

BURLEY GATE

The hamlet of Burley Gate situated at the western end of Much Cowarne parish is somewhat of an anomaly in that it also straddles the parishes of Ocle Pychard and Moreton Jeffries thus making its boundaries difficult to define.

Historically it had always been overshadowed by its neighbouring villages but over a period of several hundred years had built up an importance of its own due to the location on the main road from Hereford to Bromyard, Worcester, and ultimately London. Here were the services useful to both travellers and the local community such as the blacksmith and wheelwright, the inn, several small shops and from Victorian times a school and a post office. Like the remainder of the locality the chief employment was agricultural and brick making with the majority of the housing tied to the estates of Cowarne and Moreton Jeffries which were not broken up until between 1918 and 1921.

In the Census of 1841 there were just 17 family groups living in Burley Gate. This also included the scattering of cottages and farms at Wynns Green. The highpoint of 45 families was reached in 1871 reducing to 35 at the time of the Land Valuation of 1910. Expansion was slow and piecemeal until the 1960s and 1970s when the coming of mains water and electricity encouraged the building of 16 modern houses and bungalows.

Today the Electoral Roll records over 80 adults living in the Burley Gate area of Much Cowarne parish. The old locality based employment has now been largely superceded by the modern practice of commuting and the influx of retired people moving to the area from further

afield. Unfortunately the Burley Gate Inn was closed in 1990 but the Post Office and Stores is still flourishing in the car park of the Village Hall as a Community Shop and serving a much larger area than previously, as is the school which was located to adjacent new premises in 1972. The former school endowed in the 1870s by Mrs.Higgins of the Moreton Jeffries estate is now a well used Village Hall whilst the former Post Office which she also financed was converted to residential accommodation in 2016.