

# ONCE HALF OF HARBERTONFORD'S FAMILIES



Owner of Melbray Stores, Mr David Marks, with helpers Mrs Cary Blair (left) and Mrs Nancy Willis (right).

TO MOST visitors Harbertonford is a five second glimpse of a few houses on the way from Totnes to Kingsbridge, Salcombe and Dartmouth.

The lasting impression to a traveller driving through is a nasty bend on a busy road with a pub on the corner.

But if the driver took time out for a second look there is much more in what is a busy, bustling and pretty settlement.

Pottery and artist's prints are advertised from front room windows that peep out on to the crowded village centre.

The village sits in the sheltered Harbourne valley. Derelict water wheels are a tribute to the once busy woollen mill which was the village's main source of employment until 1956.

Mrs Edith Slocombe, 86, of Chapel Cottage, was born in the village and apart from a nine-month spell as a weaver in America when she was 17, she has lived and worked in the community all her life.

She was a weaver at the village wool mill. She started when she was 13 years old, working 12 hours a day until she was 60 years old when she stopped work because the mill closed down.

Nearly half the families in the village, including 30 men and 45 women, were employed at the mill.

It was a six-storey building run by Churchward and Sons Ltd of Buckfastleigh. It finally closed when new methods of weaving put it out of business.

She said: "Since the main Totnes-Kingsbridge road has been built it has split the village in two." Mrs Slocombe said it had always been a friendly place though.

For a village with a population of only 600 there are a surprising large number of successful and expanding businesses. One of the

most successful restaurants in the country, the Hungry Horse, sits on the banks of the Harbourne.

It is owned and run by Mr Bev Jefferies, 33, and his wife Anne. They converted the premises from a group of derelict cottages 10 years ago together with their then partner Nick Gildersleve.

Nick has now left the business and started up his own pine furniture business in the village. The restaurant has been chosen as one of the top four in the United Kingdom by the American Express credit card company.

## John Cornford's village round

Bev said: "The average life of a restaurant is three years. That's because people work like mad on them and try to make as much money as possible in the shortest space of time. They end up getting too greedy and they sell up and leave the area.

"I have tried to hold on rather than make money and run. You shouldn't fall into the trap of being too greedy."

He said he likes the way everyone helps each other in the village. "When the river flooded lots of people came forward and offered help. That was great."

But there is one problem about the traffic which Bev is worried about. "Traffic whips through Old Road. There is a blind bend there and if people don't take it easy there is going to be a nasty accident."

Another of the expanding businesses in the village is the Old Mill, which has just undergone a major facelift. The 17th century building has been taken over by Graham Miles and has now been extended and has new restaurants,



Mrs Edie Slocombe, 86, who worked at the old wool mill for 47 years.

kitchens, cocktail bar and lounge as well as an addition to the sleeping accommodation.

Nick Gildersleve, who used to help run the Hungry Horse, has got a furniture business where part of the old wool mill was, which he started nine years ago.

He employs two other full time workers, Darren Evans a school leaver who lives in Harbertonford, and Phillip Johns, from Ashprington, who has been with the business for six years.

The group strip and restore pine furniture.

"The village has changed about as much as it's going to. I think

most people would agree that it is a real village unlike some in the South Hams. It is not overrun with retired people or second homes," Nick explained.

The firm sells much of its furniture in its shop in High Street, Totnes.

The Old Mill premises are also now used by Gerald Glanville agricultural merchants. The firm, which employs 13 people at the site, processes cereal seeds and supplies feed and fertilisers.

Mr George Stephenson has worked for the company at the mill since 1959. "We have expanded the cereals and seeds here now," he says.

There are two village grocery stores - Harbourne House, which is also the village post office, and Melbray Stores. They are on opposite sides of the main

# WORKED AT THE WOOL MILL

...s a suggested plan of direct South Hams holiday traffic to area via the Totnes-Kings-ge road rather than the signed Wrangaton route. uch goes on in the village - ding Harbertonford Youth bing in the village hall, the Cross Club, and a fortnightly rom a mobile library. rbertonford Football Club is on eof the most successful in the area and plays in the Devon League Premier Divi- of the village's older nts is Harry Edwards of Ford ry: 70, has lived in the com- for 34 years. He used to run llage chip shop from his but he found business d when the wool mill closed. n he closed the chip shop he work in the bacon factory s. aid he thought the village ndly enough, but it had got half by the main road through it. 't know some of the people on the other side of the v," he said. and Vikki Taylor run the Arms; the village pub- ple moved from Derby-



The Maltsters Arms with publicans Philip and Vikki Taylor behind the bar and locals (from left) Bob Monaghan, Tony Welch, Michael Moyses and John White.

Blind vicar of H Shephear

aking over at the pub the have been extensively d, which seems to have very well with locals. said: "It's a very busy here are quite a few going on in the evenings. sm is there is not really ing on for young people, villages can be criticised appose." ur of Harbertonford and is the Rev John Walwyn, who lives in

Harberton with wife Marianne. He moved to the parish four years ago from North Devon. "The biggest problem is undoubtedly the traffic. The route it takes splits the village right down the middle. "I would like to see the traffic take a different route to go around the village if that were at all possible," he said. Mr Tony Welch is the local school caretaker, but one of the

things he does in his spare time is organise handbell ringing. At present parishioners are saving to buy 32 handbells. Tony, who is also a parish councillor, has trained some of the 120 youngsters from the village school as well as a number of interested adults. In February 1981 a group of parishioners decided to buy a set of handbells for the community. They gave themselves two years to raise £1,000 and already they have got £900.

He said: "One thing I would say is it's a caring community. For example, there was a collection for someone who was handicapped and needed a special machine. In six weeks the village raised £1,200, with help from a couple of outside organisations, and were able to buy it." Village artist Nigel Cameron and his wife Jean are two people who moved to the village to escape from the rat race in the London area. He moved to the village in September and said: "I'm so struck by the whole place I wish I had moved down 20 years earlier. "You have everything here. The sea, the countryside, and everyone is so friendly. No one seems to bother if you drive around in a brand new car or an L registered model. There are different values than other places."

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The couple moved from Derbyshire.

Since taking over at the pub the premises have been extensively modernised, which seems to have gone down very well with locals.

Vikki said: "It's a very busy village. There are quite a few activities going on in the evenings. One criticism is there is not really enough going on for young people, but most villages can be criticised for that I suppose."

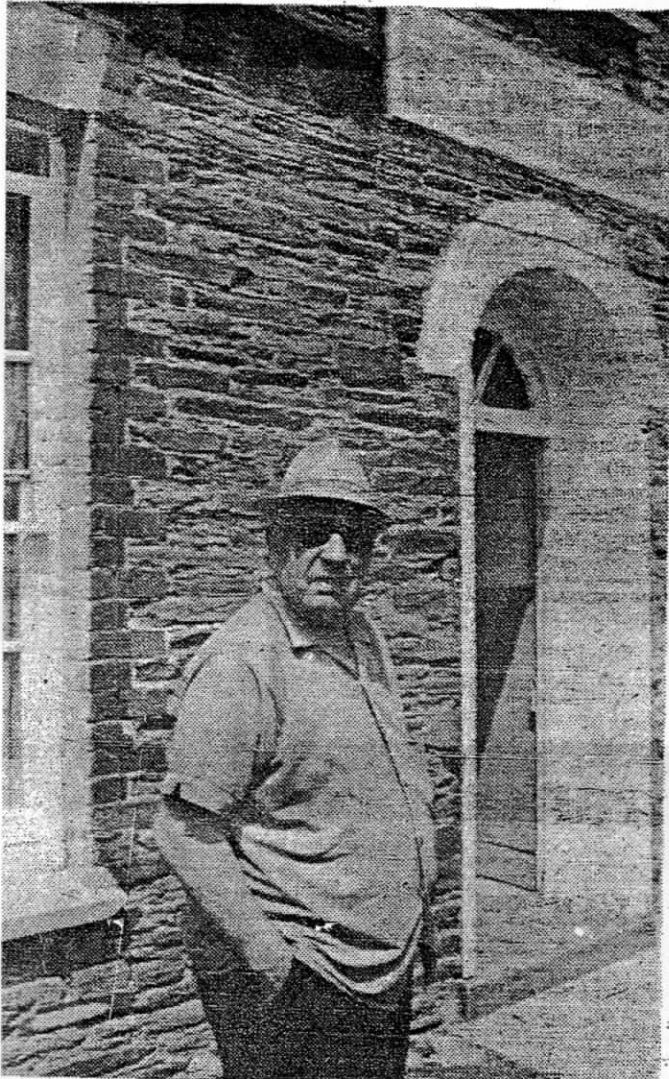
The vicar of Harbertonford and Harberton is the Rev John Shephard-Walwyn, who lives in

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Mr To school ca



Mr Harry Edwards outside the house he used to run as a chip shop.

There are two village grocery stores - Harbourne House, which is also the village post office, and Melbray Stores. They are on opposite sides of the main Totnes-Kingsbridge road.

The post office and general stores is run by Tom and Christine Pring, who moved to the village about a year ago after running a similar business in Cheshire.

The store has almost doubled in size since the couple moved in and is one of the few village stores in the area to have expanded in the last few years.

"We are trying it out. Whether it will work or not is another thing," said Tom.

"Many villagers go into Totnes for their groceries. We hope to get them into the habit of buying in the village."

The couple have introduced a hardware section to the store as well as a wider range of foods.

Mrs Hazel Heath, Mrs Sue Wakeham, Stephen Wakeham and Andrew White are four villagers who help out at the shop.

Melbray Stores is run by David Marks, who also runs a village store in Ipplepen, where he lives. He employs five part timers and plays for the village football team.

He covers Harbertonford, Harberton, Diptford, Halwell and Morleigh, but says: "I can only see this sort of business expanding if more people live in the area."

Harbertonford is also one of the bases for well known West Country car dealers Evans and Cutler. The family business moved to Harbertonford in 1963.

The firm employs about 12 staff in Harbertonford. The company could do particularly well in future if South Hams District Council



Tom and Christine Pring in the shop they have expanded to encourage more trade.