

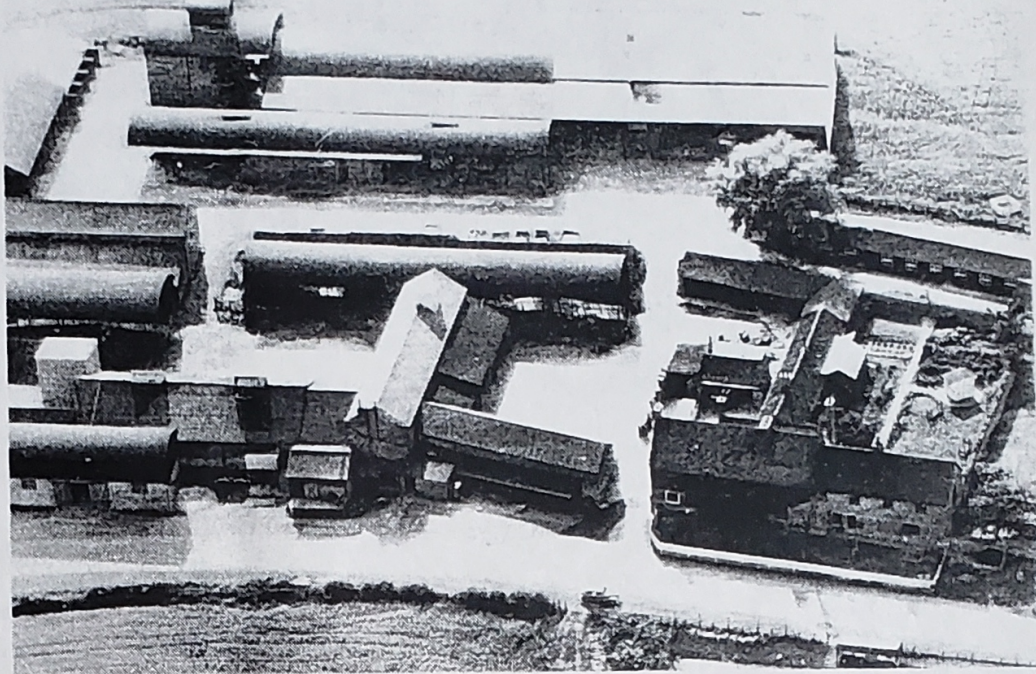
Queen of the Farmstead

Quinton is a small village lying between Wootton and Hanslope protected by Salcey Forest. To write on Quinton is to write about the land and about the people who in the past and to this present day, have respect and love for the things they grow. In Anglo Saxon times "Ton" meant "Farmstead;" the "Quin," it has been suggested, may mean "Queen," if this is so the "Queen of the Farmstead" seems to me a very appropriate name for our village.

There is evidence of human habitation here back to neolithic times and over 100 flints including arrow heads, scrapers and blades were discovered during the excavation of a site in the vicinity of Quinton. During the dig a pre-stone building was revealed which has been broadly dated from early in the first century.

Mr. Friendship Taylor, who has written a book called "The Excavation of the Belgic and Romana British Settlement at Quinton, Northants, 1971-1972" is an authority on archaeology. He has unearthed many interesting features on the site. At one end of the acre field where the dig is taking place is the Medieval site, and at the other end of the field is the Romana site where several buildings have been discovered, including a circular house which has a bowl shaped oven, with many kilns in the vicinity. It is an interesting theory that lead poisoning, due to the common practice of having pottery glazed with lead, plus the sophistication of their plumbing may have accounted for the mental disorders that were apparent with some of the upper class Romans. The pottery found on the Romana site indicates that the family who were farming the acre field at the time were not necessarily poor but what one would term today "A smallholder." A well was also found and cleared of the animal skeletons and other debris, then restored, the stone walls being restacked and it is now fully operational, holding cold clear water and fed from a spring; there are many such springs in the vicinity of the village. Many oyster shells were discovered and it has been deduced that they were brought by ships from Europe and then by barge from the east coast via the river to the various Roman camps in the area.

From the time of the first known records dated 1086 of lands then owned by the Countess Judith who also held the manor at Yardley Hastings, the history brings forward a number of family names that are known — the Dyve family who held the manor for 200 years; the De-Quenton family who built the original manor house in approximately 1250; the Montague family, the Earl of Halifax having acquired the land from John Langham of London (who was a merchant) in 1721, it remained with the Montagues until about 1787 and by the early years of the 19th century it came into the possession of the Gunning family, initially the Reverend Sir



Aerial view of Quinton Green Farm, owned by the Turney family.



No fewer than 330 cows are housed in this new 180' by 140' clear span building. Mr. Paul Turney watches the slurry scraper at work.

Robert Henry Gunning and eventually it was inherited by Sir Charles Vere Gunning who was the last known titled lord of the manor.

On the east side of the village is the delightful Salcey Forest which covers approximately 1300 acres and has many ancient monumental oak trees (between 600-1000 years old) which are a source of delight to the villagers and the many visitors who walk through this charming haven. Quinton has shared with five other forest villages, namely Ashton, Hartwell, Hackleton, Piddington and the larger village of Hanslope in Buckinghamshire. "The Rights of Common" which, historically, allowed the local farmers of these villages to have free grazing for their cattle on the open areas of grass, and also allowed the villagers to go into the forest and collect the firewood, this concession being called "stickling rights."

The village church, St. John the Baptist, is of stone construction, the main fabric being in the early English style but with a number of later alterations and additions. There is a chancel, nave, north and south aisle, south porch and a battlemented western tower, which over the years has suffered considerable structural movement. It has been strengthened by iron girdles etc. but the two bells had to be lowered and stored inside the church, the bell frame and the other tower timbers being in a derelict condition. Although it had been established that the original building dated from the 12th century, the rector, the Reverend Donald Scoley who is an authority on historic churches, believes that parts of it go back even earlier to the 11th century.

Adjacent to the church is the Rectory which was built in the mid-18th century and although most of the original building was destroyed by fire, parts of it still remain including the beautiful oak staircase and suspended oak gallery; the present owner assured me that the gallery is visited from time to time by a pipe-smoking ghost, his visits being identified by the aroma which his tobacco leaves behind. I did make the observation that this would have to be experienced to be believed, and was the brand of tobacco known?

One of the oldest inhabitants who originated from Quinton is Mr. Sydney Mills who, with his



The Old Bakehouse (right) has been converted to residential use and is owned by Mr. and Mrs. James Batchelor.

wife Florence, lives in Preston Deanery Road. Mr. Mills has worked on the land for a good part of his life, starting at the age of 13 when he was given a working certificate in order that he might leave school. He tells his story with pride, cheerfulness and dignity, his eyes sparkle with enthusiasm when he speaks of how it used to be; there is no rancour when he recounts the subservience, the poverty and the simplicity of his life.

One of 11 children all living in a thatched roof cottage at the end of School Lane he speaks of the Diphtheria outbreak in the village which took the lives of many of the children who lived here at that time, including his own sisters. His father was the gardener and handyman at the Rectory and earned very little money on which to support his many children, Mr. Mills' father also acted as a part-time policeman for the village, purely a voluntary position.

Mrs. Mills worked at the Rectory as a maid

and has many very amusing stories to tell of the Rector who was in residence at the time. He appeared to be quite an eccentric and he even went so far as to keep his horse in the sitting room.

One of the amusing stories that Mr. Mills told me was that when he was a lad, the farmer for whom he was working sent for him one day and said "Sydney, your appearance is too untidy to be seen around the farm and you will have to do something about it," Mr. Mills, who had been with the farmer for a year, and felt it was high time he had a rise, seized his opportunity and pointed out to the farmer that if he were to earn another half-a-crown a week he would see what he could do about tidying himself up, whereupon the farmer said "You are a cheeky young beggar young Sydney, who put you up to it, asking for a rise indeed, did your father put you up to it?" and Sydney replied "No Sir! I thought it up for myself and if I don't get my



Outside and inside the village church, of St. John the Baptist. The snow scene was taken by Mrs. Margaret Sage in 1978. Note the oil lamps in the picture on the right.

half-a-crown a week extra I shan't be able to work here any more after next week" and sure enough, the following week Sydney got his extra half-a-crown.

Mr. Mills is a gardener, every inch of him and has grown the same strain of peas for 20 years. What a lesson we could all learn from him, a man with a philosophy of acceptance and appreciation of the rewards that the soil will yield with effort and hard work.

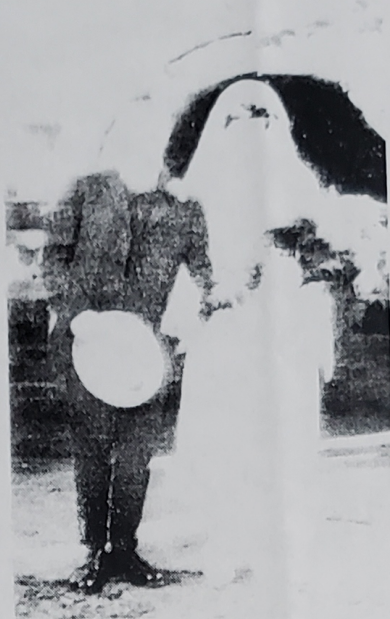
One of the larger farms in the area of Quinton is Green Farm, lying out towards Salcey Forest and consisting of 1,000 acres mainly dairy and wheat. Mr. Tom Turney started farming in Quinton in 1929 with his brother; at that time there was approximately 250 acres and he started his dairy herd with 32 head of cattle. When I saw Mr. Turney and his son, Paul, who has succeeded his father at Quinton Green, the thing that struck me most was that they both had the same visionary and enthusiastic attitude towards farming which has made the farm what it is today. The ideas that have been recently incorporated in the new dairy, and extensive new buildings that have been erected so imaginatively, have been borrowed from such countries as America, New Zealand, Holland and Scandinavia, together with original ideas of their own. Mr. Tom Turney has an enquiring mind and has always believed in seeing "how the other fellow works," he has visited many countries on his two world tours including the United States and Russia. He was the chairman of the Northamptonshire War Agricultural Executive Committee during the war and after his resignation in 1953 was awarded the CBE for his services to this body.

The new dairy at Quinton Green houses at the most 330 cows and today two men cope with the milking twice a day. These two men produce from the herd 300 gallons of milk per man hour as compared with Mr. T. Turney's time of 10 gallons of milk per man hour. This of course was when the milking was done by hand. This is a most incredible comparison but of course is made possible by the new unit with its cooling system, slurry scraper and underground drainage that takes the slurry to the tank, where it is pumped into muck spreaders to be distributed on to the land. All these refinements have made farming very sophisticated and automatic but for the tremendous capital expenditure involved it is important to have a good return for the investment made.

An interesting facet of the new set-up at Quinton Green is the artificial insemination unit which is used on about 90 per cent of the cows, a dairy bull being used on the better cows with the inferior 10-20 per cent being served by a beef bull. This means that the farm is now breeding its own replacements from only the very best stock.

There is no inn at Quinton although going back to 1612 there is a record of a licence being granted to a John Silsey to keep a common ale house in Quinton providing he did not allow dice, cards or any other unlawful games, but whether John took advantage of his licence and actually opened a public house is not known.

The village school was built in approximately



Mr. and Mrs. Mills on their wedding day. Above Mr. Mills with his own strain of peas. Below Mrs. Mills serving Sunday School tea in the Rectory garden.



1880, both the land and bricks being supplied by Sir Robert Gunning. He asked for volunteers from the village to go to the station with a handcart to collect the bricks and asked for men to build the school for their children. This they did willingly and the records of the school's history emphasise three things:

1. The enthusiasm with which the children learnt their bible, each child having a prayer book and was taught how to use them
2. They were provided with a notebook for expression work.
3. They had extremely accurate knowledge of the catechism.

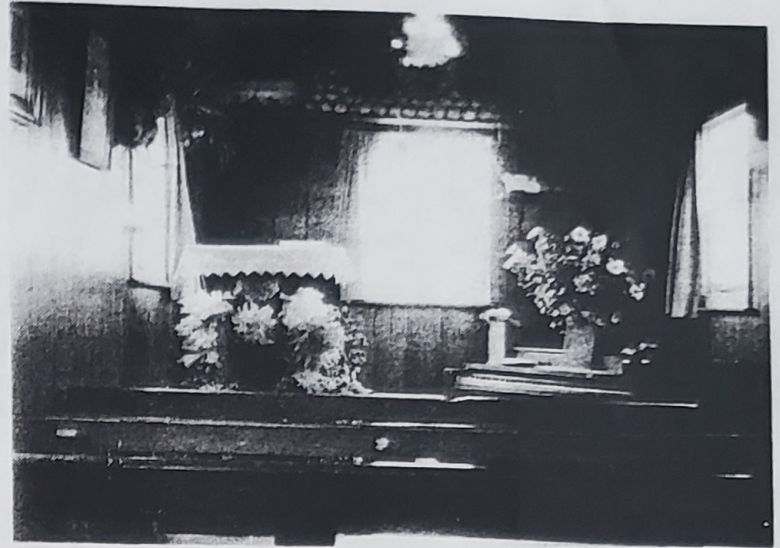
These reports were meticulously kept and it would appear that the only light relief they had from learning the 3 R's was on nature study walks and eventually poetry. One of the interesting reports by the Reverend W. H. Fagan in 1927 reads: "This small school is a very good one, the children are well behaved and well taught; I should like to congratulate their Mistress on her painstaking teaching."

The state of the children's health at that time is also reflected. There were many deaths amongst young children and at times, particularly in the winter, the attendance at school was very poor. The children obviously suffered from malnutrition and overwork, the boys putting in time at the local farm to supplement their parents' income and the girls having to support their mothers in the home with the many young children. They were also taught the art of lace-making and again this helped the family income by selling the lace in the markets and to the big homes in and around the area. The school was closed in 1935. One of the observations that Mr. Mills and Mr. Friendship Taylor both made was the fact that there was an astonishing amount of movement in rural areas before motor cars became a way of life; everyone walked, there was far more exchange of ideas and information between the villagers and in some ways certain aspects of their way of life are to be envied by our present-day society.

The first methodist services in the village were held at the cottage home of Mr. Mills'



The former Methodist Chapel — which was on wheels. On right interior of the Methodist Chapel.



grandfather. When it fell into disrepair in the early 1920s the congregation could not afford to restore and make it waterproof. Mr. T. W. Clark, of Northampton, came to the rescue by acquiring a small wooden hut on wheels which had previously housed TB patients. Mr. Tom Smith, another friend of the village, provided the site and at the opening ceremony in 1925 the 10ft x 8ft hut was packed with 17 people; a year later it was extended to 25ft x 10ft and attendance rose to 30. This hut was in existence for many years but unfortunately when it in turn deteriorated, the Quinton Methodists lost their Chapel.

Today the village is made up of people from many areas of Great Britain and from abroad. Mrs. Joan Wheeler who has lived at Foxfield on the Hanslope road for over 20 years, came here from India where she had lived with her husband, and immediately they took a great inte-

rest in the area. She was the representative for the village on the Rural District Council, also holding the Presidency of the Women's Institute for 15 years and retired in favour of Mrs. Margaret Sage last year but is still an active member.

Margaret Sage and her husband Norman have been in Quinton for 11 years; he is now the member of the Rural District Council for the village and he and Margaret play an active part in many areas of the village life. Both are members of the Parochial Church Council, the local Conservative Party and Margaret is now the President of the Women's Institute which she does with great flair and cheerfulness.

A little over a year ago a new Rector, the Reverend Donald Scoley, arrived with his two children and his wife Margaret. They reside in Wootton and he divides his time between the parishes of Quinton and Wootton. He is a very

sincere young man with a great understanding of young people.

Another very worthwhile member of the community is Miss Francis Piercey who was evacuated to Quinton during the war after her parents' home was bombed in London. Francis is the church organist, she runs the Sunday School and Girl Guides and it is a joy to see the children there under her guidance. Perhaps of all the words that have been spoken about Quinton by members of the community, her's were the most significant and sum up the magic the village held for this little girl who came here during the war, a stranger; "I came to the village and I didn't really know what life in the country was like. I could not really believe that yellow buttercups did grow in beautiful green fields."

— ELSIE B. ROBERTSHAW.



Mrs. E. B. Robertshaw, author of this article and poem, in the dining room of her home. "White Gables."

Meditation in Salcey Forest

I wander through your winding paths with tall green trees to shield me from the sun
 Whose rays come filtering through this shady bower casting shadows in the lane
 Dwelling for a moment on leaf and flower, them capriciously changing course again.
 I follow the sunbeams to your "lawns" where lush green grass doth grow.
 And sit beneath an ancient oak to watch the sunset glow.
 I mediate on days gone by when this was a different scene of fear, of death and violence.
 A picture far less serene.
 Men sat and watched with eagerness, the huntsmen who laid claim to the exhausted deer, pausing here for breath.
 Too spent to move from certain death.