

Postcards – Their Place in Quorn’s Local History

By Sue Templeman

The first postcards

The first picture postcards appeared in Britain in the 1890s. Originally the Post Office would only allow a message to be put on the front of the card and all of the reverse was used for the address. However in 1902 the Post Office relented and this freed up the whole of the front of the card for the picture and allowed more room for the message on the back. This early card from Quorn shows the front in the pre-1902 format. Note the space at the bottom for the message. Surprisingly the first postcards of Quorn were printed in Luxembourg!



This card shows the hounds and four riders at Quorn Cross. Today, the shop is Corner House Interiors, but in the early 1900s was North and Son, Grocery Store and Post Office. The scene is being observed by a policeman, two tradesmen in aprons, a gentleman in a top hat and three other passers-by.

Why people used postcards

1902 heralded ‘the golden age of postcards’, which ran until about 1920. We have to remember that the telephone was not available for use by the majority of people – and text messages and emails that we use today were a long way off! The stamp for a postcard was cheap and less than that for a letter, there were frequent collections and up to seven postal deliveries in a day, so people used postcards like we use the telephone. Within towns, a letter posted in the morning would usually be delivered in the afternoon. Quorn was also a place where people would come to stay for holiday in the country. This is evidenced not only by the postcards that they sent to friends and relatives, but also by the existence of souvenirs that have been available in local shops over the years.



How postcards add to our local history knowledge

From about 1900 collecting postcards became an avid craze with the British public, and the number produced and type of subjects exploded. There was even a regular magazine published on the subject. This means that many postcards and albums have survived, tucked away in drawers and attics. There are many ways that postcards can be an invaluable resource for the local and family historian. Some of these are obvious, others are quite unexpected:

- They provide a pictorial historical record of the village, covering buildings, roads, views and people.
- They enable us to track changes to the buildings and architecture in the village, often pinning alterations down to within a few years.
- They record events, eg floods, celebrations etc
- When cards have been written on and posted, they can provide an extra glimpse into the lives of people living in Quorn at the time. Sometimes you can even take details from postcards,

and by further research and relating them to other records, you can gradually piece together stories about families, including their movements and relationships.

- By examining pictures in more detail, especially by using modern scanning and enhancement techniques, it is often possible to reveal details on the pictures that either give us more information or simply make us smile.
- Most postcards were produced for resale to the public, but others were produced as family photographs, in which case only a small number of copies would have been printed. If these can be reunited with their roots, either by identifying the people or the location, they can make a lovely contribution to the history of a family, or even a house.

Dating postcards can be often be easy in terms of when they were written - either by being able to see the postmark, or if the writer included the date. However something that must always be remembered is that the photograph itself may have been taken many years previously. We know that some Quorn pictures were used on various postcards for up to ten years. This can confuse the unwary!

The rest of this article will show you some Quorn postcards that have all made their contribution to our local history.

A summer's day on High Street between 1905 and 1910

Below is a postcard looking down High Street from the Loughborough direction towards the Cross. All the cottages on the left have been demolished. Most of those on the right still exist and features such as the stone bulls head, on top of what was the Bulls Head pub (now 18 High Street), can be easily identified. The first floor window of this building shows a striking bow window which has since disappeared. Looking down the middle of the street you can see the 'Little Green' which later became the Memorial Gardens. Behind this is Brook House – once a grand residence which fell into decay and was eventually demolished in the 1960s. There are thirteen children strung out across the road, posing for the photographer – not something we could contemplate today! All the boys are wearing caps and one has a large basket for deliveries – probably bread.



One of the lovely features of this card is the two girls on the left. When this tiny area of the card was scanned and enlarged, it shows that they are chatting happily, seemingly oblivious of not only the photographer, but also the baby who is crying vigorously!



A Quorn romance

The two postcards that illustrate how a story can be pieced together from relatively little information were posted in 1911. The first is a view looking down Meeting Street from the Quorn Cross end. The blacksmith's forge can be clearly seen on the left and the Blacksmith's pub on the right.

The house with the railings on the right is 27 Meeting Street and still exists, but the other



buildings next to it (nearer the Cross), have been demolished. The earliest parts of 27 Meeting Street were built around 1650 and the house was originally thatched. During most of the 19th century and at the time this photograph was taken, the house was occupied by the Sanders family who were builders, joiners and undertakers. The family emigrated to Canada in 1920.

On the right of the picture, on the end of the house can be seen a sign for Alma Terrace. This was a terrace of small cottages that ran at right angles to Meeting Street.

In this case, not only is the picture interesting, but the message also arouses curiosity. The card is addressed to Mr A Marriott, 90 Moor Lane, Loughborough. It is from 'Gert' at Rose Cottage, Quorn and reads:

"My dearest Alf,

Thanks for PC received this morning dear. Hasn't it been lovely weather this week. I hope it keeps like it. About Thursday I want to go down the town if I have time and then to Miss Morley. So you can meet me there if you like I shall be earlier this week. I hope to be ready about 7 o/c if you will meet me against Miss Morley's. I have had another bilious attack this week. I am feeling a bit better tonight hope to feel straight by tomorrow. I hope you will be able to read this love Gert"

Rose Cottage was a substantial house on Loughborough Road next to 'The Hurst' (now The Chequers Chinese restaurant). It was demolished in the 1960s and the site turned into a petrol station, although it is now occupied by three newly built houses. The 1911 census for Quorn revealed that 'Gert', who wrote the postcard, originally came from Shepshed and was born Eva Gertrude Wright. At this time she was working as a live-in domestic servant to the White family who lived at Rose Cottage. The head of the household was George White who was Clerk to Quorndon Urban District Council'. The name of the White's eldest son, Charles Kirbell White and his brother Frank Cuthbert can sadly be seen on the war memorial.

Another card from Gert to Alf shows a picture of High Street looking from the White Hart up towards Loughborough Road. The old Banks cottages can be seen on the right. It wasn't until writing this article that it was realised that this photograph was almost certainly taken on the same day as the High



Street/Bulls Head picture was taken. On

close examination the children are the same, and the girl and the pram are particularly recognisable. Gert's message is less explicit than the previous one about her health, but it demonstrates how postcards were used for making everyday arrangements. The card reads:

"My dearest Alf, thanks for the PC received this morning, do you know this place you can just see Rose Cottage. Hasn't it turned out wet again but I hope it will be fine tomorrow. Will you meet me as arranged? Hoping you are keeping well. Fondest love from your ever loving Gert."

This brief story has a happy ending. A trawl through the marriage registers showed that Eva Gertrude Wright married Alfred Marriott early in 1912.

Sue Templeman has collected a large number of Quorn postcards and is a member of the small team that have produced and run Quorn's virtual museum, www.quornmuseum.com. Many of the postcards can be viewed on the site and the number continues to increase.

If you have any Quorn postcards that may be of interest, Sue and the team would love to hear from you - just contact us via the museum website.