

## POULTON, Gloucestershire



### Historic Poulton

Evidence of inhabitation in Poulton goes back to the Iron Age. Ranbury Ring, which lies to the west of Poulton, was an iron age settlement. The Poulton Hoard, now in the Corinium Museum, was discovered in 2004 and dates to around 1300-1100 B.C. It consists of 67 gold and bronze objects which suggest that bronze tools were used in early gold-working, and the hoard could be interpreted as a Bronze Age goldsmith's standard trade tools.

The Romans arrived in this part of the world in the early part of the first century and were centered locally in Corinium, Roman Cirencester. Akeman Street is a Roman road which runs through Ready Token connecting to St Allbans (or Verulamium) and Colchester.

By the fifth century the Saxons had settled in Pulton (a settlement around pools) and this saw the decline of Roman Cirencester and the establishment of Christianity by the seventh century. There is no evidence of a Saxon church here but one may have been built over by the Normans on the site of what was Poulton Priory. William the Conqueror confiscated land including that of the Manor of Pulton and distributed it to his Norman friends and installed Norman clergy. In the Wiltshire section of the Domesday Book Poltone is listed as being the holding of Earl Roger de Montgomery.

Earl Roger died in 1094, possibly slain by the Welsh near Brecon. It is thought that the estate came in to the hands of the Meysey family and in 1256 Henry the Third granted the ownership to Nicholas de St Maur as hereditary Lord of Poulton Manor. He died in 1317 leaving the Manors of Castle Eaton and Poulton to his son, Sir Thomas, who changed the family name to Seymour. This family became prominent in Tudor times when Jane Seymour became Henry the Eighth's third wife

The Black Death saw the village re-locate from around the Priory to its present position and land was transferred to the people from those who then might have been considered to be the aristocracy. This was as a result of a decline in the population and of the work force to service the Lord of the Manor. His authority was replaced by a Prior with Poulton Priory being founded in the mid 1300s. It provided employment to the villagers with much profit coming from the sale of wool, which

created the prosperity of the Cotswolds in the Mediaeval period. Very little of the building remains apart from a few walls and arches.

A major change occurred during the reign of Henry the Eighth with the dissolution of the monasteries. In 1539 the Prior surrendered the Priory to the Crown who then granted it to three individuals. During the Elizabethan period Poulton must have benefitted from the progress in literature, music, exploration and warfare. The communion chalice in the church has been in use since 1569, some twenty years before the Armada.

The advent, in the seventeenth century, of the horse rather than the ox as a working animal must have had a great influence on the nature of villages with its use as a means of transport. In Poulton the London Road was the main route linking London to Gloucester. This created new hostleries to cater for traveller's needs. In the locality there were the Red Lion, the Packhorse Inn, the Falcon, the Axe and Compass, the New Inn, the Bell and the Three Magpies. At the Packhorse, stabling was provided and a pit for cock fighting. It is probably during this period that many of the properties in Poulton, including Poulton Manor, were constructed and this established the future layout and nature of the village. This led to the development of a self-sufficient rural community with stock farms and businesses such a baker, tailor, farrier and more latterly a school, village stores and a garage.

By 1897 a mansion was built on the site of Poulton Priory by James Joicey who became a significant benefactor of the village providing a ground for the cricket club and a barn for village social and educational activities. James Joicey was the chairman of the first parish council which was established in 1894.

The school, designed by William Butterfield, was built in 1872 to accommodate 101 children on land donated by Mrs Mary Tombs of the Manor House. The school closed in 1980 when pupil numbers had fallen to 22.

In 1873 the new St Michael's and All Angels Church was constructed on land opposite the village school. It was also designed by William Butterfield and incorporated stone and features from the old church, about half a mile to the south-west, and has a distinctive three bell bellcote.

*Information regarding the history of Poulton has been taken from a book about the village entitled "A World in a Grain of Sand" by Tom Boyd*

### Modern Poulton

Over the last hundred years Poulton has changed from a predominately agricultural community with allied trades and its own facilities. All the dairy herds have now disappeared and most of the land is arable rather than grassland. The village shop is due to close and there are plans for it to be replaced by a community hub adjacent to the Village Hall.

The cost of housing makes it difficult for young people to stay in Poulton, or to move here, which has an impact on the nature of the community. There is a high proportion of retired people although it retains a good mixture of older residents and young families. There are business units in the village, but they tend to be administrative or technologically based rather than in production. Some residents work from home but the majority commute out of the village for employment.

Poulton boasts The Falcon public house which serves some of the best food in the area. The village hall in Cricklade Street was given to Poulton in 1932 by Major Mitchell the then owner of Poulton Priory. Major Mitchell also donated his private polo field to the cricket club, but they now play, as

do the football club, on 'Englands' which is adjacent to the church.

Regular meetings, Pilates, keep fit, art classes, film nights and other social events are held in the hall. The Women's Institute and the Toddlers' Group also meet there. There is a monthly "books and biccies" session, held on the first Saturday of each month, when villagers can meet and catch up with the news. The village is lucky to have retained a car workshop and a recreation ground. A traditional village fete is held on the first Sunday after the August Bank Holiday

Despite the changes in Poulton since the war it remains an active and sociable village with a good mix of professional people and craftsmen within its midst. However, its popularity has resulted in a recent increase in second homes and holiday accommodation. There are about 160 houses in the village itself and perhaps the greatest difference may be the amount of traffic passing through. Gone are the days when children used to kick a football across the main road using the bus shelter as a goal.