

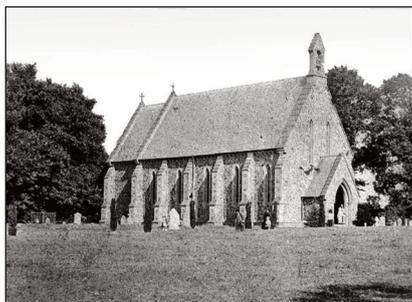


History of Guarlford and the Plough & Harrow

Guarlford

Guarlford is a village and civil parish in the Malvern Hills in the county of Worcestershire.

It is situated between the settlements of Barnards Green and Rhydd approximately two miles east of Great Malvern. The village is compact and has a parish church of St Mary's, built in 1843.



St Mary's, taken some time before 1906

The first parish council was established in December 1894 but its beginnings go back much, much further as Guarlford is one of the earliest inhabited places in the Malvern area and shows evidence of Neolithic activity with crop marks dating from a period that extends from 2350 BC to 409 AD. As with most place names, the spelling has differed through the ages, from Garford in 1275, to Gerleford in 1333 to even Galvert in the 1820s.

The Hwicce, an Anglo-Saxon tribal kingdom may have had a dwelling on the site of the existing Guarlford Court, Guarlford's most significant and substantial surviving building from the medieval period. The Court was a grange of Malvern Priory and as such its use changed dramatically with the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 when it was valued at a rent of £9.05 per annum. Its new landlords sought to curtail peasant farmers' rights to stock grazing on fields which had been largely enclosed in the Tudor period – a process that would go on into the seventeenth century and would lead to protracted disputes and some violence.



Guarlford Court, 1930

Guarlford in more recent times

The two World Wars had considerable effect on the village. A radio listening post was set up in Rectory Lane by the Telecommunications Research Establishment. It was used to track the movement of enemy aircraft by monitoring their radio traffic and proved instrumental in locating the German V-2 rocket base in Peenemünde that was subsequently bombed by the RAF in Operation Crossbow.

The memorial in St Mary's church honours those who sadly fell and close by lie two Commonwealth graves. Being rural, the village received its share of evacuee children. On 20th November 1940, 23 children from Selly Park School joined the village school and many speak of the shocking difference in the village with all the animals and space compared to their former homes in Birmingham.

Our neighbour, Humphrey Bladder, tells us how it was at this time that the farm and many others around turned from rearing sheep to growing wheat for the war effort. Their farm horses were commandeered by the American Army at Blackmore Hospital and Humphrey remembers one particular horse 'Queenie', who had quite a reputation and kept returning home on her own having thrown her rider – eventually they gave up on her and she was allowed to continue to pull the milk float through the village for the rest of the war. Fowler's Farm had a history of breeding fine horses, the two ploughing shire horses featured on our pub sign are Dripshill Forest Bob and Dripshill Forest King named after the local woods. After the war Fowlers farm would become a dairy farm along with a petrol pump outside.



This picture shows Humphrey attending the pump in 1951. At the time they had two tobacco tins in the shed by the pump, one for petrol coupons and one for money. Nothing was ever locked up and nothing was ever stolen.

Our pub

Before its closure in June 2016, 'the village elders' met regularly on a Saturday morning at the Plough and Harrow, as they had traditionally done for many years.

We are unsure as to when the pub first opened, but we believe that it used to only be licensed as a beer and cider house. There was no bar at the time but the landlord positioned himself by the doorway leading into the inner area and refilled mugs as required. It was only after the second world war that the pub obtained its full license when Dick and Pam Capstick renovated it.

Derrick Bladder was the first person to have a glass of whisky in the pub when it got its new 'spirits license'. In 'The Guarlford Story' he recalls that Revd Newsonthe, the vicar at the time, always maintained that the two most important places in the village were the church and the pub. The Bishop used to have a walk about in the summer and the Rector would bring him into the 'Plough' and say "This is where I meet most of my flock." Revd Newson also said at confirmation classes, "If you want a drink you should go to the pub and buy a drink, like I do and not to the back door (off license) with a black bag!"

Sam Beard describes the pub in the 1920s and 30s. He thinks that the premises were at one time used for storing and distributing coal and a building to the front of the pub was a dray house and stables.

"The locals gathered here on a regular basis; work on farms was discussed; far fetched tales were told and some rude ones. The Landlord kept a watchful eye on the white mugs with a golden band around the top and refilled them as required. So, in the smoke-laden atmosphere, the parish business went on. From time to



time the clean sawdust in the cast iron black-leaded spittoons erupted as one or another cleared the way for another draught from the pint mug. 'Time' at the 'Plough' was strictly observed and the men would set off in search of the next meal – on Sunday usually a roast

– but not without the occasional prank, such as the dairy man who found his milk float with the shafts put through a five barred gate, and a pony harnessed therein".

Rob Gilroy also describes how his grandfather, Bill Morris of Clevelode, used to come to the Plough and Harrow and would play cards for money, as well as a game where pennies were flicked into a tin, the winner taking the kitty. Evidently it was not unknown for poaching expeditions to be planned here, sadly necessary with so many children to feed in many families.

In 1984, Malcolm Russell began selling home grown plants from his home, the Tan House, which was then next door to the pub, but now forms a part of it. Malcolm and his mother's business 'Tan House Plants' started to attract an ever-increasing number of customers both locally and from further afield and with the help of a partner, Pauline, the business grew and grew until Malcolm's death in 2001.



With various licensees, among them Dennis Atkins, the jockey, the pub underwent changes in the last two decades of the twentieth century, culminating in a major refurbishment of the restaurant. In the autumn of 2004, the license was taken over by the brewers. 'Wadworths', with Juliet Tyndall and Michael Weir as the licensees.



The pub pictured in 2007 during the tenancy of Juliet and Michael

In 2016 the future of the pub was reported by the Worcester News as being "quite bleak". Nobody had stepped forward to take on the premises and it was now being considered for demolition to make way for houses. The local community rallied magnificently to protect their pub. They contacted Brunning and Price, bagging the lucky local £5000 through the 'finders fee' promotion that B&P offer for the introduction of a viable new project and here we are today – thrilled to have saved and restored a historic pub of great importance to those in the area.

Huge thanks to the Guarlford History Group. Their books 'The Guarlford Scene' and 'The Guarlford Story' are a wealth of wonderful local information.