

## WICK 1958

The ancient village of Wick has changed considerably since the days when water had to be hauled up in a bucket from the well on the village green.



One of the many picturesque scenes still to be seen at Wick. Only a few yards from the ferry landing stage, the thatched cottage is one of the oldest buildings in the village.

Some of the older residents say it has been "completely spoilt". Several modern bungalows and a number of caravans now stand on what used to be open fields, but the village has still many picturesque corners. And the walk from Tuckton Bridge along the tree-lined country lane to Wick is one of the prettiest in the neighbourhood. The village well was used until about 1914 and was covered over by large stones which can still be seen. Buckets were lowered into the water at the end of a long pole with a hook attached and the last person to use the well is believed to have been Rosie O'Brien, brother of John O'Brien, who was a former well-known Wick ferryman.

Water from the well was "very good to drink" and one of the older residents, Mrs. H. G. D. Gray of Laurel Cottage, remembers as a girl drawing water for her grandmother before going to work.

The O'Brien family lived in a tiny thatched cottage which adjoined Laurel Cottage and was known as "Uncle Tom's Cabin". John O'Brien is reputed to have been heir to a Lord in Ireland when the first in line was disowned after marrying a peasant girl. But John preferred to stay at Wick.

### WAS FORMER PIERMASTER.

Mrs. Gray, who attended school in Christchurch, became a milliner's apprentice in Boscombe. She left Wick about the age of 15 and returned about five years ago. Her Grandfather, Captain Robert Legge, was the first piermaster at Old Southbourne. Mrs. A. J. Bowser, of Riverside Cottage, has lived in the village practically all her life and it was her mother who opened the village hall in 1938. She has seen many changes. In her younger days there were several thatched cottages, among them Wick Farm House. Now the home of Cmdr. M. Wallrock, this house was originally one of the two farms in Wick. Farmer Dowden lived there at one time and it was also the home of the Dawe family, who were distant relatives of Mrs. Bowser.

The other farm, now owned by Bournemouth Corporation and known as lower Wick farm, was previously worked by the Reeks family. These buildings are believed to date back to the 1700's. Wick (higher) farm is now owned by Mr. H. Whiting. Most of this land has now been developed for building purposes and was at one time farmed by Mr. E. Mills.

### SOCIAL CENTRE.

It was in Feb, 1938, that the little community of Wick gained, by the generosity of a local man and the efforts of their own sports club, a fully equipped hall, in which to centre the social life of the village. At the opening ceremony nearly 100 residents expressed thanks to Mr. W. E. Timms, who then lived "The Meadows"—now "Broadwaters"—for his gift, described at that time as "the greatest necessity of the village".

The history which prefaced this happy ceremony began nearly five years earlier when local residents formed a social club. Owing to the lack of a meeting place and insufficient enthusiasm to work for one, the society ceased to function for a while, but "out from the ashes" arose first a cricket club, and finally a sports club. By means of whist drives and other social events, the sports club began to consider the ways and means of obtaining a hall. It was then that Mr. Timms, hearing of the urgent necessity for a hall, offered an extensive garage standing in his grounds for the purpose.

#### VOLUNTARY LABOUR.

This was readily accepted and within a few weeks by entirely voluntary labour of sports club members, the garage was converted into a comfortable hall and clubroom, for which all additional building materials were supplied by Mr. Timms.



Children of Wick prepare for worship in their little church in a barn. This part of the building was once a cattle stall.

The opening ceremony was performed by Mrs. Collingwood (mother of Mrs. Bowser) who, at the age of 74, was the oldest resident of Wick. Mrs. Collingwood was presented with an inscribed silver key to commemorate the opening ceremony. A few years ago this key was presented to the club, now at Tuckton, by Mrs. Bowser.

The original hall is now used as garages by residents of Broadwaters, which has been converted into flats.

Since 1942 Mrs. Bowser has been running the Missions to Seamen shop at Tuckton. Half of the income is sent to the Missions to Seamen and the other half to the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. To date, about £3,500 has been forwarded by Mrs. Bowser.

In 1954 attempts were made to recover Sam Hookey's treasure from the River Stour, near Wick Ferry. How it is reputed to have got there is

described in the story of the celebrated "Wicked Man of Wick" which is one of the gems of the district's romantic history. Sam seems to have been born during the year 1725 in a rude hovel which has long since

disappeared. His father earned a scanty living by in-shore fishing, but contrived to supplement his income by frequent bouts of smuggling.

It was during one of these escapades that he forcibly carried off from Guernsey a young and beautiful Spanish girl, brought her to his abode at Wick and made her his wife.

Sam was the first child and though he was in due course blessed with 10 brothers and sisters, he was the only member of the family who made any mark in the world—at least, as far as records tell us.

At a very early age Sam—he seems never to have been referred to as Samuel—showed signs of possessing a combination of impulsive daring and calculating judgment, that only can be ascribed to his mixed ancestry. At that time several prehistoric burial mounds still existed on the ground around Wick and on Hengistbury Head.

## SUPERSTITION.

These mounds were regarded with superstitious awe by the local populace, but young Sam made up his mind to penetrate their secrets.

Gathering together a band of playmates, he overcame their terrified objections, and persuaded them to help in burrowing a hole in the flank of the largest mound, but Sam was the only one bold enough to scratch his way into its centre.

## FLED IN TERROR.

As he was emerging from the tunnel one of the large stones, occasionally found in mounds of this type, collapsed and pinned him to the ground. All his companions fled in terror, and it was only by chance that Sam's predicament was discovered many hours later.

After serving a short apprenticeship to a farrier, Hookey set up in the same trade himself, and his smithy is thought to have been at the bottom of Pound Lane.

It is evident, however, that this peaceable occupation was merely a cloak for another and more lucrative pursuit. In short, Sam quickly became one of the most persistent and enterprising smugglers of the South Coast.

The most astounding exploit of the "Wicked Man of Wick", by which name he was already universally known, took place in Christchurch harbour one wild night at Whitsuntide in 1764. Sam split his force into two parts; the smaller force ran a cargo of brandy tubs ashore near the mouth of the River Bourne, to which the Riding Master and his assistants hurried for the purpose of intercepting the contraband. The smugglers put up a show of resistance and were finally dispersed, but great was the Excisemen's discomfiture on finding that every tub was empty!

## 12,033 TUBS OF SPIRITS.

In the meantime the larger portion of Hookey's force, consisting of three luggers each propelled by 40 oarsmen as well as a full spread of sail, went calmly into Christchurch harbour and landed, completely unmolested, a "run" of no less than 12,033 tubs of spirits, two tons of tea, and five bales of silk. The landing took place on the spot where the Wick Ferry Holiday Camp now stands, in those days a desolate, marshy waste. This is supposed to be the largest single "run" ever accomplished on the coast of England. To the end of his life Hookey continued to engage in every sort of smuggling activity, and might well have amassed a considerable fortune, but he appears to have spent his money as freely as he earned it. He met his death close to his birthplace.

At the age of 71, worn out with toil and privation, he attempted during the night of August 29, 1796, to convey a "run" of tea, lace and gold coin, over the ford which then crossed the River Stour a few yards upstream from the present Wick Ferry.

## DROWNED.

The smugglers were surprised by the Excisemen; shots were exchanged and in the confusion Sam wandered off the line of the ford and slipped into a deep hole in the river bed. Weighed down by his heavy load of gold coin, and the current running very strongly, Hookey was drowned. His body was never found, and to this day some of the older generation always refer to this spot as Hookey's Hole.

The erection of Cavalry Barracks in Christchurch was the first real practical measure against local illicit trading. This may possibly have been to some extent the result of a letter to the military authorities by a certain Richard Hughes, of Wick, in 1770. Stated the letter: "I beg to inform you that there are two bays or arms of the sea on each side of Christchurch in Hampshire that are continually frequented by a most dangerous band of smugglers who appear to hold all the revenue laws in open defiance. I

venture to recommend that a troop of dragoons should be sent to Christchurch. At this very moment the smuggling cutter is lying in Christchurch Bay flying His Majesty's colours."

Wick Ferry owes its existence to John Sloman, who lived at Wick House and also owned Wick Farm. About the year 1840, a farm hand of his named Marshall was involved in an accident which made him unfit for farm work. John Sloman provided the man with a boat, and suggested that he might make a living as a ferry man.

#### WICK FORD.

Before this, it was known as Wick Ford. The river being broader and shallower in those days, the crossing was made on horseback.

A favourite subject for photographers and artists, the ferry, now operated by Mr. Bob Bishop and his daughter Dawn, has lost little of its rustic attractiveness, although in the summer the leisurely oars must give way to the speedier motor. Wick House is now divided into four maisonettes. In the delightful grounds are several rare and unusual trees and plants. A Judas tree is believed to be the biggest in the country and there is also a rare Chinese maidenhair tree.

Attached to the house is a riding school run by Mr. J. M. Geraty and Mr. G. H. Taylor. Riding instructress and manager is Mr. Geraty's daughter, Miss Marion Geraty. The Sanctuary cottage near the Corporation farm is one of the oldest buildings in the village and is believed to have been part of a farmhouse used by monks from the Priory. A few years ago a statue, believed to be of St. Peter, was recovered from this area of the village.

Wick is in the parish of St. Katharine's, Southbourne, and services and a Sunday school in the village are held in a converted barn, loaned by Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Russell, of the Well House. The altar and sanctuary are between two oak partitions, formerly used as a horse or cattle stall.

Nearly 40 children attend the Sunday school, which is conducted by Miss B. A. R. Brazier, a lay worker. A new church in the parish of St. Katharine's is to be built at Broadway and the Wick barn church is now serving a valuable purpose in forming a nucleus for the new congregation. A parish Communion is held at 9.15 on Sunday mornings, specially to suit husbands and wives of young families.

Oldest resident of Wick is 91-year-old Mr. Arthur Stickley, whose grandson, Peter, a chorister at the Priory Church, is keenly interested in village history.