
A Stroll Around
WIGMORE
in 1901



By David Swatton



Hello – my name is William Taylor but everyone calls me Willie.

I was born in 1831 and have been a labourer on farms all my life. I live in a lodging house on Ford Street run by a kindly widow, Annie Cartwright.

But I'm out having my daily walk around the village so I'll mention a few bits and bobs as I wander.

I bumped into these kids up on Greenhill Common as I was coming back down from the castle.

Like all the kids in the village they like to run around the ruins of the old castle.

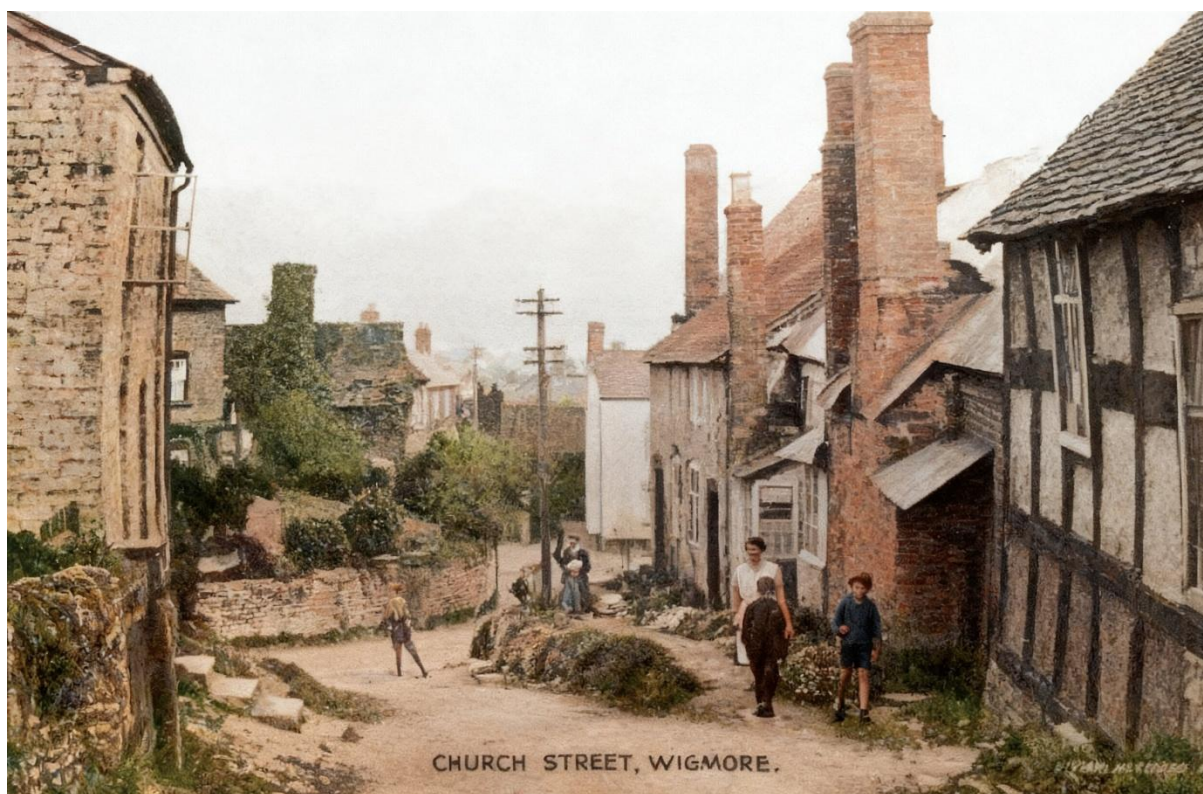


I wanted to pop into the church but first I stopped to have a chat with the lady outside Callis Cottage who is always very friendly.

The place could do with a bit of TLC but money is tight these days.

Anyway, after a bit of a chinwag I went into the church to look for Reverend Bamford but he wasn't there. The churchwarden, John Byewater, who owns Lower House on the edge of the village, said I should try the vicarage so I'll go there on my way home.





I had a quick look down Church Street to see if Josephus Went was out and about. He's a photographer who lives in one of the houses down there. I often see him out and about with his great cumbersome photography machine, but not today alas.



Down the slope now, past Long House to the junction which everyone calls The Pavement, though I don't know why.

So, I back-tracked to Castle Street where Richard Davies was taking a wagon down the road from Greenhill Farm.

The plot to the right has been empty for ages now. It was the site of the old vicar's house but since the vicarage was built on Ford Street it has been vacant, dominated by the lone pine tree.

There were more kids about too, dressed in fancy boaters.





Outside Court House, across the road, there was a group of visiting ladies who were in the village sketching as part of their art class. The young chap who was guiding them seemed pleased as punch to be in their company all day.



I have to say, though, that my attention was more focussed on The Oak tavern on the corner.

It's been run now by Widow Burgoyne for a few years since her husband passed away. She's helped out by her daughter Alice.

But she doesn't seem to have opened up yet which is a bit of a shame.

I'll call into Morgan's grocers the other side of Rock Cottage to see what I can get for my tea before I continue down Broad Street.

On the other side of the road, Castle Cottage is owned by James Harris, in his eighties now, looked after by his redoubtable housekeeper Annie Crowther.





As I wander down the hill I looked round to see even more kids out and about – don't know why there are so many about today.



Further down the road I noticed the ivy is getting a bit out of hand on the front of Brick House.

Old widow Jones has plenty of money so I wonder if she'll pay me a few bob to pull it down for her?

Perhaps I'll go into the Castle Inn to think about that over a pint.

Apparently, the inn has been here for hundreds of years. It's currently one of five pubs in the village.

There's also half a dozen cider mills in the village – well, what else is there to do of an evening?





By the time I came out of the inn we had a bit of a traffic jam. I was tempted to get the constabulary out of the police station to come and sort it out but didn't think they would appreciate it.



Not sure our boys in blue have that much of a sense of humour. But they are very proud of their police station.

It was built 50 years ago. Before that the local assizes were held in the Castle Inn and there was a room reserved in there as a lock-up. Mind you, I heard that once when that room was occupied a chap was locked up in a pig sty because there wasn't another secure place to keep him overnight.

You've got to laugh!

Just past the police station I turned to look back up Broad Street – it's my favourite view in the village.

Good job you can't smell it though because the tannery at the back of Pretoria House doesn't half pong!





I won't pop in to Wigmore Hall today... we only go there when they hold the annual village fete in the grounds.

The owner seems a nice enough chap though – a widower, Mr Prescott – some kind of mechanical engineer.

And occasionally I can pick up some leftovers from his cook, Annie Medlicott.

Apparently, the house has been there since the time of good Queen Bess even though it doesn't look like it now.

Time to turn for home, so I cut across the fields and come out onto Ford Street by the vicarage.

I called in to see Rev Bamford to see what I could do and it turns out his wife is starting a fund-raising scheme to raise the money to buy an organ for the church and I'm being roped in to help out setting up a village picnic at the weekend.



As I come out of the vicarage and turn up Ford Street I am nearly home.



But, of course before then there is a chance to stop off for another pint.

To be honest, we are spoiled for choice along Ford Street as The Compasses is next door to The Plough.

Oh well, no rest for the wicked....

Notes and a little poetic licence: all the images are from about 1895 to 1910 so I split the difference and used information from the 1901 census to fit names to places. Willie Taylor's lodging house actually disappeared in about 1895 to be replaced by the house now known as Moor View, built in 1898 and shown in the final image (above).