

# The story of the strange beehives of Broughton

An unusual photograph was dropped on my desk the other day and the owner asked me if I knew anything about the peculiar shaped houses, as he was rather interested to find out their history. The homes, as the picture shows, were thatched and rounded like beehives and were at Broughton.

I remembered the houses because in the early 1950s I went to one pair when they were struck by lightning during a violent thunderstorm and were badly damaged by fire. One of the pair was unoccupied at the time, but in the other were Mrs Alice Blake—her husband was at work at the time—and her brother and sister-in-law, Mr and Mrs Alfred Turner, who were holidaying with her from London.



Broughton Cottages  
Broughton's "beehive" cottages in the mid-1920s.—NOP

The pair of cottages were so badly damaged that the Blakes had to be rehoused and the "beehives" were never repaired and were later pulled down. The second pair became vacant in mid-1950s and were so badly vandalised that they were pulled down in the early 1960s.

But of the history of the cottages I knew nothing so I contacted Mr Francis F. Dansley, who lives at Salisbury Road, Broughton, and who knows more about the village's history than

anyone else — and sure enough he came up with the answers.

Francis told me that the cottages were situated beside the road from Broughton to Bossington about a mile and a half from Broughton Church. They were listed buildings — Grade III — and were described as follows: "Two pairs of early 19th century cottages of symmetrical design. Each pair is two storeys and an attic, brick walls stuccoed and thatch roof. The roof is designed to resemble a tall square

haystack and is carried down to ground floor level on two sides and in semi-circular form over projecting rustic porches at each corner on the other two sides.

"A massive square-based chimney with four diamond shafts crowns the apex of the roof. The central part of the road front, which is two-storey, has two casement windows each with light 'Gothic' type iron casements. The doors are placed under the flanking porches. The effect is striking as well as

picturesque." So reads the official description and Francis says they were always known locally as the "beehives". One pair was struck by lightning and set on fire in August 1952 — the same day as the Lynmouth flood disaster — and, as I said, they were never repaired and were pulled down as were the others.

The cottages were a part of the Bossington Estate. I am grateful to Mrs J. C. Powell, of Butt Street, Ludgershall, for the loan of the picture.