

Village Echoes

With today's reliance on the car, many of us will be unfamiliar with the lesser known byways of the village that are unsuitable for motor transport. One such byway is Stoney Lane, which starts from the side of Goudhurst Newsagents in the High Street and finishes in North Road near the junction with Blind Lane. If you take a walk along the lane, you will find no houses fronting it but that was not always the case!

Looking at the 1841 census, we can see that there were some 14 dwellings in the lane. This is perhaps a reflection of the belief that, at one time, Stoney Lane had been the main route into the village from the Maidstone direction. Indeed, at the time of the census, the only properties shown in North Road were those close to the centre of the village. In addition, the tollgate of the Goudhurst, Gore & Stilebridge Turnpike Trust on the road from Maidstone was situated close to the junction of Stoney Lane with North Road.

The properties in the lane were sited on the stretch from the Methodist Chapel running North, i.e. towards Marden. They were not large – most having four rooms or fewer - and were generally inhabited by labourers and tradesmen, such as a bricklayer, carpenter, shoemaker and laundress. Much the same applied by the time of the 1851 census when the number of inhabitants stood at 43. Although the number increased slightly in the later censuses, by 1901 it had decreased to 37 – probably a result of families beginning to have fewer children.

There are two advertisements in the Southeastern Gazette that give brief descriptions of some of the properties. The first, from 1857, is notice of auction of four cottages in the lane, described as being of brick and weatherboarded with tiled roofs. Each has a sitting room, two bedrooms, an attic, a washhouse and a small garden. There are three ovens between the four cottages. The total rent for the properties was just over £20 per year. The second advertisement is from 1875 and, once again, four cottages are being put up for auction and we are told that the rents amount to over £27 per year! The cottages even have the benefit of a supply of water on the premises.

What is interesting from the later advertisement is that the auctioneer is emphasising the fact that the cottages, although in Stoney Lane, also have a frontage of 78 feet to North Road 'on which several more cottages could be advantageously constructed'. This was to be the fate of Stoney Lane: the cottages were gradually demolished and replaced by more modern properties built in their gardens but facing North Road.

Unfortunately we have no record of what Stoney Lane looked like in those days or of when exactly the houses were demolished. Therefore, if any resident has some information, please get in touch with the Local History Society.

Local History Society
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