

Throwleigh

pictures and memories
from a Dartmoor Parish

edited with additional text by Michael Paget

The Throwleigh Archive
Throwleigh, Devon

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Dedicated to Amy Harvey and all the others who have kept alive the memories of old Throwleigh

*It was a great loss to the village when these people died and I
have regretted so often that I did not ask them more questions.
Emmie Varwell, 1938*

For Sarah (1940 - 2008)

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Preface

The idea of creating a Throwleigh Archive in 1999 had three sources: Millennium celebrations, a small surplus in the Beating the Bounds accounts; and, crucially, a suitcase. The suitcase contained the late Amy Harvey's extensive records of Throwleigh and its school, and this was the catalyst: there seemed no better way of marking the Millennium than by making a permanent record, not only of the school but of the whole parish. Amy was born in the village, went to the school as a child, and then returned after her teacher training; she was headmistress for 38 years.

The founder members of the Archive successfully applied for a grant through the Local Heritage Initiative, a national scheme administered by the Countryside Agency and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Nationwide Building Society. Since 1999, volunteers have scanned many hundreds of photographs and documents lent by current and former residents of Throwleigh. The Archive is almost entirely electronic, and is still growing, with both old and new photographs and other material.

This book grew out of an exhibition which the Archive held in 2002. We exhibited several hundred of the most interesting pictures from the Archive, together with some explanatory text, press cuttings, and other material about Throwleigh and its people. We were pleasantly surprised by the interest generated by this exhibition.

For some people who visited the exhibition, who knew the parish and its people years ago, many of the pictures could stand on their own, and needed no further explanation. However, for many (perhaps most) these pictures already represented a lost world, even though Throwleigh has probably had fewer physical changes than most parishes over the past century. For whilst many places in the parish looked almost exactly as they had in 1900, the inhabitants, their work, and their way of life had changed out of all recognition. Increasingly, the pictures would become almost meaningless unless the Archive also recorded the memories which went with them. Our inspiration here was the remarkable work carried out by Jacquie Sarsby in the early 1990s. She had made a number of tape recordings of local people talking about their lives, some with memories going back almost to the beginning of the twentieth century, and she kindly allowed us to copy some of these tapes.

In our application to Local Heritage Initiative, we had not claimed to be an oral history project; nevertheless, in 2002 we started to record some interviews ourselves with some key people who remembered life in Throwleigh in the 'old days'. I always had Jack Symons, who farmed at Wooda, in my mind as we did these interviews, but could never emulate his ability to elicit all the information without ever asking a direct question. The process of recording voices and pictures continues to the present, and we are

eternally grateful to all the people who were unsparing of their time, and put up with our obvious inquisitiveness – a characteristic never greatly admired in small villages.

This book is not a history of Throwleigh, or even a history of Throwleigh in the twentieth century. Nor is it a systematic gazetteer of the Parish and its buildings. It is a collection of the best pictures from the Archive, with text which explains, amplifies or comments on the pictures, mostly in the form of quotations from oral or written sources. In many ways it follows in the footsteps of Emmie Varwell, author of *Throwleigh* (1938), who listened to local people and wrote down what they told her. Occasionally, there are more substantial written contributions – for example, Oscar Greig's remarkable account of his early flying experiences.

In planning this book, the pictures were primary, and normally the text arose from those pictures. Much of this text comes from our interviews and those made by Jacquie Sarsby. This is, of course, speech, and no-one speaks as they write. I have tried to be faithful to what people actually said, and have not rewritten the excerpts from the transcripts, hoping that any extra effort which the reader may have to make will be amply rewarded by the authenticity of transcribed speech. I have occasionally changed the order of some material. I have also tried to refrain from re-interpreting what people said. There are inevitably difficulties when names and unusual terms occur in a transcription of speech. I have done my best to verify the spelling of names, and the like, but please let me know where I have failed.

Amy Harvey's writings for the Church Magazine of Chagford, Gidleigh and Throwleigh provided another rich source of memories to accompany the pictures. These short articles were originally written between 1982 and 1998, for the *Children's corner* section, and contain a mass of meticulous detail about old and modern Throwleigh, amounting to over 50,000 words. I have selected extracts which relate to our pictures; unfortunately, there has not been space in this book to do justice to all of Amy's material.

Wherever possible, people are identified in the pictures. There are various sources for these names. Sometimes the names were written on the back of the photographs or on an additional sheet of paper, and sometimes press reports provided additional information. Occasionally local people have helped us identify people. None of these sources are infallible, and I apologise for any errors which have slipped through.

Michael Paget
Chairman, Throwleigh Archive
2006