

West Bank. The building in the centre is now demolished.

Winster is an ancient lead-mining village in the Derbyshire Peak District. It existed at the time of the Domesday Book (1086), and grew into a modest market community, until a boom in lead mining in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries turned the village into a prosperous small town. Flooding in the mines became a problem as the workings got deeper, and eventually it forced many of them to close. The last working mine at Mill Close, two miles north-east of Winster, employed large numbers of local men until it closed in 1938. A number of the buildings on the imposing Main Street, some of which were once shops, date from the hey-day of mining. The two grandest buildings are Winster Market House (now owned by the National Trust) and Winster Hall. The cottages which huddle together on the hillside, known as Winster Bank, are more likely to have been the modest homes of the poorer miners, quarrymen and agricultural workers and their families. They spread out between two steep roads, East Bank and West Bank, and are linked by a web of narrow pathways. All around are mineshafts and grassy mounds left over from the period of lead mining. In the 1950s an estate of council houses was built at Leacroft, on the eastern approaches.



Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers

In contrast to past times, few of the residents now work in the village, and this fact, together with the rise of motor transport, has brought the demise of much of the old community. But although there has been change there has not been decline, for Winster is one of the most lively villages in the area, with a school, shops, a garage, two pubs, a church, two chapels, playing fields, a medical centre, a newly refurbished village hall, and many flourishing activity groups. Much of this liveliness can be experienced during Winster Wakes, especially on Wakes Saturday, which is usually the first in July.



Carnival procession along Main Street on Wakes Saturday 1982.
The building in the background is the Market House.

The feeling that the old village life was slipping away was one of the motives that lay behind the formation in 1996 of the Local History Group. Its declared aim is 'to promote awareness and understanding of Winster's history through research, publication, talks and exhibitions'. We hoped from the start that the History Group's activities would help foster a spirit of togetherness and interest in the village, and we like to think that this has proved to be the case, with membership at one time reaching sixty (from an adult population of about six hundred). Our activities are of two sorts: monthly talks throughout the winter



Introduction

on subjects of local interest, and informal workshop groups that meet throughout the year in people's homes. The workshops have concentrated on such things as assembling an archive of photographs and documents, investigating individual buildings, working on material for a village map, and recording the memories of residents and former residents. This last enterprise, which we call our Oral History Project, now comes to fruition with the publication of this book.

We first began making our recordings in February 1997. Initially people were rather uncertain about what we were doing, especially as those asking the questions were mainly newcomers to Winster. But now that the project has come to be better understood we find we have no shortage of volunteers. There are many we have not yet interviewed. Nor are we only interested in times long past, because we recognise that history does not stand still. So our archive of tapes, which now numbers about fifty, will continue to expand, we hope, in years to come.

In preparing the transcripts of the tapes for publication we have had to make changes, such as removing the words of the interviewers, taking out repeated material, and grouping the transcribed texts according to subject matter. There have been difficult decisions to make, such as the extent to which we should standardise and 'correct' the language. We knew that if we went too far in that direction we might lose the naturalness of the spoken words, so on the whole we have tried to keep changes to a minimum. Mostly it has just been a matter of clarification. Another consideration was the local dialect. One of our informants, Stan Heathcote, is so distinctive in his use of local speech that we have retained it (with his permission) in our transcriptions, so far as the limits of the ordinary alphabet allow! In short, we have tried to follow a common-sense approach and treat every problem individually. But it has not been all problems. It has been a pleasure for us to meet people and to enjoy their stories of past times. What they have told us is full of interest, and we have found that many people are natural storytellers. Readers will judge this for themselves.

The material in this book has two main features: it is personal and it is remembered. Because it is personal, we have only included it with the express permission of those concerned. And because it is remembered it needs to be distinguished from factual history. Sequences of events easily become distorted as people reach back into their memories, and dates tend to get disregarded altogether. So this is not a history book. Therefore we have not checked and changed what people have told us, beyond putting right obvious inaccuracies and contradictions. We have, though, tried to remove anything that might be taken amiss – but not to the extent of making the subject matter bland and uninteresting. But we are realistic enough to know that it is virtually impossible

Winster Wisdom: 'You canna take a stocking off a bare leg.'



Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers

not to offend someone, however careful we are, either by what we have included or by what we have left out. We can only ask readers to bear in mind that our intention all along has been to help Winster people understand and be proud of their distinctive local heritage, and to give the wider public some idea of what life was like in a rural community during the course of the last century.

The membership of the Oral History Project has fluctuated over the three years since we began. The following people are or have been members: Barbara Berry, Hilary Campbell, Betty Dawes, Gill Elliott, Freda Forster, Frances Hope, Geraldine Hopkinson, Geoff Lester, Sue Mills, Christine Renouf, Simon Reynolds, Jan Shiers and Hilary Tomlinson. We are grateful for having received valuable help in one form or another from Helen Bastin, Carolyn Brook, Joe Kewin, Marg Lester, John Mills, Brenda Newsam, Rod Shiers, Rosie Strauss and Mair Walters. And, of course, we warmly thank all those who agreed to be interviewed, without whom this project could never even have been begun.

Preparing this book has been a shared responsibility, but three people have had a greater-than-average workload. They are Freda Forster, who made most of the initial contacts with informants, did most of the interviews, and located most of the photographs; Barbara Berry, who expertly transcribed into type almost four hundred pages directly from the tape recordings; and Geoff Lester, who edited and prepared the text for publication.

The majority of the photographs reproduced here have been lent for copying over the last four years and are in the Group's archive. Others have been lent specially for this book. Specific thanks are due to David and Marilyn Bentley, Eric Brassington, Joan Crowder, Betty Dexter, John Francis, Frances and Ernest Hope, Annie Marshall, Bill Slaney, Bessie Thorpe, Gordon Thorpe and Mildred Witham. The photograph of Josiah Greatorex's grocer's shop on Main Street is from the collection of John Wright of Elton, and that of Frank Blackwell's butcher's shop on East Bank is from the collection of Michael Greatorex, who now lives in Tamworth. Thanks are due also to the many others who have loaned photographs which we have not been able to include.

The line drawings are by Joe Kewin, and the cover picture was specially painted by Bill Kirby. Colour prints (42cm by 30cm) and cards based on the painting are available from Winster Post Office.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the award of a Millennium 'Awards for All' grant, without which it would not have been possible to publish the book in this form. A 'talking-book' version is also available.

*Winster Local History Group
Oral History Project*



BIOGRAPHIES OF CONTRIBUTORS

LESLIE BACON. The Bacon family has long connections with Winster. Both Les's father and grandfather lived in the village. Les was born in 1929, attended Winster school and was apprenticed as a wheelwright in Darley Bridge when he was fourteen. He now lives in Hunstone House with his wife, Grace. His brother, Wilf, lives nearby.

HAROLD BARNESLEY was born in Winster in 1919. He lived on the Flat, East Bank, where there were several other Barnesley households - as Harold says, 'No money but plenty of property'. In 1940 he was captured at Dunkirk and spent the next five years as a prisoner of war. After an emotional return to Winster he married Edith Hayes from Matlock, then began working for his father as a builder, and later set up on his own as a painter and decorator. On his retirement he and Edith moved to Matlock.

BERT BOAM was born in Winster (as were his father and grandfather) in 1909 in the Post Office House. He was one of seven children. They were, in order, Winifred, Randolph, Bert, Harold, Hedley, Marjorie and Evelyn. Bert has very clear memories of village life from an early age and has a gift for describing them and for telling stories in an exciting way. At various times he was a gardener at Oddo, a farmhand, a quarryman, a blacksmith, a lorry driver and a lead miner. At Mill Close Mine his skill as a certified 'fireman' meant that he could set and detonate explosives. In 1939 he married Hilda Poundall, from nearby Bonsall, and set up home with her there, eventually buying land and establishing a farm, which is now run by his son, Philip.

HEDLEY BOAM. Numbered fifth of seven children, Hedley was born in 1915 and lived above the Post Office in Main Street. His parents, Ernest and Annie, moved the family to what is now Smithy House, Main Street. Formerly, a second-hand clothes shop, it was run by Annie and Ernest as a fish, chip and wet fish shop, and they also provided a taxi service. Later Hedley added a milk round. In 1950 Hedley married Joan Welch from Darley Dale, and took over the running of the shop until his retirement in 1976. Hedley died in August 1999.

DORIS BRASSINGTON [née Newton], known as 'Dolly' and wife of Ben, was born on West Bank in Winster in 1905. She was married in 1929 from Bank House in Woolley's Yard, her parents being caretakers of the Bank in Main Street. With her husband she moved to Woodland View on the Flat, where their children, Eileen and Eric, were brought up. After Ben's death Dolly moved into the cottage behind Woodland View, now known as Brassington Cottage. In 1982 she moved to Matlock to live with her daughter. She died in January 1999.



Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers

ASA COOPER was born at Rockhurst Farm, Aldwark, in 1938. He is the third of sixteen children. In 1965 he met Sylvia Stubbs in a pub in Brassington. They married in April 1967 and moved soon after to their present home at Bank Top, Winster. Starting in a small way and by gradually buying land and rearing cattle, he was able to follow in his family's farming footsteps. Sylvia and Asa have four children – Gill, Asa (known as 'Sam'), Susan and James.

MAVIS CORKER [née Wilson], born 1921, has lived all her life at Carpenter's Cottage, Main Street. Her father, Frederick George Wilson, was the local joiner and undertaker. Mavis married James Watts in 1942, and they had two sons. James died in 1959, and in 1974 she married Thomas Corker. Thomas died in 1979.

EILEEN CROWDER [née Brassington], the eldest child of Ben and Dolly, was born in 1931. In 1961 she married John Crowder, and they now live in Matlock.

BETTY DEXTER [née Greatorex], an only child and now in her 70s, was born at Hillcrest [now Chimney Cottage] on the Flat. Her grandmother sold sweets and vegetables from Hillcrest and kept their two horses in the adjoining front stables. When she was one year old her father died, and the family moved with grandma to the house now named Mia Casa on West Bank, where the business continued and a newsagent's was added. After the death of her first husband, Harry Brandon, Betty met and in 1967 married Ernest Dexter, a lorry driver from Nottingham. On her mother's death she took over the running of the shop until her retirement in 1989.

MARION DRINKALL [née Wild] was born in 1927 at Vernon House, Main Street. In 1951 she married David Drinkall from Eagle Tor, and they had two children. They now live in Matlock.

DOROTHY ('DOT') FEARN [née Walker] was born in 1924. Her father, George, was a pork butcher, who sold from his shop at the bottom of East Bank, now known as Market House. Dot married Richard Fearn in 1946, and for twelve years they were landlord and landlady at the Bowling Green. Their children, Gill and Paul, live in Winster. Dot now lives at Stanfree House, Main Street.

MURIEL GOULD [née Ashcroft] was born in Manchester in 1934. She came to Winster on 1 September 1939 as an evacuee. She lived with Nancy and George Gregory at Pembroke House [now Brae Cottage] on East Bank until she returned home in 1944. In 1955 she married Eric Gould, and they now have three children and four grandchildren. Muriel is still an occasional visitor to Winster Primitive Methodist Chapel.

GLADYS HARDY [née Fern] was born in Bonsall in 1905. She was married to Michael William ('Bill') Hardy in 1928, and they lived in Bonsall for a while, until Bill broke his leg in an accident at Mill Close Mine, after which they moved in with his parents in Woolley's Yard. With Bill off work for nine



Biographies of Contributors

months and the couple living on £2 a week compensation, they rented Dale View [now Forge Cottage] on East Bank, for 5/6d per week. When Bill died in 1962, Gladys, with her daughter Elveen, moved to Tomkins Cottage, Main Street. In 1982, after a fall, Gladys moved to live with her daughter in Matlock.

STAN HEATHCOTE was born in Bradbourne in 1939. He arrived in Winster, aged fifteen, in the back of the furniture removal van, with his brother, half-brother and aunt. Ashton House, their new home on West Bank, had been a shop, selling sweets and cigarettes. Stan has always been a farm labourer, working mostly for Cartwright's at the Holly Bush, which was once a farm as well as a pub. He was forced into retirement through rheumatism and ill health, and still lives in Ashton House.

VIN HODGKINSON, son of Fred and Tamar, was born in Winster in 1913. He and his father ran a shop in Main Street, which was rebuilt after it burned to the ground in 1933. They sold bicycles, motorbikes, greengrocery and wet fish. They also had a garage, with a petrol pump outside the shop. In the 1930s Fred taught Vin to wire farms and houses and to build and repair radios. Vin later sold televisions. He started a tennis club, a taxi service and a dancing school. In the 1950s he organised dances at the Burton Institute, and helped with the revival of the Winster Morris team. In 1997 Vin was the first person to be interviewed by Winster Local History Group for their Oral History Project. He died later that year.

ERNEST HOPE was born at Hillside View, West Bank, in 1919. His brother, Stan, lived there until recently. The middle child of two brothers and two sisters, Ernest has always lived in Winster. His father, George, a Winster man, married Annie Flint from Bole Hill. Ernest's first job on leaving school at thirteen was making wreaths for a firm in Matlock. Then he went into farming and retired at the age of sixty-three. Snow was on the ground in February 1947 when he married Frances Bateman, whose parents farmed on the Headlands and Islington Lane, Winster. They have a daughter, June.

GRANVILLE JOHNSON, born 1924 in Youlgreave, is the eldest son and third of the five children of Horace, a farmer. In 1937 Horace settled with his family at Stoop Farm [The Old Angel], opposite Winster Market House. Granville helped work the farm, and later the family diversified into fluorspar and barytes. He married Mary Malony, and they had four daughters. Granville worked for some time at Enthoven's lead smelting works.

ANNIE MARSHALL [née Brindley] was born in 1915 in Youlgreave. She met Stanley on 'a monkey run', and they married in 1939. They lived with their in-laws, Frank and Ada Marshall, who lived at Rock View [now Pinfold Cottage] on East Bank, later renting a home of their own at Rockview Cottage, from Josiah Greatorex, the owner of the shop in Main Street. Annie and Stanley had one daughter. Stanley died in 1993, and Annie now lives in Darley Dale.



Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers

JOHN MILLWARD, born 1936, lived at Delph Cottage, East Bank, until 1938, when his family moved to Sunnyside on the Main Street. He began his working life as a sawyer for Gregory's wood yard at Darley Dale, but worked mostly as a farm labourer at Birchover. He was a true countryman, and to take a walk with him was a real learning experience. In September 1992 John was interviewed and recorded by Mair Walters as part of a student project on the history of Heathcote House. The recording was kindly made available to the History Group. John died in December 1992.

MILAN PROKOP, was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1926. He came to Winster, as a refugee in 1948, where he was billeted at Winster Hall, Main Street. He married Brenda Hawksworth in Matlock in 1950. Her father, Theophilus Hawksworth, was a saddler with a shop on Main Street, at the bottom of West Bank [now Holmlea]. They had a daughter, Diana, who now lives in America. In 1957 Milan and Brenda emigrated to Canada, but Brenda couldn't settle, so they returned in 1962 to live at Hill Cottage, West Bank, where Milan still lives. Brenda died in 1993.

BILL SLANEY lives at Denver House, Main Street. He was born in Youlgreave in 1913. His parents died when he was in his teens, and he moved to Winster in 1939. He married Annie Stone, a well known pianist and the daughter of the landlord and landlady of the Crown. Bill and Annie's first home was Greenlees Cottage, next to the Post Office.

AMY SLATER was born in 1930 in Youlgreave. After living on a remote farm on Gratton Moor she was almost eight when the family moved to Stoop Farm, Main Street, Winster. She was the fourth of five children. Her father, Horace Johnson, was a representative on the Parish and Rural District Councils and served as a local preacher. Amy worked hard on the farm, even at times shovelling fluorspar and barytes. She met her future husband, Dennis, from Whiteholmes Farm, when as a young man he was employed by her father. Their son, Gordon, lives with his family on East Bank. Today Amy and her family are inspirational in the running of the Wesleyan Reform Chapel.

MARJORIE STOKER was born in Cuba in 1908. She came to England with her mother when she was about four years old, following the death of her father. She is the widow of Arthur 'Desmond' Stoker, who first came to Winster in 1934 to take over from James Fletcher as village doctor. They married in 1936. In 1939 Desmond joined the armed services, and when he returned they built up a flourishing practice, the surgery beginning in the house. They had twins, Andrew and Simon. Marjorie lives in Winster on West Bank.

PHYLLIS TAYLOR [née Marshall] was born in 1917 at E. A. Marshall & Sons, a printing, photography and stationery business opposite the Market House, Winster. Her grandfather, Albert Marshall, died in 1918, and when her father, also Albert Marshall, returned from the Great War, he took over the family business. Many old photographs and postcards of Winster are the work of



Biographies of Contributors

these two. Phyllis left school at fifteen to help her grandmother run the shop. She met George Taylor, from Bonsall, and they married and rented Jasmine Cottage, in Pump Lane. It was after Molly, their first daughter, was born, that they moved to Liskeard, Cornwall, where Phyllis still lives.

HAROLD THOMAS was born in 1907. His grandfather, Stephen Thomas, came from Cornwall in 1878 to set up the 'Jumbo' pump at Mill Close Mine. Most of Stephen's children, including Paul, Harold's father, also worked in the mine. Annie Thomas, Harold's cousin, was author of the poem 'The Brave Winster Boys', about the men from the village who served in the Great War. Harold now lives in Allestree, Derby, with his wife Kath.

BESSIE THORPE [née Boden] was born in 1914. Her father, Walter, established the family bakery in 1913 at the top of Pump Lane [The Old Bakehouse]. He later became treasurer of the Parish Council. When she was only thirteen Bessie's mother died suddenly, and Bessie had to take over the running of the bakery with her father. She played an active part in village affairs and she succeeded Miss Buxton in organising the running of the Wesleyan Reform Chapel, East Bank. She married Clifford in 1951 and moved to Matlock, where they raised their son, Michael. Bessie died in December 1997.

MARGARET TOMLINSON was born in 1922 and came to Winster from Sheffield at the time of her marriage to her first husband, Eric Roper, in 1942. During the First World War Eric's father had started farming at the top of Winster Bank and was gradually able to build up the farm by buying more land. Margaret and Eric had four children - Jane, Andrew ('Jim'), William and Ian. Jim now runs the farm and is King of Winster Morris. Margaret lives in Winster with her second husband, Charlie.

LOUIS [Alojz] VINCENT was born in 1930 in Lipovljani, Yugoslavia [Croatia]. He arrived in Winster in 1948 as a displaced person, and was housed, with about forty others, in Winster Hall. They were employed at Friden Brickworks until 1951, after which they were free to seek other employment. Louis met Eunice Stone at a dance in the Burton Institute and they married in 1949. They bought their present house on East Bank for £75, having to borrow £25 from Eunice's brother for the deposit. They have four children.

JACK WALKER was born in 1926 and lived in Manchester. On leaving the army he came to Winster in 1956 and married Bessie Greateorex. Jack is an ardent supporter of Manchester United and is a regular at the Miners' Standard.

ANNE WALTERS was born in 1940 in Rose Cottage (now Carpenter's Cottage) on the Flat, East Bank, Winster. Her father was Bill Barnsley and her mother was Bertha, who for many years played the organ in the Primitive Methodist Chapel just behind their house. Over the years Anne has been involved in many aspects of village life, but most people know her as the person who worked in Mosley's (later Yates') village stores for 40 years, until she and



Winster: A Peak District Village Remembers

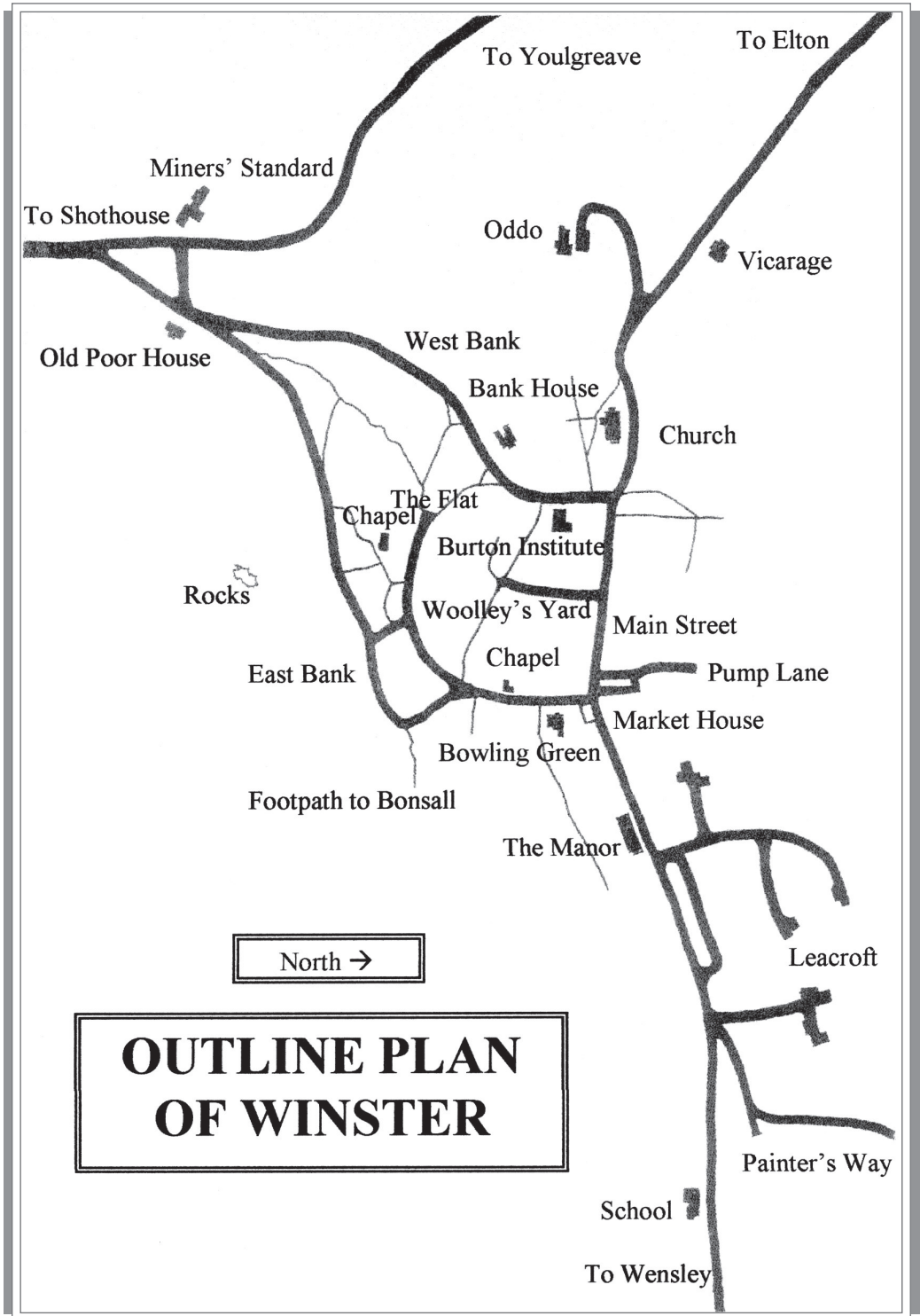
her husband, Roy, moved to a bungalow three miles away in Darley Dale in 1997.

ROY WALTERS was born in 1935 in nearby Birchover. He was demobbed in 1956 and moved to Winster when he married Anne in 1961. At first they lived in Buxton Cottage on West Bank, then in the cottage adjoining Anne's mother, Bertha, on the Flat. They occupied the whole house when Bertha died. For many years Roy worked at Shand's, an engineering company in Darley Dale. He and Anne have two children. They are still members of Winster Primitive Methodist Church.

TOM WIGLEY was born in 1915 in Hognaston, and arrived in Winster aged twelve, first to live at Stoop Farm [The Old Angel] on Main Street. In about 1932 his family moved to Painter's Way Farm. He married Eva Webster, from Elton, and they had two sons. Tom died in 1999.

MILDRED WITHAM was born in 1920 at Croft End, East Bank. She is the eldest and only girl of the three children of Dorothy and William Witham. The family moved to Westhills Farm when Mildred was three or four years old, and they stayed there until she was twelve, when they made their home at 5 Woolley's Yard [now Musk Cottage]. Mildred still lives there. At one time she was the Treasurer of the British Legion, and today she is involved in all kinds of charity work, particularly for the Burton Institute and St John's Church.

DEREK (born 1933) and PAULINE WOOD (born 1939) sold their home and business at Elton in 1972 and bought Winster Hall for £9,750, as extended family accommodation. The Hall became a pub after 1984 when Pauline was granted a licence to sell alcohol. Six years later they sold it as a going concern to Mr Warboys. Mr Burrows was the owner when the pub closed. Many people have happy memories of Winster Hall as a 'village' pub and a centre of social life. Pauline and Derek now live in Elton.



North →

**OUTLINE PLAN
OF WINSTER**