

A walk round Toddington Centre with a little bit of village history illustrating how bygone artists have contributed to our visual history ... Alan Higgs, Ba hons fine art

Photo 1 entitled Mr Harbutt's House by Fisher in 1820

This is now called St James and is in Park Road and after the time of this painting the house was lived in by Lady Caroline Cooper Cooper, spinster sister of Lord of the Manor.

She was responsible for the alterations shown by the castellation which mimic our church which she loved dearly.

She also kept a little notebook which we come to next.



Photo 2 a page from Lady Caroline's notebook handwritten in 1894

This refers to Wainholm in Park Road, wain is an old word for wagon.

For 50 years this was a hive of industry and was the principle Toddington Carriers until the railways arrived in 1868.

Local farms and producers brought their good here for distribution and two deliveries a week went to Smithfield in London leaving at 10am on Mondays and Thursdays.

Caroline describes this wagon as "The pride of the great North Road" and "a ponderous tilted machine drawn by eight horses".

What a busy industrious area this must have been with all the horses, stables and clerks required to run such a business.



Photo 3 Carrier's Wagon unloading at Toddington, George Shepherd 1818

A very significant photo not only showing how goods arrived but a detailed look at two buildings which have long gone.

To the left is a building known as the cloisters also called the session house and toll booth. These were attached to our present town hall. After this painting the town fire engine building was attached to the cloisters in place of the leaning thatched building.

To the right stood the town kitchens where it is reported they had 7 ovens and could house 10 poor families. It was pulled down in 1828.



67 Carrier's waggon unloading at Toddington.



Artist's impression of these buildings

Photo 4 Toddington High Street in 1820 by Thomas Fisher

Another very important painting recording visual history. In the distance the toll booth, session house and town kitchens are clearly visible endorsing Shepherd's close-up painting. The Forge was timber built at the time with hipped roofs. The pub sign stands outside the Queens Head which was where the nail bar is. The pond just visible coming out to the road with sheep pens in front of it.



What the pond looked like in 1581

Photo 5 Duncombe's water colour painting of the Town Pond in 1871

All the buildings in this painting have long gone and the pond has diminished significantly to make the Memorial Gardens.

The building on the left went back to make 3 houses and on the right shown is 6 of the cottages which was the start of Pond Head and Fireball Alley into Luton Road, then Fins Lane. There were 18 cottages there in all habituated by 60 folk.



1871, a watercolour by Duncombe showing the pond as it was



Sketch of how Pond Head looked, looking South. Re-created using 1882 OS map and early photos. The Angel is only remaining building on far right.

Photo 6 The Social Club then the New Inn

This annotated enlargement from a photo taken from the Church Tower illustrates this must have been the most congested area of Toddington in those days.

What a hive of industry it must have been with 60 folk living by the pond. To the right beyond the Brewery was Owen Pilgrim's wheelwrights' yard where they made cart wheels. During the hot weather the timber wheels on carts used to come loose so they backed them into the pond to swell the wood and tighten them up.

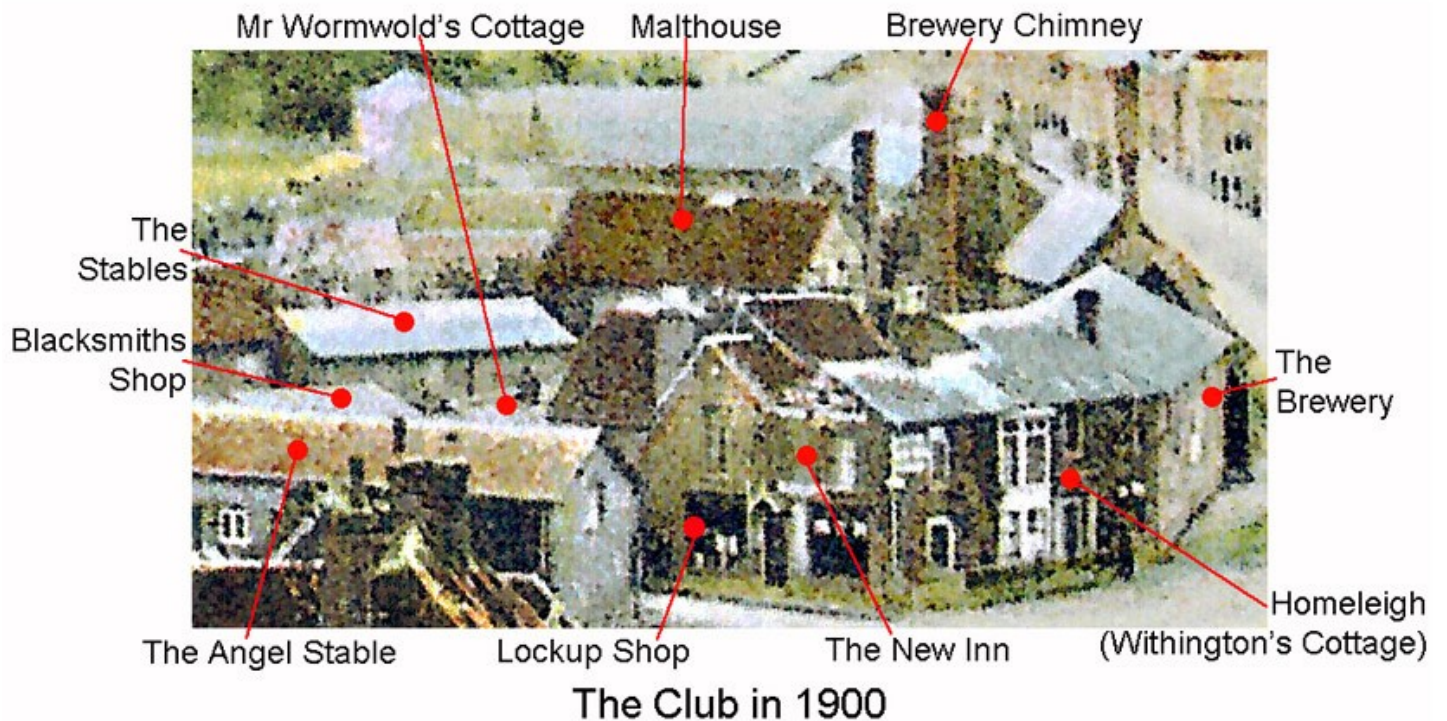


Photo 7 Mr Fletcher's House by Thomas Fisher 1920

Initially a puzzle to discover where this was but confirmed by census on Mr Fletcher that this was the first Bedford Arms Public House, then Toddington Florists and now a private house. The building had a new front added which came out to the picket fence and other alterations so disguising this painting's whereabouts. The long sloping left hand roof is still there together with the chimneys.



Locations of spots to contemplate the artist's work.
The walk around is just under a mile and takes 3/4 hour