

Brief History of Harting

Harting has a rich and long history. One of the most prominent buildings in South Harting village is the parish church of St Mary and St Gabriel. Most external detail of the Church dates back to the 14th century, but the tall slender proportions of the nave could be 11th century. Thus, there is evidence of a building in the village of at least 700 and possibly a thousand years old.

The history of Harting actually dates even further back. The site of a contour hill fort dating back to the Iron Age was discovered by archaeologists in 1948 at Torberry Hill, about half a mile from Harting village. Although it is hard to be exact in these matters, it is likely that this fort dated back to the second century BC. There is another ancient British enclosure on the Beacon, and indications of Roman settlements.

Harting was listed in the Domesday Book (1086) under the ancient Hundred of Dumpford as the large Manor of *Hartinges*, which included 196 householders, encompassing South, West and East Harting. Resources included ploughing lands, meadows, woodland and nine mills. The joint lords of the manor were the Church of St Nicholas, Arundel and Roger Montgomery, first Earl of Shrewsbury. Apart from three generations of the Earls Montgomery, the manor was in possession of the Crown until 1610, when possession was granted to the Caryll family of Ladyholt Park. In 1746, the manor was purchased by the Fetherstonhaugh family.

The Fetherstonhaugh family also purchased Uppark, situated less than half a mile from South Harting village, which became their main home. The Fetherstonhaugh estate became a source of valued employment for many villagers, and its owners, as was clear from the reminiscences of older residents, won the respect and even affection of the Parish, over which they ruled autocratically perhaps, but almost invariably, benevolently. Times change, and most of the farms were sold in the 1920s, and the house and gardens of Uppark were given to the National Trust in 1954.

Harting has continued to evolve very rapidly since this time. The Parish Council has looked after the local governance of the community since 1894, responsible for Nyewood as well as South Harting, East Harting and West Harting. There was a dramatic expansion of housing in the 1950s and 60s, a revolution in agriculture with a huge increase in mechanisation, car ownership and travel by car has multiplied exponentially, the railway closed and the Harting minibus was set up and continues to this day. The local school has become focussed on infants and juniors. The village shop and post office, as well as The White Hart Inn continue to thrive as a hub of the community. A new Harting Community Hall was built and opened in 1986, and is used for many events. Local clubs and societies, such as the Horticultural Society and the Harting Society, have continued to evolve and thrive, as well as sporting teams.

As D.C.R. Francombe wrote in his excellent booklet "Harting – Forty Years On – the story of the post war years" (1988), "No period in history has been quite so fidgety as the one we have tried to cover".

The serious coronavirus pandemic of 2020 was met with a strong Emergency Plan co-ordinated by the Parish Council to help the vulnerable of the village who had been advised or wanted to self-isolate. The voluntary response by the local people and businesses has been tremendous, and has demonstrated a very strong sense of community and support for others.

John Miller

Parish Councillor (2019 - date)

Bibliography:

A History of Harting (1877) by Rev H.D. Gordon

Forty Years On (1988) by D.C.R. Francombe

British History Online – Institute of Historical research