

## MY GRAN

My Gran is cosy,  
And warm.  
She is plump,  
And welcoming.

When it is raining  
And windy  
When every tree sheds tears  
She is happy

Her house is small,  
And comfortable,  
Its heat wraps you up  
And cheers you

Her house is open to friends,  
And enemies  
As are her arms open to family  
And foe.

Her smile is like a ray of light,  
And warmth,  
My Gran's very dear to me,  
And always will be.

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To Mrs Bradley  
by Her Grandchild  
Catherine Steward  
1979

On front cover: The Methodist Church, built in 1873 stands on the Chapel Corner, a busy part of the village.

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By the same Author:

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## INTRODUCTION

I don't know what it is about Guilden Sutton. There is a sort of something that one can never quite get to the bottom of, or pretend to understand. One day you can feel that there is nowhere quite like it, yet another day you can't get away from the place quick enough. There are plenty of other villages round about, but none can be likened to it, and there are no two villages the same.

What is this something that makes each one different? Is it the location, or the people, or the way of life? Whatever it is, you just can't put your thumb on it and say "That's it, that's what makes it different." Guilden Sutton is like a good picture, two people look at it, and each one sees an entirely different thing. Perhaps it is because we only see what we want to see, and even that depends on how we feel on that particular day.

I was in my garden only the other day when a young mother with her little boy paused to pass the time of day, and out of the ensuing conversation came the fact that when she first came here she thought Guilden Sutton was "a proper dump." Yet a minute later she admitted that after being here for three months she began to like the place and now hoped that they wouldn't have to move again, especially now they were thinking about school for the little boy.

Sometimes I wonder if our two village legends have left behind a legacy of mystery and fascination which has grown over the centuries. Certainly our village has been

here for a very long time and must have seen a lot of changes as time went by. It is nice to think on these lines, and adds to the pleasures of living here.

Some of these feelings are probably reflected in the chapters of this little book. I like to think of them as little adventures, and I hope they can transfer to the reader some of the pleasure they have given me. Certainly there is something about picking up a book of short stories, then selecting some title which seems interesting and then wondering what is coming next. I just hope that I can share with you some of the pleasure of these happenings in and around Guilden Sutton.

At this point, may I thank those who have helped me with its presentation; to Catherine Steward for her poem, Esther Woodcock for the drawings, Julia Ball for the processing and Tony Green for the printing. Finally, my thanks to the many Guilden Sutton people for their encouragement.

D A Willis, 1989

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## **THIS WAY TO THE TREASURE**

Newcomers do not have to live very long in Guilden Sutton before they hear the legend that Guilden Sutton is known as the village that Oliver Cromwell couldn't find, and of how he came to take away the Church treasure that was buried here, but was unsuccessful as he never arrived.

History tells us that he and his men started from Chester, out through Boughton turning off along Green Lane. Getting as far as Heath Bank, they looked down towards the Gowy Meadows, but on seeing no signs of any village they turned and went back to Chester.

Well, I reckon that he came 350 years too soon. If he had come today Cromwell would find things very much different as Guilden Sutton is very well sign-posted. Even much better than nearby Hoole where I can't think of any sign-post showing the way to Hoole, and which in all ways must be ten times bigger than we are. The only way we can beat Hoole is that we have been here longer than they have. To excuse me, perhaps I should say here that I don't refer to Hoole Bank village which has no connection with Hoole as we know it.

For anyone coming from a distance, there are four main entrance lanes to Guilden Sutton, and at each turning there is a prominent sign showing the way to the village. There is also another remote sign tucked away on Birch Heath Common pointing to Guilden Sutton 2 miles. Let's have a quick look at these turnings.

1. Coming by car from Tarvin one meets the first

sign at Sutton Spot which says Guilden Sutton 1, Mickle Trafford 2. Turn right into the Wicker Lane and go along until you see the finger post Village Only, Bird in Hand Inn, St. John's Church, and in that order.

2. Or you can come in at Vicar's Cross turning into Hare Lane for a couple of hundred yards, to pick up a sign showing Guilden Sutton 1 mile down Belle Vue Lane.

3. The Piper's Ash crossroads is a good place to come in, and here Guilden Sutton is signed up 1½ miles. Go on along, over Heath Bank railway bridge, until you reach the Primary School where there is another sign pointing ahead to Guilden Sutton. This is rather puzzling as although you have been in Guilden Sutton all the time you are not officially there yet. Go on, however, down the Porter's Hill and to the Chapel Corner, where there is a grand old R D C signpost saying Guilden Sutton and Tarvin to the right. Turn here, and fifty yards on you meet again the aforementioned signpost pointing to the Bird in Hand and St. John's Church. This is the village proper, although residents elsewhere may not agree with me.

If Cromwell was to come today he could come in from Mickle Trafford where at the Cross is a C C C metal signpost with Guilden Sutton signed up, although I'm afraid more as an afterthought as Tarvin is given much more prominent lettering. Coming along Station Lane he would reach the Chapel Corner, and pick up the sign to Village Only etc. there.

There we have the main entries to Guilden Sutton. Poor old Oliver Cromwell, he really did miss it, how he could have used all these signs we are so blest with. There are other ways, now mostly classed as footpaths, but these would be no use to Cromwell's men and their horses.

Analysing the above, we see that there are six main signs around pointing to the village, and when you get there you have another three to make sure you arrive at what was for centuries the very heart of the old Guilden Sutton. That's not bad for a place of our size.

Piper's Ash is another nearby place that is very well signed up. A quick look round shows that they have three signs to show Piper's Ash  $\frac{1}{4}$ , and another at Vicar's Cross saying Piper's Ash  $\frac{3}{4}$ . I could well be wrong, but I would guess that there are not more than a hundred people live there, and have the benefit of so many signs to help them.

I suppose that we could have some sympathy for Oliver Cromwell if he had persevered more, and with patience he would have found Guilden Sutton and its treasure. But think again. We, 350 years later, are not all that clever, as we have all scientific and mechanical aids unthought of by them, and we still haven't found it.

I sometimes wonder if this unsolved mystery adds to the fascination of living in such a place. It's good to be here, and after all you only need to turn over a bit of soil and you could find the treasure that has had us baffled for so long.

19th April 1988

