minutes between 1937 and 1946 and after this the meetings seem to be held in the Village Hall.

With the increased population at Northway main concerns now are for the safety of the children attending Ashchurch School on the main road.

- The bridge over the railway being dangerous to foot passengers (1949); - 1959 brought the reply from the County Council that "nothing could be done re: widening the bridge - restriction of funds made available by the Ministry of Transport. It had been added to the list of such bridges requiring attention."
- A "Halt Sign" at the junction of Fiddington Road and the main road (1951)
- Traffic control for traffic leaving and entering the R.E.M.E. Depot (1951)
- Dowty's were asked for their police to control traffic (1952)
- A bus service to Ashchurch (1953)

Roadways seem to be an issue of continual complaint with the County Surveyor being asked repeatedly to repair reported defects at The Village Hall and Northway Back Lane and Aston on Carrant with improvements required to the Cross Roads at Aston Cross.

Flooding seemed to occur on a regular basis at Aston on Carrant and corner of Northway Lane and the Main Road, and the Church Drive.

- A new School at Northway was a top priority - shortage of accommodation at Ashchurch School (1954)
- Two huts from the Army Camp were provided as temporary accommodation until Northway Infants School was opened.
- A new Clerk - Mr Shill was appointed in 1957 at a salary of £35 per annum. The precept that year was set at £60.

- A children's playground behind the Church Hall was agreed (1957)
- A Doctor's Surgery was enquired about (1959)

By 1961 Ashchurch Parish Council were meeting in the Northway Church Centre and the representation had been increased from 7 to 9 members. Housing needs were still an issue.

- Dowty's had an immediate need for 30; Merrett & Co. had applied to R.D.C. for another 10 and the Army had been authorised to require another 60. They wanted these to be within the bounds of the Depot but permission to erect on the Old Army Dump on the South Side of the Stow /Tewkesbury Road was refused.
- Hedges on corners obscuring visibility concerns about roads brought a report from the County Surveyor (1961) :  
Re: the A438 footpath at the Junction of Northway Lane - plans for widening to 24ft and construction of footpath would be dependent on this. Visibility fencing would be erected on North East corner of Northway Junction  
Hedge cutting notices being sent out this month  
Barrier at end of footpath in Northway Lane to be repaired
- County Surveyor report that improvements to road at Aston on Carrant which had been of some concern for some time would be in his 1962/63 estimates. (1962)
- The War Memorial had been re-seeded, levelled and replanted with shrubs (1962)
- Development of 22 houses at Pamington - residents had agreed only 5 with the planning authorities (1962)
- Mr Harry Gould gives 8 acres of Land as a Playing Field (1962)

The Closure of Ashchurch Station was problematic for the area but at the same time the M5 motorway was built with Junction 9 at Ashchurch providing an alternative and easy route for Labour, Goods and Materials, to access the developing Industrial Estates.

Another Local Government Act in 1972 brought into creation the new Tewkesbury Borough Council which absorbed the Cheltenham Rural District Council and Ashchurch Councillors had a new system of lobbying to learn in order to achieve any benefits for the Parish.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008 further boundary change came into force and Ashchurch Civil Parish was abolished.

The Population for Ashchurch at the 2001 census is given as 6064 although the figure used for the Boundary Change Apportionment split is only 5888 which is as follows:

A new Parish of **Northway** - 4828

A new Parish called **Ashchurch Rural** - 903

The remaining 157 (those houses west of the M5 motorway) absorbed into the Newtown Ward of Tewkesbury Town.

The Ecclesiastical Parish of Ashchurch St. Nicholas Church will remain as ever.

Councillors serving Ashchurch Parish Council on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008

Mrs D. Bailey

Mr D. Birch

Mrs A. Brown

Mr A. Goloskof

Mrs M. Litherland

Mrs M. Levett

Mr S. Lewis

Mr D. Oughton

Mrs J. Shillam

Mr B. Sluz

Mr A. Snarey

Mr C. Woodward

Clerk to the Council: Mrs C. Woodward