

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FULFORD VILLAGE

Fulford village stands on one of the tributaries of the River Blythe to the south of the route of the old Roman Road that passed through Draycott and Blythe Bridge and on to the Stoke boundary.



The Domesday Book

*The photographer is unknown, despite every effort being made to find him through printers Phoebe Phillips, the Publisher's Association, and the Design and Artist's Copyright Association.*

At the time of the Domesday Book of 1086 there were only about 3,000 people living in Staffordshire, or 'Stadfordscire' as it was called, and Fulford was known as 'Foleford', literally meaning "foul or dirty ford", or "full ford" according to some modern scholars. The actual settlement of Fulford consisted of one virgate of land (*about 30 acres*) which was held by the Anglo-Saxon Almar, the last Earl of the Royal House of Mercia, and there was land for two ploughs, the remainder of the land being divided amongst the few inhabitants of the village. Their rough timber and thatch houses would have been built at random within an earthen wall or ditch, and would probably have been quite small and simple with sunken floors. Almar would have lived in one of them and would also have had a home farm and a team of about eight oxen. The other houses would have been occupied by *villeins*, or unfree tenants, who probably had one or perhaps two oxen each and a few acres of arable land, given on the understanding that they ploughed the Lord's land in the spring and provided oxen for the Lord's plough team. In addition each of them would have had to undertake to work for the Lord of the Manor for three days a week, or pay a yearly toll.



Fulford may have looked like this in 1086

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The men in the village would have done all the hunting and fishing, whilst the women would have cleaned and cooked, milked the goats and ewes, sheared the sheep, and made all the clothes. Hay for the animals would have been cut on the meadowland. Somewhere nearby there would probably have been a large tree or mound at which the *Moot* was held to manage the affairs of the village, such as the rotation of the crops within the three-strip system. More important matters were referred to the *Hundred Moot* to be discussed by the leaders of the '*Hundred*' villages. With Staffordshire having only about 3,000 inhabitants this meant that the whole of the county had only five '*Hundreds*'. Fulford came under the jurisdiction of the *Pirehill Hundred*. The inhabitants of Fulford would still have been heathens at this time and so their dead would have been either buried on the top of one of the nearby hills, or have been covered with mounds of earth or stones.

During the reign of Henry II, who reigned from 1154 to 1189, Fulford Manor was appropriated as a cell of the Kenilworth Priory to the priory of Augustinian Canons which had been founded by Robert de Stafford in 1100. At this time Fulford stood on the edge of the New Forest which

extended eastward from Newcastle-under-Lyme and southward down the Trent to the Tixall area. This forest is said to have been created by King Henry II in 1166, but with the exception of the area between Newcastle and Hanley, was virtually disafforested by King John in 1204, though timber was still being gathered in this pocket of forest in 1423. After the Norman Conquest Fulford was then created a Manorial Dependency of the great Norman Baron Robert de Stafford, and was situated in the Pirehill Hundred.

In the early 1300's Adam de Fulford was Lord of the Manor of Fulford and was living at the Manor House which is thought to have once stood where Fulford Hall Farm now stands. In 1327 Adam, along with others, was accused of forcibly entering Trentham Priory in the name of the Earl of Leicester. The Earl of Leicester at that time was Thomas, Lord of the Manor of Newcastle, who himself was eventually executed for rebelling against his cousin, King Edward II.

In 1481 it was recorded that "*Robert Wyre, Prior of Stone, sued John Foden of Fulford for breaking into his close at Fulford and pasturing his cattle on his grass*". Apparently no verdict was given.

When Stone Priory was dissolved as part of the 'Dissolution of the Greater Monasteries Act' by Henry VIII in 1539 and given to George Harpur, Fulford was divided into reasonable-sized farms, and by the time of the Civil War it had become a closely knit agricultural society. However because many of the inhabitants refused to contribute to the weekly pay of the Roundheads all of their cattle were seized. By now Fulford consisted of between thirty and forty houses. At least two of the lanes from that time still exist if the recognised theory that each separate established species of bush or tree in a thirty metre length of hedgerow represents one hundred years, Baulk Lane and Cockieshall Lane. There must be others, but the hedgerows have disappeared.

Towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Fodon family were Lords of the Manor of Fulford with the family seat being at Fulford Manor. Then Thomas Allen inherited the title in the 18th century and it was passed down through his son Thomas and his grandson Thomas to his great-grand-daughter Lady Pilkington. In 1851 William White wrote in his "History, Gazetteer and Directory of Staffordshire" that "*Fulford is a township and chapelry..... Lady Pilkington, as heiress of the late Thomas Allen, Esq, is lady of the manor of Fulford. Fulford Wake is on the Sunday after All Saints day*". Another member of the Allen family was the Rector of Stoke from 1699 to 1732, and he later became the Dean of Chester. Another famous citizen of Fulford was Rev. Stebbing Shaw who was born in the parish in 1762. He was to become the author of the now rare and highly prized 'History and Antiquities of Staffordshire', a project which took its toll of his health as after publishing the first two volumes he broke down and became insane.

In 1702 a young lady named Ann Inskip and her brother John, both of whom had been born in Fulford and had lived there for about 30 years, emigrated to America. Ann's 6x great-grandson became the 37<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. His name was Richard Nixon.

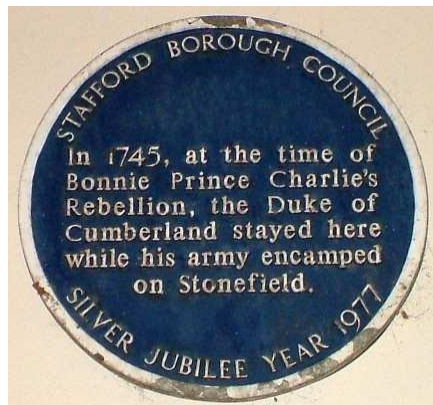


It is reputed that the son of an Essex alehouse keeper, butcher's apprentice turned highwayman, Dick Turpin rode through Fulford in 1739 as he fled from London to try to escape capture, passing through Fulford by way of Summer Street Lane which ran from the Cotwalton area to Spot Acre and on through Fulford village itself. Part of Summer Lane can still be seen on the bend on the south side of the Stone Road near Moddershall Cricket Club. Turpin was eventually caught in York and hanged at the Blue Boar at Castle Gate, York, on 7<sup>th</sup> April and his body then taken into York for burial. He was thirty-four years old.



Looking down between the hedges that border Summer Street Lane in 2006 \*

In 1745 the Duke of Cumberland moved his large army north from Lichfield and Rugeley in order to halt Bonnie Prince Charlie's march south. He assembled them on the rising ground at Stonefield at the north end of Stone where his infantry dug themselves in and his artillery threw up earth mounds on which to mount their cannon. However their stay was cut short because Prince Charlie moved east towards Leek and Derby and so the Duke pulled back to Meriden. Perhaps the residents of Fulford had a near miss!



This commemorative plaque is fastened to the wall of Cumberland House in nearby Stone's High Street. \*

From the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards the same few surnames keep on appearing in Fulford records. A document recording rents paid in Fulford in 1610 contained the following inhabitants:-

John Bagnall	9/11d.
John Batkin	1/8d.
Thomas Foden	5/8d.
Margaret Bagnall	1/11d.
Robert Wright	9/8d.
Thomas Baffin	£1.0s.0d.

In February 1652 there was a Parliamentary survey of the Manor of Fulford which recorded the following inhabitants:-

Richard Austin	Richard Mathers
Thomas Batkin	John Russell
John Bently	John See
Thomas Bently	Francis Wright
John Browne	John Wright
George Buxton	James Inskipp

The Poll Book for Staffordshire in 1747 recorded the following inhabitants:

John Bagnall	Mr. Fernihough
Richard Bagnall	Thomas Lovatt
Geo. Batkin	John Morrey
John Bradbury	Thomas Ratcliffe
B.Broughton Brook	W. Sant
Richard Cope	Will Tenant
W. England	John Tillsley
W. Fenton	Ra. Watson

.... and the Poll Books for 1771 and 1774 recorded the following inhabitants:-

John Bagnall  
Richard Bagnall  
George Batkin  
John Bentley  
Richard Cope  
Mr. Fernihough

Fulford didn't change very much during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the summer of 1832 a cholera epidemic swept Britain and from studying some of the memorial stones in St. Nicholas's churchyard it appears that Fulford didn't escape. In 1825 the old chapel, which been in existence since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, was in such a dilapidated condition that it was taken down and a new church was built on a different site within the chapel yard. This church, dedicated to St. Nicholas, stands on high ground at the north end of the village, next to Fulford Hall that is thought to have been built on the site of Fulford Manor House. From the Church the road runs downhill to the old village green on which the National School was built in 1785. At this time the village green was the hub of Fulford, with buildings such as The Shoulder of Mutton, The Olde House, Fulford Farm, and The Rocks around its periphery. The Rocks is built on top of a fifteen-foot high rocky outcrop and in the garden there is a small square lane surrounded by a wall of rock. A post once stood in the middle to which straying cattle were fastened until such time that the owners paid one shilling to claim them back. This area for lost cattle was known as 'The Pinfold'. From the village green roads fanned out to the various farms in the village such as Ivy House Farm, Manor Farm, Baulk Lane Farm and Fulford House Farm. These farms varied in size from about 20 acres to 200 acres.

Many of the old houses in Fulford are built using the white stone from the two old quarries at the village end of Fulford Dale, and many of the house walls bear strange incision marks on them, some of the marks being at the height of a man sitting on horseback. According to local folklore these marks were made by the fighting men of Fulford sharpening their weapons on the walls.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November 1849, when the tithe map of Fulford was signed, there were about 35 habitable properties in the village, and by the end of the 1800's this number had grown to 60 habitable properties whose inhabitants were involved in a multitude of trades, from boot maker to wheelwright, and butcher to wood ranger. The map also shows the spring and village wash-hole which sat on the tributary of the Blythe where it passes under the road from the green to the church. This wash-hole was still there at the turn of the century but had disappeared and taken over by Near Little Meadow by 1920. Some people think that the original village of Fulford could have been located close to this wash-hole, though to date no evidence of this has yet been found.

The Poll Book for Staffordshire in 1868 recorded the following inhabitants:

William Abberley – Cross Gate	Thomas Fairbanks - Mossgate
Enoch Batkin – Fulford	Benjamin Finney - Fulford
Richard Beard – Fulford	Alfred Hart - Fulford
George Brain - Cross Gate	John Jenkinson - Fulford
Samuel Brain - Cross Gate	Joseph Jenkinson - Fulford
Thomas Cotton – Fulford	Thomas Jenkinson - Fulford
William Cotton – Mossgate	Thomas Sergeant - Fulford
Thomas Davall – Fulford	Thomas Scarratt – Brooms Farm
Thomas Davall Jnr. – Greensitch	George Swift - Fulford
John England Jnr. – Fulford	

By 1861 the population of Fulford was 411 and this had risen to 475 by 1872, 607 by 1891, 660 by 1904, and 707 by 1921. By 1931 the population had passed the one thousand mark, the count that year being 1,175. By this time there was a bus service to Hilderstone and Longton which was run by 'Lymers', but there were only two buses a day and so Fulford was still a fairly isolated though self-sufficient agricultural village. Even as recently as 1949 there was no water supply, all drinking water being drawn from 'The Town Well' on the edge of the village green which is common land. This well

was renovated for the second millennium when the art of well dressing in Fulford was revived. Both this well and the well on the lane that leads to the church are fed by springs which have never been known to run dry.



This is the Prince of Wales plane that crashed in the field behind Fulford County School.  
*Photograph courtesy of Philip Leason of Stone*

Some time between the title of 1849 and the end of the century the two fields adjacent to Manor Farm called Wall Croft and Near Wall Croft had been made into one and part of this larger field eventually became the village cricket field. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1931 there was a lot of excitement in the village, the results of which lasted for weeks. A light aircraft was flying over the village on a day when there was some fog about and it was seen to be in difficulties of some kind. It eventually came down in the cricket field, close to the rear of the new County School. News quickly spread round the village that the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VIII, had arrived in the village. One of the tales that spread round the village was that the Prince had gone to the 'Shoulder of Mutton' but that he had found that it was closed. However he had supposedly insisted on being served with a whisky and soda but had been refused as he was a stranger. In actual fact it was the Prince's plane, but the Prince wasn't in it as it was on its way back to pick him up at Meir Aerodrome after his visit to the Potteries. This meant that only the Prince's pilot, a man by the name of Fielding, was on board the plane when it got into difficulties. Having suffered some damage on landing Mr. Fielding had then had to walk all of the way to Tom Byatt's at Meir where the nearest telephone was to summon help. A policeman kept guard of the plane that night.



Looking down on the village green area of Fulford and the church, both hidden in the trees.\*



An aerial view of Fulford as it was in 1971 (*photo'copyright of Staffordshire County Council*)



This map of Fulford in 2006 was produced by the author and is based on the 1849 tithe map, the aerial photograph, and various borrowed maps. It shows how the village now comprises almost 300 dwellings, about ten-times more than in 1901.

Although Fulford expanded during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it still retained the narrow winding lanes of medieval times. During the heavy snowfalls of 1947 the snow drifts in these lanes were so deep that the District Nurse could not get into the village by car and so in order to reach her patients she was compelled to dig her way in with the help of her husband. In the 1950's a row of council houses was built on the edge of Town Meadow opposite The Green and these were followed in the 1960's by a number of large houses and bungalows that were built along Fulford Road.

In the 1970's about one hundred houses and bungalows were built on the fields known as Croft, Wall Croft, Near Wall Croft, and Turney's Meadow. These fields lay between Fulford Road, Baulk Lane, and the Village Green and had been part of Arthur Saxon's 'Manor Farm', this area therefore being called Sunnyfields Estate, Manor Farm. Then in the 1980's about another sixty houses which were built on the fields known as the Croft, Town Meadow, Juice Hill and Madge Yard which lay between the 'Shoulder of Mutton' and the tributary of the River Bythe.



Fulford in 1989

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Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, although Fulford village is five times bigger than it was 100 years ago, it is still a rather quiet isolated. It now comprises about 280 properties, the majority of which are private residences. Some of the old farms are now gone or have been converted to private residences, but outlying farms such as those at Greensytech, Long Lane Head, Morrillows, Rushlade and Fulford Dale still exist. The 'Shoulder of Mutton' pub still serves beer to the locals, and there is a County Primary School and a village hall, but sadly the shop and post office are now gone. In the Parish of Fulford there are just over 5,600 residents.

Of the 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, the only ones still in existence are St. Nicholas Church, Fulford Hall Farm, Fulford Manor Farm, Old Vicarage, the Calvinistic Chapel (now lovingly restored as a private home) and adjoining cottages, Rose Cottage, Ivy House Farm (now derelict), Olde House Farm, the Shoulder of Mutton, Fulford Farm, Post Office Terrace Cottages, and Fulford House Farm. In contrast, the surrounding villages and hamlets of Saverley Green, Stallington, Crossgate, Mossagate, and Hilderstone have changed little over the last 200 years, with just a handful of new residences being built at Hilderstone.

Two family names in particular have been associated with Fulford. The Batkin family lived and farmed for at least two hundred years, being first recorded there deeds in the mid-1600's, then in the tithes apportionment of Fulford in 1849, and yet again in the 1881 census returns. The other family whose name appeared through the records of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20 centuries was the Jenkinson family who were recorded as farmers, cowkeepers, shopkeepers, dressmakers, shoemakers, joiners, wheelwrights and stonemasons.