

BUSHLEY TODAY

A brief guide to the village and parish of Bushley

Welcome to Bushley

Bushley is a south Worcestershire village with a strong sense of community. It lies just across the River Severn from the abbey town of Tewkesbury in neighbouring Gloucestershire.

The village consists of the twin settlements of Church End (usually just called Bushley) and Bushley Green together with the surrounding farmland which make up Bushley Parish. It has a total population of about 300. Most of the parish is north of the A438 Tewkesbury-Ledbury road, and it is bounded by the River Severn and M50 motorway to the east and north. There is a good footpath network, a number listed buildings and a part of the Parish falls within a conservation area.

Village facilities

Bushley is a good place to live, even though there is no pub, no post office and the school closed almost 60 years ago. A bus is only available on demand and there are no mains drains or gas supply. But, unlike so many villages in the area there are no new housing developments and very few second homes. Under the South Worcestershire Development Plan any future development is severely limited, if possible at all.

Superfast Broadband is available throughout the village, ultrafast available for most.

Tewkesbury Fields Care Home, located on the main A438 Ledbury Road opposite the Bushley turn, has 65 beds for the elderly.

Regular events

It is a friendly village and a variety of social events take place throughout the year. These often involve fundraising for the village hall, charities or the church (see the Bushley News or the Parish magazine).

There are frequent social nights at the Cricket Club and there is usually a major village event in the summer, such as the Village Fete, Flower Festival and Open Gardens or Open Farm day.

Father Christmas comes to Bushley shortly before Christmas Day, giving children a ride in his sleigh while the rest of us follow behind, culminating in a village get-together at the cricket club.

Bushley News

The strong feeling of community in Bushley is greatly helped by the village newsletter, the monthly Bushley News, delivered free to all households and uploaded to the Parish website. This is where to find what's on and what's coming up, as well as reports on village activities.

Contributions of news items or towards the cost of publishing are always welcome. For contact details see separate sheet.

Parish Council Website

Can be found at www.e-services.worcestershire.gov.uk/myparish/

Maps

The best detailed map of the area is map 190 in the Ordnance Survey's orange 1:25,000 Explorer series "Malvern Hills and Bredon Hill". This is excellent for footpaths, including the long-distance Severn Way. A larger area, from the Malvern Hills to Redditch, is shown on OS sheet 150 in the purple 1:50,000 Landranger series.

The three main village institutions are church, village hall and cricket club:

The Church

Currently, reduced services are held at St Peter's Church for its small but loyal congregation. Its importance to the community is recognised by churchgoers and many non-churchgoers alike. In addition to regular services it is available for christenings, weddings and funerals and the graveyard is still in use.

It is also used for concerts and recitals and there are plans to make it available for other religious and secular activities. Regular sessions are held for children to prepare for and celebrate church festivals, there is a Benefice Youth Group for teenagers and Sunday School for Primary aged children.

Our vicar, based in neighbouring Longdon Parish, also looks after the parishes of Castlemorton further west and Queenhill with Holdfast just north of the M50. The four parishes in the benefice also share the Parish Magazine, which can be delivered to all households. A copy of the current issue can always be seen in the church.

Church affairs are managed by the Parochial Church Council - this is not the same as the Parish Council, which is part of local government. For information and history, see below.

The Village Hall

Our village hall is available for a wide range of activities for a modest fee with a lower rate for villagers. There are currently regular Indoor Bowls, Pilates, Step Aerobics, Flower arranging and Craft sessions. Facilities include a large main hall, a bar, a kitchen, a raised stage and a small meeting room, as well as a fair-sized car park. The village hall is managed by its own committee.

The Cricket Club

Cricket is very much part of village life, taking place on summer weekends and evenings on the Green. There are both women's and men's teams. Bushley Cricket Club pavilion overlooks the Green and many other activities take place there, including village and private parties, social nights and bar opening on the 1st Friday of the month at 6pm. New members are welcome as social members or cricketers. A new pavilion is planned for 2023/4.

FURTHER AFIELD

Schools

Primary schools in the area include Eldersfield School in Corse Lawn, the C of E school in Chance Street, Tewkesbury, and Mitton Manor County Primary School.

Bushley is in the catchment area for Hanley Castle High School, eight or nine miles away by school bus. Places are also available at the nearer Tewkesbury School in the next county. Both are comprehensive with good results and have their own Sixth Forms. There are still grammar schools in Gloucestershire, although not in Tewkesbury, but Worcestershire is fully comprehensive.

In Bushley itself, beyond Bushley Green, located at Pull Court is Bredon School which is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls of all abilities aged from 7 to 18. See www.bredonschool.org

Tewkesbury

The centre of our nearest town is only two miles from Bushley Church, across the River Severn in neighbouring Gloucestershire. Its glory is the Norman Abbey and there are many other historic buildings.

Our nearest doctors are now all located at the Devereux Centre opposite the recently built Tewkesbury Hospital, and a number of dentists are in the town. Our nearest Post Office and a diminishing number of banks are there. Tewkesbury Library can give you details of local societies and activities. There is also a Tourist Information Centre.

The flourishing Roses Theatre doubles as our local cinema. Details of its programme are circulated to people on its mailing list and on line.

Tewkesbury Market takes place on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and the impressive Mop Fair takes over much of the town centre on 9th and 10th of October each year.

Transport

Bushley is conveniently located close to Junction 9 (Tewkesbury) of the M5 and Junction 1 of the M50. The nearest railway station is at Ashchurch, off the A46 east of Junction 9 of the M5. For London trains Pershore, Evesham or Cheltenham stations are the options.

Events

Annual events in the area include the Three Counties [agricultural] Show and the RHS Spring Show near Malvern, the Three Choirs Festival, the Upton jazz and blues festivals and the Battle of Tewkesbury re-enactment. Cheltenham holds annual Literature, Classical and Jazz music, Cricket and Science Festivals. Cheltenham Race Course is famous for the Gold Cup and other meetings.

HISTORIC BUSHLEY

"Bushley, originally Biselege or Bissele by the year 1086, meaning
The Wooded Pasture, formerly part of the great Malvern Chase"

Pull Court

For many years most of Bushley was owned by the Dowdeswell family of Pull Court, who acquired the estate in 1691. It had formerly been part of the Bishop of Worcester's Manor of Bredon and then belonged to the Bishops of London.

Pull Court, now housing Bredon School, was built in the Elizabethan style in the 1830s on the site of an older house which was described as "ancient" in 1628.

The estate was split up and sold in the 1930's, Pull Court itself becoming the home of racing driver Dick Seaman - his mother bought it for him for his twentieth birthday in 1933. A hero to the Nazis after winning the 1938 German Grand Prix as a member of the Mercedes Benz team, he died the following year in the Belgian Grand Prix. Hitler sent an "enormous" wreath to his funeral.

Paynes Place

Bushley's finest Tudor house, Paynes Place was built in about 1450 by Thomas and Ursula Payne. Local legend has it that in 1471 Queen Margaret of Anjou, whose army had just been defeated by King Edward IV at the Battle of Tewkesbury, fled across the Severn and took refuge here, spending the night in what is still known as the Queen's Room.

Thomas Payne was a wool merchant and a retainer of the Earl of Warwick. He died in 1500. Brasses of Thomas and Ursula from the old Bushley Church can be seen on the wall of the present church near the font. Later owners were the Stratfords, who lived there from about 1550 until 1678. They sold it to the Dowdeswells, who held it until 1932. More recent owners included fashion photographer Norman Parkinson - "I like to make people look as good as they'd like to look, and with luck, a shade better" - who was also the inventor of the Parkinson sausage.

St Peter's Church

Bushley Church was built of local stone in 1843 to the designs of architect Edward Blore. The chancel, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, was added in 1857. Both were paid for by The Dowdeswell family. There are many Dowdeswell tombs in the church, including one in the Lady Chapel with a lengthy inscription by Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the famous statesman and author, considered one of the finest parliamentary orators of his time.

The font is much older, dating from the 12th century. There is a ring of six bells, five Dating from 1710 and one from 1889, which are still rung by the village bell ringers.

Two earlier churches stood on the site, the first founded in the 12th century by a Norman nobleman, Simon de Columba. The second, demolished in 1842, was built in the 14th century by Lord Edward Despencer, a descendant of Hugh le Despencer, Earl of Gloucester and a favourite of King Edward II (1307-27). He is depicted as the famous kneeling knight in the Trinity Chantry chapel in Tewkesbury Abbey.

Bushley's population

In 1676 the Compton Census noted Bushley as having 60 adults, all members of the Church of England. Returns to Parliament published in 1835 put the population at 113.

By 1891 there were reported to be 306 people in the parish, 165 female and 141 male. There were 35 farm labourers working for ten farmers (who had five adult sons), 37 housewives, 22 domestic servants and 12 labourers. Four people had their own means and there were four laundresses and four carpenters. There were two each of dressmakers, bricklayers, blacksmiths, coachmen and gamekeepers.

In addition there was a seamstress, a parish clerk, a waterman and his crew member, a milkman, a carter, a tailor, an estate bailiff, a woodcarver, a sawyer, a groom, a painter, a nurse and a lady's companion. There were 63 "scholars" - children at school - and 21 babies. Since this all adds up to 241 it is not clear what the remaining 65 were up to.

The Erasmus "Bible"

This sixteenth century book is one of Bushley's treasures, bought by the villagers in 1590 for then considerable sum of 12 shillings. The village newsletter reported in 1948: "On Easter Sunday by sheer chance the Bushley copy of the Paraphrases of the Gospels by Erasmus was discovered in a cardboard box among what were considered to be worthless articles in a loft at the Vicarage."

Most churches had one of these books during the reign of King Edward VI from 1547 but many were destroyed when Queen Mary I (Mary Tudor) came to the throne in 1553 and England became Roman Catholic again. The rare volume together with other parish records were deposited for safekeeping in 2002 with the Worcestershire Record Office, where they can viewed by members of the public. The parish registers date from 1538.

Historic maps

Historic Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1828-32 covering the same area as the present-day sheet 150 (see above) have been published as a single sheet "Worcester & The Malverns" in the Cassini Historical Map Old Series (www.cassinimaps.com).

A detailed map of the village dating from the 1790s has survived in private ownership. A copy can be seen in the Village Hall.

Bushley History Website

Maps, articles and documents can be found at www.bushleyparisharchive.co.uk