



West Moors: a History in Images

Where it all began ...

Until the old railway line opened for traffic in 1847 it would have been hard to find a 'village centre' to which the name of "West Moors" could be attached. The area was the northern-most portion of the parish of West Parley, which extended as far north as Three Legged Cross. There were a scattering of farms either side of the Uddens & Mannington water-courses making use of the somewhat better soils found bordering these small rivers and a few small cottages clustered around the edge of the expanse of heathland.

In 1843 a small 'National School' was opened on a plot of land roughly opposite where the church is now (this latter wasn't built until the 1890s). Given the very scattered nature of dwellings/farms in this part of the parish, the school had to be built in a location such that it would encourage children to attend. It had to be nearest the largest collection of cottages / farm houses, and also, as it would draw children from places like Dolman's Farm (at Amey's Ford), Clayford Farm & other small settlements clustered around Holt Heath, it was built close to the long-used footpath that exits near to the modern school.



We don't have any images of this first school but in the 1860s a cottage was built close-by, which became the village grocery – though perhaps that title implies a somewhat grander establishment than might be warranted. In later life, this is what it looked like – still owned by the family that opened it – George & Ann Frampton.

[Image kindly donated by Amanda Gillingham, a descendant of the Frampton & Stickland families.]

Ann was the daughter of the sole teacher (living next door) who ran the school from the late 1840s until 1875; George was a member of an agricultural labouring family long associated with this part of Dorset. The image probably dates from the last years of its life as a grocery: by the mid-1900s, Ann's daughter, Mary, who became a qualified teacher, had married Walter Stickland and it would be this next generation that developed the family grocery business on new development south of the railway: see the section relating to Station Road – central area.

The 'grocery' was essentially a two-level cottage with, at one end, an extended portion to house the small shop: the village was tiny until the latter 1890s and the wants of the residents were not great. By the 1891 census, the numbers attributed to 'West Moors' had just about reached the low 200s, in less than 50 dwellings – and that number is reached by stretching the definition of the community to include some small out-lying hamlets.

A grocer would only be expected to supply such as tinned, bottled and dried goods, a small selection of alcoholic drinks, some tobacco, rudimentary medicines and a selection of hardware such as basic pots and pans. Turnover was small, with little profit. The Framptons, the owners of the grocery, are listed at one point as being 'market gardeners' as well so no doubt they grew produce to sell in the shop – but many village folk of course grew their own or bought direct from local farmers.

With the opening of the railway junction (1866) and station (1867), West Moors began to gain more dwellings – largely clustered around the station. The population though remained very small until the altered pattern of railway traffic encouraged those that could afford it to move out of the rapidly-growing Bournemouth and have a somewhat quieter life, but still within easy reach of the coastal towns and also having access to a good train service to / from London.

With more people came a demand for more facilities, and in the late 1890s, a church & village school was built – which of course are still there. These next images portray the early years of these buildings.



A view (above) from the field opposite the School/School-house and church (latter partially seen in the background) showing the original building with full set of wonderful late nineteenth-century chimneys, and the bell tower, the latter a classic feature of late Victorian schools.



This image shows St. Mary's School, with the school-house in the background, early in the 20th century. It would appear that we have the entire school lined up in the yard – with the Head Teacher (Albert Pepperel) and classroom assistants.



An aerial view of St. Mary's School and the school-master's house pre-1972. The core of the old school can be clearly made out, but also the later extensions and modifications: note the absence of chimneys & the loss of the bell tower. Given the rapid expansion in population in the village, temporary classrooms were erected on the field opposite the playground – top/right of photograph. Children still attended up to age 11.

It appears that the main entrance to the school at this time is still from Station Road – in later years it would be relocated to a somewhat safer access off The Avenue.

On the other side of Station Road, is the Memorial Hall – with no sign of the modern tarmac car park; it was apparently a mix of gravel and grass at this time.



The School-house, late Victorian school and some newer extensions: taken from what is now the car park of the Memorial Hall, but I suspect at this date was still 'green'. Again this image is of the 'cleaned' version – no chimneys on the school and no bell tower.



A little way back up Station Road and a view of St. Mary's church which must be early in its life – note lack of well-grown trees and the rather rough, crushed-gravel road. In 1927 an extension to the church was added to bring it closer to the road; as that is not evident in this image, we can assume the photograph dates sometime before that year. The photographer is standing not far from the so-called 'Iron Room', the building that was associated with the old school / chapel on the site of the Church: this was moved to the opposite side of Station Road to allow building of the new church to begin in 1896. The 'Iron Room' (also known as the 'Parish Room') fulfilled a multitude of purposes – meetings of the old West Parley parish council were held there until the 1950s - and the structure would linger until well into the 1970s.



St. Mary the Virgin church, Station Road, sometime post the Second World War with the School-house (i.e., schoolmaster's/mistress's house) in the background.

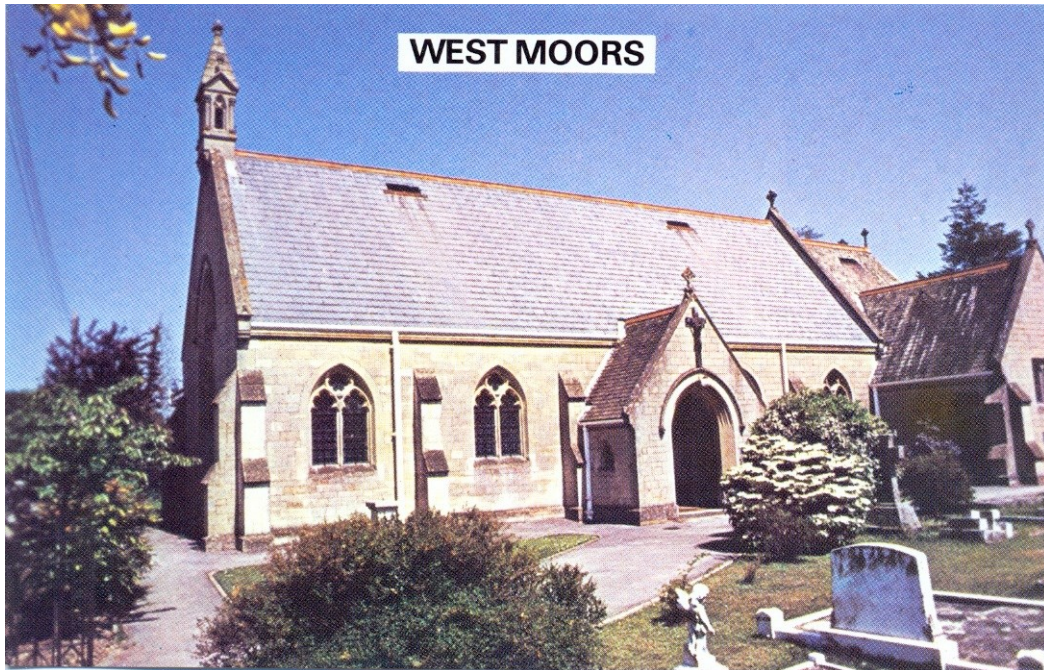
At the same time as the church, school and school-house were constructed, a rather grand house was also built to house the curate, later the vicar. The view below would appear to be in the early part of the 20th century, to judge by the growth of shrubs etc., and the settled 'edge' to the roadway.



[Image kindly donated by Amanda Gillingham, a descendant of the Frampton & Stickland families.]

The church, school, school-house and curate's house were all financed largely due to the good offices of the first Vicar of Verwood & West Moors, the Revd. Claud Brown, who held this post until 1917. The image above shows the curate's house, but from 1912, West Moors had a 'Priest-in-Charge' and once the village became the centre of its own Ecclesiastical Parish in 1922, the building became 'The Vicarage'. It would remain in church ownership until 1980 when it was sold – the present vicarage being in Glenwood Road.

And coming a little close to the 'modern-day', this colour image (below) of the church dates from (roughly) the 1980s and is taken from the corner that The Avenue makes with Station Road (or Church Road as it was known at one time).



[Image kindly supplied by Peter Bedewell]

[For much more on the history of the Church & School, and the important part played in the provision of all these facilities by the Revd. Claud Brown, see the web site of St. Mary the Virgin at this link: www.stmaryswestmoors.org.uk/]



This photograph is labelled as 'Church Road' and obviously dates from early in the 20th century, both from the unmade form of the road and the lack of really well-developed trees. Until the last decade of the 19th century, this would have been open moorland with scrubby, stunted trees. Apparently,

the section of Station Road that passes the church, school etc., was known as Church Road for a time: however, by 1915 certainly, no such road name appears in the local directories.



The *Tap and Railway*, formerly the Railway Hotel – built in the latter 1890s and much extended and updated. This building replaced the old ‘Railway Inn’ which was situated where Ashurst Road meets Station Road – though the former road wasn’t laid out then – there was just a jumble of heathland tracks converging on that corner. There is no image known of the earlier building which is a pity as it was apparently also the village smithy.

We do, however, have an image of the ‘Railway Hotel’ in an earlier guise: this image was part of a commercial collection – hence the catalogue numbers printed on the photograph – and probably dates from just after the Second World War, or the very early 1950s at the latest. Note the old-style bus stop (outside the pub), the back (rare view this) of the signal box (left-hand side of road) and what appears to be hand-operated petrol pumps in front of the garage in the left foreground. A marked contrast in traffic flow to that of today; one (careful) lady cyclist!

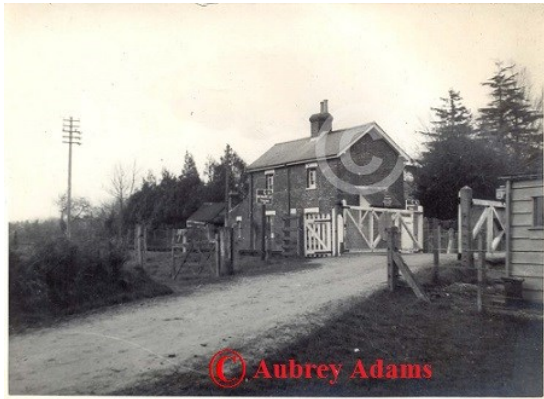


Looking south down Station Road at the junction with Ashurst Road (left) and Riverside Road (narrow opening on right). The shops adjacent to the latter are not yet built. The shop on the corner (H. G. Kidd) is no longer active, but the building is still there, much modified. At one point in its history this was the village post office, but at this date, sometime just before the Second World War, it is a boot and shoe retailer.



The image above is of relatively recent date (2009) but it shows buildings that had stood on this spot for about a century. The double-fronted shop was active as a retail unit (with living quarters above) until 2011, when it was demolished. Though a pet and hardware supplies enterprise at this date, it had housed a men's tailoring and tobacconists / confectionery retailer earlier in its lifetime. The building to the left also had several functions since first building, but its last function was as the village post office. However by the time of this photograph, the post office had been incorporated within the local Co-op store elsewhere.

And now, we're heading back right to the very top of the 'old' parish that contained West Moors: this image is of Revel's (or Revells) railway crossing lodge, sometime in the late 1950s or early 1960s.



The Salisbury & Dorset Junction Railway was opened in 1866, joining the then main line in West Moors. Along the line, crossing lodges were built – this one gave access to the farms in this area at the very northern end of West Parley parish. This area is now outside the modern parish of West Moors, but for most of its working life (railway closed in 1964) it would have been regarded as a ‘satellite’ of the village – and this crossing, along with Newman’s Lane, was administered by the Station Master at the Junction.

[Image supplied by Aubrey Adams, the son of the last crossing-keeper at Revel’s, Mrs. Ina Adams]

[Last updated 17th August, 2014 / Martin Rowley]