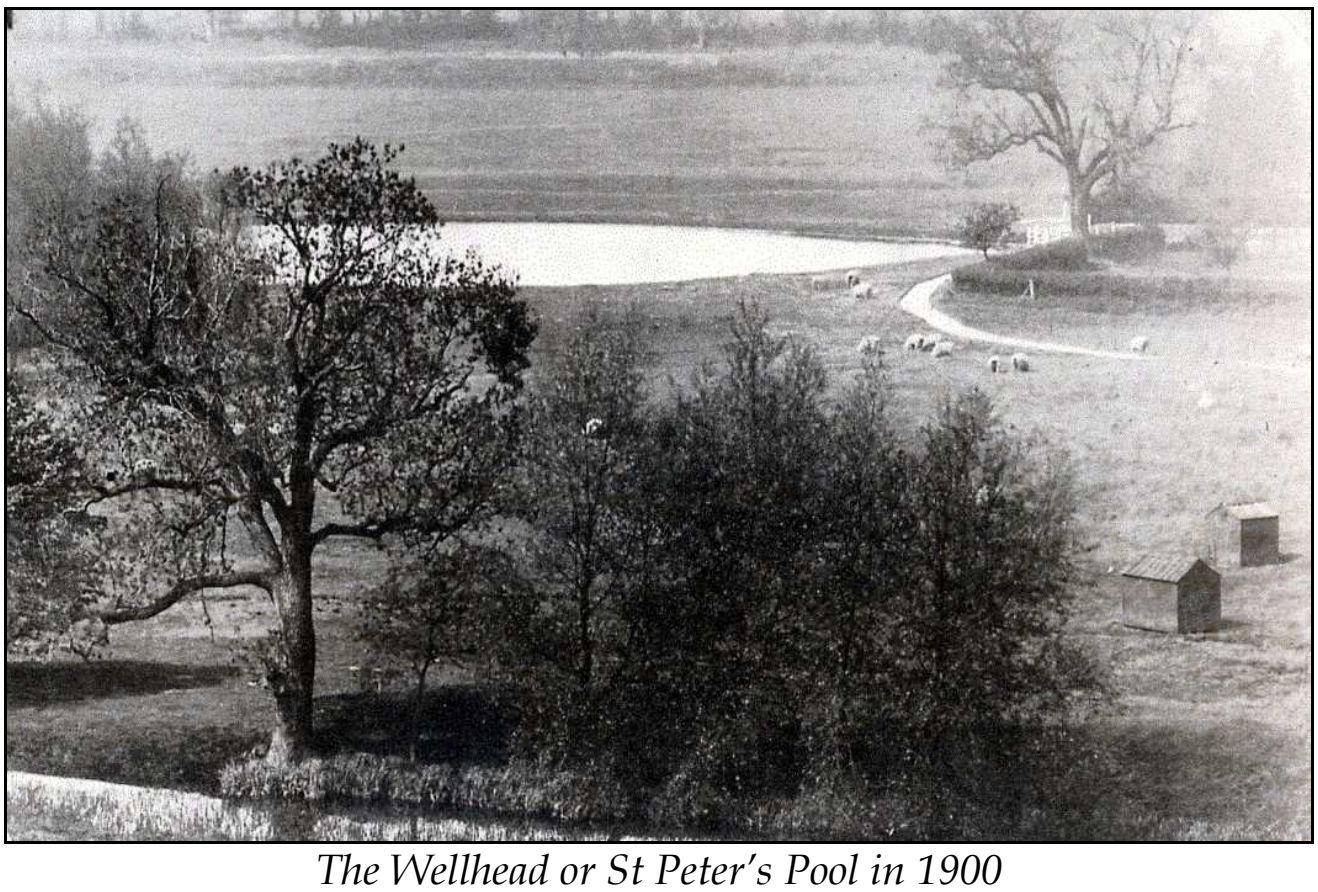


The Wellhead or St Peter's Pool in 1900

IN THE BEGINNING

Our towns and cities have sprung up from small beginnings and so it has been with Bourne. Imagine open countryside where you now see the shops and houses, no roads or buildings of any kind, but a landscape of streams, dense woods and scrubland and large areas of marsh covered with sedge and teeming with wildlife.

This is how this part of Lincolnshire looked in the distant past, when the inhabitants stayed alive by hunting for their food, killing wild animals, birds and fish, with primitive weapons and living in shelters made from branches and leaves. At first they led a nomadic life, roaming from place to place, usually where the hunting was best, but soon they began to settle when they found somewhere that suited their needs and as fresh water was vital to life, they sought out those places which provided it.

One such spot was a pool fed by a series of underground springs that never dried up, even in the hottest of weather, and providing a continual supply for drinking and cooking.

This was the lake we know today as St Peter's Pool, or the Wellhead, one of the oldest underground springs in England, and as the first hunters chose to settle on its banks thousands of years ago, a small community was created which in the centuries that followed, slowly turned into the Bourne we know today.

The surrounding area has now become a modern market town, originally known as Bourn but the name changed to Bourne in 1893 to avoid postal confusion with Bourn in Cambridgeshire. The pool remains virtually unchanged as a reminder of our historic past, still producing thousands of gallons of fresh water every day. But it is now pumped out and sent through pipes to homes and shops, offices and factories over a very wide area, providing a constant supply to other places such as Spalding and even Peterborough, and this reminds us that fresh water has always been vital to our existence.

THE FENLAND

The main feature of the countryside around Bourne was the marsh or fenland, huge tracts of swamp and reed beds, and because the area was low lying it was always damp and often shrouded in mist, an immense trackless waste of waterlogged land and sluggish streams.

It became a place of mystery and soon tales spread that it was a haunt of devils. But there were people living there, attracted by the fish and the birds that provided a constant supply of food, although they risked illness and disease from the damp atmosphere, and many were outlaws and robbers, rowing or wading from one patch of dry ground to another.

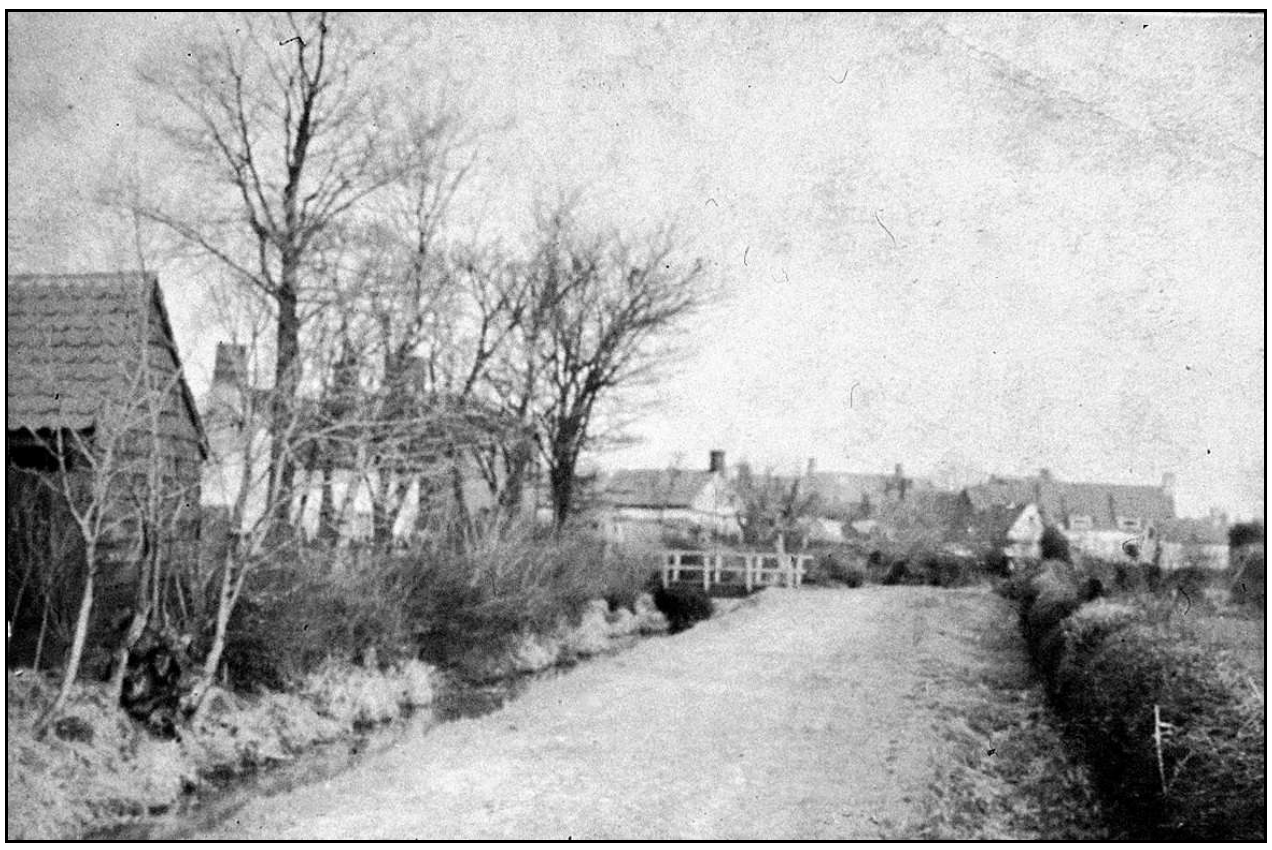
In later years, this vast swampy area was to become the fertile farmland we know today, a potential first realised by the Romans who began to embank rivers and cut channels to enable the land to be drained and cultivated and then produce food. The work continued over the centuries and these thousands of acres around Bourne have become some of the most productive in the world.

The bread that you toast for breakfast and the chips you eat for lunch most probably came from the wheat and potatoes grown here because that once vast area of bog is now rich in its annual yields of cereal and vegetable crops grown to feed Britain's expanding population.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE ROMANS

The first people to live around St Peter's Pool were almost certainly the Ancient Britons who had been living in this country since the Iron Age, staying alive by fishing and agriculture, with huts for shelter and speaking their own language. But this early tribal culture began to change with the arrival of the Romans 2,000 years ago.

The conquest of Britain took place in the 100 years between 55 BC and 43 AD, led first by Julius Caesar and then by the Emperor Claudius who appointed a governor of Britain. Their armies swept north, crushing all rebellion as they went, but also enforcing their own laws and building towns and roads, villas and bathhouses while trade and industry flourished under their rule.



The Car Dyke in Bedehouse Bank in 1920

By 47 AD, the Romans had reached Bourne, building the main road between south and north that survives to this day and the waterway which can be found to the west, the Car Dyke, which was constructed to move soldiers and supplies on rafts or small boats but also helped drain the land to grow crops.

This historic canal can be seen where it crosses Cherryholt Road, in Bedhouse Bank, Eastgate and Manning Road and then at the village of Dyke which is named after it.

The Romans remained in Britain for almost 400 years but returned to Italy because their homes were being attacked and every man was needed to defend them. But they left behind many features of our lives that we recognise today such as the calendar, the law and legal system, straight roads and aqueducts and, most important of all, our language which is based on the Latin they spoke and wrote.

Signs of their occupation in Bourne have been unearthed around the town in recent years such as coins, weapons, pottery and utensils, and the remains of a mosaic floor, all of which were proof that a Roman settlement once existed here.

THE ANGLO SAXONS

The Anglo-Saxons had begun migrating from Germany while the Romans were still in power, a people belonging to a series of tribes but all sharing the same language. They were hunters and farmers but also warlike and armed with spears and swords and it is generally believed that they were invited to come to England to help fight the Picts and the Scots who were continually raiding the country but soon they settled down and stayed.

Place names of Saxon origin are easily recognised because they end with *ton* as in Pointon, meaning village or farmstead, *ford* as in Greatford, meaning river crossing and *ham* as in Edenham, meaning village. The Anglo-Saxons were originally pagans but gradually converted to Christianity and many churches in the Bourne area have Saxon origins.

THE DANISH INVADERS

In the 9th century, after many years of raids from across the North Sea, the Vikings eventually came in greater force and their arrival in the Bourne area dates from around 877 AD, frequently destroying Christian churches and monasteries in their search for booty and wealth. But they had come prepared to stay and settle

and so we have hundreds of local place names of Danish origin such as Eastgate and Meadowgate because *gate* is the Danish for street or thoroughfare. *Austr* is the old Norse for east and the name survives as the Austerby, a street in Bourne. Toft signifies a green knoll while Lound is most probably associated with tree worship.

There are many others such as Cawthorpe, *thorpe* and *by* originally meaning a dwelling place or single farm but then came to stand for a village. Elsewhere around Bourne, Danish place names intermingle with those of Saxon origin and so Thurlby and Northorpe are Danish, lying near to Baston which is Saxon while Edenham is Saxon but linked with Scottlethorpe which is of Danish origin, as is Morton with Hanthorpe, while Pointon is close to Milthorpe and Dowsby.

Many churches were destroyed during the occupation that eventually ended when the Danish armies were defeated at the battle of Stamford Bridge by the last Saxon king, Harold. But his victory was to be short-lived because another threat was waiting in the south where the invasion of England was about to begin.

THE NORMAN CONQUEST

In 1066, King Harold was defeated at the Battle of Hastings by William the Conqueror who became the new monarch and immediately replaced all of the Anglo-Saxon lords with his own knights who were given land and property, so bringing to an end Anglo-Saxon rule. William ordered a survey of everything under his control in England and the results were published twenty years later as the Domesday Book of 1086 in which Bourne has an extensive entry detailing everything of value in the area.

The entry includes not only the number of people and their status but also the mills and fishponds, woodland and pasture, ploughs and oxen and from this we can see which of his knights controlled Bourne and details of their property. The biggest landowner was Oger the Breton and it is likely that he built either a castle or a

manor house here and the most obvious situation for this would be alongside St Peter's Pool.

HEREWARD THE WAKE

One man who is reputed to have opposed the Normans when they arrived here is the Saxon rebel, Hereward the Wake, who now enjoys a reputation in the list of English heroes second only to Robin Hood although his exploits that are recounted today are mainly fictional written by the Victorian novelist, Charles Kingsley.

According to these tales, Hereward was the son of the Earl Leofric of Mercia and his wife Lady Godiva who owned the manor of Bourne and the castle that reputedly stood in the Wellhead Gardens which was Hereward's birthplace. After being outlawed for the rough treatment of certain monks at Peterborough, young Hereward is alleged to have had numerous incredible adventures in Britain and the Low Countries before returning home to challenge the Normans and clearing them from Bourne, hiding in the woods with his band of outlaws where he was eventually killed and then buried in the chancel of the Abbey Church.

These colourful accounts were once taught to children in school but little of this is accurate although there is a core of truth in the story of Hereward which is a complex one in that he did own lands in the area and so he may therefore have been active in the locality during these years. But his title of "the Wake" may have been bestowed by John, the Abbott of Peterborough, or more likely by the Wake family, the Norman landowners who took over his estates and became Lords of the Manor of Bourne, claiming him as an ancestor in later years.

BOURNE CASTLE

The tradition is that Bourne did have a castle, built here after the Norman invasion and periodic investigations of the site suggest

that it had a moat and drawbridge and an inner bailey. Some accounts say that it was built for the Saxon lords, and that Hereward the Wake was born here, but in that case it would have been recorded in the Domesday Book but was not and so must have been built after 1086.

The Shippon Barn

By the 17th century the castle had fallen into ruins and much of the stone had been taken by townspeople to build cottages and barns. When Oliver Cromwell set up a garrison here for his men during the English Civil War of 1642-51, his artillery fired upon the remains from the rising ground to the west and that was the end of the castle. All that we see today is the series of grassy mounds and hollows to indicate where the ramparts were once situated although the section of river that runs nearby is believed to have been the moat.

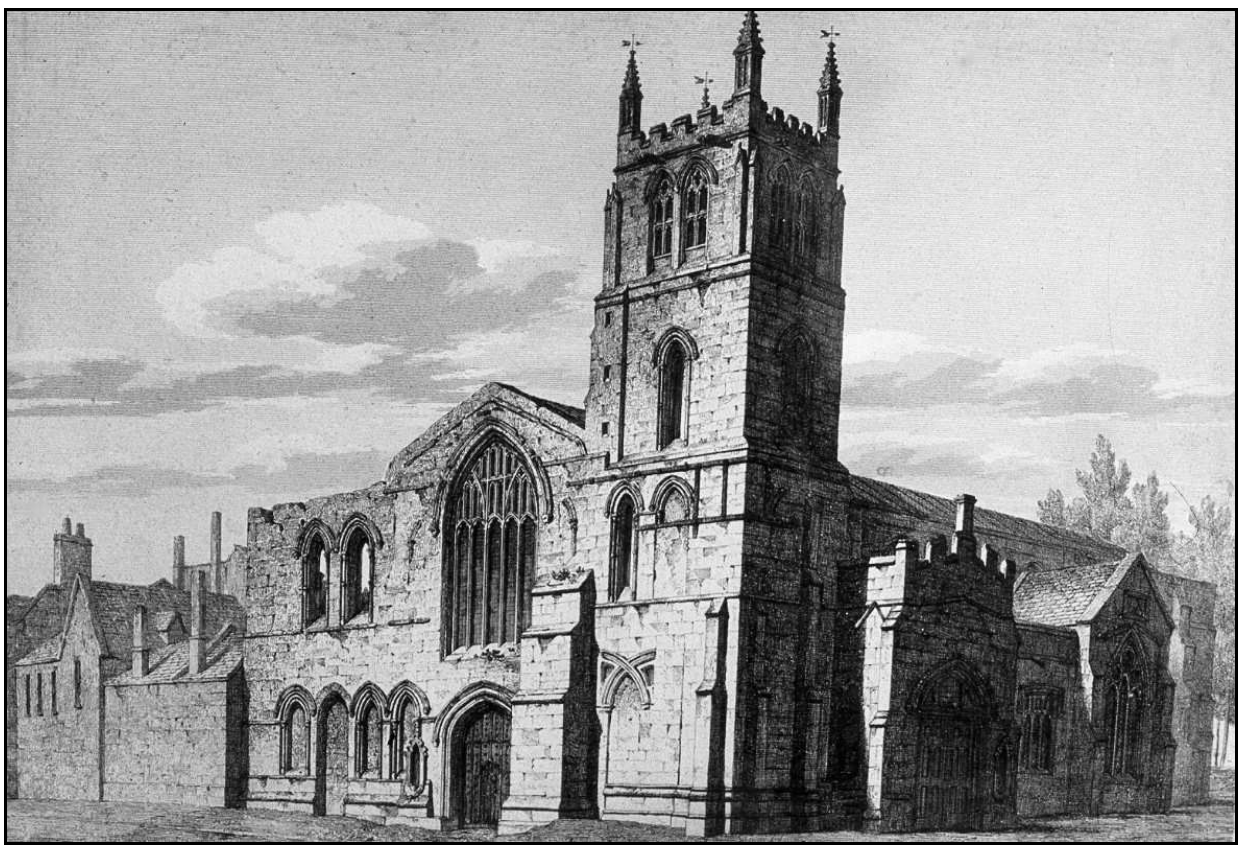
Some of the stone has survived because it was used to build the Shippon Barn which can still be seen in the Wellhead Gardens with two of the original arrow slits from the castle in the walls. The word *shippen* is an Old English term meaning cattle shed or cowhouse although the building is used today as a meeting place by the scouts and guides.

THE ABBEY CHURCH

The Saxons almost certainly had a church in Bourne but no trace

of it remains and the Abbey Church which survives today was founded by the Lord of the Manor, Baldwin Fitzgilbert, around 1138. He envisaged a grander building with twin towers to demonstrate his Christian faith although the work was delayed and remained unfinished until many years later. It was originally used as a monastery for a group of twelve French Augustinian monks but was never rich or important.

The abbey was extensively damaged during the reign of Henry VIII who ordered all monastic buildings to be pulled down between 1536 and 1540. This was known as the dissolution when the lead was taken off the roofs and all images removed but the walls were left standing although in the years that followed, some restoration was carried out but it was not until the 19th century that major alterations were made to the building.



The Abbey Church in 1819

The work completed during this period was paid for by the people, mainly Robert Mason Mills, a Bourne businessman, and if you visit the church you will see a brass plaque which commemorates his generosity. During this period, there were many alterations to the interior and it began to take on the appearance that we see today. No trace remains of the monastic buildings and what we have left is the parish church of St Peter and St Paul, the original extensively altered over the years, but continuing to serve as the centre of Christian faith as it has been for almost 900 years. This is known as the established church.

THE ABBEY HOUSE

An imposing Georgian mansion once stood to the north of the Abbey Church overlooking the river. It was built in 1764 by George Pochin, Lord of the Manor of Bourne Abbots, and known as the Abbey House although sometimes referred to as Bourne Abbey. He died in 1798 and in 1849, ownership passed to the church and the building was converted for use as a vicarage.

In 1877, the mansion was pulled down and the stone used to build a new vicarage but that too was phased out in 1983 and replaced by the present house which was built on the former bowling green while the old building continues in useful service as the Cedars retirement home.

OTHER CHURCHES IN BOURNE

There are several other churches in Bourne used by those who chose a different method of Christian worship and known as non-conformists. These are actually chapels and those who belong dislike the doctrine and usage of the established church but are no less fervent in their beliefs.

The first of these to be built in the town was the **Methodist Church** in Abbey Road, which was founded in 1800 although the present building was erected in 1841 and has been considerably improved over the years. The **Baptist Church** in West Street was opened in 1835 and the **United Reformed Church** in Eastgate dates from 1846 although it was then known as the Congregational Church.

A **Calvinist Baptist Chapel** was opened in North Street in 1868 but the congregation was dogged by debts and forced to close in 1890 and later became the Vestry Hall. There was also an **Eastgate Mission Church** built in Willoughby Road in 1857 and used until 1903 when it was converted for use as a school for the next fifty years until demolished in 1960.

There is a **Roman Catholic Church** in St Gilbert's Road, a building of circular shape dedicated in 1976 and a hall for the evangelical **Salvation Army** in Manning Road that was opened in 1990 and the most recent addition to our religious life is the Kingdom Hall in Victor Way that was built in 2004 by the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, a sect which originated in the United States.

Another very small church or chapel can be found in Burghley Street, often passed by unnoticed, a converted lorry garage but now home to a small group known as **The Believers**, a non-conformist breakaway sect from the Plymouth Brethren and equally devout because the notice outside proclaims that "the word of God is preached here each Lord's day at 6.30 pm".

The Methodist Church in 1930

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

In past times, most children attended a Sunday School, even those whose families were not regular churchgoers. This was regarded as an essential part of their religious education and usually held on Sunday afternoons at various churches in the town but the Baptist and Congregational attracted the largest numbers. Lessons were devoted to reading and studying the bible, prayers and a hymn. In later years, there was often a magic lantern or film show on religious topics such as the lives of the saints or the work of missionaries in foreign lands such as China and Africa.

Children were encouraged to attend with the promise of an annual treat that took place during the summer when everyone dressed in their Sunday best and accompanied by their parents, marched through the town with banners waving and a band playing. There were sports and games at the Abbey Lawn followed by tea and buns in a huge marquee and everyone went home with a present, usually a mug or sometimes a prayer book or bible.

DAY SCHOOLS

Organised education began in Bourne during the 14th century with the establishment of the first school but little is known about it. A new grammar school was opened in 1638, three centuries later, on land next to the Abbey Church with money left to the town by a wealthy landowner, William Trollope. This may also have been the site of the original building and that Mr Trollope's bequest was used to modernise and replace it, so laying the foundations of the education system that we have today.

The school was rebuilt forty years later and survives to this day but is now known as the **Old Grammar School.** It was for boys only because in those days it was not thought worthwhile to educate the girls and parents had to pay for their lessons which meant that only rich people could afford to send their sons to be taught.

There was only one schoolroom which was heated by a wood fire but was very cold in winter and the only place pupils could play was in the churchyard although sometimes they roamed the streets between lessons and caused trouble in the town. In 1861, the headmaster, William Webber, persuaded the church authorities to provide a strip of land for a play area and at the same time new seating for pupils was installed. The lessons were strict but thorough and many of the pupils went on to Oxford and Cambridge universities and became successful in their careers.

The school closed through lack of support in 1904 and was used

for various activities after that, as an ambulance station and as a meeting place for the scouts and guides, but the building has been unsafe and out of bounds since 2003 and it is hoped that someone will buy it and restore it for community use.

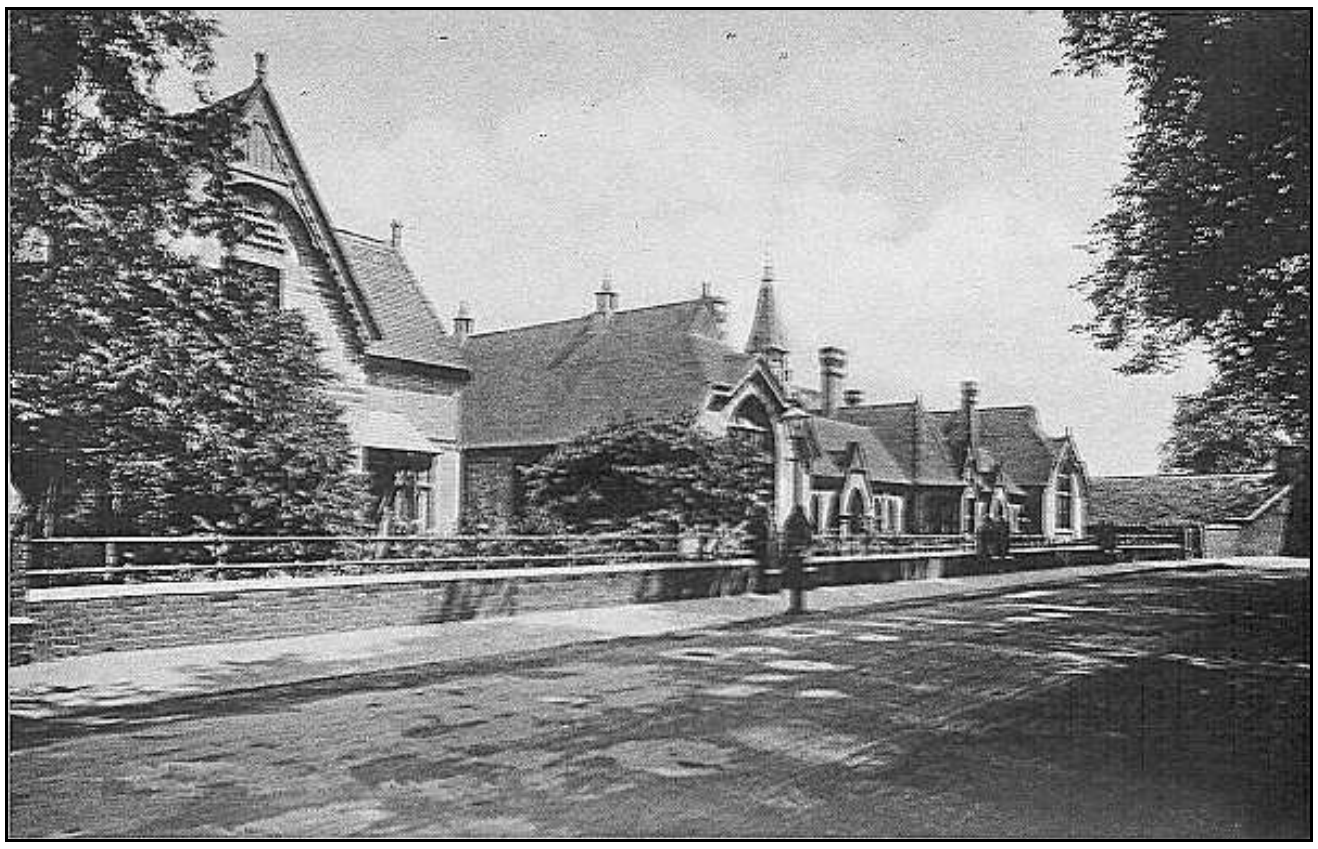
The Old Grammar School in 1920

The first free school open to everyone without paying fees was the **National School** in North Street which opened in 1829 and was financed with grants from various churches and money raised by townspeople through fund-raising events. The building remained in use until our present schools were built when it was sold and is now the Conservative Party headquarters.

The Star Lane Board School followed in 1877 when it was built on the site of an old orchard, later to become the **Abbey Primary School**. There was originally room for nearly 500 boys and girls and in those days each had their own entrances which can still be seen today.

They were also taught apart in different classes and had separate playgrounds. Although schooling was strict, pupils were often absent through illness which was frequent, and as this was a farming area, their parents insisted that they work on the land to earn money helping with the harvest. This became such a frequent occurrence and classes so reduced in size as a result that in 1918, the school shut for four weeks for potato picking, a closure that became known as the harvest holiday.

The school premises have now been extended and modernised with all of the latest teaching aids and the addition of new classrooms, a kitchen and canteen. By 2010 its name and status had changed to the Abbey Church of England Primary Academy and is considered to be one of the best in Lincolnshire.



The Abbey Primary School in 1900

There was for a time a national school in Willoughby Road, built in 1857 with room for 200 boys and girls and known as the **Eastgate School**. It closed in 1903 and after a spell as a mission church and later as a storeroom, the building was pulled down in 1960 to make way for a new housing estate.

Bourne Grammar School dates from 1920 when it began life as a co-educational secondary school, first in temporary premises at the Vestry Hall in North Street before moving the following year to its present site in South Road. The original classrooms were old wooden army huts which were meant to be temporary but remained in use for another seventy years, hot in summer and cold and draughty in winter but essential to enable the school become established.

More permanent accommodation was built over the years as the number of pupils increased to create the modern and well-equipped school we know today, one that has achieved excellence in many spheres, particularly the performing arts, while its scholastic performance has also progressed year by year, at O and

A level, and a significant number of students annually gain admission to the various universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, while the school enjoys an enviable reputation in the locality and beyond.

Our other large school, the **Robert Manning College**, began life when the primary school in Abbey Road became too cramped to cope with the expanding number of pupils and in 1946 half of them moved to a site in Queen's Road. The accommodation was a series of wooden huts until the main school opened in 1958 when it became independent as a secondary modern school but after many name changes and the addition of several large buildings it has been transformed into its present status specialising in technology and vocational training with a pupil roll well in excess of 1,000.

As more families moved into Bourne during the second half of the 20th century, another school was needed for infant and junior children and a site was chosen on the western side of town where so many of the new houses were being built. **Westfield County Primary School** was opened in September 1975 and this too has grown considerably over the years as the town continues to expand.

We also have the **Willoughby School** in South Road, opened in 1980 as a special school catering for students aged from two to 19 with learning difficulties. It has grown significantly since then in terms of pupils, staff and buildings, with a major rebuilding programme and refurbishment in 2005 which doubled the size of the premises.

Education today is one of the blessings of our modern society and it is a privilege that we are able to attend and learn in such a pleasant and comfortable environment compared with the early schools that began almost 200 years ago.

All of those in Bourne today have achieved excellent reputations throughout the county and places for pupils are so highly sought after that some parents move from their present homes, in many

cases long distances away, in order that their children can attend. It is therefore essential that precious time spent at school should not become wasted years.

THE BOURNE EAU

There is a widespread belief that the river takes its name from the French word *eau* meaning water but that is not the case. It actually derives from *eä*, a pure Old English word that was erroneously given by cartographers on their maps as *eau* and few examples of this spelling occur in documents before the 18th century.

Although the modern tendency is to go for a French sound when pronouncing eau, this does appear to be a very recent practice. *Eä* is a local word meaning drain which was used in the past and far more accurate than the French when relating to a Lincolnshire watercourse, hence the Bourne Eau.

The Bourne Eau flowing from St Peter's Pool in 1900

The river begins at St Peter's Pool where the water can be seen gushing out at its very source and then flows in two directions, one eastwards towards Baldock's Mill and the second north and then east, skirting the boundary of the Wellhead Gardens before flowing south towards Baldock's Mill where the waters combine and cross underneath South Street and surfacing in Church Walk. From here, the river is piped underneath the vicarage gardens

until it reaches Coggles Causeway where it runs behind the houses on the north side and on reaching the edge of the Abbey Lawn complex, it again goes underground and surfaces in Victoria Place. After crossing the road at the Queen's Bridge, the Eau runs parallel with Eastgate for its entire length and is joined by the Car Dyke near the Anchor public house before crossing underneath Cherryholt Road at Mays' Sluice and flowing into the South Fen, joining the River Glen at Tongue End, its entire length being just under 3½ miles.

In centuries past, the Eau was part of a navigable waterway from Bourne to Boston, a distance of 24 miles, and so the town had a direct link with the North Sea for waterborne transport which enabled the movement of coal from the Midlands and Yorkshire which was unloaded and distributed from a wharf in Eastgate while the outward bound shipments included leather and sheepskins from the local tanneries, wool and grain.

Cargo traffic continued until the coming of the railway in 1860 when trade declined and the water slowly fell into disuse, silted up and choked with weeds and today the section from the Queen's Bridge out into the fen remains largely neglected.

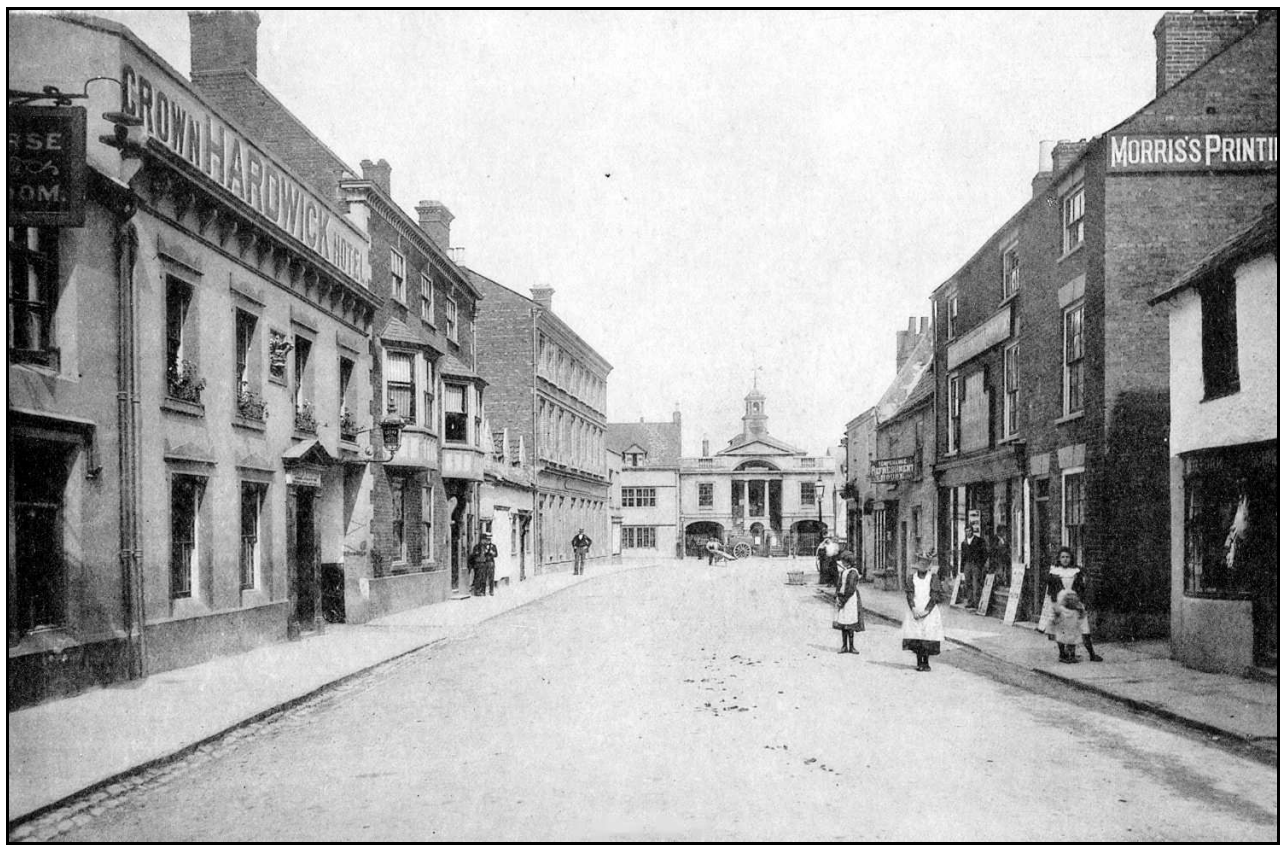
For a short spell in Victorian times, the Bourne Eau enjoyed a reputation as a pleasure spot, the banks thronged with visitors out walking on Sunday afternoons in summer and in 1897, decorated gondolas took guests on short trips along the river as part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee but today it is rare to see even a rowing boat on the water.

OUR STREETS

Medieval Bourne was clustered around the market place and in 1380 just seven main streets existed. They were Northgate, Southgate, Water Gang Street, West Street, East Street, Manor Street and Potter Street and elsewhere there were merely cart tracks or footpaths. Other names that have appeared since often have origins deeply rooted in past history such as Bedehouse

Bank, a reference perhaps to an ancient monastic or prayer house that was once situated in the vicinity and Coggles Causeway where the surface was paved with small round stones or coggles, an alternative to cobblestones.

There are now around 250 street names in Bourne and the list is a chronicle of our history because they reflect the people, places and events that have influenced the community over the centuries. Occupational names survive with Tin Lane, off Exeter Street, once an area for tin workshops, and Tannery Close in Eastgate where houses have been built on the site of a busy skin and tannery industry.



West Street in 1900

Religion also finds its way into the streets with the names of saints such as St Gilbert's Road while the Roman occupation is remembered with Centurion Court, the Danes with Viking Close and resistance to the Norman occupation by our Saxon hero is well represented with Hereward Street.

The Marquess of Exeter, whose family once held the title of Lord of the Manor of Bourne, is remembered with the Burghley Centre and Marquess Court and by Victorian times, the tradition of naming new streets after kings and queens and prominent people was firmly entrenched and so we have many royal associations such as Queen's Road and Edinburgh Crescent, politicians with Gladstone Street and Churchill Avenue, explorers with Stanley

Street, writers and poets with Tennyson Drive and Betjeman Close.

The system of street naming remains more or less the same today and although patriotic and military names are less evident there are special occasions when they are used such as the housing development off Mill Drove that remembers a Second World War battle with Arnhem Way and other names from the campaign.

Many prominent people from Bourne's history are also well represented such as Delaine Close which remembers Hugh Delaine Smith MBE (1920-1995) and the family bus company that has served the town since 1890 and Midleton Gardens after Viscount Midleton (1903-88), best known locally as Trevor Brodrick, who with his wife Sheila, did so much work for deaf charities and the Girl Guides.

Street naming today is one of the tasks of the town council which is frequently called upon to advise housing developers and flowers, trees and herbs have become popular in recent years together with the names of various people who have made their mark on the community. All are worth investigating because they provide a permanent reminder of our past.

POPULATION

Until 1801, the actual population of Bourne was never accurately known. According to an inventory of the estate of Lady Blanche Wake, whose family owned the Manor of Bourne, a total of 2,295 people were reported to be living here in 1380 and it also listed 413 houses and a military garrison of 200 strong. This population figure however, appears to be quite high and is most likely to be incorrect because two centuries later there were only 174 families in residence and the population never reached 2,295 again until 1820.

By 1665, it was estimated from various tax returns that Bourne, including Cawthorpe and Dyke which both lie within the parish,

had 780 inhabitants and that the figure had only increased to 807 eleven years later. In the 18th century, as in earlier periods, it is difficult to obtain precise figures for Bourne's population although a count made at three different times during the years 1705 to 1723 shows that the town contained 300 families, then 212, and then 217, but the precise dates for these surveys are not known.

However, these figures do show that there was a marked decrease in the population of Bourne during the first quarter of the century, a trend that reflects to an unusual degree the general tendency for the county, whereas a slight decrease in the total number of families occurred between 1706 and 1721 and at this time, Bourne was still large when compared to the size of other Lincolnshire towns.

Market Day in 1910 when the population was 4,343

Towards the end of the century, it is probable that the population of Bourne began to increase again and the introduction of the national census in 1801 brought with it more accurate population figures with a gradual increase in growth for the ensuing years.

The figure for that year was 1,664 and the town grew at a rate unequalled until modern times with the figure more than doubling in the forty years from 1811 (1,784) to 1851 (3,717). Thereafter, it remained at almost the same level, until the last two decades of the century brought a further, but more gradual, upward trend until 1891 (4,191).

During the 20th century, the town continued to increase in size, although its growth was steady rather than spectacular until 1931 (4,889) but after the Second World War of 1939-45, the population then began to rise more rapidly and the census of 1951 revealed that the town had 5,105 inhabitants.

One of the main catalysts was the increased opportunities for employment in neighbouring towns such as Stamford and Grantham and particularly Peterborough rather than in any sudden new development in Bourne itself although not all of the newcomers were commuters.

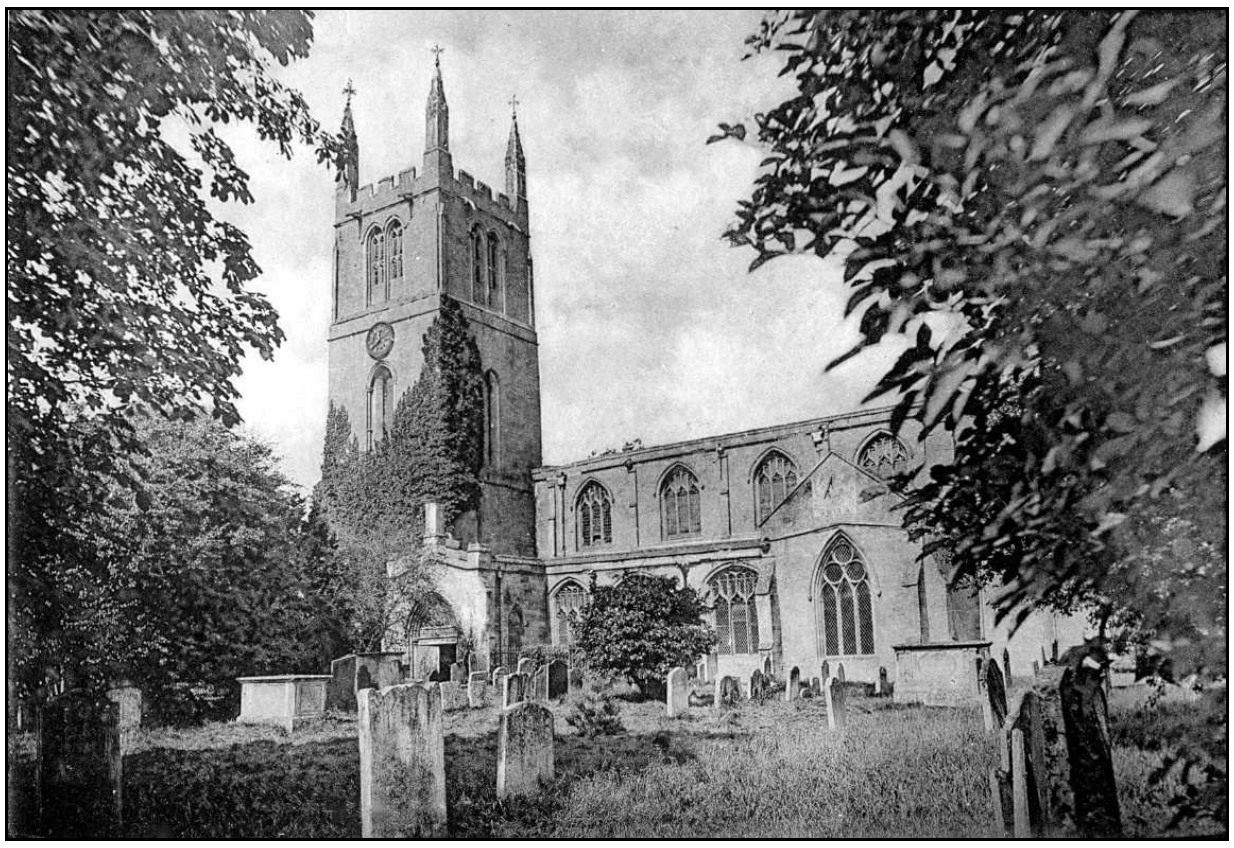
Bourne Urban District Council had striven hard, and with some success, to attract light industry to Bourne and the construction of new housing was soon underway to cope with the influx and lower house prices also made the town a popular place to set up home.

The 1961 population of 5,337 reflected future trends and there was a further increase by 1981 (8,142). The total from the latest census taken in April 2001 was 11,933 but this figure is now likely to have increased dramatically as a result of a programme of intensive private house building in the town, notably 2,000 new homes currently under construction at Elsea Park as well as numerous smaller developments elsewhere, and a population of around 15,000 would appear to be a more realistic figure as Bourne expands at a far greater rate than at any time in its history.

THE CHURCHYARD

A plot of secluded land to the south of the Abbey Church is used as the churchyard, shaded by ancient chestnuts and lined with slate and granite tombstones. It has been in use since the earliest times but contains barely 300 graves yet the number of people who died in Bourne in past centuries are numbered in their thousands, leaving us with the mystery of where they were all buried. Overcrowding was evident well before records began, even as early as the 14th century when bodies were buried one

upon the other. Historians have also discovered that even in a small village of say, 250 inhabitants, several thousand people died and were buried each century and in the average country churchyard there are about 20,000 bodies under the soil with the result that the ground has risen by as much as three feet often giving the appearance that the church has sunk into the ground.



The churchyard in 1900

Parish and other records suggest that the number of burials in Bourne is at least 30,000 and so this explanation would appear to be appropriate with our churchyard which has also risen above the level of the church by more than two feet, a height not quite so dramatic as others elsewhere in the country but then this is fen soil and the land is also liable to sink, thus reducing the impact.

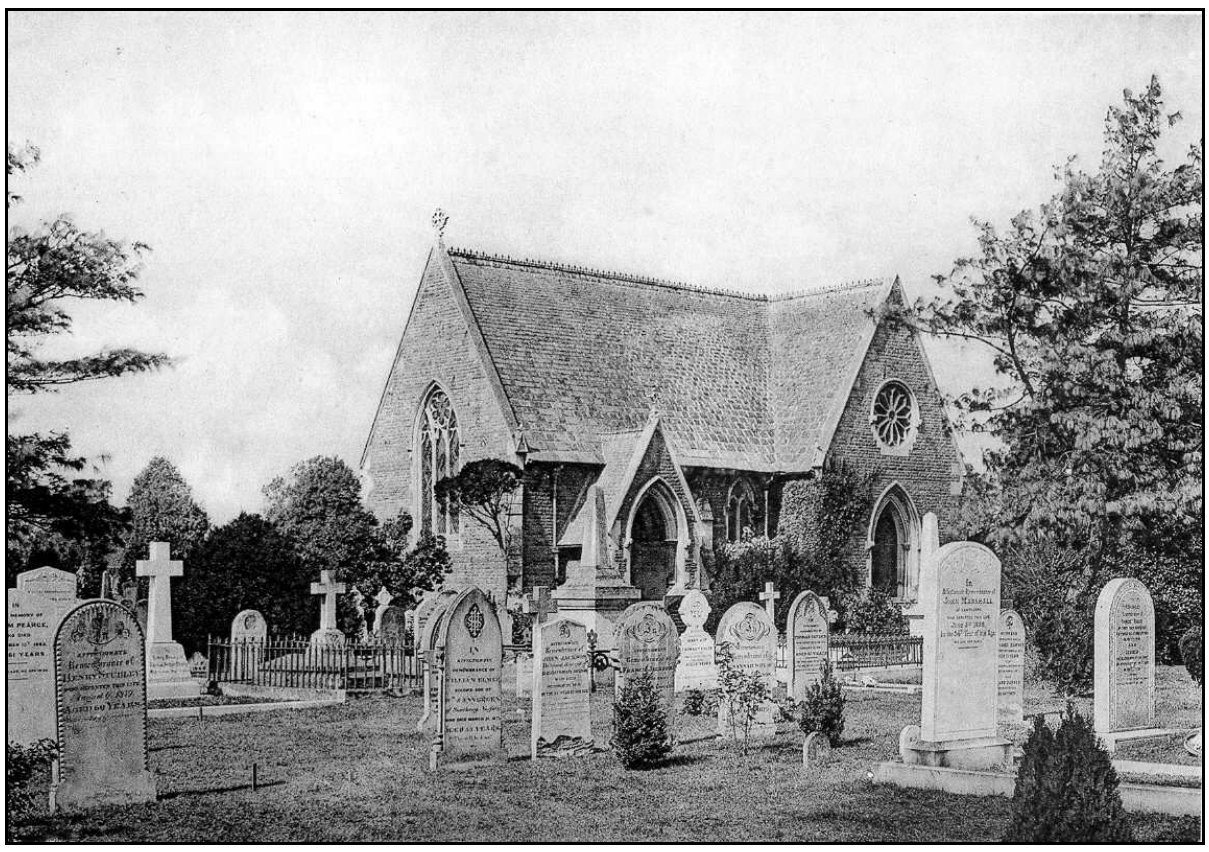
By the mid-19th century, interments were reported to be two and three on top of each other and the churchyard could not cope with further burials. In accordance with the Burial Act of 1855, a new cemetery was opened in South Road, thus resolving the shortage of burial space.

THE TOWN CEMETERY

The Bourne Burial Board formed in 1854 purchased four acres of land in South Road for use as the town cemetery when the churchyard was declared to be full. A stipulation of the purchase

was that a solid stone wall should be erected around the perimeter, built of locally made red bricks, and this remains in place today with stone markers at various points bearing the date 1855 when it was opened.

A stone building housing two chapels of rest, one for the established church and a second for other denominations, was built near the main road at the same time together with a lodge house for the cemetery keeper. In 1904, the cemetery was extended up to 5½ acres and in 1999 when land for further burial plots was exhausted, another two acres were added beyond the brick wall and this is known today as the new cemetery.



The town cemetery in 1900

There is also a rose garden and a garden of remembrance for those who were cremated together with a large number of memorial seats, rose bushes, trees and shrubs marked with dedication plaques while the paths that crisscross the grounds are lined with well trimmed holly and yew trees and an occasional conifer with laurels around the boundary.

The cemetery is administered by Bourne Town Council and is open every day from sunrise to sunset. A Cemetery of the Year award has been won on two occasions for its neat and tidy appearance, in 2002 and again in 2006. Over 10,000 people are now buried there, the most frequent name being Smith which is mentioned over 200 times, followed by Lunn, Parker and Pick.

The stone lodge was demolished in 1960 and replaced by the present bungalow which is now used by cemetery staff as an office while the chapel was closed in 2004 because it had become unsafe although attempts by the town council to pull the building down were prevented when it was given a Grade II listing. A voluntary organisation, Bourne Preservation Trust, is now negotiating for a lease in order that it can be restored and brought back into useful life. In 2010, the town council acquired another four acres of land to ensure that there is enough space for burials in the future.

THE BLACK DEATH

The plague which broke out in England in the middle of the 14th century was catastrophic and had a permanent effect on the life of the country. This disease spread by black rats was the notorious bubonic plague which killed thousands, the worst outbreak being in 1348 and later became known as the Black Death.

In agricultural areas such as Bourne, there were insufficient hands to cultivate the soil, crops were left ungathered, cattle roamed at will and it is believed that the building of the second tower of the Abbey Church may have been curtailed because of the absence of skilled masons who had died from the illness. There were several further outbreaks and although the number who died in earlier times is not known, we do have an indication from the 17th century.

The parish records for Bourne show that the greatest number of burials took place between 1633 and 1642 when there was a high rate of mortality in the town believed to have been caused by the plague which was still breaking out in England. A total of 662 burials are recorded for that nine year period, the highest annual figures being 100 in 1634 and 126 in 1638.

Other epidemics took their toll, such as influenza and cholera, when the churchyard could not cope with so many burials and mass pits were dug well away from inhabited areas for fear of infection which accounts for many discoveries of mass graves

made when farming, building and other modernisation projects are undertaken.

EARTHQUAKE, FIRE AND FLOOD

Earthquake: In foreign countries, seismic tremors, as they are known, are a frequent occurrence but we rarely experience them in England although they are not unknown even in Bourne where five have been recorded in the past 500 years. There were shocks in 1750, 1792 and 1896 which were evident when the houses shook, plates and glasses fell from the shelves and slates, tiles and even chimneys toppled from the roofs and in 1916, an earthquake rattled windows, furniture and crockery in many homes and children still asleep awoke when their beds began to move across the room.

The most recent earthquake in the Bourne area occurred during the early hours of Wednesday 27th February 2008 when families heard a disturbance described by one resident as "a loud rushing sound as though an express train were thundering past the front window" followed by walls shuddering and pictures and ornaments vibrating.

Many people rushed out into the streets and gardens wondering what had happened while others telephoned relatives or friends and it was later revealed to be the biggest earthquake in England for a quarter of a century. The village church at Haconby was damaged as well as the stone pinnacles on the gable ends of the Red Hall sixty feet up which were later repaired and cemented back into place.

Fire: Bourne does not have as many old buildings as it should because of two disastrous fires in past centuries that destroyed large parts of the town on each occasion.

The first was in August 1605 and raged for three days and was so severe that no houses were left standing in some streets. The distress of the homeless and those whose businesses had been

ruined attracted great concern throughout the country and when word of the disaster spread to London, the king himself, James I, ordered all of the nation's churches to preach special sermons and to start appeals for money to help those who had been affected.

The second fire broke out in Eastgate in May 1637 and soon spread to surrounding streets, burning down many properties. Although not as widespread as the fire 32 years before, it did have far reaching effects because Bourne then had a thriving pottery industry based in this locality which had been operating since the Middle Ages but was virtually wiped out and never recovered. Documents that have survived tell us that the outbreak began because of carelessness in one of the potteries and totally destroyed Potter Street which was never rebuilt.

The Cliffe shop and the Meadowgate fires

In 1898, fire broke out at Cliffe's shop in West Street which was then a grocery store and within a few hours the entire premises were gutted. Although it was in the early hours of the morning and still dark, many people gathered outside in their nightclothes to watch as stacks of food such as bread and milk, biscuits and jam, and hundreds of household items burned to a cinder with the firemen pumping water from the river at the back in an attempt to douse the flames. But nothing could be saved and next morning only the outside walls and chimney stack were left but the shop was eventually rebuilt and continued trading and is still in use today.

Two families with children were made homeless when a pair of shops at the corner of Meadowgate and North Street caught fire in 1922 but all of them managed to escape in their nightclothes. This

time the fire engine did not work properly and by the time they managed to start pumping water, a strong wind had fanned the flames and it was too late to save the building.

A wooden classroom at the Abbey Road school was destroyed in 1956 just a few minutes before 100 children were due to assemble there for morning prayers but desks, musical instruments, text books and recent work projects all went up in flames.

In 1968, a big blaze seriously damaged the premises of W A North, the forage and potato merchants, in West Street and in November 1979, the ambulance station in Queen's Road was destroyed by a tragic fire in which a young mechanic lost his life. There was also a massive countryside fire on the outskirts of Bourne in the summer of 1976 when grass and undergrowth became tinder dry because of weeks without rain and the flames soon enveloped three miles of hedgerow, 300 acres of stubble and many trees.

Flooding: Long periods of heavy rain are a particular hazard in Bourne because the town is surrounded by low-lying fen that was prone to flooding. One of the earliest recorded instances was in 1571 when according to one eye witness the roads were turned into rushing torrents and the market place became a vast lake. It was also recorded that the floods rose "to midway the height of the church walls" but this is most probably an exaggeration because there is a mark on the base of the tower which was made at the time recording a height of two to three feet above sea level.

There were other serious storms in the 17th and 18th centuries when huge hailstones beat the fruit off the trees and shattered windows and in 1763 the entire farming area around Bourne was under two feet water for several days. In 1875, the streets were so badly flooded that a boat was used to rescue marooned home owners and an excursion train returning from Skegness was halted when floodwater washed away the railway line and passengers were given emergency overnight accommodation.

These storms also illustrated the danger from thunderstorms because in 1878 a gang of boys were working in the fen when

three of them were struck by lightning and one, Samuel Northern, aged 10, was killed instantly. In 1904, several houses in the town were also badly damaged in the same way.

The worst flooding in the history of Bourne occurred during the 19th and early 20th centuries when the fen was under water on several occasions, the worst being in 1910, a disaster so complete that it has become known as the Great Flood. For more than a month, the entire fen was a vast sea of floodwater with houses and farms under water as rivers burst their banks and farm workers struggled to fill the breaches with sandbags.

The Spalding Road during the Great Flood of 1910

Despite labouring for long hours, they had little success and farmers were forced to wait until the water subsided naturally but it was four weeks before it drained away completely. A distress fund was set up to help those affected but it was several years before the area finally returned to full crop production although some of the smaller farmers never recovered from the financial loss.

Improved drainage and the installation of new pumping stations now keep the area free from flooding and today, the fenland around Bourne is considered to be among the best drained areas of Britain through a continual programme of constant repair and renewal to ensure that the first class arable land it serves can fulfil its vital role of food production.

The town itself has also had its share of flood disasters mainly due to an inadequate system of drains which overflowed when they became blocked or unable to cope during periods of heavy rain. North Street was flooded in 1912 and again in 1915 when the downpour continued for ten days. Dozens of people turned out to take a look when the Bourne Eau overflowed its banks below the Queen's Bridge in Eastgate during a period of heavy rain in 1930 and another downpour flooded Hereward Street in Bourne the following year.

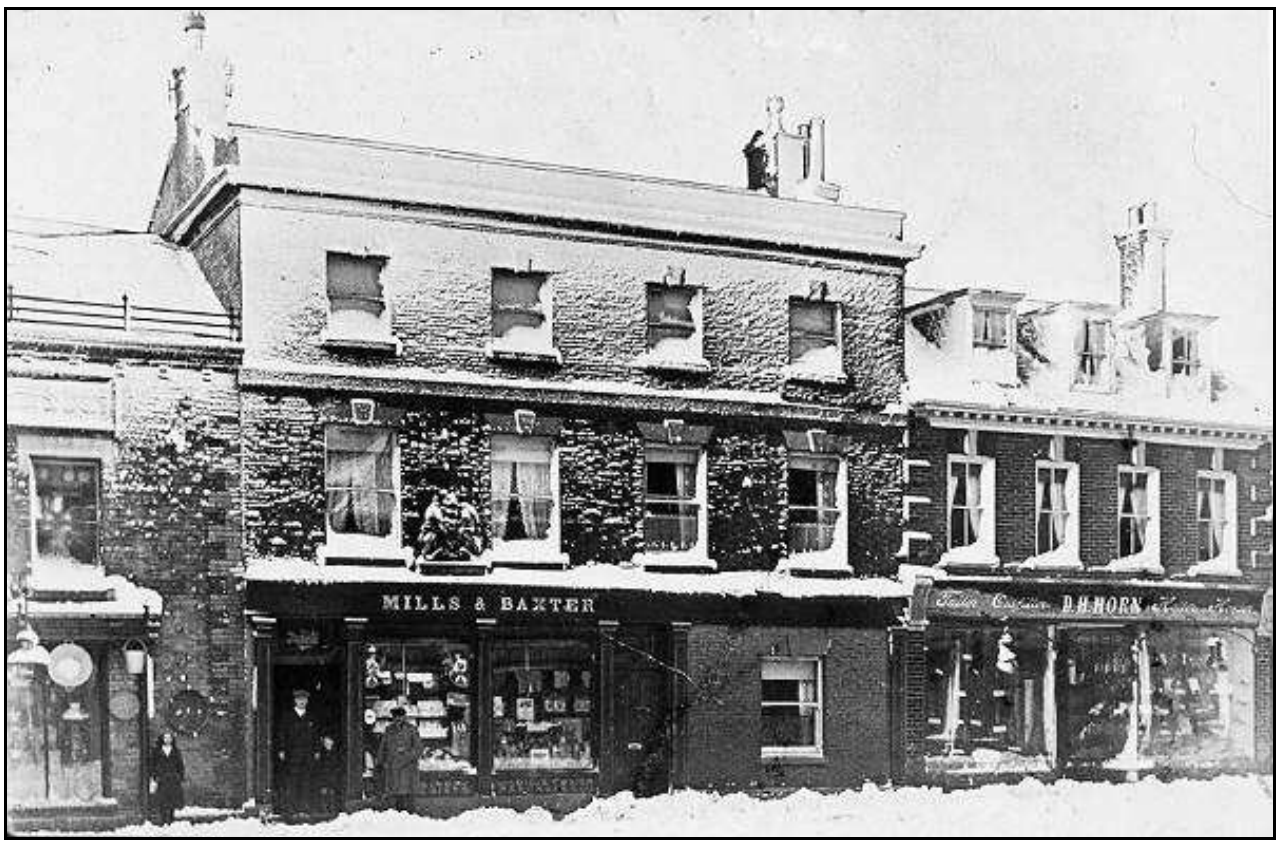
Queen's Bridge in 1930

In 1960 there was a heavy mid-week downpour when three inches of rain fell in ninety minutes. The violent thunderstorm occurred on Wednesday 5th October and although it was early closing day, shopkeepers had to return to their premises to mop up. Traffic was brought to a standstill as roads quickly turned into lakes, cars were stranded, shops and houses flooded and daily life totally disrupted by the downpour. The fire brigade worked non-stop in an attempt to keep the floodwater at bay but were powerless to stem the inundation.

Most streets in the town were under water but Manning Road, South Street, Abbey Road and Coggles Causeway were among the worst hit where cars were left stranded at the kerbside, mainly because they were slightly below the level of the other streets in the town. Bourne Grammar School was holding its annual Speech Day at the Corn Exchange and as guests left to go home, they

found floodwater swirling around the entrance. Senior pupils volunteered to wade through it and carry some of the elderly people to dry ground while hundreds more waited inside for the water to subside.

In 1968, the floodwater was so deep along South Road that Mrs Alice Gray, who ran a smallholding with her husband David, was marooned inside her cottage but chatted to firemen from an upstairs window when they came to the rescue with their pumps. Flooding in 1980 and as recently as 2002 has also affected the town but it has become a rare occurrence because of improved drainage.



West Street during the snowstorm of 1916

Snow is synonymous with winter and particularly Christmas and yet its appearance is relatively rare and when we do have a fall of any significance, the country invariably grinds to a standstill because public services, traffic, trains and travel cannot cope. Those occasions are therefore well remembered and although records of past centuries are sparse, particularly for small communities such as Bourne, some instances are well documented, especially the blizzard of 1916 which caused major disruption to public services and left a trail of damage.

The wintry conditions prevailed throughout Tuesday 28th March when trees were uprooted in various parts of the town, telephone and telegraph services were cut off, rail services halted by deep snowdrifts and the mail held up. Several passengers were

stranded at Bourne railway station including three soldiers who were given beds for the night at the Red Cross hospital in the Vestry Hall. The surprising feature of the storm was that is caused only a small amount of structural damage to property, mainly dislodging slates, tiles and guttering that collapsed under the weight of snow.

One of the biggest snowfalls of recent times occurred in January 1987 when the town was covered to a depth of 6-12 inches. The main A 15 road into Bourne from the south was blocked near Thurlby, bus services were suspended for two days and all vehicles other than tractors were at a standstill. The deep snow was followed by a thaw which brought flooding to several streets while trickling water from the rooftops formed large icicles as it froze again during the night.

THE WEEKLY MARKET

The market place is the centre of most small towns and has been for centuries, a place where people meet to gossip, celebrate national and local events and to buy their food from farmers and often to sell their own wares. Many are marked with a stone obelisk, also known as a butter cross, but most have been dismantled because of the danger created by modern traffic and the one in Bourne disappeared some time after 1803.

Bourne market place was situated at the crossroads where the two main roads serving the town, east to west and north to south, intersect. Regular trading took place here from the earliest times and in 1279, a royal charter was granted to the Lord of the Manor, Baldwin Wake, giving him permission to hold a market. These manorial rights enabled him to levy tolls and this authority was passed down through the centuries to South Kesteven District Council which has run the market and collected the rents since 1974.

Until 1990, stalls were erected on the streets when the danger from passing traffic became apparent after a lady shopper was hit by a

lorry and the council decided to move them to a safer location, a specially paved area behind the Town Hall where it remains to this day. The original charter stipulated a Saturday market and this tradition has continued although a Thursday market was later added and this has become the more popular of the two.

Market day in 1920

The market is now strictly regulated and has usually gone by mid-afternoon but in past times it was a noisy and sometimes riotous event with a great deal of drinking in the local public houses which stayed open all day. In 1924, for instance, residents living in the vicinity complained about the late hour of closing on Saturday nights and demanded that the stalls be taken down at 10 pm in order that they could get some sleep.

THE CATTLE MARKET

The sale and purchase of livestock was also a feature of commercial life in Bourne for many years, first in the town centre where sheep and pig pens and cattle stalls frequently lined the pavements and then in a purpose built cattle market behind the Town Hall.

From 1824, these sales were held three times a year but business was given an added impetus with the opening of the Bourne and Essendine railway in 1860 which provided a facility for bringing in

livestock from a much wider area, and so a newly established stock market opened and was soon trading weekly. The large number of animals brought in for sale meant that the streets were unsuitable and a permanent site off Hereward Street was developed as a new cattle market for regular Thursday sales of livestock which operated well into the 20th century and there were often as many as 3,000 animals brought in for sale.

A sheep sale in 1910

But signs of a decline in trade became apparent and in 1981, the cattle market closed after 120 years of trading, a victim of the changing trends and government regulations concerning the transport, sale and disposal of livestock. The site stood empty and forlorn for several years until builders moved in and turned it into Bourne's new market square and car park as part of the Burghley Centre development which opened in 1989.

HOUSING

Older domestic properties in Bourne were built mainly during the 18th and 19th centuries, replacing homes that were lost by two big fires that caused widespread damage in the early 17th century. Others have been pulled down to make way for new developments and so many historic homes have been lost. The result is that most of our old buildings are either Regency or Victorian, built in brick, stone and slate, but are no less interesting

for that. Old cottages can still be found in Bourne, usually greatly altered in appearance, such as a row of mud and stud cottages in Spalding Road which are at least 300 years old, originally farm workers' cottages but now converted into two homes.

Stone was the most durable material for house building in times past but is now no longer economical although there is an example of what they looked like in the row of stone cottages on the north side of West Street. But red brick appears to be the dominant building material that identifies Bourne with its immediate past and these were manufactured locally when stone was no longer readily available.

The town's current housing stock is a direct result of the building booms after the First and Second World Wars when hundreds of council and private houses were built. The council houses of past years were originally designed as accommodation for the working classes and have been built by local authorities for more than a hundred years.

Spalding Road cottages and Harrington Street council houses

In Bourne, large estates such as Harrington Street, Recreation Road and Ancaster Road were built as council housing although many are now privately owned. Government policy in the late 1980s encouraged home ownership, and this enabled thousands of sitting tenants purchase the properties in which they lived at discount prices.

As owner-occupiers, they could then change the appearance of their homes to suit their own tastes and these changes invariably started with a new front door, a feature that today distinguishes

the house that is now privately owned from that which is still rented from the local authority.

New building activity during the first half of the 20th century altered the appearance of the town more rapidly than at any other time in its history and in the years between 1914 and 1970, Bourne Urban District Council alone erected 546 houses, bungalows and flats. By 2006, there were still 535 council houses and maisonettes, all administered by South Kesteven District Council which took over from Bourne Urban District Council and an attempt to sell off the properties to a housing association was dropped when 73% of tenants voted against the scheme, thus giving a resounding rejection of the transfer that would have ended a century-old tradition of council house provision for the less well off.

In the past 40 years, the accent has been on private housing with extensive residential development on the west side of the town, stretching out from St Gilbert's Road towards Bourne Woods on either side of the westward curving Beech Avenue, which is just under one mile in length, making it the longest of the recently built new roads with other streets feeding off on both sides.

In recent years there has also been new housing development to the south of the town alongside the A15 where the Elsea Park estate will add a further 2,000 new private homes over the next two decades although the difference today is that the homes being built are purely speculative for private sale and mostly to newcomers moving into the area, thus increasing the size of the town even further.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

The corn trade: The biggest industry in Bourne in past centuries was based on agriculture with corn as the main product that was supplied to many other towns in the country. This sometimes created problems and in 1740, during a period of food scarcity, rioting broke out when a gang of angry townspeople tried to prevent a consignment from being sent by river barge to Spalding.

Root crops such as potatoes and sugar beet have also been important to the locality while the sheep trade supplied the demand for wool and cattle provided the hides which formed part of a busy leather tannery centred in Eastgate. A skin yard was situated on the bank of the Bourne Eau where they were scraped and cleaned before being shipped by barge and boat to many parts of the world.

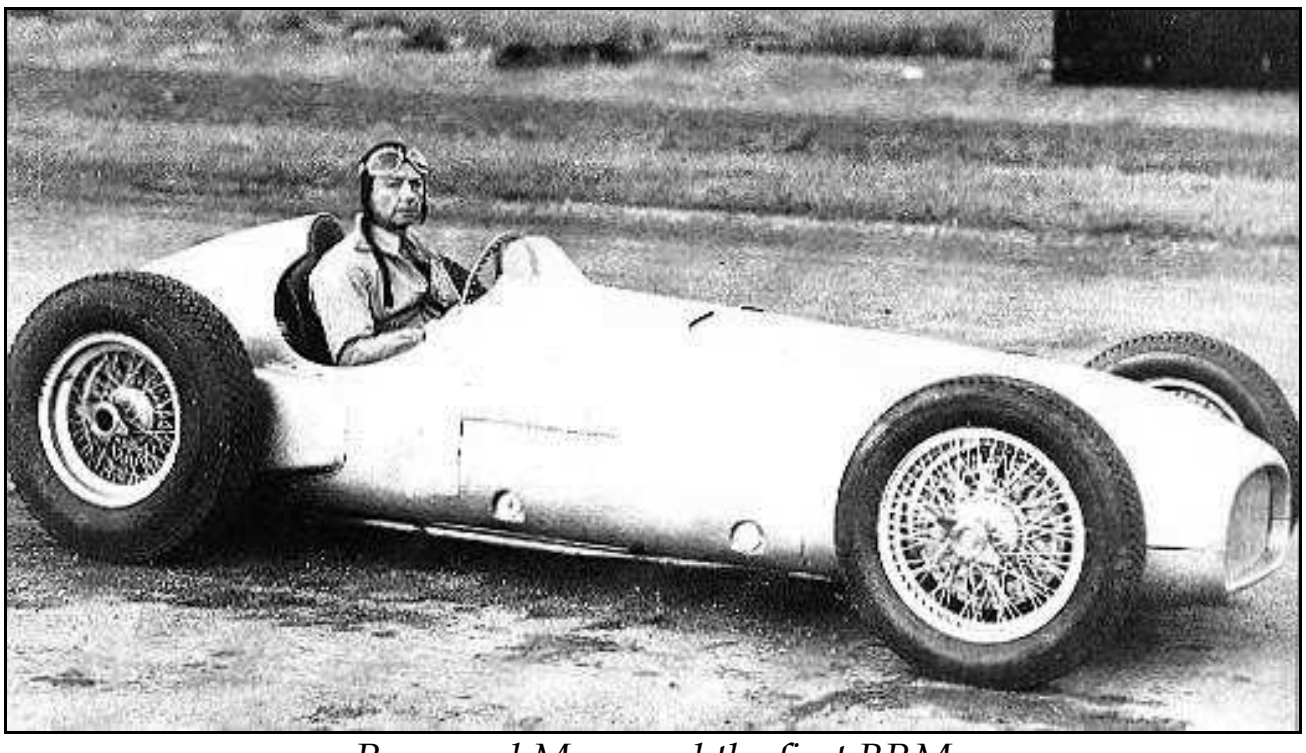
The firm also dealt with dead or fallen livestock collected and processed as meat and the by-products were sent to a nearby factory to be turned into fertiliser and glue. Dead farm animals such as horses, cattle and sheep were brought in by cart and it was the firm's proud boast in a tradesmen's catalogue of 1909 that "every atom of the carcasses reaching these works would be turned to some commercial account". In 1928, a horse sanctuary known as the Klondyke was set up in West Road to ensure that the animals were treated humanely and it is estimated that more than 20,000 were slaughtered before it closed forty years later.

Mechanisation on the farm and the challenge from exports heralded the end of these ventures and by 1980 all of them had gone. But agriculture remains a vital part of the local economy, now supplemented by new factories devoted to the growing and preparation of herbs and salad vegetables.

Motor racing: The pioneer of British motor racing, Thomas Raymond Mays, always known as Raymond, brought prestige to Bourne and took this country to the forefront of international competition on the track. Although his achievements were mainly sporting, his various business enterprises created jobs and stimulated the local economy.

Raymond, the son of a wealthy local businessman, owned his first motor car at the age of twenty and within a few years he was racing and designing his own models, first with English Racing Automobiles, or ERA, and then with British Racing Motors, or BRM as it came to be known. The first BRM was demonstrated to the motoring world at Folkingham airfield on 15th December 1949 when the car was hailed as a world-beater, although success was

slow in coming with many failures on the way. New engines and cars were designed at the workshops in Spalding Road which at one time employed more than 100 people and in 1962, the BRM became the first all-British car to win the world championship with the company's Number One driver Graham Hill, father of the present day Damon, at the wheel, so becoming the world champion.



Raymond Mays and the first BRM

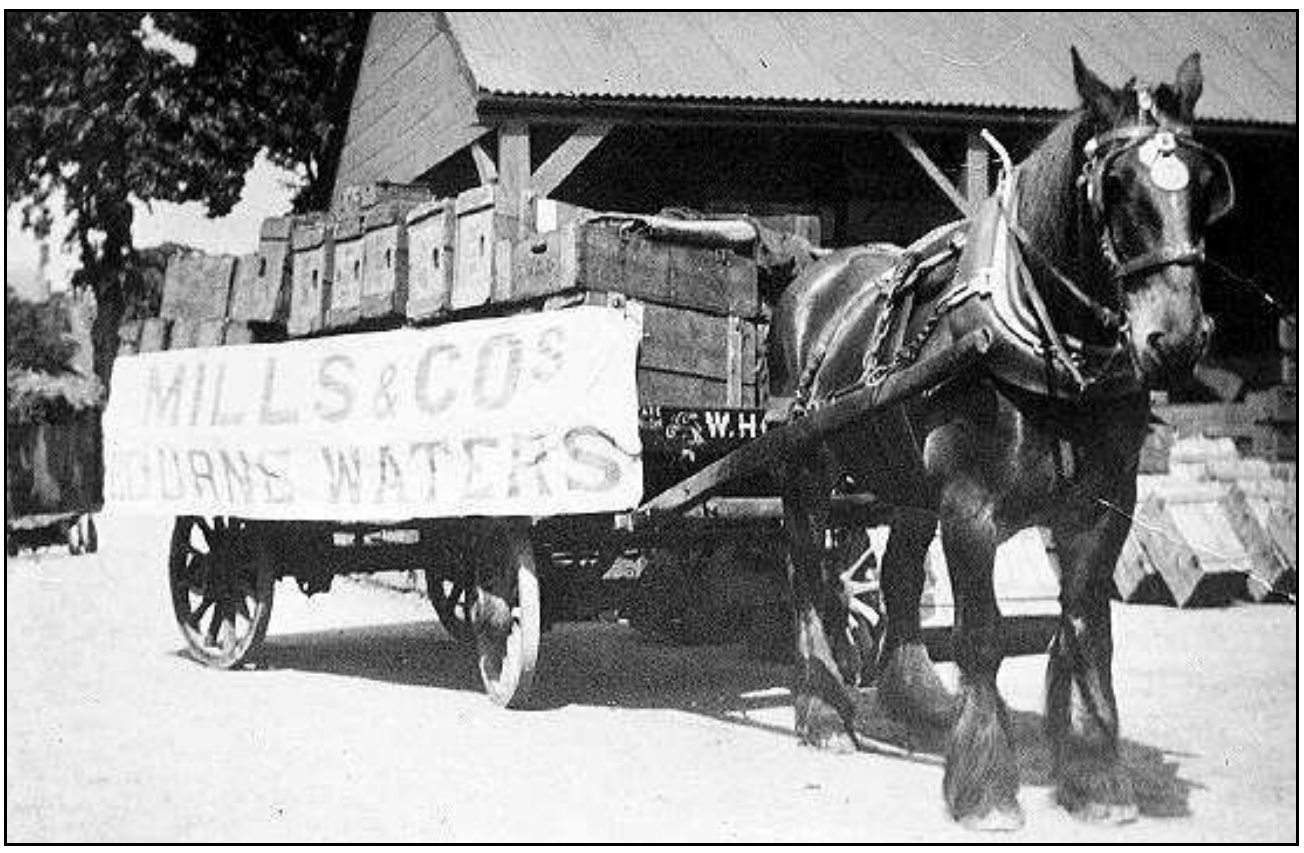
This accolade from world motor racing was marked by a civic reception at the Corn Exchange in March 1963 organised by Bourne Urban District Council when Hill was presented with a silver salver for his achievement and in 1978, Raymond was honoured with a CBE for his services to motor racing. He died in 1980, aged 80, and a memorial marking his achievements was erected on the riverbank in South Road in 2003.

Bottled water: Water from Bourne's underground springs has been famous for centuries and was even being exported 300 years ago. At one time, there were an estimated 130 artesian bores within the urban district of Bourne, supplying farms, factories and housing developments but most have since been sealed and those that survive are used by Anglian Water to provide supplies over a much wider area.

But it was an enterprising businessman during Victorian times who realised that this water was an asset to be exploited and was soon marketing the abundant natural supplies that were available

under the town on a very large scale. In 1864, Robert Mason Mills, a chemist with a shop in West Street, began the bottling of aerated mineral water in a factory behind the premises under the name of R M Mills & Company, a product so popular that soon he was supplying the rich and famous.

The firm began manufacturing a dozen different aerated beverages using flavouring extracts from various roots and herbs and special medicinal waters were also being made from doctors' prescriptions. By 1934, table waters from the town were advertised as "the purest in England from an artesian spring of great depth" with supplies being despatched by horse and trailer from a depot in South Street, although there were also deliveries by their own motor vehicle and by rail.



Deliveries by horse and cart in 1920

There were other companies soon marketing Bourne water, such as Lee and Green Ltd who set up a bottling plant in Abbey Road in 1891, and one of their advertisements proclaimed: "As the beauties of nature appeal to the eye, so the exquisite flavour of Lee and Green's Dry Ginger Ale charms the palate." Their table water also became so popular that a railway tanker was bought to carry it to distributors throughout the country.

The demand for Bourne water declined in the late 1930s and none of these firms has survived but many of the old bottles used by them are frequently unearthed in gardens and building sites

around the town and a large display of them can be seen in the Heritage Centre as a reminder of this once thriving trade.

Printing: One of Bourne's major industries today is printing, a direct result of the enterprise and foresight of Lorenzo Warner who in 1927 founded Warners Midlands Ltd, a company specialising in newspaper distribution.

Lorrie, as he was known, had begun as a delivery boy after leaving school at the age of 13 and eventually acquired his first shop in Abbey Road, Bourne, but by 1936 the company had outgrown it and moved to larger premises in West Street that also included an old printing works founded in 1864. This small business has since grown into Warners Midlands plc, now based at the Old Maltings further up West Street, and still run as a family concern.

Lorrie's son, the late Michael Warner MBE, took over when he retired and was responsible for the major expansion that took place during the late 20th century and the firm is now run by his grandson, Philip Warner, who succeeded his father as managing director. The company currently employs 300 workers with a printing plant catering for every aspect of magazine and brochure production from design through to mailing and despatch.

SICKNESS AND HEALTH

Treatment of illness in the earliest times depended entirely on folklore remedies and herbal medicines although those who dispensed these cures were thought to have supernatural powers and often treated as witches. The ancient Greeks pursued medicine as a science and the Romans were aware of public hygiene, providing clean drinking water, building sewers, and even hospitals to care for their sick and injured soldiers.

When they left, Britain entered the Dark Ages, a period in which cultural awareness declined and society became riddled with superstition about medicine and it was not until the Renaissance

which marked a new period of interest in art and science throughout Europe that people became curious about how the human body worked and so began our present awareness of personal health.

By the 19th century several doctors or surgeons as they were then known were practising in Bourne and patients would call for a diagnosis or to seek medicine but more often they were so sick that he visited them in their own homes, taking pills and potions with him and sometimes carrying out operations on the kitchen table. This often meant either a long walk or ride by horseback which could be dangerous because roads were few and the cart tracks often muddy and riddled with deep potholes.

Dr Galletly's home and surgery in North Road

One of the five doctors at that time was Octavius Munton who lived in West Street and went about his business on horseback to reach the sick and dying in outlying areas and it was on such a visit that he met his own untimely death. In 1863, while returning from attending a patient at Morton village, his horse shied and threw him to the ground and although neighbours ran to his assistance, he died in agony from a fractured skull soon afterwards. He was only 57 years old.

Another distinguished physician was Dr John Galletly who practised during the early years of the 20th century and was frequently called out to remote farmsteads in the fen, often on

dark and windy nights. In his memoirs, he recalled regular visits to Tongue End, four miles away, either on bicycle or by pony and trap, to attend mothers about to give birth, always hoping that they would leave a lighted candle in the window to guide him to the door. But death was ever present and in 1904, a little boy from the workhouse died in the playground during the morning break at the Abbey Primary School from consumption, the name then given to tuberculosis which was caused by poor food and living conditions.

The town in those days was served by two doctors' surgeries, Dr Galletly's practice in North Street and at Brook Lodge in South Street, and both were busy because illness was a regular occurrence although many of the diseases have since been eradicated or brought under control, such as smallpox, cholera, scarlet fever, whooping cough, diphtheria, chicken pox and measles.

Today, these surgeries have been replaced by the specially built Hereward Practice in Exeter Street and the Galletly Practice in North Road, operating from Dr Galletly's old home which has been considerably improved and extended, and both staffed with a large number of doctors and nurses dealing with several thousand patients each year.

Since the beginning of the National Health Service in 1948, medical care has also changed dramatically with the disappearance of many illnesses and infections and the introduction of a policy of prevention rather than cure through regular health checks together with a wide variety of ancillary services for young and old alike.

HOSPITALS

There have been four hospitals in Bourne but all have now closed. The earliest was a **fever hospital** established in two empty cottages in Manor Lane to accommodate cases during a smallpox outbreak in 1885 and continued in use until 1913 when Bourne

Urban District Council began work on a new hospital in South Road which was opened in the summer of 1915.

Bourne Hospital was originally intended for patients suffering from infectious diseases such as scarlet fever, diphtheria and typhoid but in 1918, cases of tuberculosis were also admitted. By 1965, it was being run as a medical and surgical unit with 53 beds and a full range of services but was shut despite a vigorous protest campaign by local people who raised a petition containing 8,000 names to keep it open.


The former Bourne Hospital and St Peter's Hospital

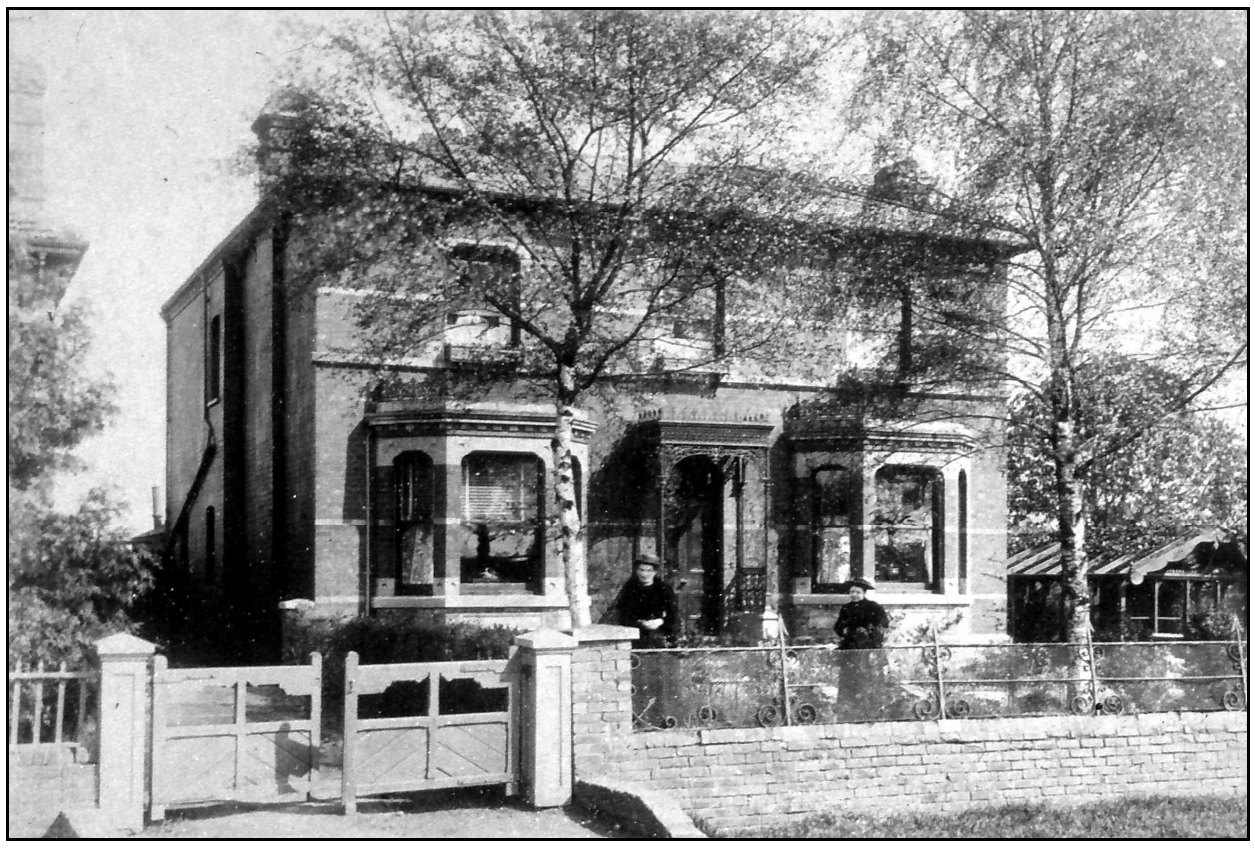
The battle was eventually lost in 1998 and the premises were left standing empty for the next five years before being demolished and the land has since been sold and used for new houses.

St Peter's Hospital for mental patients was established in 1930 at the former workhouse premises in St Peter's Road but when this closed in 1992, the entire complex stood empty for several years before being bought and demolished in 2001 to make way for extensions to the printing plant owned by Warners Midlands plc.

Care in the community, as we know it today, began with the Bourne Nursing Association which was formed to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and within ten years, nurses were making almost 2,000 visits a year to treat patients in their own homes.

The organisation was left a private house in North Road in the will of a local man and this was turned into the **Butterfield Hospital**, so named after its benefactor, and opened by the Countess of Ancaster in 1910. The first patient was already being treated,

William Thornton, aged five, who had fallen from a bridge in Eastgate breaking his thigh which was set on the kitchen table before being admitted to recover which he did sufficiently to present a bouquet to the countess. William incidentally, lived to be 63 and died in July 1969.



The private house that became the Butterfield Hospital

The hospital was enlarged in 1920 and continued in use with 12 beds in three wards and a full range of medical services until 1982 when it was shut down despite public protest but Lincolnshire County Council ensured that it could continue as a centre providing day care, recreation and leisure for senior citizens, and this has been its role since 1985. It is now known as the Butterfield Centre, a charitable company which is self-financing but assisted with grants from local authorities.

Hospital care for Bourne patients is no longer available in the town and is provided at Stamford, Peterborough, Cambridge and elsewhere.

Another hospital existed here during the Great War but with a very different purpose because all of the patients were soldiers who had been badly injured in the trenches. When the request for Bourne to establish this facility came from the War Office in October 1914, the town responded magnificently and within a few months, the Vestry Hall in North Street was turned into a temporary hospital for wounded soldiers returning from the front

to convalesce, with additional accommodation at the National School next door. The facility became officially known as **Bourne Military Hospital** and hundreds of soldiers who had been injured or gassed in France and Belgium were sent here to recuperate under the care of nurses and doctors from the town who had volunteered to do the work.

The military hospital in 1916

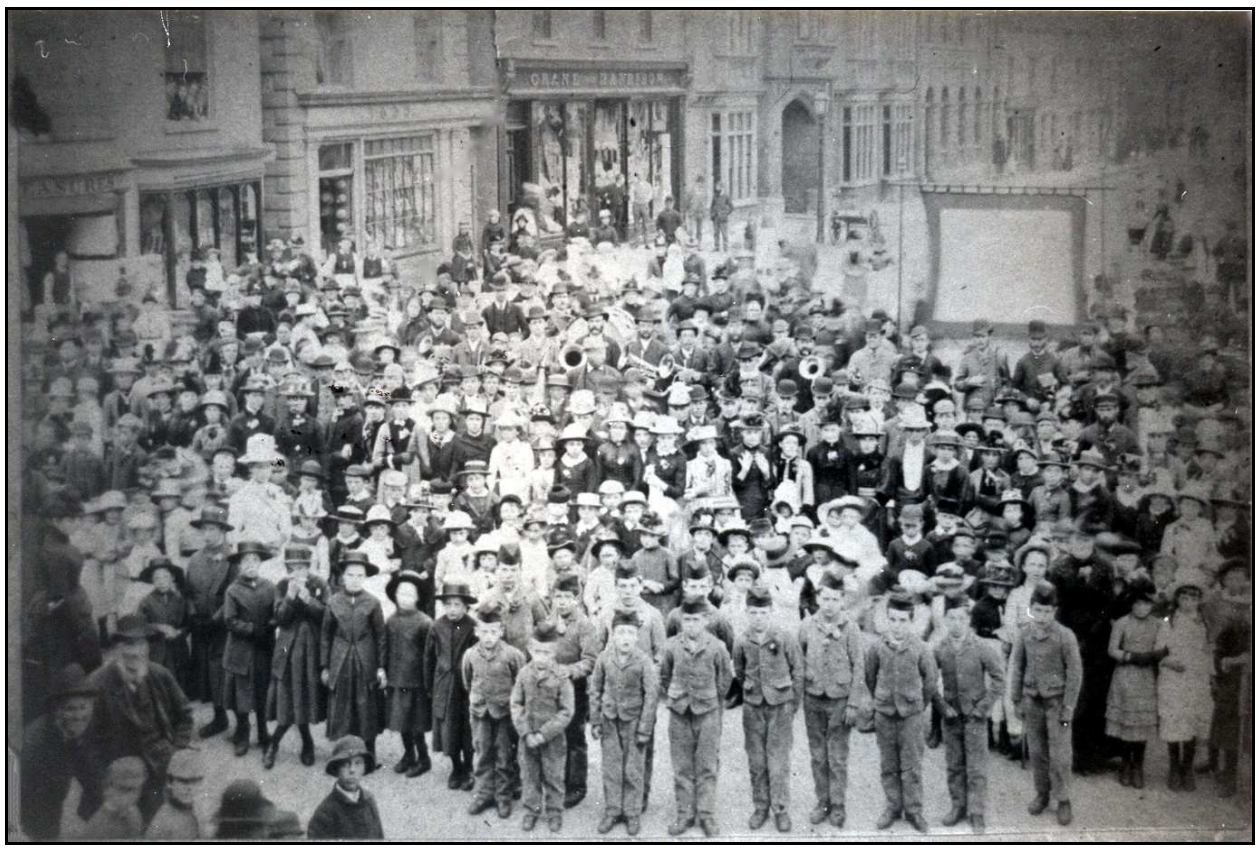
By the time the war ended in November 1918, the hospital had forty beds and had cared for almost 950 servicemen during a four year period and the work of the staff was subsequently acknowledged by the British Red Cross Society and the War Office. A plaque on the wall inside the hall once remembered this period and although the building has now been converted into a private home, it still has pride of place in the entrance lobby.

THE WORKHOUSE

Poverty in past times was epitomised by the workhouse that has earned its place in English social history as the last resort for the poor and destitute. The conditions that prevailed have been immortalised by Charles Dickens in his novel Oliver Twist, written against the background of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which forced impoverished husbands, wives and children into separate institutions. Until then, each parish provided cash relief to deserving cases but this was becoming expensive and the

system often abused and the government decided to impose a stricter procedure under which able-bodied men who could not find work had no option but to enter the workhouse, taking their families with them.

Bourne already had a workhouse that stood in North Street near the junction with Burghley Street which was then called Workhouse Road but this was too small and so a new building was planned at the end of Union Street, now St Peter's Road, built in 1836 at a cost of over £5,000 with room for 300 paupers and run by a Board of Guardians.



Workhouse children on parade in Bourne

It was rarely full because admission was discouraged by the guardians who enforced a strict regime in an attempt to persuade the poor to seek employment rather than live in such grim and uncongenial surroundings. In 1841, there were only 84 inmates who were not generally treated with much sympathy. Productive work was not encouraged, rules were strict and there were no luxuries. The equivalent of 5p per person per day was spent on the inmates and that included clothing. Other cash help was also provided for the poor in their homes, there being a great resistance to entering the workhouse and some who could not face the stigma took drastic action such a inflicting self harm or even committing suicide.

It was a hard life but there were treats for the inmates on special

occasions such as Christmas Day and in 1877 they were provided with a dinner of roast beef and plum pudding and entertained by a local group of musicians and afterwards the children received presents of toys from underneath a Christmas tree with sweets for the women and tobacco for the men. These luxuries were paid for by wealthy townspeople who often dropped in to see how their money was being spent and to receive the thanks of the inmates.

The workhouse guardians in 1910

The guardians also ensured that they were appreciative of this charity and in 1923, one of them, an eleven-year-old boy, no doubt guided by matron, wrote thanking them for providing such a happy Christmas and the lovely toys which Santa Claus had brought them. The letter concluded: "From one of the grateful little boys."

The workhouse also catered for tramps passing through the district who received lodging and a meal of bread and gruel for perhaps one or two nights in return for some menial work such as chopping wood or sweeping floors. These vagrants had been known to cause trouble, and even to bring lice into the workhouse, and as a result, the guardians decided in 1868 that everyone should be searched and given a bath before being admitted.

The disgrace of the workhouse remained until improvements in social conditions brought about its gradual decline and in 1930, the premises were converted into St Peter's Hospital.