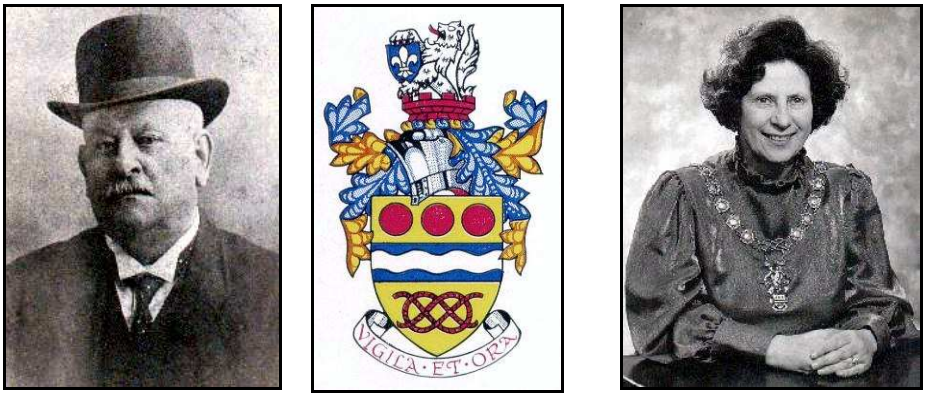
44: The beginnings of the town council

The origins of the town council date back to the late 19th century when Bourne was governed in its local affairs by vestry or parochial meetings with the courts of its two manors of Bourne and Bourne Abbots still active and exercising rights over their respective properties. The Local Government Act of 1894 provided for the establishment of urban district councils and it was as a result of this legislation that local government as we know it today began.

Bourne Urban District Council came into being on 1st April 1899, formed by Local Government Board Order No 38,377, with jurisdiction over an area that included the village of Twenty together with Dyke and Cawthorpe that had always been within the old parish of Bourne. The first chairman was Mr John Baxter Shilcock (1899-1900), whose family were in business as millers and maltsters and owners of the Star Brewery that supplied many local public houses with their ale. He headed the council again in 1921-22 and other past chairmen have included Thomas William Mays, the father of the motor racing pioneer Raymond Mays, who was chairman four times in successive years from 1904 until 1908, Mrs Caroline Galletly who was the council's first woman chairman (1930-31) and her son Dr Alistair Galletly (1961-62).



James Shilcock and Marjorie Clark with the coat of arms

The council had a wide range of responsibilities including community services, public health and even the fire brigade. The success of the town through expansion was a particular aspect of its work and during the early years of the 20th century, one of their main aims was to attract light industry and their efforts met with some success and laid the foundations of the business community that we have today.

Housing was one of its major activities and the urban district council was responsible for the increase in council housing between the two world wars of the 20th century when the population of the town doubled. New streets were added to keep pace with the demand for accommodation and it was during this period that many council estates such as Recreation Road, Harrington Street, Queen's Road and Edinburgh Crescent were built.

The original council chamber was in the old Corn Exchange in Abbey Road but the offices were later moved to the Town Hall. The council was granted its own coat of arms on 23rd July 1953 in the archaic terms of the College of Arms: “Or, on a fess azure between in chief three torteaux and in base a Wake Knot gules, a bar wavy argent, and for the crest, on a wreath of the colours issuant from the battlements on a

tower gules a demi-lion ermine holding between the paws an escutcheon azure charged with a fleur-de-lys argent." The shield is a modification of the arms of the Wake family who were Lords of the Manor from 1166 until the 14th century and are not to be confused with Hereward the Wake, whose exploits are the subject of many fictional tales. The three red roundels in gold remain and the characteristic Wake knot is depicted in the base of the shield. The two red bars from the Wake arms are replaced by a single broad blue one charged with a navy white one, representing two waterways, the Bourne Eau and the Car Dyke. Above the shield is the closed helm granted to civic authorities and this is furnished with the twisted crestwreath and slashed oak or mantlings in the main colours of the arms, gold and blue.

The red battlements represent the castle, the ermine lion is from the arms of the Cecils who have owned the market rights in Bourne since 1564 and from which family came the first Lord Burghley, while the lion holds a shield of arms of the Digby family who once lived at the Red Hall. The motto included within a scroll at the base is *Vigila et Ora*, or Watch and Pray, which is also used by Bourne Grammar and the Abbey Primary Schools.

A public subscription list was opened in 1953 to purchase suitable civic regalia for the council and a jewel incorporating the coat of arms was obtained together with a chain of office in 1955 to be worn by the chairman of the council on official occasions and a tapestry of the coat of arms was hung in the council chamber. Bourne Urban District Council continued to administer local affairs until April 1974 when it was disbanded under the local government re-organisation after a period of 75 years, the final meeting of the council being held in the Town Hall on 12th March 1974.

All urban authorities in England were replaced at this time by district councils and henceforth, Bourne's affairs came under the control of South Kesteven District Council based in Grantham but the town retained a parish council which, because of its historic status, was given special dispensation to become a town council with a chairman who is also the mayor and this authority took over the Coat of Arms and civic regalia. For a short time, the new council held its meetings at the Red Hall but it was later decided to hold them at Wake House where the district council had its offices and meetings continued there until 1993 when they were transferred to their current venue at the Town Hall although some meetings are now held at the Corn Exchange because of difficulties of access for the disabled.

A number of councillors have given long and dedicated service to the town but special mention must be made of husband and wife team, the late Ray Cliffe (1925-2006) and Mrs Shirley Cliffe, who have served for more than sixty years between them. Ray was mayor twice, in 1975-76 and 1991-92 while Shirley was mayor in 1979-80 and 1997-98 and served a third term for 2008-09, thus setting a council record. Another stalwart was the late Mrs Marjorie Clark (1919-2007), who served as a councillor for more than 40 years and was chairman of the old urban district council in 1970-71 shortly before it disbanded. She was also mayor twice under the new authority, from 1984-85 and again from 1999-2000 when she fulfilled the office of the town's first citizen at the remarkable age of 80.

The present town council has 15 members and retains the old committee structure but administers a budget of around £100,000 a year. It does have an input into planning applications and other matters under consideration by the district and county councils

but is in effect a token authority with few powers apart from the control of the cemetery, the town's allotments and the Christmas lights, but is regularly consulted on the choice of street names on new developments. Over the years however, some councillors have gone on to serve with distinction on the district and county councils.

45: 150 years of policing in Bourne

There has been a police presence in Bourne for more than 150 years because uniformed officers were deployed in the town for the first time at the beginning of May 1857. Until the formation of an established police force, the maintenance of law and order was in the hands of parish constables appointed annually by the magistrates, usually farmers and yeomen who combined the duties with their normal work, but it was an inefficient system and riots and disturbances were not uncommon. When such events were anticipated, they called on a body of special constables who were recruited and sworn in from various walks of life provided they were of respectable character, such as labourers, shop keepers, clerks, tradesmen and even pensioners. This enabled the parish constable rally a large body of men to a given place at short notice and if the incident got out of hand, then they could call out the military.

But the system was in need of revision and the formation of a permanent police force eventually became a reality. The County and Borough Police Act of 1856 brought together the Lincolnshire divisions of Lindsey, Holland and Kesteven, which included Bourne, and a meeting of magistrates appointed the first chief constable, Captain Philip Blundell Bicknell, who was interviewed and selected from 102 applicants on 19th December 1856. Although there was only one chief constable, each of the three divisions was to have its own police force but overall, it was known from the start as the Lincolnshire Constabulary. By April 1857, Bicknell had appointed 129 officers although they had an authorised strength of 207 and the recruitment of suitable applicants was continuing and by the end of that year the force was practically up to strength and the Bourne contingent was in place.

A local newspaper reported on Friday 15th May: “This long looked for force arrived in Bourne last week and we are gratified in being able to state that already a considerable improvement may be noticed. This was fully apparent on Monday last when the loiterers at the corners were much surprised at the order to ‘move on’ which they also found would be to their advantage promptly to obey. No less than six or eight cases of petty larcenies have occurred and parties have been apprehended upon suspicion from the neighbouring villages. The town itself is supplied with one superintending officer and two men. Of course, the liberty of the subject will not be necessarily interfered with in the discharge of the duties of the new officers.”

In fact, the police presence appears to have had its effect in many areas, notably the annual May Statute Fair which was held a few days later and was normally marred by drunkenness and fighting and frequented by tricksters and pickpockets. A local newspaper reported on Friday 22nd May: "We are glad to notice a decided improvement in the manners and appearance of those who attended. Not a single case of disorderly conduct took place that required the interference of the police who were very alert all day."

At this time, the population of Bourne was 3,720 (1851 census figure) but the police strength increased as the town expanded and by 1861 a permanent police headquarters

had been established at the corner of Burghley Street and North Street complete with offices, cells and hostel accommodation for officers so enabling them to be available on 24-hour call. There were then 16 officers but this had increased to 19 by 1875 and the coming of a regular police force brought a considerable decrease in crime and general lawlessness. One local historian noted: "Although the conduct of the people has vastly improved, their honesty is undoubted, and, with a few unhappy exceptions, the country people are extremely sober."

Parish constables were also appointed to assist the regular force, particularly in rural areas, and on 23rd February 1888, ten people were selected at a Vestry Meeting (forerunner of our present council system) to serve for the ensuing year for the parish of Bourne and the hamlets of Dyke and Cawthorpe. By 1900 the police strength consisted of a superintendent, one inspector, two sergeants and 15 constables and by 1913, two additional officers had been posted in, the population then being 4,343 (1911 census figure). But the Great War of 1914-18 necessitated numerous changes in the police force after recruiting for military service considerably depleted the numbers stationed in Bourne. In 1916, several officers who had retired and placed on the pension list were re-sworn in as constables and Mr Matthew Leeson, who had moved to the town two years before after retiring from the Manchester police force, was also sworn in as a constable.

County police parade down North Street in 1890

From 1857 onwards, policemen on foot patrol day and night were a familiar and comforting sight and during the early years of the 20th century when the motor car was becoming popular, uniformed officers could be seen regularly on point duty to keep vehicles moving in the increasingly busy town centre, especially on market days when stalls erected at the kerbside reduced the amount of road left for passing vehicles. But when the first traffic lights were introduced in 1973, they were no longer necessary and so began the reduction in the police presence on the streets.

The police station in North Street continued in use until 1960 when it was replaced by a new building in West Street while the old premises were demolished to make way for a block of old people's maisonettes. The new facility, however, was downgraded to office status in 2000 open only five days a week (closed for lunch) and an

indeterminate staffing level for duties in the town. Yet by 2007, Lincolnshire Police, as the force is now known, had 1,228 regular officers, 149 Community Support Officers, a new breed of police men and women although with limited powers, 784 civilian support staff and an annual budget of £108.6 million, which accounts for 10% of the total council tax bill.

In the past 150 years, modern policing methods have changed drastically through the introduction of mobile patrols, new technology, shorter working hours and fewer points of personal contact, with the result that Dixon of Dock Green, the friendly neighbourhood constable, has all but disappeared. There is undoubtedly increased efficiency in some areas but public concern persists, particularly among the elderly who feel unsafe because petty crime frequently goes unchecked and their environment and well being is being threatened by litter, graffiti, vandalism, yobs on the street corner and other anti-social behaviour that is not investigated, and there is a frequent cry for a permanent return of the bobby on the beat who was such a familiar and reassuring sight in past times.

46: Justice was swift and severe

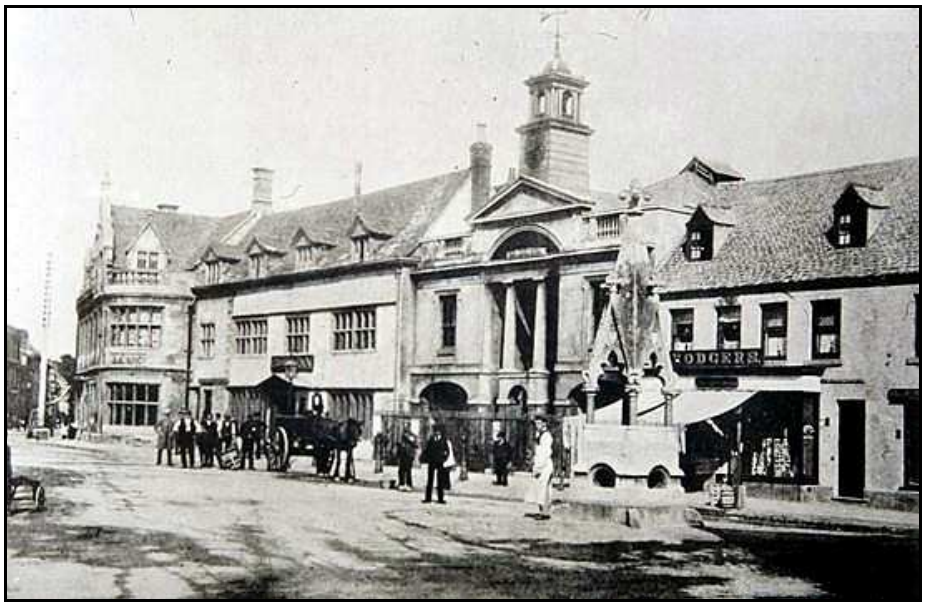
The closure of the magistrates' court in Bourne in March 2008 marked the end of more than four centuries of dispensing justice in this town. During that time, there had been a building in the market place serving as a town hall which was also used for the hearing of criminal cases and alleged infringements of the law, through meetings of the various manorial courts that controlled land and property and settled grievances, and at the petty and quarter sessions which were held at regular intervals under the jurisdiction of a bench of magistrates or justices of the peace.

The busiest time for the courts was in the 19th century when crimes and misdemeanours kept the magistrates busy with hearings at least once a week for the police courts or petty sessions and the quarter sessions being held for the more serious crimes and heavier sentencing once every three months. Justice during this period was swift and punishment severe with imprisonment and even deportation for what would be regarded today as minor offences. In 1811, for instance, the magistrates sent an unmarried girl, Elizabeth Whitfield, of Stainfield, near Bourne, to the House of Correction at Folkingham for one year for having an illegitimate child, her third within five years, and leaving them to be looked after by the parish.

A sixteen-year-old servant girl, Priscilla Woodward, came before the court in 1832 accused of setting fire to a haystack belonging to her master, farmer Isaac Teesdale, of Haconby, near Bourne, and although the magistrates were told that she was backward and ignorant and unable to read or write, she was sentenced to be deported to Australia. Other deportations included Augustine Chamberlain, aged 23, a labourer, who was accused in 1825 of stealing 24 chickens and ducks, the property of John Wilson, of Grimsthorpe, near Bourne, who was sentenced to be transported for seven years and was sent to Bermuda, and Sarah Marvin, aged 15, also a servant girl, who was found guilty in 1836 of stealing five bed sheets from Elizabeth Seward, of Dyke, near Bourne, and was transported to Tasmania for seven years.

In 1854, William Henry Marshall was accused of breaking into the dwelling house of William Elfleet, a farmer, of Eastgate, Bourne, and stealing bacon, ham, liquor and

two sovereigns and sent to jail for four months and in 1879, Frederick Rouse was sentenced to three months after being found guilty of stealing gin, wine and food from the North Street grocery shop where he worked. Cases of drunkenness were a regular occurrence and in 1888, the chairman of the bench, the Rev George Carter, Rector of Folkingham, told a sitting of the magistrates on Thursday 27th September that 11 out of the 16 police cases that had been heard that day were directly due to drink and that if it were not for that, the justices of Bourne would have very little or nothing to do. However, figures produced to the court revealed that during the previous three years, convictions for drunkenness were declining, from 223 in 1885 to 159 in 1886 and 127 in 1887 and so it was believed that the punishments being meted out were having an effect.



The Town Hall and market place in 1900

Those who have sat as magistrates for Bourne include many prominent people from our past history who were also actively involved in other spheres of civic, religious and charitable work. Among those who served with distinction on the bench and also became chairmen were William Wherry (1841-1915), whose family firm survives to this day, Thomas Mays (1856-1934), father of Raymond Mays, the motor racing pioneer, and Robert Gardner (1850-1926), bank manager and talented artist whose paintings were exhibited by the Royal Academy.

There has been little change to the town hall since it was built in 1821 although the interior was modernised in 1974-75, so reducing the size of the courtroom but the general layout remained with a public gallery for anyone who wished to watch the proceedings and an adjoining committee room or library where the magistrates adjourned to consider their decisions. Further improvement work was carried out in 2004 as part of an overall refurbishment. In recent years there have been fewer cases than in the past although in 2001, the magistrates sat for a total of 330 hours adjudicating on adult and youth crime, fine enforcement and family matters.

The town hall is now owned by Lincolnshire County Council but administered by the Lincolnshire Magistrates Courts Committee and it was decided to phase out sittings from 1st April 2008 as part of a reorganisation of the justice system and cases are now heard at Spalding, Grantham and elsewhere in the county. But the historic town hall

remains, its walls echoing with the pleas of past offenders, and although no longer the seat of justice for Bourne, certainly as the centre of the town and community.

47: The Royal mail always arrived on time

Strikes and stoppages in our daily post are a timely reminder of the service provided in past years when industrial action was unknown and the Royal Mail was rarely late. A General Post Office was established in England by Act of Parliament in 1656 and the collection and delivery of mail was mainly carried out by regular coaching services but it was generally a costly business. The introduction of the penny post by Rowland Hill in 1840 brought the postal service within the reach of everyone and therefore resulted in a tremendous increase in the volume of mail and by 1849, the number of letters carried had reached almost seven million.

The first post office for Bourne was opened in Abbey Road in 1847 and by 1857 there was a daily collection and delivery of letters under the supervision of Mr Towns Gatliffe, the first postmaster. Horse-drawn carts were used to transport the mail between the post office and local railway stations and after the line arrived in the town in 1860, all of the village postal services were eventually linked to Bourne.

The town's first post office pictured circa 1860

The telegraph and post office was moved from the Abbey Road premises in 1870 to make way for the building of the new Corn Exchange and a new post office opened in the stone-built premises in the market place, now the town centre, on the left of what is now Lloyds TSB bank. The telegraph was connected early in 1870 and the first telegram was despatched from the town on Saturday 5th February while the telephone was introduced to Bourne three years later. Mr Gatliffe remained as postmaster until Friday 12th February 1875 when he retired on a pension and John Thomas Pearce took over and ran the business in conjunction with his stationery shop next door.

Letters from London were arriving four times a day and there were three daily deliveries. The last collection for the capital was between 7 pm and 8 pm and the wall letter boxes that had been introduced in 1853 were so popular that they were being emptied three times a day between 6.45 am and 7.05 pm. There were many such collection boxes around the town but they were much smaller than those in use today. By 1905, when the postal service had become universally popular and extremely well used, the arrangements were quite surprising when compared with today and a trade

directory that year recorded the system operating in Bourne: “Letters from London, by mail cart, via Peterborough, arrive at 4 am and are delivered by 7 am. A second mail arrives at 11 am and is delivered to callers at 11.30 am. A third mail arrives by rail at 2.27 pm and is delivered by 3 pm and a fourth mail at 6 pm and is delivered by 7.20 pm.” In addition, the wall letter boxes in Eastgate, South Street, West Road and North Road were being emptied three and sometimes four times a day.

John Pearce died suddenly in January 1905 at the early age of 59 and he was succeeded as postmaster by his son William who recognised the importance and potential of the postal work and immediately began enlarging the premises still further. Business at Bourne Post Office continued to expand as the population increased and eighty years later, the premises had become so cramped and inconvenient for staff that a new Post Office, complete with sorting office at the rear, was opened in 1981, one of the most modern in South Lincolnshire. The site chosen was in West Street and included three old cottages, Nos 22, 24 and 26, that were demolished to make way for the new development.

The new red brick Post Office has been extremely popular with customers and attempts to downgrade and even close it have been successfully resisted on several occasions, notably in 2003 where an attempt to relocate the business as a counter service at the back of a supermarket 50 yards down West Street towards the Market Place was abandoned after several months of protest by the public and local organisations and a spirited campaign by the local newspapers.

48: Fighting fires on a pint of beer

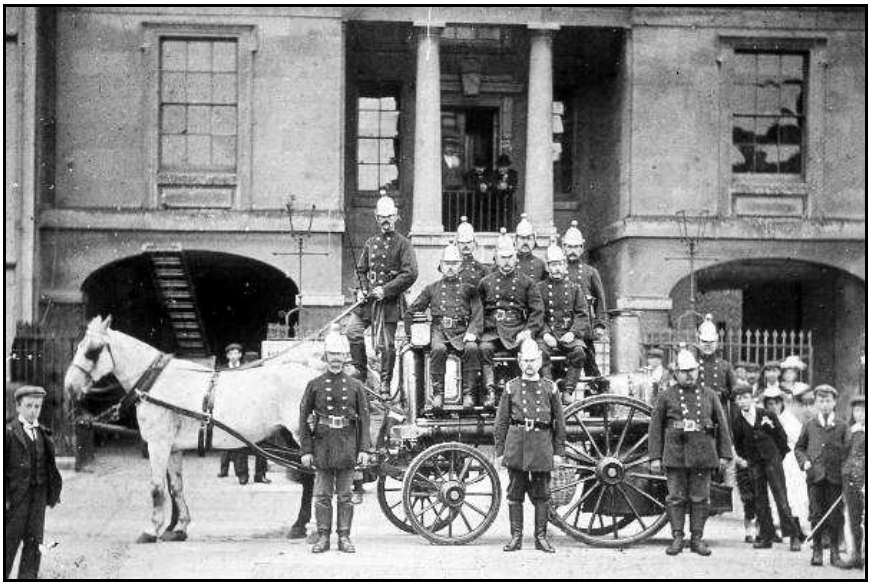
There was a fire brigade in Bourne as early as 1815, administered by the local fire insurance companies who owned a manual water pump but by 1900, responsibility had been taken over by Bourne Urban District Council when the horse-drawn pump was kept underneath one of the arches of the Town Hall. It was at first a manual appliance requiring crews of four men working each side of the pump and delivering a single jet of water.

When the firemen became tired with their pumping, bystanders were recruited to take over and paid one shilling an hour although some fire engines rewarded these occasional volunteers in beer and carried a barrel of ale on the fire engine specifically for this purpose. In 1900, the council bought a horse drawn steam pump manned by twelve volunteers and capable of delivering two or more jets and firemen proudly posed outside the Town Hall with the appliance wearing smart new uniforms with brass helmets, leather belts and boots. The pair of grey horses used to pull the appliance were stabled in the yard of the Bull public house next door, now the Burghley Arms, and were shared by local undertakers who also used them for their hearse.

Improvements in equipment followed and in 1928, a Dennis trailer pump was purchased and this was towed by a lorry borrowed from a local firm. When there was a blaze, firemen were summoned to duty by a brass fire bell on the chimney of the Bull that was rung by pulling a rope dangling between the two buildings with a pulley wheel taking it over the parapet and high enough to be out of the reach of mischievous children. By this time, volunteer firemen were being paid one shilling (5p) for every

hour spent fighting a blaze and the annual cost to the council at this time was around £265 a year.

The steam engine was replaced in 1930 by the brigade's first motor tender towing the trailer pump with long ladders on the top and benches alongside the tender on which firemen sat while travelling to a fire. The arches under the Town Hall soon became inadequate and work on building the present fire station began in 1944 and improvements to the premises have been carried out over the years with the enlargement of the appliance room, new offices, a lecture room, muster bay and a bar and social room. The National Fire Service was formed to meet the emergencies of the Second World War from 1939-45 but when the fire service was returned to local authority control in 1948, Bourne became part of the Kesteven Fire Brigade and had a complement of 20 men, all retained - one station officer, one sub officer, four leading firemen and 14 firemen. By 1965, the brigade possessed three appliances, each carrying 400 gallons of water and was also equipped with foam and breathing apparatus.



The horse drawn steam pump pictured circa 1895

The fire station was completely rebuilt and equipped in 1969 at a cost of £15,000 and included a 1,330 sq. ft. appliance room, stores, repairs, muster and watch rooms, a station office, social clubroom and kitchen. The official opening was held on Thursday 11th September and was performed by Councillor Ted Kelby, immediate past chairman of Bourne Urban District Council, who unveiled a commemorative plaque. Figures released at the ceremony revealed that the Kesteven brigade had answered 15,000 calls in the previous 21 years and Bourne had dealt with one tenth of them. In 1974, the brigade became part of the Lincolnshire Fire Service following a nationwide-wide re-organisation of local government and there has been a continuous development to the modern fire service we know today with constant upgrading of vehicles and equipment. The parent brigade is now known as the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service that has an establishment of 750 uniformed and non-uniformed staff organised from the service headquarters at Lincoln and covering a total area of 2,237 square miles and equipped with around 100 vehicles including fire pumps, hydraulic platforms, rescue tenders, water carriers and various other units. Times were also changing in recruiting for the brigade and in March 1989, Mrs Annette Jackman,

aged 27, a mother of two young children, joined the staff at the Bourne station, so becoming the first retained firewoman in Lincolnshire.

The fire station in South Street is now one of 38 in the county and part of D Division whose headquarters are at Grantham and is manned by retained fire fighters, that is personnel who also have full time jobs but are alerted by bleepers when there is a fire or other emergencies because the brigade also turns out for other disasters including road accidents and air crashes. It is a busy life that is reflected in the official statistics because during the year 2000, Bourne retained fire fighters dealt with 72 alerts during working hours alone.

A new water ladder rescue tender was delivered to the Bourne station in November 2001 to replace a previous appliance that had been destroyed in an unfortunate accident. The brigade was called out on the afternoon of Friday 25th August 2000 when sparks from farm machinery set light to 50 acres of standing wheat near Lound village. The blaze was slowly heading for nearby farm buildings and an electricity sub-station as firemen from Bourne and five other local stations tackled the flames with their tender parked on the field. The wind suddenly picked up and changed direction and burning straw was blown underneath the appliance and set fire to it, causing the brakes to seize and the crew were unable to move it and watched helplessly as the £80,000 appliance was burned out. It had served only eight of its 12-year life cycle but as Assistant Divisional officer Mick Green said afterwards: "This was an absolutely rare incident. The engine was insured and will have to be replaced."

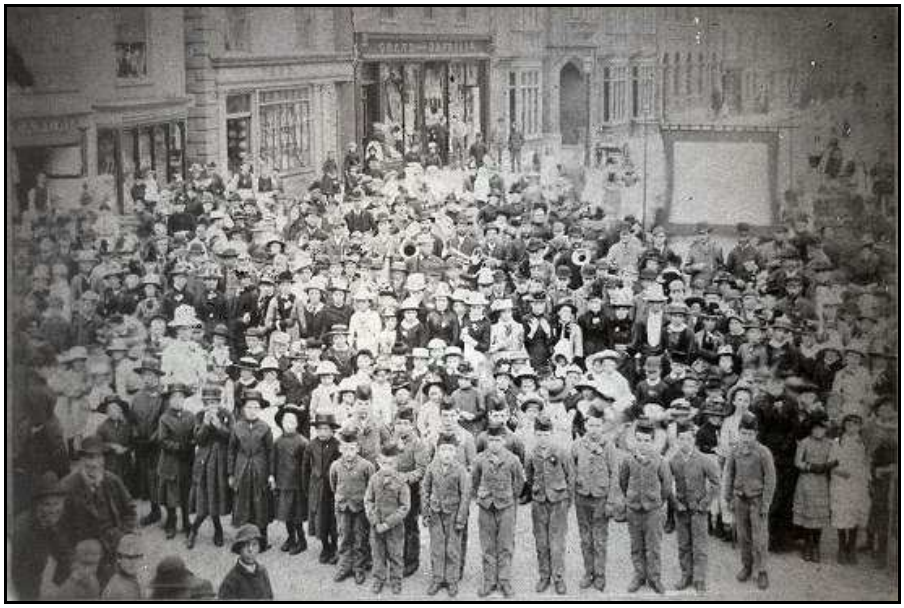
The new tender was a £100,000 Volvo FL614 that had previously been in use at Grantham and is powered by a five litre turbo-charged diesel engine and equipped with a major and a lightweight pump.

49: The stigma of life in the workhouse

The workhouse has earned its place in English social history as the last resort for the poor and destitute, immortalised by Charles Dickens in his novel Oliver Twist that was written against the background of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which ended supplemental dole to the impoverished and forced husbands, wives and children into separate institutions in the name of utilitarian efficiency. The welfare and relief of the poor had always posed a problem for society and by the early 19th century it was clear that the existing system needed drastic revision. The overseers of the poor in each parish were responsible for giving relief to deserving cases but the burden on the rates was becoming heavy and the relatively easy terms on which men without an adequate wage could get financial help from public funds was being regularly abused. The government therefore decided to impose a more rigid procedure and the new legislation decreed that able-bodied men who could find no work had no option but to enter the workhouse, taking their families with them although in some cases, children were boarded out with foster parents.

This was the main principle of the act that also required parishes to be grouped together as unions with a workhouse for each. Bourne Poor Law Union was formed on 25th November 1835 and to supervise the workhouse and the local administration of the new law, a Board of Guardians was elected from the district and the government, a total of 44 in number and representing 37 constituent parishes, and they lost no time in establishing the system that became operative before the end of

1836. The town already possessed a workhouse that stood in North Street near the junction with Burghley Street which was then called Workhouse Road but this was too small to cater for the new legislation and so a new building was planned at the end of St Peter's Road. It was designed by Bryan Browning, the architect responsible for the Town Hall at Bourne, and built in 1836 at a cost of £5,350 with room for 300 paupers but was rarely full because admission was not encouraged by members of the Board of Guardians.



Workhouse children during a parade in the market place in 1900

They enforced a strict regime in a bid to encourage the poor to seek employment rather than live in such grim and uncongenial surroundings. In 1841, there were only 84 inmates and 178 in 1851 when the census was taken. In 1881, the workhouse had a total of 123 officers and inmates and the guardians were meeting once a week to perform their duties. The staff included a master and matron, usually a husband and wife team approved by the board, a medical officer, chaplain, schoolmaster, and schoolmistress to assist with the welfare of the inmates who were not generally treated with much sympathy. Productive work was not encouraged, rules were strict and the official policy of economy left no room for luxuries. An example of the conditions that prevailed can be found in the workhouse accounts which indicate that 5p per head per day was spent on the inmates and that included clothing. In addition, a great deal of outdoor relief was still provided to paupers in their homes without them being forced to enter the workhouse. There was a great resistance to entering the workhouse or even accepting relief from the parish and some who could not face the stigma took drastic action such a inflicting self harm of even committing suicide. Nevertheless, poverty was so widespread that overcrowding became a problem.

There were treats on special occasions such as the royal wedding in 1893 when the Duke of York married Princess May and instead of their usual oatmeal and gruel, the inmates were served with a breakfast of tea, coffee, cocoa and bread and butter, a meat dinner and a pint of beer for the men and a half a pint for the women, with bread and butter and plum cake for their tea and the men were also given an ounce of tobacco each. There were occasional gifts from the local gentry and in 1874, eighty of them were taken on an afternoon picnic in Bourne Wood by Baroness Willoughby,

from Grimsthorpe Castle, while in 1898, Sir John Lawrance, of Dunsby Hall, sent ten braces of partridges from one of his shoots to be cooked for their dinner.

In 1863, the name of the institution was changed from the Bourne Union Workhouse to Waterloo Square in an attempt to remove the stigma attached to the original address, especially among unmarried mothers who often gave birth there. Apart from providing for the poor of the parish, the workhouse also catered for tramps passing through the district and 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 on 6th February 1868, that everyone should be searched and given a bath before being admitted.

The humiliation of the workhouse system remained well into the 20th century but improvements in social conditions brought about its gradual decline and by 1905, there were only eight officials in charge of 87 inmates and the guardians were meeting only once a fortnight. The premises were converted for use as a mental hospital in 1930 known as the Bourne Public Assistance Institution and was also referred to as Wellhead House but subsequently became St Peter's Hospital for mentally handicapped women and children. This facility was slowly run down during the late 20th century and patients moved out under the government's policy of care in the community and although the buildings stood empty for several years, the entire complex was bought in 1997 by Warners Midlands plc, the printing firm that owns the adjoining premises, for an expansion of their business interests and was demolished in 2001 and the site is now occupied by the company‘s new press hall and bindery.

50: Early years at the Abbey Primary School

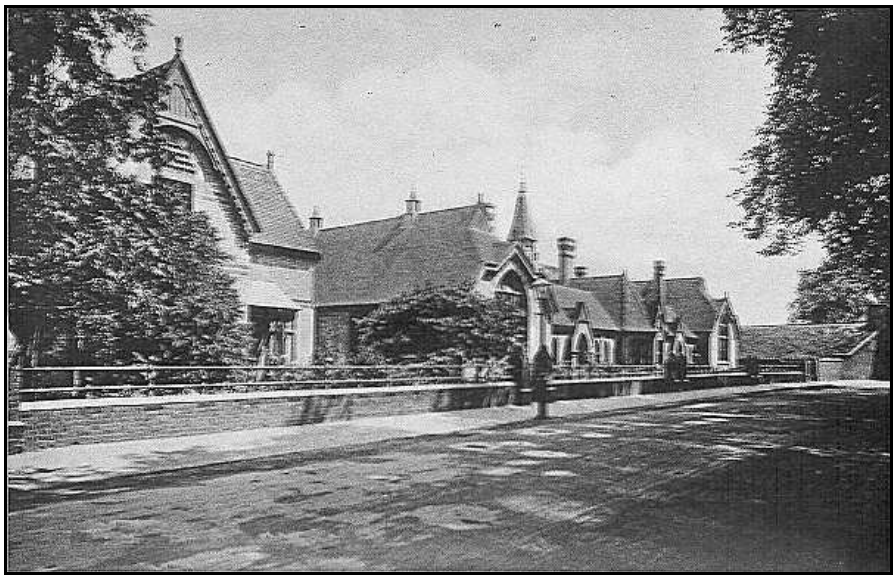
A new flag unfurled over the Abbey Primary School in September 2007 marked 130 years of unbroken teaching for young children on the same site which is a record for which the town may be justly proud. Of all the schools in Lincolnshire, this one had more cause to celebrate than most because it has evolved from a humble council school providing basic learning to many deprived children to an ultra-modern teaching unit.

Education available to all is a comparatively recent innovation in England and it was not until the Education Act of 1870 that elementary schools were built and run by the state and local school boards appointed to supervise their running and empowered to levy a rate for this purpose. This was a major social change that has evolved into what we know today as the state education system although conditions have drastically changed since Victorian times. The school board in Bourne was formed in 1874 and its first task was to build a new elementary school which was erected with an adjoining master's residence on the site of an old orchard in Star Lane [now Abbey Road] at a cost of £3,727, constructed in the distinctive yellow bricks and blue slate popular for institutional buildings during the mid-19th century.

The school opened in 1877 as the Star Lane Board School with room for 480 children, both boys and girls, and soon became the main centre for elementary education in the town, superseding the old National School in North Street. Mr John Derry was appointed headmaster at a salary of £80 a year and average attendance during the

ensuing years was 350 but numbers steadily increased to 500 by the turn of the century and the premises were enlarged to accommodate the additional children in 1892 and again in 1894. There was a further extension in 1901 with the aim of providing classroom space for 700 children although this turned out to be an optimistic forecast.

During one week in January 1878, stormy weather caused fluctuating attendances and a year later, heavy snowfalls resulted in only 55 girls turning up out of a total of 120 while in July 1901, continuous rain flooded the streets and closed the school and pupils were sent home. There were similar occurrences of wet weather disrupting the school's activities in 1910, 1911 and 1912, causing serious flooding in the surrounding fenland. Illness and epidemics were also a common cause of children staying away. Influenza closed the school for three weeks in 1891 and it was shut again for a fortnight in 1897 because of an outbreak of measles. Mumps and whooping cough were also prevalent illnesses of the time together with other diseases that have become quite rare such as diphtheria, scarlet fever and even smallpox which resulted in a number of children from the workhouse being absent.



The Board or Council School in 1900

Many of the fathers of children attending the school were agricultural labourers and so busy periods in the farming year were also a major cause of absenteeism and in October 1879, attendance fell because girls were out gleaning while six years later, the headmistress reported: "Attendance irregular - some of the girls are absent getting the potatoes up" and in July 1901, girls stayed away for half-days while taking dinner and tea to the hay fields. The authorities were well aware that schooling in a farming area was likely to be affected in this way and tried to minimise the difficulties by arranging holidays to coincide with busy times on the land. In the final decades of the 19th century, the summer holiday of five or six weeks' duration became known as the harvest holiday and in October and November 1918, the school closed for four weeks to enable children go potato picking.

There were many other reasons for a fall in attendances during the school year including the arrival of a circus in the town, ice skating in severely cold weather, cheap day rail trips to surrounding towns, the October Fair, church picnics and national holidays such as the coronations of 1902 and 1911. In February 1905, each

pupil was handed a slotted card with a sixpence attached that had come from Burghley House to mark the birth of David George Brownlow Cecil, Lord Burghley and later the 6th Marquess of Exeter. One of the boys, George Darnes, later remembered: "Some of my classmates, to whom sixpence was real wealth in those days, chose to spend it on sweets on the way home."

But despite these interruptions to the daily routine, attendances slowly improved and had reached 90% by 1907 while inspectors spoke highly of the standards achieved, and that progress has continued to the present day. The Abbey Primary School today is a large, mixed nursery, infant and junior school although the original buildings of 1877 can still be seen with separate entrance doors marked Boys and Girls while the stone tablet bearing the crest and the motto *Vigila et ora* or Watch and Pray remains on the front wall.

The premises however have been extensively modernised over the years with new extensions built during the early 1960s and mid 1980s and a further addition of three infant and two junior classes and a technology room were completed in the 1990s. Apart from the well equipped classrooms, there are two large halls used for assemblies, physical education and drama lessons, concerts and musical presentations while the school also has an active Kindergarten and extensive hard and grassed areas for play and outdoor games. The current IT provision is among the best in Lincolnshire with an interactive DVD as part of the school's prospectus and pupils have their own web site on the Internet of a very high quality, well designed and easy to read and navigate and additional pages are being added showing the work of each year group and community links.

There was a landmark in the history of the school in June 1991 when it was named as the first primary in Britain to become grant maintained and pupils and staff received a surprise visit from the then Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Clarke to mark the occasion, and it has since become a foundation school, a far cry from those Board School days of a century ago.

51: Teaching the three Rs at the Eastgate school

Our schools today have become comfortable even luxurious havens of learning when compared with those of yesteryear but even the cold and austere buildings of past times gave many deprived children the chance to learn how to read, write and add up and were established mainly through philanthropy rather than state finance.

One of the smallest of these in the Bourne area was the National (Mixed) School which was opened in Willoughby Road in 1857 with classroom space for 200 boys and girls and was responsible for the early tuition of children from the Eastgate area, then attending the National School in North Street [now the Conservative Party headquarters] which was becoming overcrowded. It was designed by the Stamford architect, Edward Browning, who was personally responsible for overseeing the construction, and was intended to give children the basic elements of primary education known colloquially as the three Rs, reading 'riting and 'rithmetic.

Arrangements for the establishment of the school began in June 1855 when a subscription list was started to pay for it and sufficient money was raised to negotiate a contract with the builders. John Lely Ostler (1811-59), one of the town's biggest

land and property owners, gave the site and donated £20 towards the cost while the Marquess of Exeter added a subscription of £50. The school was also supported by the charity founded with the bequest from Robert Harrington (1589-1654), a Bourne man who made his fortune in London and whose legacy benefits the town to this day, together with other voluntary contributions.

Work began in 1856 and the foundation stone was laid during a ceremony on the afternoon of Thursday 10th July when schoolchildren accompanied by the town's brass band marched in procession from the National School to the site of the new building where the vicar, the Rev Joseph Dodsworth, officiated.

Pupils at the Eastgate school in 1890

Coins were placed under the foundation stone before it was ceremonially laid by Mr Ostler's daughter, Laura, amid cheers from the crowd and a local newspaper reported: " The weather was remarkably fine and a scene of interest and excitement was presented to the minds of many who will not soon forget it. The vicar feelingly addressed the parents present upon the importance of education generally, and upon the expediency of their availing themselves of the advantages to be derived by their children from a punctual attendance at this school when opened, which was especially intended for that locality." There were three cheers all round from those assembled and afterwards, everyone adjourned to the Abbey Lawn for celebrations, 200 children being given a treat of cakes and tea followed by sports, amusements and dancing in the evening for the parents after the youngsters had gone home.

The following year, the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Rev John Jackson, preached two sermons in the Abbey Church on the subject of education and instructing the young, the proceeds from each collection going towards the cost of the new school which was proving to be a more expensive undertaking than first envisaged because a local newspaper reported on Friday 5th June that year: "We understand that the school is a most convenient one but the cost has much exceeded the original estimate (not unusual in such matters) and it is intended to make collections for the benefit of the funds at both services." The total bill is not known, but compared with building standards of the day, was probably in the region of £800 of which about £130 remained to be found and the bishop expressed the hope that the congregation would

contribute liberally, an opportunity, he said, which was both a privilege and a duty. In the event, the two collections totalled £47 0s. 11d.

The bell in the bellcote at the school which used to summon children to their lessons came from the Red Hall in Bourne and was given by the Duncomb family who owned it. About this time, they were selling the 17th century mansion to the Bourne and Essendine Railway Company for use as a railway station booking hall for the town and Lady Duncomb, who was by then head of the family following the death of Sir Philip Pauncefoot Duncomb, was persuaded by the vicar that this relic from the building should go to the school and so it was formally presented to the trustees in March 1860. Religion played an important role in the life of the school from its inception and in the autumn of 1859, services began on the premises for people living in the vicinity.

The Eastgate school

It was also home to a thriving Sunday School and classes for the study of the bible and other worthy subjects were held regularly and well attended. In 1860, for instance, there were 220 children on the register with 22 voluntary teachers. The running of the school needed funds but all money was donated and collections for this purpose were often held at the end of Sunday services there and in the Abbey Church.

Meanwhile, the school itself was well used for its original purpose and by 1885, when the mistress was Miss Lucy Ashbrook, the average attendance was 97 and by 1900, there were more than 100 pupils on the roll but despite this popularity, it closed down three years later during a government re-organisation of education and the children were sent to the school in Abbey Road. After closure in 1903, the Victorian building stood empty for two years before re-opening as a full time Anglican mission church serving the Eastgate district and it continued in this role for almost half a century.

The church closed circa 1950 and was left empty and disused until demolished ten years later to make way for new housing development and the site is now occupied by two bungalows. The fate of the bell from the Red Hall after demolition however is unknown.

52: The drudgery and perils of a life in service

The future was bleak for most children born into working class families living in rural areas in past times, the boys destined for labouring on the land and the girls a life of drudgery in domestic service. They were regarded as cheap labour by the gentry and the wealthy middle classes while harsh laws governing their conduct ensured that they always did as they were told or face ruthless retribution and social disgrace. Many youngsters were sold into a form of slavery by their parents at the May statute fairs held in Bourne every year when employers would arrive to recruit the workers they needed by striking a bargain with those seeking employment, the terms usually providing for food and lodging and a few shillings each year in return for long hours, no holidays and few days off and little chance to see their families.

The conditions under which the servants lived were often horrendous and the slightest misdemeanour could mean dismissal and even punishment under the law. These were often petty crimes that today would not even be investigated yet in centuries past could lead to imprisonment and even deportation. In the summer of 1813, a girl, Elizabeth Gunn, who was employed as a servant by a family at Billingborough, was accused of stealing a dress she had found hanging out on a hedgerow to dry but subsequent events had a most disturbing effect on her young mind. A local newspaper later reported: "The offence seemed to be so clearly brought home to her that her mother was sent for and the girl dismissed from her service after a severe and suitable reproof. Stung with shame and apprehension, the wretched creature accompanied her mother to Pointon but seemed to be in a state of stupefaction and during the course of the night died in her bed. It was at first thought that she had taken poison but on her body being opened up by two surgeons for the satisfaction of the coroner, no intimation whatsoever was evident of her having done so and the jury therefore, under all the circumstances of the case, returned a verdict that she had died by fright or terror."

There were other cases of similar desperation and we can only imagine what agonies of mind they went through. In the same year, an inquest was held on Joseph Measures, a 15-year-old boy who had been employed as a servant to Robert Rosling, of Swinstead, near Bourne. On the afternoon of June 28th, he hanged himself with a leather strap from the branch of an elm tree and when found was quite dead. No reason could be established as to why he took his life and the jury returned a verdict of *felo de se* [suicide] and the body was interred at a crossroads near the village without the rights of a Christian burial.

Theft or damage to property was frowned upon by the gentry and retribution was swift and severe. As the local bench of magistrates was composed entirely of land and property owners, those who came before them accused of stealing or wanton destruction were given severe penalties, often forfeiting their freedom for the rest of their lives. In 1832, a servant girl, Priscilla Woodward, was brought before the magistrates for setting fire to a haystack belonging to her master, Mr Isaac Teesdale of Haconby, near Bourne on December 7th. The court was told that she had been much unsettled in her work and disliked such jobs as milking the cows and other farm and domestic duties. Shortly before the fire, she had told Mrs Teesdale that she would give her husband "a damned good blowing up when he came home" and the haystack was seen burning soon afterwards. What motivated this action we can only imagine but the girl was found guilty although reprieved after the judge heard a recommendation for mercy on the grounds of her age and that "besides her almost childish years, the miserable girl appeared to be in a state of stupid ignorance, being unable to read or write." Priscilla was subsequently deported to Australia. She was 16 years old. A similar fate awaited Sarah Marvin, aged 15, a servant girl born at Morton, near Bourne, who was accused of stealing four linen sheets and one cotton sheet from Elizabeth Seward, of Dyke, when she appeared at the Quarter Sessions on 27th June 1836. She was sentenced to be transported for seven years and sailed for Tasmania aboard the ship Westmoreland later that year.

Servants were also likely to fall out among themselves, often with drastic results, as reported by a local newspaper on Friday 8th October 1875: "A young girl in the employ of Mr May, of Lound, having quarrelled with her fellow servants, went to an upper window on the evening of the 30th ult. and threw herself into the yard, a depth

of 25 feet. When picked up, she was unconscious and had evidently received severe injuries. The girl has been nine years in the service of Mr May." Many of the servants were employed by the gentry at their country homes in the locality such as Hanthorpe House, now demolished, home of the Parker family for many years. Colonel William Parker, landowner and magistrate, who at one time commanded the Bourne Company of Volunteers, was living there with his wife Augusta and family in 1891 when the census reveals just how many they employed because their retinue of live-in servants listed included a cook, lady's maid, parlour maid, housemaid, under housemaid, kitchen maid and nurse as well as employing grooms, footmen, gamekeepers, gardeners, coachmen and a butler, but many of the outside staff lived in cottages in the vicinity. Colonel Parker was also chairman of the Bourne bench of magistrates and therefore had the power of life and death over those in his employ.

The severity of sentencing for wayward servants continued well into the 20th century and on 17th October 1918, a domestic servant, Florence Duggan, appeared before Bourne magistrates charged with stealing a cash box and £78 from Messrs Story and Sons, cabinet makers, of North Street. Police told the court that the accused had been living in the workhouse and although she had a mother and sisters, they refused to have anything to do with her. The prisoner was sentenced to three months in jail for each offence, a total of six months.

Today, justice is tempered with compassion and understanding and most of the cases quoted here would not get into court and possibly dealt with by the state's welfare authorities yet the lives of those involved were ruined by a moment's lapse that found no sympathy from a ruling class which insisted on servants knowing their place.

53: When the corn trade flourished in Bourne

The old red brick warehouse in Burghley Street is one of the few remaining buildings from the corn trade which flourished in Bourne during past times. It is one of several built during the 18th and 19th centuries for the distribution of wheat and barley grown in the surrounding fertile acres of fenland and which provided the basis of many family fortunes. Corn has been grown hereabouts since Roman times and was moved north along the newly constructed Car Dyke by low barge or raft to feed the empire's advancing armies while other consignments were exported for their troops in Germany and Gaul. Five hundred years later, as the population increased, grain had become an even more valuable crop for local farmers and improvements were made to the Bourne Eau to make it navigable and facilitate easier transportation with the result that warehouses sprang up to cater for the movement of corn in bulk.

From the period 1500-1640, when Bourne was one of 37 market towns in Lincolnshire, the main commodity was corn and successive legislation affecting the drainage of the fens and the subsequent reclamation of land was instrumental in improvements to all existing waterways. By the end of the 17th century, the new cut known as the South Forty Foot Drain had linked several of them to form what was described as "a navigable river from Bourne to Boston, a distance of 24 miles" and so Bourne therefore had a direct link with the North Sea. The improvements led to a boom in waterborne trade with the Midlands and Yorkshire with boats leaving laden with corn and returning with coal and other vital commodities for the local economy and later, the grain trade was to be supplemented by leather and sheepskins from the

fellmonger's yards in Eastgate. Today, the river is overgrown and neglected and the only reminder of our maritime past is the 18th century Anchor Inn, once a popular haunt of boatmen who plied their trade along the waterway.

Grain therefore has always been a vital part of the local economy and was even the cause of rioting. In 1740, a gang of angry townspeople tried to prevent a consignment from being sent by barge along the Bourne Eau on its way to Spalding. This was a year of rising prices and a scarcity of food and they resented corn grown locally being sent to feed people in other parts of the country when they themselves were hungry. John Halford of Bourne wrote to local landowner Sir John Heathcote at his residence in Epping Forest: "We have had a disturbance by the mob which cut some sacks of wheat in the boat and obstructed its passage to Spalding for a time but was quelled by officers of the town and five women were committed to the House of Correction."

The skinning shed at T W Mays and Son circa 1890

Wherry's warehouse in South Road was probably the busiest of these red brick buildings which sprang up during the late 18th century and continued in business for almost 200 years. Wheat, barley and oats grown by local farmers were brought here by horse and cart which waited outside while the sacks were unloaded and hauled up the gantry. Older inhabitants have fond memories of some of the animals used in this work, particularly a white Shire called Flower owned by the proprietors and regarded with some public affection, continuing in employment until 1967. This warehouse, now listed Grade II, has recently been converted into six retirement flats although the outward appearance has been retained as a reminder of its past use. One of the biggest of the warehouses was in Eastgate on the north bank of the river in the 18th century, a massive building four storeys high with an uninterrupted view of the surrounding fens and on a clear day you could see Boston Stump, the 272½ ft. high tower of St Botolph's Church, the second highest church tower in Britain, which was almost 20 miles away as the crow flies. This imposing warehouse survived until 1967 when it was pulled down and the site was redeveloped for new houses.

The four-storey grain warehouse overlooking the car park in Burghley Street also had another agricultural use when flax became a small but thriving industry in Bourne during the early years of the last century. The plant had previously been grown in the area in past times and used in the manufacture of linen and its cultivation was revived

during and after the Great War of 1914-18 when the building was converted for processing and providing a large number of jobs, mainly for women. Bringing in the flax harvest also attracted dozens of itinerant workers who were brought in by lorry, rather like the gangmaster system that now operates in some areas of the Lincolnshire fens. In the summer of 1918, for instance, 500 workers were encamped on the Abbey Lawn for several weeks assisted by troops from various regiments while harvesting operations were underway in the surrounding countryside.


Surviving warehouses in Burghley Street and Cherryholt Road

In recent times, the Burghley Street warehouse was owned by Nursery Supplies (Bourne) Ltd which closed down in 2001 and was then acquired by the printing firm Warners Midlands plc and used for storage but has been standing empty for several years. South Kesteven District Council bought the building in 2008 for £300,000 as part of the town centre's £27 million redevelopment scheme and although its future in this has not yet been decided, there are hopes that it will be preserved in some way as part of our agricultural heritage.

54: When gas lit our streets, homes and offices

The gas works existed in Bourne for more than a century, producing coal gas to provide light and heat for much of the town until electricity started to compete because of its cleaner operation and safer installation. The first commercial gas works were built by the London and Westminster Gas Light and Coke Company in Great Peter Street in 1812 laying wooden pipes to illuminate Westminster Bridge with gas lights on New Year's Eve in 1813.

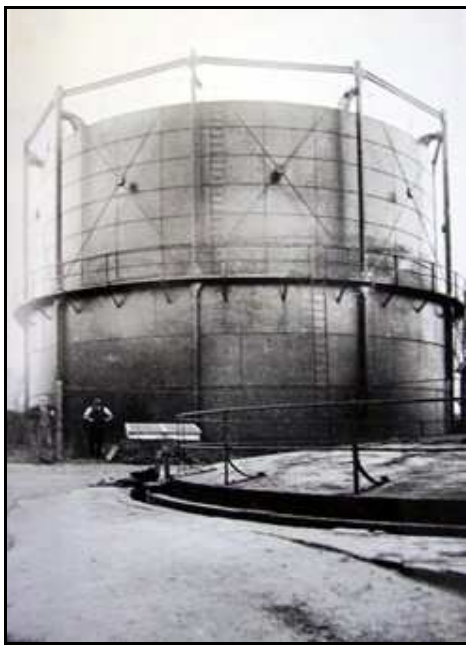
Other gas works for towns and cities followed, the Bourne Gas Light and Coke Company being formed in 1840 with premises on a site at the top end of Eastgate. There were five trustees of the company, one of them being the vicar, the Rev Joseph Dodsworth, and £10 shares were issued to those who wanted a financial stake in the venture. The gasworks were erected at a cost of £2,000 and the enterprise prospered, the first project being the installation of gas lighting in the Abbey Church the same year followed by the erection of lamp standards to light the streets.

The first street to be lit by gas had been Pall Mall in London in 1807 and by 1823 numerous towns and cities throughout Britain had followed suit. Costing up to 75% less than lighting produced by oil lamps or candles helped to accelerate its development and deployment. By 1859, gas lighting was to be found all over Britain and 1,000 gas works had sprung up to meet the demand for the new fuel. The brighter lighting which gas provided allowed people to read more easily and for longer, so

helping to stimulate literacy and learning and speeding up the second Industrial Revolution.

In 1868, it was necessary to enlarge the gasworks premises in what had become known as Gas House Yard to meet the demand and further extensions to installations were carried out in 1878 when new and much larger mains were laid as far as the Market Place. By this time, coal gas was being used for heating and lighting in homes, shops and business premises, as well as for street lighting and there were 56 public incandescent gas lamps at various points around the town. Kelly's Directory of Lincolnshire reported in 1885: "The town consists principally of four streets diverting from the Market Place, all remarkably clean and lighted with gas." In February 1898, the parish council, which was responsible for maintaining the street lighting at that time, asked the gas company to ensure that the lamps were lit on every dark evening and that they were left on all night on Saturdays and Sundays.

The invention of the gas meter and the pre-payment meter in the late 1880s played an important role in selling town gas to domestic and commercial customers and by the turn of the century the supply had become an essential part of everyday life. Central to the supply system was the gasometer, a massive metal telescopic holder to contain the domestic supply ready for distribution. Three were eventually erected to serve the town, each better than before, the last with a capacity of 40,000 cubic feet installed in 1908 and the biggest to be built on the site, installed by Messrs R and J Dempster of Newton Heath, Manchester, a firm with an international reputation that had been called in as consultants for public gas undertakings in many places, particularly St John's, Newfoundland, in 1888.



The 1908 gasometer

Explosions were not unknown, similar to that which occurred on the evening of Friday 21st October 1898 at Mr Thomas Carlton's drapery shop in North Street. There had been a small leakage of gas which seeped into a drain through a grating at the roadside and a match thrown down by a passerby caused an explosion. Damage was not extensive and the leak was located and repaired. There were also breakdowns and when the engine at the gasworks failed in August 1915, the Town Crier, Richard Lloyd, was called out on Sunday morning to alert householders. The supply was cut off for 24 hours, causing much consternation because housewives were about to start preparing Sunday lunch but they were urged to light fires and use those for cooking instead while in the evening, churches started services without lights although the gas supply was resumed soon after they began.

The Bourne Gas Light and Coke Company ceased trading on 31st March 1914 and went into liquidation prior to being sold to Bourne Urban District Council which paid almost £14,000 for the business. The manager was retained in his post at a salary of £2 a week with £1 per quarter extra for meter reading and a house, coal and gas supplied free of charge. His wife was also to receive two shillings a week to attend to

customers at the gas showrooms in Eastgate and to keep the premises clean. By 1927, gas consumption in the Bourne area had increased to such an extent that the council purchased more land for £450 to add to the number of purifiers needed in the production process. In 1934 the service was extended to Dyke when the urban council laid a mains pipe to the village from Bourne and the streets were lighted with gas lamps for the first time, the switching on taking place on Saturday 1st September. Until then, twelve oil lamp standards had been used to light the streets but these appliances were replaced by gas burners and the number reduced to nine because their increased brilliance required fewer of them. The old method of lighting and extinguishing the lamps by hand was also abolished in favour of an automatic clock system that switched them on at night and off in the morning.

Demolishing the gasworks in 1960

This prosperity continued for another twenty years but re-organisation within the gas supply industry brought about their closure in 1957. The buildings in Gas House Yard were demolished in January 1960 and the following April, new workshops for the construction of the BRM racing cars were built on the site by the company run by the motor racing pioneer Raymond Mays although the huge gasometer remained in use on the opposite side of the road for several years.

By 1965, there were 1,400 consumers in the town with the demand rising steadily. Responsibility for gas distribution subsequently passed from the council to the East Midlands Gas Board and then to British Gas in 1973. The popularity of gas as a domestic fuel remained undiminished but today the gasometer has gone from Bourne and our supply no longer comes from coal but from the North Sea and is brought into the town through a complicated pipeline network from the east coast.

55: The age of steam railway

The coming of the railway during the 19th century gave the people of Bourne fast access to other parts of Britain and turned the town into a rail junction where two lines crossed. The building of a track to connect the town with the Great Northern line at Essendine was completed in 1860 when the route was opened for both passengers and goods traffic, an undertaking that was not a particularly difficult engineering feat

because the 6½ mile stretch of line needed no tunnels and there were no demanding gradients.

Details of the Bourne to Essendine rail link were reported in the House of Commons by the examining committee in June 1857 when it was announced that the proposed capital of the company was £48,000, one third of which (£16,000) was to be taken up by a loan. The amount subscribed in shares was £33,990 of which £3,399 had already been deposited. The length of the proposed railway was 6 miles, 2 furlongs, 8½ chains, and the steepest gradient was 1 in 107. It was intended to cross three roads on the level. The estimated cost of the railway was £45,000 and the quantity of land required 53¾ acres. The engineer was Mr W Hurst and the committee were satisfied of the fitness, from an engineering point of view, of the proposed railway.

The station platform and bookstall

The bells of the Abbey Church rang out on Saturday 1st August 1857 to celebrate the passing of the bill by the House of Lords and work was eventually well underway on the line by 1859, exciting great public interest in the town. Early the following year, work on the line was proceeding rapidly towards completion and the Stamford Mercury reported on Tuesday 21st February 1860 that: "An engine for the first time reached the Bourne station. In the course of the afternoon, two of the company's directors, the Rev Joseph Dodsworth [Vicar of Bourne] and Mr Edward Hardwicke, together with Mrs and Miss Dodsworth, rode the whole distance from the station at Bourne to the ballast hole near Essendine and back upon the tender of the engine. The whole journey is said to have been performed in first-rate style, some part of it at the rate of 40 miles per hour, and without any casualty. The line is now nearly finished, except the levelling of the station yards, and it is expected that it will be ready for goods and coal traffic in the course of three weeks or a month."

The railway company also bought the Red Hall, together with the adjoining buildings and five acres of land, for £1,305 for use as the stationmaster's house and ticket office, and the line finally opened in May 1860. The date of May 10th was fixed for the opening but the line's official certificate of competence had not arrived and so it was postponed and passenger services actually began on Wednesday 16th May. Large crowds of sightseers gathered at Bourne station to witness the first departure at 9 am, a train pulling five carriages but only 35 passengers. The bells of the Abbey Church

rang out throughout the day to mark the occasion although there were no other formal celebrations and the public dinner that had been promised did not materialise.

The Midland and Great Northern Railway Company which was responsible for the project then began to expand further with the opening of the line to Spalding in 1866 and this gave a direct connection from Melton Mowbray in the west as far eastward as King's Lynn and Cromer in Norfolk. Surveyors also began mapping out the route of the line between Bourne and Sleaford in February 1870 and it was eventually opened in 1872, giving access to the northern parts of Lincolnshire and, more importantly, trains began to run between Bourne and Little Bytham junction in 1894, from where the track continued to Saxby and this east-west route became the most important of the lines which served the town, carrying a considerable amount of both passenger and freight traffic. Thus within the space of just over thirty years, Bourne had become a railway centre of some importance.

The boom was not to last and despite protests from local people, the last passenger train from Spalding ran in 1959, arriving at Bourne on February 28th, an event that did not pass without notice. The 9.20 pm train arrived from Spalding with 94 passengers on board, although the average for each journey in the previous months had been only four. The front of the engine also carried a farewell headboard bearing a cartoon of the last train and the message: "That's yer lot!" The Lincolnshire Free Press sent along a reporter to travel on the train and he wrote afterwards: "The railway line met its death bravely and defiantly, with epitaphs and slogans on its passenger train engine and amid a challenging din of deafening fog detonators, sirens and whistles.

Up and down the line throughout the day, drivers, firemen and guards made their final journey on the old, friendly, familiar route. Hundreds of passengers of all ages accompanied them, carefully preserving the last souvenir tickets. The final curtain came late at night when crowds gathered at Bourne, Spalding and at intermediate stations and crossings, as the last train, whistle blowing, slowly puffed out into the darkness like old friends gone forever. The locomotive carried a wreath and the epitaph, 'Goodbye all, for we may not pass this way again’. One woman was weeping."

Freight facilities continued for the movement of sugar beet but that too finished in 1965, virtually ending the railway age for Bourne and in the following years, the station platforms were demolished and although the remaining red brick station buildings were retained as part of the central depot and offices of Wherry and Sons Ltd., the agricultural merchants, they too were finally pulled down in 2005 and the site developed for housing. Many of the railway stations in the surrounding villages survive, some converted for use as business premises or private homes, while evidence of the great steam age is all around us.

56: Leisure and learning at the Bourne Institute

Leisure pursuits in past times, before the arrival of television and clubbing, embraced a wide range of intellectual and cultural activities that were popular during the period such as reading, debating, music and amateur dramatics. Opportunities were few and there were several attempts during the 19th century to establish a meeting place in the town where like minds could gather but eventually the

most successful venture of its kind in our social history began with the opening of the Bourne Institute at No 63 West Street. The imposing building on the corner of St Peter's Road is a perfect example of Victorian ostentation. It was once a farmhouse but its wealthy owner gave it a Gothic style façade during the 19th century and the porch contains ballflower decoration and wheat sheaf capitals while the date 1872 has been included in the arch rosette above the upper window on the side of the front and the owner's initials J G are also visible to the discerning eye in a similar position above the upper central window.

This reminds us that the original red brick house and grain store attached once belonged to Mr John Gibson, a corn merchant and brewer, who improved the property in that year, adding the imposing stone front and stained glass windows that depict the four seasons of the barley growing cycle which is also featured in the decoration over the front door. Gibson lived there with his family for 25 years but he got into financial difficulties and in 1896 the property was offered for rent on a three-year lease to the newly formed social organisation.

A public meeting on Tuesday 20th October that year outlined the aims and objectives of the Bourne Institute, the club to be non-sectarian and non-political run by a popularly elected committee to provide for healthy recreation, education and intellectual improvement and to offer a wide range of activities such as a music room and piano, musical and debating societies, billiards and other games and a modest library.

The club opened its doors the following month with Mr Robert Gardner, a local bank manager and magistrate, as president and membership was soon nearing the 200 mark. In the event, the library became the most popular amenity, quickly amassing 400 books, a remarkable collection at a time when they were prized possessions and eagerly sought after by those anxious to read and expand their knowledge of the world. Many were donated by members and friends, including the local M P, Mr William Younger, member for the Stamford division and a keen supporter of the institute, who presented the library with a complete set of recently published volumes of The Queen's Prime Ministers while Mr Gardner handed over two handsome volumes of the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen's The Farthest North.

The debating society was another popular feature of the institute's activities, robustly discussing a wide range of current topics, both local and national, such as the session on Friday 11th November 1898 when a crowded meeting heard impromptu speaking on an eclectic mix of subjects including a proposed tax on cycles, Britain's role in retaining control in Egypt, socialism and whether a time limit should be imposed on Parliamentary speeches. There was also an active theatrical section, in particular the Amateur Minstrels, who specialised in giving concerts of songs, dances, monologues and sketches, performed by actors wearing black face make-up under the direction of a chairman, a form of entertainment that was particularly popular at that time but has disappeared in recent years.

In 1897, the committee was given the opportunity to buy the building which was due to be sold off to meet Mr Gibson's creditors and a number of events were held to help raise the purchase price of £900. The biggest of these was a grand bazaar to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, held on Wednesday 9th June that year, a grand occasion under the patronage of the Countess of Ancaster. Unfortunately, the weather

was inclement and plans to hold it in a large marquee in the grounds were abandoned and the stalls were set up in the billiards room and adjoining granary, all decorated in red, white and blue bunting to mark the royal occasion. During a concert in the evening, a series of tableaux were staged to illustrate the leading events in the Queen's reign and there were also music, songs and dancing, and as the weather improved, decorated gondolas took guests on short trips along the Bourne Eau. The money raising continued until the total reached over £300 and in 1899, the committee completed the purchase with £600 borrowed at an interest rate of 3½ % but an appeal for a further £350 was then launched to pay for pressing repairs to the building.

The Bourne Institute in 1900

The success of the project became apparent at the annual general meeting on Tuesday 30th January 1900 when Mr Gardner, after being re-elected as president, reported that the institute had assets of over £1,000 and he told members: "This handsome block of buildings, splendidly adapted for the purpose, is now the property of the institute and during the year the value has been enhanced by their being put into a thorough state of repair. Every department of the institute shows activity and progress. The membership is 187 and we confidently hope that this might well be increased to 300 very soon." In 1921, Mr Gardner was presented with an antique jardinière to mark his 25 years as president, an office he held until his death in 1926 when he bequeathed a generous endowment to help the institute pay off the outstanding balance on its mortgage of the premises.

The golden jubilee was celebrated in October 1946 with a gathering at the Corn Exchange when tribute was paid to those who had put in so much work to make the project a success. In July 1953, the committee approved leasing one of its rooms to Kesteven County Council for use as a branch library for Bourne at an initial rental of £1 a week and although the original agreement was for a five-year period, it continued until the town's present library was opened in South Street in 1969. The first billiards table had been bought for the club in 1900 and a second in 1908 and this began the tradition for the game on these premises that continues today. In 1975, the Bourne Institute was renamed the Pyramid Club whose activities are devoted mainly to billiards and snooker, as the name implies, although the traditions of the original organisation are proudly maintained.

57: Early entertainment in Bourne

In those days before television, the cinema and other forms of mass entertainment, people looked towards the more simple pleasures to while away their leisure hours and so penny readings became a fashionable draw in past centuries. These were parochial entertainments consisting of readings of poetry and extracts from popular books of the day, or perhaps music, held in schools, inns and anywhere with sufficient space for a large crowd, for which one penny admission was charged. The Corn Exchange was not built until 1870 and so the town's main meeting place was the Assembly Rooms at the Angel Hotel, a popular venue, together with the Victoria Hall in Spalding Road, which was demolished in 1967, the old National School in North Street, now the headquarters of the Grantham and Stamford Conservative Association, and the schoolroom adjoining the Wesleyan or Methodist Church in Star lane, now Abbey Road.

Penny readings were the forerunners of the concerts that we know today and the performers were usually local people, often civic dignitaries and the daughters of leading citizens. These events were non-profit making and the proceeds were used for good causes in the town. Books were expensive and only a few homes had musical instruments, the piano being the most popular, and so readings and recitals were often combined and invariably drew large crowds and in many communities, this was a major factor in the building of our first public halls. Fewer people could read, play a musical instrument or sing in those days and so the performers invariably came from the middle and upper classes and figure prominently among those who appeared at these events, perhaps because they had the leisure time at their disposal to practice their readings and musical items. Members of the clergy were also in great demand and few performances were without the parson or a curate.

They became so popular in Bourne that in September 1864, a committee was appointed to organise them on a regular basis and Henry Bott (1810-88), landlord of the Angel and himself a keen supporter of penny readings, provided the accommodation and gas lighting free of charge, he then being on the committee of the Bourne Gas Light and Coke Company which supplied the power. The first of the winter sessions were held on Friday 21st October and they continued fortnightly until well into the New Year. Attendances were invariably crowded and a glance at the programme for the Christmas meeting on Friday 16th December that year tells us that it included poetry, monologues and readings with the intervals filled by choral and instrumental music. A magic lantern show was given the following month and for the last of the series, on Tuesday 7th March 1865, William Parker, who presided, presented a paper on penny readings which had been specially prepared for the occasion, describing their purpose. He expressed the hope that readings in the future would prove both useful to the readers and the listeners. He went on: "The variety of the readings, interspersed with music, cannot fail to be interesting and as to their utility, I contend that much good will result from them and even if they do no more than provide an evening's recreation for a large number of people, they will do some good, the recreation being innocent and cheap. Those who are induced from what they hear at these readings to go home and read and think for themselves can scarcely fail to become wiser and better in consequence."

The popularity of the circus was unquestionable and any small town was in a state of excitement for weeks before its impending appearance, such as here in Bourne in

1858 when Ginnett's equestrian troop paid a visit. On the day of arrival, Wednesday 28th April, the artistes and their animals paraded through the streets at midday to advertise the show, two performances each day, one in the afternoon and the other in the evening. Then as an added incentive to attract customers, they gave a sample of what they could expect on the river in South Street.

Here is how the Stamford Mercury reported the event the following Friday: “At 1 o'clock, a vast number of persons assembled on the banks of the Bourne Eau navigation to witness an exemplification of A Tale of a Tub, or in other words, to see a clown upon the water in a washtub, to which four geese were attached; but to say that the geese draw the tub, the clown, and the two half-hundredweights which are placed in the tub, is the very reverse of the truth. There is a pole attached to the tub about the centre of the front end, to which the geese are literally bound fast and made secure. At the sides of the tub are fixed paddles, by which the occupant propels it along and forces the geese forward "whether they are willing or not".

The river in South Street in the 19th century

The publicity was effective because the performers played to packed houses for the next four days and everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time. This equestrian troop was an early form of the travelling circus owned by French-born Jean Pierre Ginnett who founded the Ginnett circus dynasty. He died in 1861 and is buried in Kensal Green cemetery in London although the circus was later carried on by his son and three grandsons and is still in business today. But the magic of the sawdust ring is now a thing of the past and it is doubtful if a similar troupe would attract a paying audience in Bourne today while the spectacle of geese being harnessed to a makeshift boat on the river would certainly attract the attention of animal rights activists, Health and Safety officials, the RSPCA and most probably the police.

Feats of strength and endurance always attracted curious onlookers and were usually carried out for a wager of a few shillings but as money was scarce and wages exceptionally low, some men would do anything that offered the prospect of a few pennies. The newspapers usually carried stories about these diversions and in June 1809, it was reported that a young lad named Russell undertook to run a mile in five minutes at Market Deeping “for a trifling wager which he lost but went the distance in

five and a half minutes." In July 1812, John Banks, a brickmaker from Bourne, undertook to make 1,000 bricks in three hours "which arduous task he performed in one hour and 55 minutes" to win a bet of half a guinea.

But not all of these feats were hailed as worthy pursuits and in March 1854, the newspaper reported on a long distance walker who was attracting attention on the road. "A young man named Elsom on Monday last commenced walking three journeys a day between Bourne and Sleaford, making a distance of 54 miles daily, which it is his intention to continue for six successive days", said the report. "The energy and resolution necessary to perform this task of pedestrianism would certainly be much better directed were they applied in an equal degree to some productive and useful employment." Another marathon walker appeared in the area in August 1873 when William Richards, of Oxford, walked 50 miles in 12 hours, starting from the Market Place in Bourne between seven and eight o'clock in the morning, walking 6¼ miles on the Deeping road and back, repeating the journey four times. Ten miles out of the 50 were walked backwards and the whole distance was completed about a quarter before eight in the evening. Richards was reported to be about 30 years of age and his weight was about nine stones.

One of the most unusual feats was carried out in December 1899 by Joseph Edward Dallywater, a well known local character, who entered the lion's cage of a Spanish travelling menagerie that was visiting Bourne and, facing the lion, remained inside while he smoked a cigarette, after which he emerged unscathed amid the cheers of a crowded audience. He had lived to tell the tale and later became the Bourne town crier as well as carrying out several other businesses including chimney sweep, bill poster and, at the time of his premature death in 1901 at the age of 36, landlord of the Red Lion Inn.

In the early years of the 20th century, a professional entertainer called Birt Morris enjoyed great popularity in the Bourne area playing to local audiences and soon became a firm favourite in the town and surrounding villages and even on occasions at more distant venues. A trade card of the period announced: "Mr. Birt Morris of West Street, Bourne, is a well known humorous character entertainer, his services being requisitioned at concerts, bazaars, garden fetes, parties, etc. His vocal accomplishments are much appreciated by audiences, and he is prepared to visit Grantham and all parts of the country. Every style of artiste or complete concert parties are supplied, and terms may be had on application."

Birt Morris

He was born Thomas Albert Morris, son of John T Morris, the printer, stationer and bookseller, with premises at No 13 West Street where his son worked, serving in the shop and later as a photographer, selling his own postcards, many humorous, including self-portraits of his various impressions such as "The Misery Man", a particular favourite with the public. His reputation was that of "a rum comedian" and he was in great demand at concerts and parties, particularly all male functions such as Masonic dinners. Birt Morris was a variety turn in the old music hall tradition, often performing to great acclaim at the Corn Exchange where he always commanded top billing. The baker and confectioner, William Earle Pick, had the shop next door to

John Morris in West Street and his daughter, Miss Violet Pick, remembered him in later years. "When I was a girl, Birt Morris called in every morning and purchased two bars of Fry's plain chocolate", she said. "He was a naturally funny man even when not performing on the stage. He was also very popular in the town." Birt Morris was married and the couple had a son but they left Bourne sometime after 1922 when the last reference to him can be found in local archives and his subsequent whereabouts are not known.

58: The cruelty of fox hunting

Fox hunting has become a controversial and emotive subject in recent years, resulting in the Hunting Act of 2005 that banned the pursuit of wild animals with dogs. Yet the traditional meets continue, particularly on Boxing Day, and although the hounds are no longer allowed to chase and kill foxes, many hunts use techniques such as drag hunting with dogs setting off on the trail of a scent laid about 20 minutes in advance by a runner or rider dragging a lure.

Although it has been a less popular venue, Bourne was often the centre of fox-hunting activity in South Lincolnshire in past times, the Cottesmore Hunt, established 1666 by Viscount Lowther, being one of the most active, together with the pack owned by Sir John Trollope [who became the first Lord Kesteven when he was raised to the peerage in 1869] and there were still regular meets in recent years but apart from occasional forays by hunt saboteurs, the sport attracted little adverse comment in this area.

It was a different story in years past when hunts in the neighbourhood pursued their activities with scant regard for person and property because this was the sport of the landed gentry who were also usually magistrates and few dared question their activities. There were also scenes of real cruelty to animals but they must be judged by the customs of the time.

One such incident involved Sir John Trollope’s hounds that met at Manthorpe on Saturday 22nd January 1859 and soon picked up a fox, chasing it into Bourne along South Road. A local newspaper reported the rest of the incident: “At a little before one o'clock reynard made his entrance into Bourne by the south side of the town, passing through Mr Thomas Osborn's yard, through the paddock owned by Mr George Nicholls, over the river and into the Rev Joseph Dodsworth's bottom garden [the vicarage], thence he crossed the Abbey Lawn and into Mr Dodsworth's top garden which is surrounded by a wall more than six feet high. Here the poor fox had, as it were, jumped into a large cage from which there seemed no escape, and he quickly concealed himself behind some flower pots in a little outhouse communicating with the garden. This however, brought him only a short respite, as the hounds and huntsmen were upon him and he was speedily doomed to death. He was then brought on to the lawn and after the brush and head had been cut off, the master of the hounds stepped forward and threw the body of the fox into the air to fall amongst the dogs, which in a very few moments, tore it to pieces and consumed it. Besides the huntsmen, there were present on the lawn a large concourse of persons who appeared highly excited by the sport.”

Ten years later, Sir John Trollope's hounds were again at the centre of an incident. The hunt met at Manthorpe, near Bourne, on Saturday 12th March 1868 and after running a vixen to ground in Dole Wood, they proceeded to Thurlby Wood where

they started another fox. A local newspaper takes up the story: “After about three hours' chase to and from Thurlby and Northorpe, and again into the wood, reynard, shortly before 4 o'clock, approached Bourne town by the west side of the railway station and thence across the river forming the back way of Mr Robert Munton's mill [now Baldock's Mill], over the trenches, along the paddocks belonging to Mr John Gibson and Mr Thomas Presgrave, and after making an unsuccessful effort to mount the wall into the back premises of Messrs [Robert] Mills and Company's soda water manufactory [in West Street], he finally took refuge in Mr Thomas Heaton's hen roost, the occupants of which made a precipitate retreat but in doing so, protested loudly against reynard's unceremonious visit and doubtless he must have felt ill at ease at their noisy cackling when he meant no harm for it at once discovered his hiding place. A couple of dogs were put in to keep him company and the result of their short acquaintance we need not relate. He was then taken into the Market Place and his brush, head and feet cut off and his carcass thrown into the air to fall amongst the dogs which in a few moments tore it to pieces and devoured it.”

The Cottesmore Hunt meeting in the market place in 1914

Because hunting invariably involved the gentry, there was great public amusement whenever they suffered indignities such as that which occurred on Saturday 25th January 1850, when riders with the Cottesmore came to grief while in full pursuit on the outskirts of Bourne. The hounds met at Castle Bytham and having raised a fox on the Grimsthorpe estate, chased it across the countryside around Edenham where it crossed the river, badly swollen by thawing snow, but when they attempted to follow, several riders were swept off their horses and left floundering in the water, their hats floating ignominiously downstream as they struggled to reach the safety of the bank, a tale that was recounted in some detail and with much hilarity in the hostelries around Bourne for several weeks. The appearance of the Cottesmore hounds in full cry on the outskirts of Bourne on Friday 26th January 1872 also caused a good deal of pleasure among local folk. Riders were unseated while trying to cross low lying land that had been flooded by recent rain and one found himself up to the neck in a dyke with a struggling horse which was rescued with difficulty. The fox they were chasing made its way across a row of cottage gardens and the owners rushed to the upstairs windows to watch the cause of the hubbub, finding their little plots invaded by swift

running hounds and eager huntsmen. The fox, however, which had given the field a gallop of an hour and a half, eventually escaped unharmed.

But there were also tragedies in the hunting field and in 1861 a local doctor met his death while riding to hounds. Mr Henry Bromley, of Rippingale, near Bourne, who was also surgeon to the Bourne Rifle Corps, joined the Duke of Rutland's hounds when they met at Lenton village on Friday 20th December but shortly afterwards, near Kirkby Underwood, his horse slipped at a dangerous fence and he was pitched over the top, the horse following, trampling on his body and inflicting fearful injuries internally and externally. He was taken home by carriage and medical aid summoned from Bourne and Stamford but after enduring great agony for many hours, he died the following Monday.

Hunting has had a declining reputation in recent years and hunts have recognised their unpopularity by keeping contentious issues to a minimum. There was however one incident in 1998 which raised public anger when the Cottesmore chased a fox through Bourne Wood, much to the distress of walkers who had to jump aside as horses galloped along footpaths in pursuit, and finally ended up at the Beech Avenue entrance where the fox took refuge in a culvert and the hounds ran amok in a private garden. The hunt subsequently tendered a public apology and there were no further incidents. In view of the barbarity apparent at those earlier incidents described, accounts of which survive in some detail, it is difficult to understand how fox hunting continued for so long yet the sight of horses and hounds at the traditional meets with a picturesque village as a back drop, such as Folkingham where the Belvoir Hunt met in centuries past, will remain an evocation of old England for many years to come.

59: Water, water everywhere and all of it fit to drink

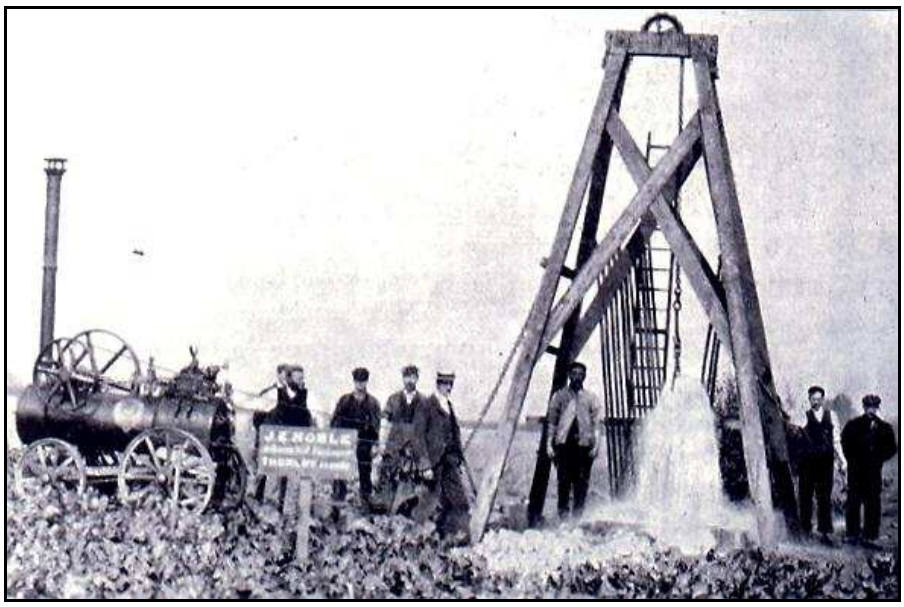
Pure water was an essential ingredient of the economy of Bourne in past times and the operation involved in bringing it to the surface is one of engineering ingenuity and the drilling of frequent boreholes at various points around the locality.

The product from the town's underground springs had been famous for centuries and was even being exported 300 years ago, a list of goods from August 1724 showing that 129 bottles of Bourne water had been sent to Holland. But it was enterprising businessmen during Victorian times who realised that Bourne's water was an asset to be exploited and were soon marketing the abundant natural supplies on a very large scale. In 1845, Mr. Robert Mason Mills purchased a chemist and druggist's shop in West Street and in 1864 began the bottling of aerated mineral water in a factory behind the premises under the name of R M Mills & Company.

Water for the bottling and aeration process was drawn from a borehole that had been sunk in North Road by the newly-formed Bourne Waterworks Company in 1856 by natural artesian pressure and the company, Bourne Waters, was given a seal of approval when it was granted a Royal Warrant by Queen Victoria's son, HRH the Duke of Connaught. The industry spawned several other firms, notably Lea and Green Limited, but all needed boreholes to extract their supplies and they were drilled at various places around the town to meet both commercial and public demand, on the site of the new market place in front of the Corn Exchange and in Manning Road on land now occupied by Browning Court. The Pinfold bore was sunk by the water company behind the Marquis of Granby public house in Abbey Road but its water had

a high contamination of iron and rotting vegetation, causing problems for householders and breweries who used it.

Boreholes were also sunk in those areas where users were having difficulties with water supplies and some of these were financed by private individuals. In August 1887, following complaints about the inadequacy of the supply, a boring was made in the yard at the rear of the Bull Hotel (now the Burghley Arms), reaching a depth of 93ft 2in and subsequently producing water at the rate of 170 gallons a minute. The operation was carried out by Messrs Thomas Nowell of Bourne at a cost of £30. In September that year, a borehole was also drilled on Mr Henry Goodyear's property in the Austerby where it reached a depth of 104ft., despite some technical difficulties with the equipment caused when it reached a layer of solid rock.



J E Noble at work on a water borehole

The borehole sunk by the waterworks company in West Street, near Manor Lane, in March 1888 was among the most important in the history of the town because, as a local newspaper reported on Friday 2nd March: "The inhabitants of Bourne have now the benefit of a plentiful supply of good water, the bore producing 280,000 gallons of water of excellent quality daily. 150 yards of new piping for the purpose of connecting with the main drain have been laid down and the water is now in full supply."

Two important boreholes were sunk in Bourne during 1891. The first, in March, was completed by Messrs Eldred to supply the new brick works that had been opened near Stamford Hill for construction work by the Midland Railway Company and the contractors found a plentiful supply at 81 ft. 9 in., the average depth of borings in Bourne at that time being 95 ft. In the same year, Nowell were instructed by the railway company to sink a borehole to supply the new railway station, a short distance from the Red Hall. The work was completed in April with a bore of 2½ in. in diameter and a depth of 85 feet. A report on the project said: "The quality of the water is excellent and although the bore is small, the quantity is amply sufficient to supply the whole of Bourne." But the deepest and most productive of all of Bourne's boreholes was in the Austerby that was drilled during the spring of 1893 and for an artesian well of its size, was acclaimed by the experts as being one of the most powerful springs in

Britain. The drilling was carried out on the property of Mr John T Swift by a well-known artesian well borer called Mr Gribble. Five separate springs were reached by the drilling, each yielding a copious supply of water, although the main spring had not been tapped before in Bourne. Despite difficulties during the drilling operations the borehole was successfully sunk with a 2½ inch pipe that was sealed once supplies had been achieved and engineers reported that the new spring was of exceptional power and quality.

Drilling operations continued well into the next century and by 1969, there were an estimated 130 artesian bores within the urban district of Bourne, supplying farms, factories and housing developments. However, all water in the Bourne area is now drawn out through boreholes administered by Anglian Water which supplies a much larger catchment area, often to the disadvantage of the town because both St Peter's Pool and the Bourne Eau have been known to dry up during spells of drought in recent years. Boring for new wells needed an expert and there were several of them in the Bourne area. John Elwes Noble of Thurlby was one of the better known and he carried out drillings for many local authorities and industrial firms. His son also worked in the business which was later known as John Elwes Noble & Son, and they sent details of the strata and location of every bore they drilled to the Geological Society in London which assisted them in their compilation of the geological survey of England and Wales which survives to this day.

60: The origins of Bourne’s charitable wealth

The money administered today by Bourne United Charities is almost entirely due to the boom in London property prices during the past 100 years. Most of it comes from the terms of the will made by Robert Harrington in 1654. He originated in Bourne and went to London as a boy to seek his fortune and left if for the benefit of the town when he died. The income from his properties at Leytonstone that now forms a substantial part of the portfolio was not fully realised for many years because the will was disputed by members of the testator’s family with the result that the revenue was wholly spent in litigation. In fact, it was not until 1827 that the residents of Bourne derived any benefit at all from the bequest that had been made 160 years before.

The net income was then £420 and in 1826, the vestry meeting, forerunner of our present local authority system, drew up a scheme which was sanctioned by the Court of Chancery allocating it in tenths as follows:
1. Three tenths of £126 to be distributed among decayed tradesmen and mechanics belonging to the parish of Bourne;
2. Two tenths of £84 to the aged poor of the parish who were not tradesmen;
3. One and a half tenths of £63 to the poor, in money, to enable them pay rents;
4. One tenth of £42 for clothing for the deserving poor;
5. One and a half tenths of £63 for coal for persons belonging to Bourne;
6. One tenth of £42 to educate poor children.

This scheme was administered by the overseers of the poor, the vicar and the churchwardens as trustees mentioned by the testator and who at that time were the recognised parish officers and not infrequently the parish authority. It was not until the passing of the Local Government Act of 1894 that local councils came into being and churchwardens as such ceased to be the trustees of the charity, being superseded

by four persons elected by the then parish council and subsequently, according to a new scheme, by Bourne Urban District Council when it was constituted five years later in 1899.

In little more than a century, the £420 had increased to nearly £4,000 per annum from property which, when it was left by Harrington, was not valued at more than £50 per annum, and it was the expansion of London which played such a prominent part in this massive revaluation. Large houses with a small paddock at the rear were interspersed with smaller commercial premises but Leytonstone was not the trade and business centre it is today. The main railway line was the London and North Eastern Railway (the old Great Eastern) with easy access to either Liverpool Street or Fenchurch Street stations. The estate, however, profited when the London, Midland and Scottish Railway (then the Midland) cut across a corner of the holdings which happened to be copyhold, a tenure of land less than freehold. Just before the line was built, the lord of the manor compelled the enfranchisement of the estate and what might have been a valuable addition to the income of the charity was swallowed up by the sum payable to the lord of the manor. But with the advent of the railway and Leytonstone becoming a residential suburb of London, the development of the estate commenced and the increase in income followed.

The West Street almshouses soon after construction in 1931

The appointment of Alderman William Wherry (1841-1915), an astute businessman, as one of the overseers of the poor, and as such a trustee, was a major influence in the development of the estate. It was mainly through his encouragement that the income of the charities was increased by the rents being made proportionate to the growing value of the properties. When he retired, Councillor Thomas Baxter (1854-1920), who had served as a trustee with him, paid a glowing tribute to his work in the development of the Leytonstone properties and it was acknowledged that without his foresight, the remarkable rise in its monetary value would not have been realised.

Two other people have made major contributions to the success of BUC. Horace Stanton (1897-1977), who was clerk to the trustees for almost 40 years, steering through the purchase and development of the War Memorial, the open air swimming pool, the Wellhead Gardens and the Abbey Lawn, while Councillor Jack Burchnell

(1909-73) was instrumental in saving the Red Hall from demolition and acquiring it for the community.

Charities now administered by BUC include Robert Harrington, John Brown, William Fisher for Almshouses and Bread, Jeremiah Ives, Nicholas Rand, William Trollope, Poor Land (North Fen & South Fen) and several small charities including Constable's Land at Bourne, Dyke and Cawthorpe, Emma Searson Nursing Fund Charity, Thomas Whyment Atkinston Charity, Lucy Ellen Story Trust, Bourne Christian Fund and Friendly Society and the Thomas Mee Trust. The trustees are currently the vicar, who is ex-officio, five nominated by the town council for a four-year term, three permanent trustees and the remaining six co-opted for a period of five years, the objective being that the board consists of members embracing all aspects of life in the town.

BUC now has assets worth more than £12 million (2007 figure). The gross annual income continues to increase as the years go by and is today in excess of £660,000, the bulk of it from the Harrington estate which currently consists of seven residential and 21 commercial properties valued at £5.8 million. One was sold in 1931 to make way for a street widening scheme and so provided £6,000 for the construction of the almshouses in West Road. An impressive investment portfolio of stocks and shares has also been built up to safeguard future activities.

Coal and clothing is no longer distributed to the poor and needy but 200 deserving old people in Bourne have benefited with a weekly payment of £9 each, recently increased to £10, a handout known affectionately as The Essex, after the county in which Leytonstone was originally situated. This figure is currently being reduced to 175 and will in future account for £91,000 of the annual income but other regular grants are also made to local organisations and for educational purposes. Charity, it seems, still begins at home.

61: All the fun of the October Fair

The funfair arrives in Bourne at the end of October every year and it is easy to imagine the delight in the hearts of hundreds of children awaiting with eager anticipation their visit to this wonderland of sights and sounds.

English fairs have a long and honoured tradition and have always been associated with merrymaking. In fact the name fair is derived from the Latin *feria* meaning a holiday but their object was a serious one and far removed from the swings and roundabouts we see today. Fairs meant commerce and as many were established by the grant of a Royal Charter, the right to hold them became highly prized. There is no evidence of such distinguished approval for a fair at Bourne but a Royal Charter was granted to Baldwin Wake, then Lord of the Manor, by King Edward I in 1279 enabling him hold a weekly market every Saturday and extract tolls from those who came to sell their wares. These rights passed to the Cecil family in 1564 and in recent times were acquired from the Marquess of Exeter by South Kesteven District Council who continue to hold markets on Thursdays and Saturdays.

Many fairs however were established in towns during the period between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the Black Death in the 14th century but most of them were cattle fairs although sheep were sometimes involved and other trading was also

carried out. There was one annual fair at Bourne in the Middle Ages but by 1816 the number had risen to three, held on the Thursday nearest to March 7th, May 6th and October 29th and by the end of the century there were four, held similarly on April 7th, May 6th, September 30th and October 29th. People came from long distances to attend, bringing a bustle of activity to a small community that was absent at normal times, and the shops clustered around the market place welcomed the additional business. Performers arrived to entertain visitors and to add to the revelries while the inns and alehouses were filled to overflowing.

The 18th century brought about changes in the nature of fairs and as the distribution of goods from manufacturers to the shops became more efficient, there was less trading as the years progressed and more emphasis on amusements such as peepshows, rope walkers, freak shows and the first of the rides we know today, swing boats, merry-go-rounds and the big wheel, which in the absence of electricity, depended on the treadmill and crank for power. They eventually became purely pleasure fairs and it was the travelling showmen who kept them alive, pursuing a nomadic way of life on the fringes of society but the place they once occupied in our folk heritage has been eroded by the advent of the cinema, increased mobility, holidays abroad, a wide variety of recreations and now television and so their arrival in town is no longer the grand event it once was. Consequently, our attitude towards the travelling fair varies from indifference to thinly veiled hostility.

Itinerant showmen have been coming to Bourne for centuries and the present fair operators, Roger Tuby and Sons, have been involved with travelling fairs since 1853. Their October engagement is part of a hectic schedule that lasts from February to the last week in December and covers a 100-mile radius from their home base at Doncaster in Yorkshire. Roger Tuby's great grandfather was Alderman George Thomas Tuby who became one of the most prominent fairground proprietors in the country. He served for more than thirty years on Doncaster Borough Council and was mayor from 1921-22. Fairs carrying the Tuby banner now appear in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire and have made regular appearances in Bourne for over 30 years.

Today, the October fair is the only one left in Bourne but has been criticised as being noisy and disruptive to the everyday life of the town. Almost 100 parking places are lost for five days, access to West Street, North Street and Crown Walk is impeded by trucks and caravans resulting in a manic hunt for somewhere to leave the car. The showmen too have their own problems with rising running costs, expensive new rides to keep pace with changing fashion and health and safety rules and regulations that must constantly be addressed.

The travelling fair has for centuries held an affectionate place in our history, a romance of the road, of moving from town to town and spreading pleasure and enjoyment in its wake, but such imagery of a living, breathing example of the mediaeval past is no longer valid. The visual textures of our travelling fairs, mostly remembered from childhood, fade as the years pass but there will always be those who lament their changing face and wallow in the nostalgia of these attractions as they were but if the appeal of the candy floss and cake walk are as magical as they insist, then they will be just as appealing from a meadow on the outskirts as they are on a cramped and awkward site on a valuable and much needed car park in the middle of a busy market town. Perhaps the time has come for our annual fair to be moved. Oh

for the eyes of a child again for we would never see the problems that this transitory but bewitching world creates.

62: One of England’s oldest outdoor pools

The outdoor swimming pool on the edge of the Abbey Lawn which opens each year during the summer months has been the place for a dip on a hot day for almost a century and is now one of the oldest lidos in the country. The present amenity is the result of hard work by a dedicated band of volunteers over the years but has little in common with its early use as a carp pond to provide food for the monks of Bourne Abbey.

The origins of the pool date back to the late 19th century when bathing was becoming popular throughout Britain and a public meeting was held in June 1891 to discuss the possibility of opening one in Bourne. Various sites were put forward, notably St Peter’s Pool, but the idea was rejected because it would ruin such a picturesque spot which was also home to kingfishers and other rare birds. A second suggestion was an expanse of water 200 yards west of Shilcock's Mill, now Baldock's Mill, but there were objections because it might interfere with the rights of mill owners, the town having three working watermills dependent on the Bourne Eau at that time.

A third suggestion was a pond known as Burdwood's Pit, a stretch of water owned by Dr James Watson Burdwood, the Medical Officer of Health, although in reality little more than an extension of the Car Dyke and located at the base of the embankment of the Bourne to Sleaford railway line and although it was 16 feet deep in places, many thought it could be made suitable for public bathing. The meeting could not agree on any of them and so the idea was shelved for almost three years until it was revived by Cecil Bell, a local solicitor, who chose a piece of land to the south of St Peter's Pool as the site, now part of the Wellhead Gardens. He engaged an architect who specialised in the design of swimming baths and plans were drawn up for a pool 90 feet by 40 feet, the depth varying from 3 feet 6 inches to 6 feet and the floor laid from 400 cubic yards of super cement.

The monks’ fish pond

Provision would also be made for eight dressing boxes or changing rooms and an open central shed, all covered in, and the complex surrounded by high fencing to ensure the strictest privacy. The project was costed at £300 and another public meeting was called in April 1894 to discuss raising the money but when opinion in the town was canvassed over the issue of ten shilling shares to form a liability company, there was insufficient interest and by the end of the year the idea had petered out and it was to be another 20 years before it eventually came to fruition.

During the years following the Great War of 1914-18, there was an upsurge in the provision of leisure amenities and a swimming pool for the town was high on the

agenda with the carp pond next to the vicarage gardens being the most suitable place, having become a popular haunt for the local lads taking a dip during the summer months. In 1922, a local committee was formed to clean it out and make it suitable for bathing including the erection of dressing rooms at either end and an approach to the baths from Coggles Causeway. The official opening by Lady Kesteven was held on Saturday 12th August who stressed the need for boys and girls to learn to swim and she made particular mention of an heroic act by a ten-year-old lad who had saved two people from drowning after they had got into difficulties out of their depth. The pool was primitive by today's standards, unheated and with corrugated iron sides, and swimmers could often feel the eels wriggling between their toes as they walked on the muddy bottom.

The site was taken over by Bourne United Charities with the acquisition of the Abbey Lawn in 1931 and the following year major improvements were carried out to create a pool 154 feet long and 50 feet wide, lined with reinforced concrete and a paved path running round the edge. The depth of the water at the shallow end was 2 feet 9 inches and 7 feet 3 inches at the deep end with new four-tier diving boards 14 feet high and two additional spring boards. A lawn around the sides of the bath was laid and there were several flower beds and rockeries. The water was supplied by the Bourne Eau and filtered through a coke bed and the bath was both filled and emptied by the gravity of the water, thus obviating the necessity of a pump.

The outdoor swimming pool in 1946

From these early beginnings, the present outdoor pool has grown in size with the regular addition of new facilities and rarely a year goes by without important improvements being made. The result is that the pool is now just under the official Olympic length of 50 metres and is heated to a pleasant 27-30 degrees C during its opening period from mid-May to early September. There are indoor and outdoor changing rooms with lockers and toilets, extended lawns with seating and picnic tables, attractive gardens with hanging baskets, a refreshment area, sweet and snack shop and barbecues for hire.

All of this is available in a most pleasant part of the town, surrounded by the Abbey Lawn and mature trees, an old garden wall and a magnificent view of Bourne Abbey.

Qualified lifeguards are on duty at all times while first aid and life saving equipment are kept continuously at the poolside. In 1990, after it had become part of South Kesteven District Council's leisure activities programme, the pool survived the threat of closure when Mrs Lesley Patrick, later to become Mayor of Bourne, led a vigorous public protest to keep it open and from this campaign, the present Outdoor Pool Preservation Trust was formed to secure its future. It was therefore a satisfying moment for everyone involved when in 2006, the pool became recognised as one of the finest lidos in the country by being named by the Observer newspaper as being among the best places in Britain to swim outdoors.

63: The town almost twinned with Bourne, USA

Twinning has burgeoned since the ending of the Second World War in 1945 and has been the catalyst for the peoples of many nations to befriend others around the world and to become familiar with their way of life, their customs and their heritage. The object of this international understanding has been to enable two towns in different countries, usually similar in some way, such as size or industrial make-up, to become formally associated by engaging in reciprocal cultural visits to ensure that their ties become closer as the years progress.

Councillor Mary Parker signing the twinning charter

Bourne came late to this arrangement and it was only in 1989 that links were established with Doudeville in Normandy, France, more of a large village than a town, and situated about thirty miles inland from Dieppe. In October that year, a civic party travelled there by coach and a twinning charter was signed by the Mayor of Bourne, Councillor Mrs Mary Parker, and the Mayor of Doudeville, M Raymond Laroche. Since then, the bond has been strengthened with frequent exchange visits and the town sign proudly announces that Bourne is twinned with Doudeville.

But there was a previous attempt at twinning in 1949 that flourished for a short time and was then forgotten. The initiative was known as a goodwill campaign and was the idea of Councillor Thomas William Revill, chairman of Bourne Urban District Council from 1949-50, who was interested in developing friendships between nations, particularly with the United States that had been a major ally during the Second World War that had ended four years before. He therefore chose Bourne in

Massachusetts for his transatlantic town friendship after an opening move had been made by Harry I Avery, chairman of the Board of Selectmen at Bourne, who invited the people of Bourne, Lincolnshire, to correspond with citizens on the other side of the Atlantic. BUDC was celebrating its golden jubilee that year, having been formed in 1899, and he had written to Mr Avery promising to do all he could to further mutual contacts between the two towns and their citizens. “Our Bourne is only a small place”, he wrote, “but its roots lie deep in the history of the English speaking peoples.”

Massachusetts is one of the original 13 states first settled by the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620 and becoming part of the union in 1788. It is located in the north-eastern part of the country and is variously nicknamed the Bay or Old Colony State, covering an area of 8,299 square miles with a population of more than six million people. The capital is Boston and it is rich with a diversity of industries including electronics and optical equipment, precision instruments, dairy products, fruit and fish. The state also has a chequered Civil War battlefield history with many national parks and museums while the town of Salem was the site of the infamous witch trials of the 1690s.

The message from Councillor Revill was soon flashed around the district by the local newspaper, the Massachusetts Standard-Times, the editor devoting the entire front page to the story with his photograph together with pictures of the Abbey Church and the Red Hall and a short history of the town. The importance of the proposed goodwill link to the Americans can be gauged by the fact that the newspaper that day ran to 36 pages at a time when newsprint was still in short supply as a result of wartime economies and most British newspapers rarely exceeded eight pages.

Also included was a picture of 11-year-old Margaret Burton, of 2 Victoria Place, Bourne, one of those local people who had written to Mr Avery seeking a pen friend and saying that she wanted to go to America to see how they played baseball.

Thomas Revill

“Councillor Revill is to be congratulated on his initiative”, enthused a local newspaper on Friday 9th December 1949. “The reception accorded his message in America augers well for closer contact between the two places.”

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm was not to last. By the following year, the initiative had begun to peter out and although many townspeople continued to correspond with their new found American friends, full twinning never materialised and Councillor Revill died in 1959, aged 61, without his wish being fulfilled and it was to be another 40 years before Bourne turned to France for this to come to fruition.

This link between the two towns flourishes still with regular exchange visits by the Bourne Twinning Association which has around 80 members, among them stalwart Betty James. “These visits are always great fun”, she said. “Many of us fancy ourselves at speaking the language but even if you don’t, it really does not matter because everyone thoroughly enjoys themselves and the camaraderie between the two countries is very strong indeed.”