

As a follow-up to last month's reflections on Bicton life when the Lawson family occupied the vicarage, Miss Dorothy Lewis has provided us with her class photograph taken at that time, together with associated memories.

Nearly all the children shown would, like Dorothy, now be in their nineties, if not already deceased. By publishing this photograph, it may perhaps come to the attention of any survivors or their families, thus prompting their own memories (and even completing identifications). Such was rural life, with its short agricultural tenancies and tied cottages, only a few families have remained in the area for long, so that many descendants must be well scattered by now. Improvements in education were also allowing children to 'spread their wings' in following careers. Families of local tradesmen or those with work in Shrewsbury did however, tend to stay longer in this area, including the Lewis family. Dorothy did, nevertheless, enjoying a successful career as nurse and midwife elsewhere before returning 'home'. Likewise, the daughter of classmate Arthur 'Tishy' Evans is still a local resident.

With few exceptions, these children all came from the local parish which included Montford Bridge and the Isle. Geoffrey Williams from the Isle Park probably had one of the longest journeys, helped by a taxi service provided by another Isle tenant.

The class shown ranged in age from 5 to 9 and was split into two age groups for actual teaching. Some were absent that particular day, thanks to common childhood ailments. A Hartshorne from Montford Bridge was at least one of them.

Their families were mainly drawn from the ranks of farm and estate workers or local tradesmen, while the principal 'employers' such as the larger tenant farmers, landowners and 'professional' classes, including the vicar, preferred to use private education elsewhere. In any case, most of these would have had older children by this time.

Two exceptions, which actually prove this point, were Brian Warner and the Cassels sisters. The Warners held Forton West Farm on the Montford estate and thus were avoiding using the same local school as their workers. At Bicton House there was also room for the farmer's son and his young family, for a short time at least, when they attended Bicton School.

Amongst the other children there was quite a variety of backgrounds. Ernest Lewis, Dorothy's father, has already been discussed in this series (Dec '13). Victor Buckley (also in the Church choir) was son of local blacksmith, William, just down the road, where from time to time, some of the older boys went for practical lessons, while the girls did their sewing. Billy Broughall's father would have been the local vet in Montford Bridge. The father of the Bailey sisters, and their other siblings, was an attendant at Shelton Hospital (Asylum) and they all lived by Grove Farm, in a house since demolished. Edna Edge's father, Moses (brother of war casualty, Henry in our churchyard and also uncle to 'Tishy' Evans), was gardener to Mr Mead at the Woodlands. Edna was bright enough to win a scholarship to the Priory Girls School, which would certainly have given her opportunities beyond the traditional rural work. Also working at the Woodlands as cowman, was Tom Price (just a coincident with no connection to today's family), father of Ivy and Joyce, one of whom is in the photograph. The Edwards sisters, Joyce and Phyllis, from the Isle Lane, still have surviving younger sisters, Brenda and Christine, married to local lads, who no doubt have more information about them.

The infant teacher, Nellie Catterill, married Charlie Edwards from the village; he worked at a Morris store in Shrewsbury and later the Milk Marketing Board. They lived in 'The Haven', one of the early houses in Church Lane. They had no children of their own, but Nellie was kept busy teaching at Montford School.

It would be interesting to learn more about what happened to these young children after their school years. Sadly, Denis Brown of Isle Lane went down with his ship in the last war, but there must be some happier stories too.

Bicton Lower School 1928

Left to right:

Back Row:

Billy Broughall
George Pope
Victor Buckley
John Matthews
Geoffrey Williams
Arthur Evans
Miss Catterill

2nd Row:

Dorothy Lewis
? Reeves
Alice Powell
Edna Edge
Margaret Bailey
Gwen Evans
Joyce Higgs
Ivy (or Joyce) Price

3rd Row:

Joyce Edwards
Phyllis Edwards
? Asterley
? Ivy Powell
Unknown
Unknown
Joan Edwards
Unknown

4th Row:

Margaret Cassels

? Ivy Powell

Phyllis Morris

Brian Warner

Denis Brown

Teddy Davies

Front Row:

Katherine Bailey

? Cassels

Unknown

? Roberts



