

# **CONTENTS:**

<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Defining Hesters Way .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Battle for Bedlam Mill .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Memories of Arle and Hesters Way .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>More Chippings of Times Past .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Arle Court Farm .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>The Sindrey Family .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>The Residents of Arle Farm .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Into the Light - The Academy .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>The Footprints of Time .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>The Pavilion of Pate's Playing Fields .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Shopping List .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Insight and Intrigue - Building G.C.H.Q.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Addressed at Arle .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Old School .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>From the Ground Up - In and around Springbank .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Fiddler's Green Folk .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Retiring on all Cylinders .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>79</b>

## FOREWORD

In this, our fourth book on The History of Hesters Way and Arle, we have endeavoured to show the many changes which have taken place since the early post-war years, when the skyline was marred by high rise flats and houses developed apace. Since those early years the estate has changed almost beyond recognition. Several of those blocks of flats have gone, to be replaced with small housing estates and the boundaries have extended further and further afield. Much of the old Hesters Way and Arle has disappeared but there are still pockets of old Arle to be found if you know where to look.

The old hostelry, namely The Cross Hands which was the only one to serve the residents in olden days has changed beyond recognition and is now a flourishing Premier Inn. Yet, surprisingly the post-war Public Houses seem not to have had the fascination for today's residents and apart from The Umbrella Inn, have all closed down. The once busy shopping centre at Coronation Square has declined but it is hoped the re-generation proposed will once again attract residents – perhaps a new Continental-style inn might have more appeal.

Schools built immediately after the War have disappeared or are about to disappear, whilst the proposed Academy on the site of what was once Arle Farm is growing fast and the recent discovery of Anglo-Saxon remains on the site makes one wonder what other historical artefacts lie buried beneath this vast estate.

The HWNP centres at Coronation Square and Springbank offer a wide range of social and educational activities. Manned chiefly by an army of volunteers who give freely of their time in an effort to attract the residents of this fast-expanding estate to socialise and to appreciate what is on offer.

It is to this willing army of volunteers that we dedicate this fourth book on the History of Hesters Way.

December 2010

## DEFINING HESTER'S WAY

Where is Hester's Way? We tend to think of it as the large housing estate on the North-west of Cheltenham spanning both sides of Princess Elizabeth Way, but it has become vast over the years, taking in Springbank, Fiddler's Green, Elm Farm, Arle and parts of Uckington and spreading as far as the Old Gloucester Road, namely Hayden Road.

When it all began there was no parish church and residents had to travel to churches in Cheltenham, Swindon, Staverton and even Elmstone Hardwicke, so if you wish to trace your early ancestors in the area, you may have to consult all their documents. Not until the first half of the 19th Century did Arle and Hester's Way have their own church but when the building and consecration of St Mark's Church and also that of St Peter's began to serve the residents of what was to become a huge estate.

Our Hester's Way Books 1 to 3 tell you much about the very early residents of the estate: the gentry such as the Gregory-Welch family and even earlier nobility such as the Lygon family whose names are perpetuated in the names of roads along with the names of 20th Century residents. There was alas no grand stately

home to attract tourists, but nevertheless there were ancient dwellings such as the Old Arle Court and the original Arle Mill; the latter may well have dated back to Domesday. An even later grand residence, Arle House, which belonged to the Gregory-Welch family, survived until the post-war years, but those post-war years in which the urgent need for housing

was paramount swept away many of the original historical buildings of Hester's Way. So imperative was the need for housing that no protests were raised by those early residents when one by one early landmarks disappeared.

First to go was that part of Brooklyn Gardens, owned by the Sindrey family, whose estate at that time extended from the railway in Arle Road to nearby Village Road. Along with Mill Lane and the Mill and part of



Old Arle Court Farm. Soon after, Hester's Way Farm and other dwellings that stood in the way of the proposed spine road that was to be called Princess Elizabeth Way disappeared. It was intended that the main road should stretch from the Old Pike House on Tewkesbury Road to the main Gloucester Road at Benhall. In the town's extension westward, the old Grammar School playing field was also swallowed up.

When it came to extending the estate northwards, part of Arle Farm and later Arle House were compulsorily purchased, along with other pieces of land for a fraction of what they were really worth. (See Book 2). Whilst some owners may have happily accepted what they were offered, not so the Wood family of Arle Farm whose descendants never accepted losing their inheritance.

The Fletchers of Hester's Way Farm were rehoused, and later other land was sold off to private builders for a more realistic price and so the estate grew and grew with a mixture of council housing and private houses. But whilst the original sites had access to the main road, bus service and shops at Coronation Square and Village Road, those later residents who were housed at Arle Farm Estate and along Hayden Road had no vehicular access through to the main estate. It was only when an emergency arose, which brought about what came to be called The Battle of Barbridge, that this lack of foresight made people realise the divisions which existed. (See Book 2). Once the emergency was over, it returned to the status quo which, it is feared will lead to further controversy as the residents along Hayden Road now feel it is high time they should gain vehicular access to the heart of the estate. With the rapid development of the Springbank Centre this would seem to make sense but we must wait and see what happens.

Despite the many changes that were taking place, rather surprisingly one farm remained untouched – that of Hope Farm, aptly named, for it still exists tucked away on the northern boundary next to the Arthur Dye School. The Sindrey family rapidly lost all their land to the immediate post-war development, for they retained the land on the south-east side of Princess Elizabeth Way, which extended to the railway and was called Brooklyn Gardens but later was sold to Western Estates who developed one of the first post-war private housing estates. Later still, some of the land adjacent to the railway was sold to Gloucestershire County Council for the development of St Benedict's School (now Christ College).

So all in all, whilst progress went ahead the estate expanded but still retained most of its pre-war homes along the old Arle Road as it joined Village Road and along Village Road itself. The three-storey farm house which was part of the original Old Arle Court still stands and is believed

to be haunted, whilst Arle House and its lodge survived for a time. So did Waldrist, home for a while of the Wood family, later developed into Waldrist Close.

Residents at the corner of Welch Road have found artefacts that must have belonged to the original Arle House. On the former site is a care home for the elderly whilst opposite, Tungum Engineering took over the Villa and land on the corner of Village Road and the old Arle Road, (now Kingsmead Road). However, recent plans to demolish the villa and extend the business were turned down as the Villa is now Listed. Despite this, it was becoming derelict until complaints were made and it is now being restored.

If we are to retain the old buildings in Arle and Hesters Way money needs to be spent on them. Fortunately developers have built beside

the site of the original farm-house, an attractive Close which enhances the neighbourhood. But along Village Road itself, in addition to post-war private houses, commercial buildings have been erected, so we should be thankful that the old row of cottages, once the homes of Arle Farm employees, are preserved for posterity.

If you wander along Village Road today, past the old cottages which faced the field where the Revival Meeting described by a former resident took place, and cross the new bridge spanning the Chelt, you will come upon the Premier Inn built on the site of The Cross Hands Inn. Opposite is a charming black and white cottage, lovingly preserved, once the home of





**CHELTONHAM GOLDEN WEDDING**

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Fowler of Cross Harle, Tisbury road, Cheltenham, who celebrated their golden wedding on Tuesday. They were married in Cheltenham on April 25, 1880, and have passed their event. Mr. Fowler, until his retirement six years ago, was an employee of the Cheltenham and District Gas Company.

the local blacksmith. It is a miracle that this ancient cottage has survived, but tucked away here and there are other old cottages part of Arle's history.

However, Arle's history goes back into the realms of time. Little did the pupils of Arle School (later Kingsmead) realise as they played in the playing fields on which in the pre-War years, the Woods ran a successful farm, know that beneath their feet lay an Anglo-Saxon settlement. During the new development of the proposed All Saints Academy, the land being cleared opened up a vista of an even earlier history than had been envisaged. The findings are being studied and full details will be available in the near

future. Thus, we must consider the criteria for deciding what must go and what must be retained, for there may well be other ancient sites hidden beneath this vast estate.

Yet whilst retaining those old cottages along Village Road,



Edinburgh Place

some of the post-war flats erected higher up on the estates have, in recent years 'bit the dust'. It is not just a case of historical value, but of convenience or rectifying what, at the time they were built, was considered expedient but later considered unsuitable for growing families. So gradually in the past ten years or so these flats have been replaced by small housing estates. Yet those on the lower north end have been retained. In fact, after the demolition of the Adult Training Centre, another block of flats was erected and quite attractive it is too, but they were denied vehicular access to the cul-de-sac that was part of the old Arle Road. They lie next to Chelt

Walk an oasis of greenery off this busy road which can be reached by a lane adjacent to Christ College and also from across the Chelt in St Peter's Park.

However, even here at the extreme edge of the estate where Andy's Candies used to be, other buildings have taken its place: factories, petrol stations and opposite, where Mother's Pride Bakery used to be, a prestigious car firm is flanked by a garish yellow warehouse. On the north-western side, however, George Reading's Way extending to meet Glynbridge Gardens, and divided by the Chelt from PC World and other businesses, offers a quiet backwater.

At the same time, development has continued at the opposite end with the development of Fiddlers Green and Elm Farm, not to mention, of course, the all-important 'Donut' – GCHQ - the 21st Century answer to the hide-bound architecture of Regency Cheltenham: Hester's Way encompasses it all.

It only remains for Coronation Square to be rescued from its seemingly abandoned state and with the expenditure of a considerable sum, it is hoped it will be re-developed into a shopping area that does justice to this expanding estate.



## THE BATTLE FOR BEDLAM MILL

There has always been a community spirit in Hesters Way, particularly during the War and post-War years, but when something threatens a well-loved landmark, then that community spirit comes to the fore and when a local historical building was under threat then not only the residents of Hesters Way and Arle were involved but the cudgels were taken up by the Swindon Village Society and Cheltenham Local History Society as well.



When one of the oldest surviving buildings in the area, namely Bedlam Mill (alias The Homestead) which stood off the playing field of Arle School, formerly part of Arle Farm, was under threat of demolition then at the first intimation of what was likely to happen, battle lines were drawn. And what a

battle it proved to be lasting from October 2002 to spring in 2004. Because it actually stood on the boundary of Swindon and Arle, naturally the Swindon Village Society took up the cudgels.

When the Planning Department announced what was planned for that area, local residents and even people further afield made their protests heard for this ancient Mill whose history dated back to the 13th Century, and probably beyond, was a well-known landmark. And whilst perhaps there was no great objection to the erection of new homes in the area, there was certainly a strong objection to the plan to demolish this building.

Letters were sent to the Planning Department, to the local papers and to MPs and English Heritage to prevent such desecration. As soon as Swindon Village Society learnt of the proposals it immediately applied for Emergency Listed Status because of the reluctance of the former owner to apply for Listed Status which he felt might impose too many regulations. This action was urgent as the Swindon Village Society had learnt to their cost, because previously when they had applied for Emergency Listed Status for an old cottage in Quat Goose Lane, the new owner had sent in a bull-dozer which promptly demolished it overnight. The society was afraid the same might happen to Bedlam Mill. So it was obvious that time was of the essence if Bedlam Mill was to be saved.

They were doubly concerned when Gloucestershire Echo published a front-page headline on a 16th century listed building in Apperley which had been bulldozed and knocked to the ground, completely disregarding that it was a listed building.

Of course, the owner and wrecker disclaimed knowledge of this outright piece of vandalism, but it only served to make the saviours of Bedlam Mill more determined to save it.

The new owner of the property, Newland Homes, whilst anxious to go ahead with its plans, did not stoop so low, but it tried everything to get the building demolished and make way for a small housing estate of modern homes. I think it is fair to say that few speculative builders know or care much about the history of an area and some may even be surprised when local people who had grown used to seeing an old building, and cared little until it was rumoured that it would be demolished, then begin to take an interest in it.

An article published in the Echo of 1/11/2002 by James Costley-White drew the attention of the public at large as to what might happen. Further letters to the editor followed by those of members of Hesters Way History Society and the editor of the Hesters Way History books coupled with letters to the Planning Department gained public awareness. Despite remarks by English Heritage that the premises were not listed and of no architectural merit, backed by the Planning Department, such remarks were like a red rag to a bull for it was pointed out by those local historians who had troubled to find out more of the mill's history that the premises dated back to the 13th Century and that it began as a corn mill and was documented as early as 1250.

Despite being described by Newland Homes as a redundant building of an indeterminate age, it was in fact, a family home of character with a long history. It began as a corn mill dating back to 1246 and was known at that time as Priest's Mill and later as Bedlam Mill. It was then owned by a religious charity that ran a lunatic asylum (hence its name). By 1775 it had changed use as a cloth mill as per a sales notice in the Gloucester Journal in February of that year. In 1781 it became the farmhouse of Bedlam Mill



Apperley listed building

and remained as such in the 20th Century. Then it lost most of its land to farming and became a family home.

This was verified by a letter to the Echo from one Roderick Yeend of Malmesbury who had been made aware of what it was proposed to do with his family home. His uncle James Yeend was the owner/occupier from his marriage until shortly before his death in 1973. His grandfather, Walter Yeend was the landlord of the Cross Hands where his father William Wallace was born in 1898, who, like many publicans of that date combined farming with the license trade. Mr Roderick Yeend recalled watching the horses pulling the circular stone press which crushed apples, for it was a cider mill at that time. The stones have survived and can be seen lying on the ground nearby. Mr Yeend thanked the Swindon Village Society and others who were doing all they could to preserve his old home.

Despite this, Newland Homes were not prepared to give up. English Heritage were called in, but their opinion was that it did not deserve Listed Status and that, though it was a remarkable survivor in that surrounding modern development, it did not meet the criteria for listing as it did not contain sufficient original fabric.

Letters were sent to the Planning Department to save this building and a lengthy petition was drawn up signed by the residents in that area and even further afield. Then Newland Homes suggested that the presence of a gas main in the area might be a hazard but this was dismissed by the Gas Company who stated that the mains ran along the middle of the main road and that no-one had hitherto suggested there was any danger when other nearby houses were built! The residents of nearby Attwood Close objected that the new development would disturb the flourishing wild life in the area and so a bat survey was carried out but it was felt they were not so numerous as to be disturbed if work was carried out at the right time, so the pipistrel bats which had flourished in that ancient site were safe.

Then the placement of windows in the new homes were queried as it faced on to Arle School playing field and it was felt that the windows might be damaged. The next task was to have a Flood Risk survey carried out, but it was felt there was no real risk. The builders were persuaded to retain the 'footprint' of the original mill whilst at the same time, adapting it and trying to meet the wishes of immediate neighbours. Unfortunately the outbuilding of the Mill, where the mill-wheel originally stood was demolished but the remainder was retained and converted into two semi-detached homes, thereby leaving room for the building of the new road.

It was impossible to please everybody but the over-riding factor was that the ancient mill itself should not be demolished and so the battle

continued until the spring of 2004, when all objections were considered and a compromise was reached. Modification were carried out and if it still looks rather incongruous nestling amongst the towering modern homes nearby, at least it had been



Bedlam Mill 2010

saved and so at least one important piece of Hesters Way and Swindon Village history has been saved by people power. It was too late to save Arle Mill, the old Arle Court or Arle Farm House and a few of the cottages which stood in the way of progress, but this Battle has made people aware of their local history so that in future, if it is threatened, they will do all they can to save it.

### **Post Script**

Regarding Oak House at Apperley, fortunately a Mr Richard White from Much Marcle, Herefordshire bought the property from Ruth Shields after it was driven into by a JCB in 2006. He is now restoring the part-demolished listed cottage and it is hoped his efforts will offset the damage done by those people who seem to care little for historic buildings.

## MEMORIES OF ARLE AND HESTERS WAY

We owe a debt of gratitude to our senior citizens who have kindly shared their memories of their childhood in those days before the last war when Arle and Hesters Way were in the countryside, almost devoid of houses except for the few cottages, one or two farms and the long-gone homes of the gentry. Arle as they knew it is no more, except in their memories and the few pictures that have survived.

Audrey Stevens (nee Peart) remembers

*As a child she lived at Bank Cottages with her parent; unlike other cottages it was not a tied cottage and had previously been occupied by Stan and Winifred Iles who became life-long friends. The rent until 1949 was 6/6d a week paid weekly at the kitchen of Arle Court Farm (usually by Audrey) and the cash always handed to Mrs Brown at the door of the kitchen into which Mrs Brown did not deign to invite her. Those were the days of 'knowing your place' and Audrey sometimes fell foul of this social requirement. She believes Jocker Brown was paid the pre-war value of Bank Cottages that she thought was either £25 or £100. Hesters Way Book 2 sets out the amounts the Council paid for property that was compulsorily purchased. No doubt the Browns were as bitter as the Wood family of Arle Farm about their land and homes being summarily taken from them.*



Audrey, mother and rabbit

Audrey's earliest memories were of her father rushing out of the house on hearing the word 'Fire'. She believes she was about three and remembers



**MR. AND MRS. G. W. WISE,**  
of 7, Arle Cottages, Arle, near Cheltenham, who celebrated their golden wedding on Tuesday. Mr. Wise has been in the employ of Mr. S. G. Wood, of Arle Farm, for over 33 years. The couple have two sons and four daughters, all married, and have 12 grandchildren, two of whom are serving in the Forces.

sitting on the pavement crying for her dad and calling 'come back daddy, you'll be killed'. The local men had formed a chain to pass buckets of water along to put the fire out. Apparently Mr and Mrs Wise's chimney had caught fire (a common hazard in the days of coal fires). Fortunately all was well—the fire was extinguished and her daddy returned home safe and sound.

Another worrying event occurred when she was still about three when one day she saw her mother crying – mothers don't cry when you are three! It seems she had heard that Mr and Mrs Wise were to go into the workhouse – a place dreaded by everyone. But a check of the records do not reveal them as inmates so one assumes they managed after all, or perhaps their

children helped out, but such events stick in a child's mind.

Yet a more terrifying event occurred when Audrey had called at Arle Farm for her friend. It was just as the cows were returning to the farm to be milked and the road was deep in mud. Audrey's friend managed to get out of the way but poor Audrey was stuck in the mud and thought her end had come. Fortunately James, the cowman, scooped her up and kept her safe: he remained her hero for evermore.

Of the nearby White House on the corner of Village Road and the then Arle Road (now Kingsmead Rd), she believes the owners were Stevens who owned Paragon Laundry. This beautiful villa was later taken over by the Tungum Company as offices, but, needing to expand, their application to demolish, was turned down as it was a Listed Building. From then sadly, the building went rapidly into dilapidation, until it was mentioned in the Echo and it is now being restored.

Nearby was The Gables owned then by a Mr and Mrs Cox, the grounds of which were given over to market gardens. Audrey recalls buying lovely tomatoes from them. Mrs Cox whom she remembers as a rather 'whiskered' lady, used to turn on a miniature fountain in the pretty conservatory at the rear of the house for her to see, and also used to put on a pianola for her amusement. Audrey believes the Sindrey family later acquired the house and land.

Next along the road came the remains of the original Arle Court that was part of the farm of that name in which the Browns resided. A lane nearby led through a field into a very creepy narrow way and emerged on the Tewkesbury Road. Half way along there was a railway carriage mounted on bricks, but if she had to go that way, she used to run there if she were alone, as if the devil himself was after her. On the opposite side of Tewkesbury Road was a large Victorian house surrounded by a market garden and a Toll House, known as Pike House, that used to sell cigarettes and sweets. Sadly this Toll House, a vital part of English History, has not survived.

Of other early residents, she recalls a Mrs Roberts who lived in the row of cottages at Arle End. She believes it was third from the end nearest Waldrist. She does remember being sent to visit Mrs Roberts shortly after the birth of her son, Francis, and recalls a bedroom with white-washed walls, a white bedspread, just a bed and a wooden chair in the room. Another time, when visiting at Christmas, Mrs Roberts was painting a toy for one of the children.

Audrey's most vivid memory is that of a Revivalist Meeting held in a field opposite the cottages in Village Road, where every summer a band of "Missionaries" used to arrive and erect a marquee. She and her friends watched their arrival from the stile opposite the cottages and she believes someone played a squeaky harmonium. There was much happy-clapping and cries of "Hallelujah". They thought it was great, not a bit sombre, like the services they attended at the parent Church of St Marks. Towards the end of the service, emotions would reach fever-pitch and the preacher would beg "those who wanted to be saved and born again" to come forward. The children just did not understand this and hung back but then Mr George Johnson bravely stepped forward and offered himself up "to be born again". The children were really mystified – how could this fully grown man be "born again"!!! They stood on tip-toe to see this "miracle" but all that seemed to happen was that Mr Johnson knelt down and the preacher placed his hand on his head. It was all a bit disappointing to them but his action seemed to lead to a lot of cheering and clapping and more

“Hallelujahs”. Those Johnsons were neighbours and a very hard-working and kind family. George, usually pronounced ‘Jarge’, Mrs Johnson and four daughters may or may not be forebears of the other Johnson family of whom we hear so much.

Although Audrey and her friends were perhaps not entirely au fait with the social strata which existed in that area, nevertheless when she came into contact with the gentry, she recalls vividly how she was treated, and of course, being a curious child, always noted the furnishings and ornaments. When visiting Mr and Mrs Voice’s house with a friend, Elsie Cripps, she recalled one bedroom contained beautiful wooden wardrobes with Egyptian figures carved into them, bought at an exhibition in London. Another room which impressed her was a large one containing a beautiful wicker chair on a raised dais like a throne. It was, in fact, a commode but to a child having only an outside ‘thunder-box’ this created quite an impression.

Arle House at that time was surrounded by high walls and railings through which one could see this impressive villa. The entrance to it was canopied with pillars. Whilst not exactly a pretty house it was very grand. The lodge to it was a few yards from Arle Farm House and a wide drive led to the front entrance.

At the beginning of the Second World War the villagers were invited to shelter in the wine cellars when the sirens sounded. Mrs Denne, the lady of the house, did not join them (she evidently trusted them not to raid the wine cellar!), but she used to sit in the hall in a full-length green dress, her



grey hair tied back in a bun and her hand always resting on a walking stick – her back very straight. Whilst the common people sat on the stone-slab floor in the cellars where it was icy cold. There it was that Audrey did her homework and passed the time filling up her stamp album.

In subsequent years residents became more blase and remained at home when the sirens sounded. Later, her parents acquired a Morrison Shelter which took up 95% of the kitchen and allowed about nine inches space to get

Audrey as a girl



to the gas cooker. The idea was that all the children of the village would come and shelter in it. However, in time, sleeping on the metal mesh base and with the claustrophobia it caused, Mr Morrison's grand idea became a repository for everything but bodies.

How many people, looking back today can claim to have had a lovely childhood and the freedom to wander. Arle was such a peaceful place then and her mother used to invite friends to a tea of salad, sherry trifle and home-made fruit cake. In autumn friends would arrive in long macs and wellingtons, armed with walking sticks to collect hedgerow blackberries for jam making and

bottling and the usual Aunty Lizzie's teas. In summer they would walk (yes walk) from Arle to The House in the Tree in Hayden Road, for a drink for father and lemonade for mother and Audrey, and a packet of Smiths Crisps with the little wad of salt before they walked home again. What a special treat!

Eventually her family were re-housed in Hawthorn Road where everything was new but they hated it - for it felt claustrophobic after the wide-open spaces of Arle where the distant view of the Malverns and Cleve Hill were awe-inspiring. Later her parents bought two cottages in Charlton Kings but it is her memories of her time in Arle which remain so vivid. How many residents today of this area, young or old, can have had such a memorable childhood?

# MORE CHIPPINGS OF TIMES PAST

## MR BRADSHAW

It is difficult to imagine how Hester's Way looked at the end of World War II. To those people who were born here and lived in the area we owe a debt, for without their memories we would know very little of the people and places in those far-off days.

Mr Bradshaw is from a third generation of Cheltenham builders. He grew up in the area of Prestbury Road and Cromwell Road. Two friends, the Bryant lads, went from Cromwell Road before the War to live in semi-detached houses in Village Road. So he used to cross town from Prestbury on a quick journey by bike to see them, which was the first time he became familiar with the area. Later, he came to the Hester's Way area more on business, becoming familiar with the sawmill and scrapyard.

Two uncles in the 1920s and 1930s started a building company in Naunton Park, trading as Bradshaw Brothers. His father, cousin and older brother were also drawn into the trade. Pre-War, while he was still at school, his father moved on to trade independently on projects in the Alstone area, along with his older brother. This work included a pair of cottages in Rowanfield Road.

Where Alstone Croft Playing Field is now, there had been a big sand-pit. It had its own separate railway siding crossing Alstone Lane. Beautiful quality sand came from there. The sand was loaded into wagons, and he recalls a train pushing or towing a couple of wagons across Alstone Lane there, whilst a lookout waved them across with a red flag to warn anything approaching.

He can't quite recall where the tarmac finished in Alstone Lane, but it was somewhere near the school that used to stand at the corner of Rowanfield Road. From there as far as Village Road there was no tarmac along the lane, nor along Rowanfield Road. But these tracks were not muddy. Country lanes in those days had an ash and clinker surface, so were fairly dry. (In the days of open fires, 90% of household rubbish was ash and clinker anyway). Cobbles were rammed into any potholes. Mind you, you might still step into a pothole at night, since you would have had no torches, only maybe a candle in a lantern. Until 2008, Tanners Lane was still an example of what the whole lane towards Alstone used to be like, just hardcore.

Mr Bradshaw was a builders' apprentice before the War, but then went into the Army. Coming back after the War, there was no work available initially, but he soon got back into building. (Bear in mind that there was

a need, not only to replace bombed and demolished buildings, but also to catch up on all the building that would otherwise have been going on throughout the intervening six years). He worked briefly at a factory, but went back to the building trade. He enjoyed it, otherwise he wouldn't have done it!

He recalls that the sawmills at Hester's Way were run by an Evesham firm. There were two big saws, which were powered by connection to a little steam engine. The weird and wonderful large cross-cut saw had a claw, ram and lever. It just dropped down onto the tree trunks and cut them into the required lengths such as 6' or 6'6" (1.9m or 2m), and then cut these into coffin boards. (People at that time would often employ builders as undertakers, as it was more economical). Any planks not big enough for that purpose were cut by the smaller saw into fencing posts. Still smaller pieces became firewood, but the sawmill itself used a lot of that to fire up the boiler. And there were several barrow-loads of sawdust produced each day, which they piled up as high as they could.

Mr Bradshaw had the chance, one day as a teenager, to pull the lever that drew the trunk through the large cross-cut saw, while the other men guided it through. There were no Health and Safety restrictions in those days! So he was considered responsible enough to be a helping pair of hands.

He would buy fencing posts at this sawmill, both before the War and also after. These posts were of good quality oak. So because furniture was still rationed by coupons, whereas there was a surplus of fencing posts, he used some of these posts to make a set of four dining chairs for the sawmill managers!

Mr Bradshaw did his courting around here, after the War. His wife lived on Gloucester Road, near the Calcutta. So they would walk from there out towards Fiddler's Green and Arle Court, then back by way of the Lansdown Castle, (a castellated shop).

## **MR KANIA**

Ted Kania's father came from Poland in 1948, and like many of his compatriots, he ended up in the building industry. In late-1952, his parents and Ted moved up with their caravan from Somerset to a caravan-site off Hester's Way Lane at the back of the M.E.B. substation. This site was for Wimpey's workers who were building the new estates. The "Hostel" which was here probably consisted of an encampment of huts for single people plus caravans for families. The Kania's lived there for a while, then in 1954



Ted Kania and sister Sue in 1952/53 at the Wimpey workers' site off Hesters Way Lane

moved the caravan to a nearby spot behind The Bungalow. The Bungalow (next to the Mission Room) was owned and occupied by Mr Higgs, but there was a separate dwelling behind. The Kantias were there for a couple of years before moving to a brand-new house in Welch Road in 1955. (Nos.1-12 Welch Road were completed in 1953, but the other houses there were added later).

Here, as a four or five year-old boy, he recalls playing along Hester's Way Lane in the old vehicles at Challis & Hart car-breakers, with their distinct smell of old leather. He also recalls Hopkins the milkman along the lane. Also, there were the Saw Dumps at the sawmill next door, with a layer of sawdust several feet thick - almost as springy as a trampoline. He also recalls that Mr Higgs had a long

stretch of garden behind The Bungalow, and there he climbed the trees, and was chased by the geese. And also Mr Higgs had pigs, of course, and grew vegetables.

Ted has a few photos of he and his sister Sue sitting in a field here. Perhaps the two children were walking from their caravan towards the hut camp, in which case the large but low shed-like structures visible behind them could be part of



The Kania children in about 1953, apparently in front of Seacombe Road flats, sitting about where Hesters Way Resource Centre is now

the market-garden known as The Poplars. If so, a chunky tower a little further away might have been some kind of crusher or hoist at Challis & Hart's. Or the constructions visible might be the camp itself, with some



The Kania children in 1953 in front of perhaps Tichborne Villa

kind of lookout tower for Wimpey's foremen.

The list of residents' names at "Wimpey's Hostel" in the 1952 Cheltenham Electoral Registers is extraordinary: 278 people. Bear in mind that these were only the voters, it excludes any children such as Ted. It also excludes immigrant workers such as Ted's father, one of many Polish workers there, who were not entitled to vote. (This is why only his mother Doris M. Kania is listed in the register, at The Bungalow). By late-1953, Wimpey's Hostel was much reduced in numbers.

As a schoolboy in 1955-56, Ted walked from Welch Road to the infant and junior schools at Rowanfield, this being before Hester's Way School was built. Where Hester's Way School is now there was just a green or waste-ground, which they could use as a

short-cut. Then they would go along Tanners Lane, where if they had a penny to spare they made use of a small sweet-shop. This shop was not at the Post Office close-by, but must have been tucked into the back of Tanners Cottages on the corner. Another green space was opposite there, a field with horses on it, where St Thomas More Catholic Church was later built. Also, near Welch Road he can recall that the old Arle House was still standing.

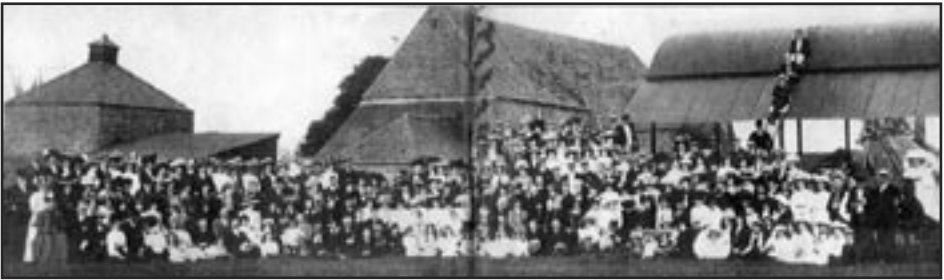
# ARLE COURT FARM

Another local farm to be compulsorily purchased in Arle in 1952 was that of Arle Court Farm which stood on the original Arle Road (now Kingsmead Road), covering 49.67 acres. It was owned at that time by the Browns and originally it stretched from Arle Road to the Gloucester



ARLE COURT—FACING TOWARDS CHELTENHAM.  
DEMOLISHED ABOUT 1880.

X WINDOWS REMAIN. From a sketch of about 1850 by J. S. Welsh.



Wesleyan rally and garden party at Mr F. W. Brown's farm - Arle, June 9th 1909

Road and embraced part of St Marks Estate.

Mr John Reginald Brown, whose father, Frank, held the farm before him was a member of the Methodist Church of St Marks and was one of the benefactors. He was, at the time of his death, treasurer of the Re-building Fund, and his late father, Frank was



the donor of the manse at Brighton Villa in Gloucester Road but this was later destroyed by fire.

In a historical pageant in Cheltenham some forty years prior to his death, Mr Brown, as a boy, was 'Master Cheltenham' in striking contrast to the late Mr E H Fluck's float representing 'Father Thames'.

Mr Brown and his wife, Ethel are described in Audrey Steven's 'Memories' and no doubt he was well known by other residents in Arle. He was affectionately referred to as 'Jocker Brown'. A nearby lane that led from the original Arle Road to Orchard Way, near St Barnabas Church, was called 'Jocker Brown's Lane' and it was one of the first parts of the farm to disappear in the post-war development along with the orchards.

Mr Brown died in 1946 following an operation and his wife inherited the farm for they had no children. At least there were no heirs to be done out of their inheritance as was the case with Arle Farm. So yet another piece of Arle's history disappeared and there can now be few people left who can remember this bluff hearty man in his jodphurs who was a popular figure in that area. I doubt if the people who live in Orchard Way or Pennsylvania Avenue know of this gentleman on whose land they are now living. But there are still a few landmarks of those early days, if you care to explore.

## THE SINDREY FAMILY

**L**ike the Wood family, the Sindreys too came to Cheltenham in the 19th century to make their fortune. The first to arrive was George Sindrey, a blacksmith, for in those days of horse transport and extensive farming there was plenty for blacksmiths to do. This first George settled in the Lower Alstone area where his son, another George followed the same trade. The census shows they came from the Forest of Dean.

This second George married a local girl, Mary Ann Smith in 1862 and they settled at Sydney House, Rowanfield, where by 1881 they had three sons to carry on the market gardening business: Albert Henry born 1865, Arthur George born c. 1867 and Frederick born c.1868. Each of the sons followed the market gardening business for both Alstone and Arle were highly fertile areas which supported many families from large farms to small-holdings.

However, it is Albert Henry with whom we are chiefly concerned for at that time, market garden land being snapped up, he looked more to Arle to make his living and it was at Brooklyn Gardens that he and his wife, Mary Louise settled. At that time, Brooklyn Gardens extended from close to Arle Court Farm along the Chelt, to the railway on Arle Road.



**MR. AND MRS. GEORGE SINDREY,**  
 Of Sidney House, St. Mark's, Cheltenham,  
 who celebrated their golden wedding  
 to-day (October 19, 1912), having been  
 married at the Parish Church, Cheltenham,  
 on October 19, 1862.  
 [Photo W. Wilson, 22 Roman-road, Cheltenham.]

Albert and his wife produced four sons and three daughters, namely George Thomas born c.1888, Albert Henry born c.1889, Roy born 1892 Arthur Victor, born c .1906, Hilda May born 1893, Nora Winifred born 1896 and Kathleen born 1904. Needless to say the sons carried on the family business until they set up elsewhere in the area on their own account.

Each of his sons ran their own successful market gardening business: three of them in Rowanfield and one in Tewkesbury Road and so the Sindrey family between them cultivated a large part of the Arle and Alstone area. But one by one they too had their land compulsorily purchased when Rowanfield Estate was built. But, as stated above, Albert



**A PRETTY CHELTENHAM WEDDING.**

The marriage took place on Wednesday, Sept. 10th, 1912, at St. Mark's Church, Cheltenham, by Rev. Canon Webb-Peploe, of Mr. James Yeend, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Yeend, of Millfield, Tewkesbury road, Cheltenham, to Miss Olive Louise Sindrey, youngest daughter of Mr. F. W. Sindrey, Sidney House, St. Mark's, Cheltenham. The bridal party leaving the church.  
 [Cheltenham Chronicle "Photo"]



### A PRETTY CHELTENHAM WEDDING.

THE MARRIAGE TOOK PLACE AT ST. PETER'S CHURCH, CHELTENHAM, ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29th, OF MR. ARTHUR THOMAS SINDREY, ELDEST SON OF MR. A. H. SINDREY, OF BROOKLYN GARDENS, ARLE ROAD, CHELTENHAM, AND MISS KATHLEEN LOUISA WILSON, YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF MR. AND MRS. AMOS WILSON, OF SWINDON ROAD, CHELTENHAM. THE BRIDE'S FATHER IS CHURCHWARDEN OF ST. PETER'S AND THE BRIDEGROOM AN OLD CHOIR-BOY, WELL-KNOWN MARKET GARDENER, AND A STRONG CONSERVATIVE WORKER.

1.—The bride's parents leaving the church.  
2.—The happy couple.

3.—The best man and bridesmaid, brother and sister of the bridegroom.

[Photos by Cheltenham Newspaper Co., Ltd.]



### INTERESTING CHELTENHAM WEDDING.

The marriage took place at St. Lawrence Church, Sarisdon, near Cheltenham, on April 24th, 1920, of Mr. Ernest Edward Matthews, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Henry Matthews, of Watkinson, Leicestershire, to Miss Mary Winifred Smedley, daughter of Mr. A. H. and the late Mrs. Smedley, of Brooklyn Gardens, Arle, near Cheltenham.



MR. A. H. SINDREY, of Brooklyn Gardens, Arle, who died last week, aged 72 years. He had lived at Brooklyn Gardens for the last 50 years, and was a well-known fruit grower. He leaves four sons and three daughters.  
"Cheltenham Chronicle" Photograph.

continued for several years until the whole of his Brooklyn Gardens estate was built on by Western Estates, when no doubt he was glad to retire.

So gradually in those early post-war years, Arle, Hesters Way and Rowanfield ceased to become agricultural land and gave way to housing. The only farm to survive the drastic changes of the post-war years, was as mentioned above, Hope Farm.

## THE RESIDENTS OF ARLE FARM

**I**n the early 19th century Cheltenham was expanding rapidly with the influx of the gentry who came to partake of the Spa Waters which King George III had approved. Nobility, genteel people, even foreign counts and countesses flocked to Cheltenham – all needing accommodation, entertainment, and, of course, food. Whilst there was no lack of entrepreneurs prepared to invest in providing suitable accommodation in the Lansdown and Bayshill area close to the original spa, the newcomers, used to being waited on, needed an army of servants to meet their needs. This of course, gave employment to the lesser residents of the area, whilst the farmers and market gardeners did their best to meet the ever-increasing demand for food.

So it was that in the 1850's James Wood of Devon, with his wife Jane, came to settle in Cheltenham at 4 Winchcombe Place, where he set up a modest dairy. So successful was he that before long he was forced to expand and looked to that area of the town in the north-west, namely Arle, which was renowned for its rich farmland. First of all he set up at Arle Court Farm and the dairy business soon expanded.

James and his wife lost their first daughter Georgiana, who did not survive long, but soon after, three other daughters, Mary Jane, Sarah and Martha were born, but naturally, it was a son that James hoped for. However, his first wife died in 1867, probably in childbirth and so James was forced to consider re-marriage to find a helpmate and mother for his daughters. His second wife, Anne Bentley, who was born in Whitwell, Derbyshire, had her hands full, for a farmer's wife worked hard and the thriving dairy business needed a lot of work. James, no doubt still hoped for a son to carry on the business, but their first child, Ada Theresa, named for her maternal grandmother was not the longed for son, and Ada Theresa died at the age of eight.

At last the longed-for son arrived – Walter James Frederick born in 1877, followed in 1880 by Sydney George. It seemed as if the future of the farm was assured with the arrival of two sons to carry on the business, which



continued to flourish. So the family settled happily at Arle Farm and the dairy business expanded. The arable side was also growing rapidly with the help, not only of the Wood family itself, but the labourers who lived in the row of cottages along Village Road.

Arle at that time was a very close-knit community, but everyone knew their place. No doubt the Woods and the Welch family of Arle House mingled from time to time, but the farming community, in those days, was very much into hunting. This was partly to keep down the fox population but also for social occasions. Hunt Meets were held at different areas of the town – the main hunt on Boxing Day met outside the Queens Hotel, the lesser ones meeting by the Cross Hands, the only hostelry at that time in the Arle Village area. It is hard to imagine today, that it was mostly fields where cattle and horses grazed and the only traffic was horse and carts, riders and the odd bicycle - this quiet Village Road was then free of the chicanes and traffic of the 21st century.

## SYDNEY GEORGE WOOD

Whether James himself ever hunted is not known, but his son Sydney George and grandson Gershom certainly did. For a time Sydney George resided at Arle Farm but on his marriage in 1898 to Victoria Louise Spry they moved to Waldrist along Village Road beyond the old cottages, whilst Walter remained at the Farm House.

However, Sydney George, by then a successful businessman as well as running the dairy business was a well-known and popular figure in local business, farming and sporting circles. Their marriage was blessed with the birth in 1900 of a daughter, Annie Doris, followed by a son Gershom Sidney in 1905 and a second son, Heber James in 1907. Annie Doris appeared to have been a favourite and the photograph shows her grandfather, James holding her when she was a toddler. Gershom took an active part in the family business but Heber, it is understood, was not of the best of health, and became a minister and spent some time abroad in missionary work.

When James, Sydney's father, died in 1905 his will left the farm equally between his sons but he stressed that he had made provision for each of his daughters, all of whom had married farmers, whilst he was alive. So Sydney and Walter continued to farm and manage the other properties they owned in the area.

Sadly, Walter died suddenly in 1918 at Arle Farm House of nephritis. His early death left problems. He did not leave a will nor male heirs, having two daughters, Annie Lilian Wood born 1905 and Marjorie Wood born 1908, this meant that if the business was to continue Sydney George would have to buy out his brother's share of the business. This he did and Annie Lilian later married Job William Thomas White in 1929, whilst Marjorie married Charles Hardiman. Sydney still resided for a time at Waldrist but in 1921, his circumstances being considerably better, he decided to purchase the prestigious Moat House which stood nearby in Uckington. This grandiose dwelling, (now a Listed Building) being more in keeping



James Wood and granddaughter

with his status amongst business and hunting circles was probably why, when he and his wife Victoria had a son, they called him after the leader of the Hunt who was Heber Percy.



S. G. Wood and daughter

It was in Uckington, just over the borders of Arle Farm land, that Moat House with its adjacent property, Moat Cottage, had in the 1850's been in the possession of the Buckle family for generations. At some time in the late 19th century it was acquired by Mr T. Jessop who very kindly entertained

the Boddington Harriers for lunch there. This elegant mansion was large enough to entertain Sydney George's business acquaintances as well as the hunting fraternity. Almost hidden away behind its moat and battlemented gate-houses, it was certainly an improvement on Arle Farm House where he still ran the dairy business.

Sydney and his wife Victoria seemed to have lost touch with the other members of the Wood family, the descendants of Walter and his wife Jane, though Eric White descendant of Walter, still recalls visiting Moat House in 1945. He was overawed at the grandeur of this splendid building and of his numerous, richer relatives. Nevertheless when he was inveigled into helping with the harvest he drove the jeep that pulled a trailer. However, his handling of the clutch was somewhat erratic and the poor helper on the trailer was tossed off. Whether this was a cousin he can't recall, but he doesn't recall making any further visits.

The family at Moat House led a busy social life, and Sydney George's obituary in the Gloucestershire Echo 1942 said he was chairman of the Cheltenham Gas Company and also of Cheltenham Motors Limited. He was also a keen golfer who sometimes played for the County and was also president of Lilley Brook Club. Cricket was another sport to which he was devoted in his younger days and had occasionally played for the county under the captainship of the famous W. G. Grace.

## GERSHOM SYDNEY WOOD

When Sydney George died, little did he realise that the property and the family business which, by then had been with the Wood family since the 1870's, was soon to be no more. His only daughter, Annie Doris had married Sir Ian Yeaman, a partner in the local law firm of Rickerby's and his trust in his son-in-law led him to name Sir Ian as well as his son Gershom Sydney to become trustees of his estate. All his household furniture, personal ornaments and wearing apparel, plate and plated articles, linen, china, glass, books, pictures and engravings etc., including motor-cars, were left to his wife Victoria. To his missionary son, Heber, he left one thousand pounds. But all his freehold farm-house, buildings and land known as Arle Farm together with the fields known as The Shallows, Fox's Close and Thickthorn plus the cottages known as Arle Farm Cottages, and Waldrist were left to his son Gershom Sydney.

Here however came the surprise bequest, for Sydney George left his

"dwelling house known as The Moat House Uckington with all fixtures and fittings thereon and gardens, yards, outbuildings and two cottages, namely Moat Cottage and The Kennels to his said daughter Anne Doris Yeaman". Whether this 'division of the spoils' rankled with his descendants is a moot point, but the writer was asked by descendants of both sides of the family 'whether there had been



'whether there had been any estrangement'. I can only guess in the light of what happened later, namely the compulsory purchase by Cheltenham Council in May 1953 of 156.02 acres of Arle Farm at the unrealistic price of £16,000, that the inheritors, Gershom's family, must have felt they had received a bad deal.

Be that as it may, since Annie Doris had inherited the property the Yeamans moved from Leckhampton Lodge to Moat House. On the death of Annie Doris and Sir Ian Yeaman in 1975 and 1977, the property was left to his son Keith Ian Yeaman but he and his wife were settled in their Cotswold home

and did not wish to move so Moat House was sold to a Mr David Verney.

However, Heber Wood, being away on his missionary service in Africa and possibly as a minister of the church, was unable to take part in the family business. Sydney's other son, Gershom Sydney had married one Joyce Alford in 1927 and, like his grandfather before him, must have felt, when two daughters arrived, Dinah and Wendy, that he too might be fated not to have a son and heir. Whatever the reason, his first marriage failed and he divorced his first wife and took as his second wife a divorcee, one Marjorie Stacey (nee Mant), They married in Cheltenham Registry Office in 1945 but that marriage too seemed fated and they were divorced.

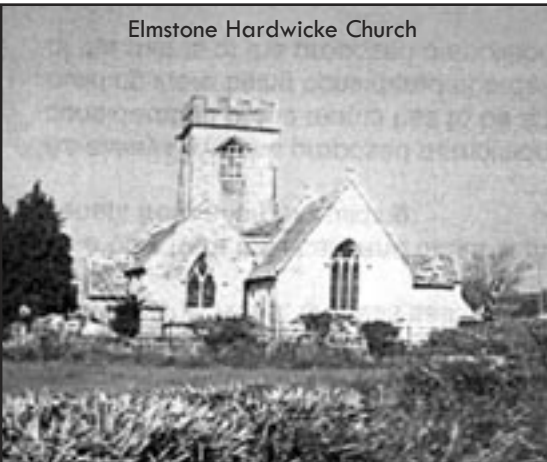
His third marriage to Marion Jane Wolfe in 1957 eventually brought him the son he longed for. When Gershom Thomas arrived in 1961, he had two older married half-sisters. But all was not well and the compulsory purchase of their farm had meant that Gershom Jr. had lost his inheritance.

Perhaps this was often discussed in the family, but certainly Gershom Jr. was always a very troubled and dissatisfied person.

On his father's death, he and his mother resided at Moat Cottage, near to Moat House where his married sister Wendy held her wedding reception. For a time Gershom Thomas attended Stowe School but meanwhile, Arle was changing rapidly in the post-War years, and on the farm which had been in his family for three generations, council houses sprang up and a different type of person occupied land that he believed should, eventually, have come to him. When, his uncle and aunt passed away, and then his dear mother, with whom he was very close, also died in



Elmstone Hardwicke Church



2005, he was left the remote Moat Cottage, far removed from those he knew. His existence from then on, continued to deteriorate and though he found one loyal friend to care for him, later events proved to be the last straw.

The Wood Family of Arle Farm is commemorated in a splendid stained glass window in Elmstone Hardwicke Church - a very fitting reminder of that once notable family. The family graves lie close together in that quiet churchyard. But the founder of that family, James Wood, lies buried in Cheltenham cemetery along with his son Walter and his first wife Jane, whilst next to that grave is that of Theresa Boulting grandmother of the younger Theresa and also of Anne Wood.

The war of 1939 –1945 saw many changes in the Arle area, as recounted in Hesters Way Book 1, with the villagers doing their share of ARP and WVS work and accommodating evacuees. But for the gentry at Moat House, the prospect of having 'scruffy urchins' from the slums of London or Birmingham was daunting to say the least. There was a family consultation and it was decided that Sydney George and his wife, then in their 60s could not possibly accommodate evacuees: so then whole family moved into Moat House and they were spared that problem. But to be fair, in the interests of Health and Safety, a tempting moat plus dozens of trees to climb, was too much of a risk for adventurous children who might well have met with accidents. So Moat House survived, but there is nothing left now of Arle Farm itself, except the estate of that name which earned a bad reputation through the behaviour of some of its residents who vandalised Moat House.

## **THE NATIVES AREN'T FRIENDLY**

As to what happened at Moat House after the Yeamans left, a Mr David Verney and his wife Barbara purchased it in 1978 and set about carrying out improvements subject to Planning Requirements for Listed Buildings. There they resided happily till in the winter of 1995/6 when Mr Verney was pruning roses, on hearing the sound of breaking glass he investigated and saw a group of six youths throwing stones across the moat to the detriment of his greenhouses. On his remonstrating, they laughed and ran off, but he jumped into his car, drove two miles and hid in wait for them to emerge on to Hayden Road, where he dealt forcibly with them. Too forcibly it seems for then, as today, the perpetrators sued for assault, and this law-abiding businessman was fined heavily for assault whilst the culprits got off scot-free. Mr Verney was traumatised by this event and had the security at Moat House considerably improved. But no doubt, it



## INTO THE LIGHT - THE ACADEMY

One thing is certain, the fortunate pupils who will attend this groundbreaking educational institution will have lived very different childhoods from those early pupils who entered Arle School (later re-named Kingsmead School) in the 1950's. Gone were those dark days of the war, although rationing had finally ended, raw materials for the construction industry were still in short supply and this shortage limited the design of those immediate post-war buildings.

Nevertheless when the new schools were erected in this post-war estate, namely Monkscroft Secondary, Arle and Pate's Grammar School, although the intake was perhaps not as advanced as those about to enter the new Academy, it has to be remembered that as well as the strict rationing and limitations of the War years, technology was not as we know it today. Although the radio kept people informed of events during the War, and the telephone was limited to government and the middle and upper classes, those pupils were not privileged to enjoy the results of 21st century technology which is now taken for granted. They had to learn the hard way!

Although Cheltenham had long had its share of private schools, namely the Gentlemen's College, The Ladies' College and Dean Close, nevertheless the immediate post-war state schools gave their pupils what was considered adequate instruction aided perhaps by the strict discipline of those days. Certainly no child would be allowed to interrupt the progress of his or her classmates by ill behaviour. The cane was used as a last resort but was very effective.

However, all that was to change. The post war schools were light and airy and the staff – many of whom were newly returned from HM forces put their stamp on the schools.

The headmaster of Monkscroft, Mr W. Tiplady introduced the first CSE, feeling that his pupils had every right to compete with the more able pupils. When, eventually the GCE replaced this, it certainly challenged the more hard-working pupils, some of whom, made it to university.

first Grammar School building in Hesters Way



Sadly, Monkscoft School did not survive to the 21st century, giving way, first of all to become a temporary school when the first grammar school on Hesters Way became co-ed. But this split-site arrangement was very inconvenient and Monkscoft, like other post-War buildings in the area, disappeared. Gone maybe, but not forgotten by its former pupils, who through the wonders of technology can set up a web site to contact old friends many of whom are now in their late sixties and remember the old school with affection.

## KINGSMEAD ONWARD AND UPWARD

Arle School which opened shortly after Monkscoft under the headship of Mr Nicholas, was later re-christened Kingsmead School and had its own ethos and with the enthusiasm of diligent staff and hard-working pupils established a VI form. But time does not stand still and competition from other schools such as Bournside and Balcarras caused numbers to fall and for a time the school went into special measures. Though it recovered somewhat, its future was doomed when it was proposed to build a Faith Academy on the site and to demolish the original school.

And so Kingsmead School stood in this rural community on the site of



Kingsmead School with construction for new Academy

Arle Farm, formerly home of the Gregory family and the Wood family, unaware of what lay beneath them. Inevitably the end loomed and preparations went ahead to build this new iconic building which is to alter the landscape.

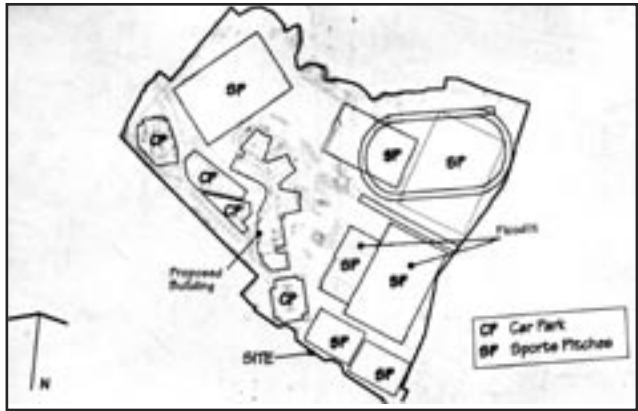
There was, as one might expect, some controversy about the building of the Academy on educational and religious grounds. But the head designate Mr P. Kingham and the Church authorities have, it is felt, allayed any fears. Meetings are being held at Christ College to inform parents and pupils what this new school will offer them, but everyone is impatient to see it in its final form.

It is to be a church academy for the whole community welcoming all faiths and no faiths. It offers 900 places for students aged 11-16 and 250

places in a VI form. The final intake of Kingsmead will join the Academy, as will the pupils from Christ College on Arle Road and other pupils who, it is hoped, will soon meld into the ethos of this prestigious school and appreciate the wonderful facilities it has to offer.

As you enter the building, the entrance at ground floor level will lead directly to the café/dining area with changing rooms for outdoor sports beyond, for there is no shortage of sports facilities. The chapel at first floor level is an important symbolic element and the top of the chapel will be visible from further afield.

There will be more than adequate teaching facilities with emphasis at the heart in the Learning Resource Centre with facilities for computers as well as a library for both Academy and community use if required. The hall is intended as a space for gathering and worship and will seat 360 students. The drama studio adjacent could serve as a stage or offer additional seating.



Artists' impressions of the Academy

In addition there is a meeting/conference room accessible for governors or community meetings, whilst the three learning wings are assembled as groups of rooms arranged around a central facility resource area. The whole area will be landscaped and the environment has been considered for habitat areas are proposed along the river corridor and site boundaries, so perhaps the pipistrel bats which formerly occupied the old Bedlam Mill may return.

Naturally attention has been paid to security and the Academy will operate extended opening hours with a manned reception; out of hours there will be CCTV surveillance and intruder alarms.

There can be no doubt that the Academy will make an impact on this area of Hesters Way and is obviously intended, not only to offer its pupils the best of education and sports facilities, but to invite the local residents to partake of its facilities and work with them to make it a success.

Once the Academy is running smoothly, under the headship of Mr Kingham, Kingsmead School, like Monkscroft will be no more. I am certain that former pupils will never forget their days in those post-War schools where their characters were formed and where they forged long-lasting friendships. No doubt they too will set up web sites so that former friends can keep in touch and reminisce about the old days.

## THE FOOTPRINTS OF TIME

The pupils stared out of the upper windows of their school, across the rather ugly barricades which were intended to protect them from any damage which might be occasioned by the activities going on outside. The front playground was now out of bounds in the interests of Health and Safety but it was a temporary parking lot for the workmen and visitors to the site.

The work was going ahead and was on schedule by the contractors, a Construction and Development Company, the UK branch of Skanska, an international Swedish firm of some renown. It was they who erected that well-known London landmark in St Mary Axe, euphemistically referred to as 'The Gherkin'. They had fulfilled contracts around the world and they were prepared for all eventualities, but even they were taken aback, when in May 2010 the schedule came to a halt. The reason – the finding of what later proved to be a discovery of immense significance.

Work ground to a halt, the workmen took a prolonged break, suited men consulted with the contractors and experts had to be summoned without delay. Soon a group of men clad in fluorescent jackets and hard

hats conferred earnestly. The pupils were mystified. Had an unexploded bomb been found? Were the workmen on strike? Or, more newsworthy, had the grizzly remains of former residents been found? It was none of these: never in their wildest dreams could they have envisaged what came to light. For on this site, formerly Arle School and before that the site of a flourishing farm – Arle Farm, owned for three generations by the Wood family-Anglo-Saxon remains had been found.

Work on the new Academy was temporarily suspended while Cotswold Archaeology were called in and the whole site carefully and meticulously excavated. Deadlines have to be met but this ‘find’ was far too important to brush aside. Unlike other local builders, who, on meeting obstacles of historical interest, went ahead and destroyed them, Skanska were well aware of its significance and did all they could not only to preserve these precious remains but also to see the building of the Academy went ahead as planned.

The finding of two skeletons led the archaeologists to think there may be more elsewhere on the site but this thought was dismissed due to the way the two bodies were buried. The remains of a large banqueting hall gave pause for thought, but only a prolonged examination of all the remains





will help to draw logical conclusions. Obviously its possible connection with other Anglo-Saxon remains in Gloucestershire will be considered, the nearest being Bishops Cleeve, Leckhampton and Deerhurst. Much has still to

be done and a full report will be given at a later date.

Whilst this wonderful Anglo-Saxon find may not in itself compare with the fantastic relics found at Sutton Hoo or the fabulous treasures recently unearthed in Staffordshire, yet it is 'our own' Anglo-Saxon site and of very great significance to the area. The local pupils from Kingsmead School and Christ's College were privileged to be invited on site to examine the remains. Here was a history lesson they would never forget.

The local paper took up the story as did the TV and once again Hesters Way was in the news this time for exciting ground-breaking reasons. Later, an exhibition of the finds will be open to the public, and you can be sure that not only will it appeal to the residents of this vast estate but to Cheltenham in general.

Once the Academy is completed and the surrounds landscaped, the skeletons will be re-interred in a suitable spot with due ceremony, and a plaque to commemorate this event will be affixed to the Academy. In addition signs giving details of this momentous discovery will be erected so that all can appreciate the work and careful preservation of this historic site. For Gloucestershire County Council, Skanska - the contractors, Cotswold Archaeology and the Church Authorities have all worked together to not only build this prestigious Academy but to ensure that the ancient history of the area has been preserved.

One cannot help but think with the urgency to build this vast estate in the immediate post-War years, whether other Anglo-Saxon remains lie hidden elsewhere. Certainly this event can truly be termed 'History on your Doorstep'.

## THE PAVILION OF PATE'S PLAYING FIELDS

From the early 1930s Pate's Grammar School, although still based in the town centre, had use of playing fields beyond the edge of town, i.e. in our area. The entrance was from Brooklyn Road, and the pavilion stood where Sochi Mews is now. For some years an annual fete was held on these fields, including aeroplane trips. [See our History of Hesters Way Volume 2 pp.20,21].

Cyril Palmer writing in Hesters Way News no.6 recalled around 1927, when "there was a Flower Show at a field in the St. Mark's area. It was on the Easter period. These shows were held in Charlton Kings, Prestbury and St. Mark's on an annual Bank Holiday, and were very popular in those days.

At the St. Mark's show there was an Avro biplane from the Great War period, which gave flights over Cheltenham from 5/- per person (25p). The aeroplane had a rotating 9-cylinder engine, which moved with the rotation of the propeller and was lubricated by 'Castrol R' engine oil which gave off a pleasant smell.

These old-fashioned aeroplanes would leave the ground when they reached a speed of about 30-40 miles per hour. This enabled them to land and take off in any average sized field: ideal for small shows.



Aerial view of Dowty Road area 1954

**Aerial view of Dowty Road area in 1962.  
(Cheltenham Newspaper Co Ltd).**



**What the above photograph represents.  
(Courtesy of Chelt. Local Studies Library).**



The pilot of this aeroplane was a Mr Jordan, whose father was a well-known Cheltenham coal merchant. (Allen Cobham did similar flights in St. Mark's in the 1930s)."

A booklet of about 1934 called "St. Mark's Estate" describes the scene:- "Shakespeare Road runs in the direction of green fields, where are football pitches, at the further side being numerous hedges of hawthorn. In Brooklyn Road, a little way down on the left, is the main entrance to the Grammar School Playing Fields, with pavilion and ample covered accommodation for cycles and motor cycles. A site for the new Grammar School buildings has been acquired."

The pavilion resembled the semi-detached houses of nearby Kipling Road, which were built in the same era. Later, as the estates covered the playing fields, the pavilion still stood amongst the redevelopment, sitting under a large tree, as shown on a 1954 aerial photograph.

The original pre-War plan had been for the long straight line of Brooklyn Road to be extended southwards, so that it would have met Gloucester Road where Benhall roundabout is now. This would have neatly concluded the shape of the St. Mark's Estate. [See the map in our Volume 1 p.17]. It was beside this new road that a site was set aside for the new Boys' Grammar School, roughly where Walton House and Goldsmith Close are now.

But the War changed plans, and the playing fields ended up under compulsory purchase in 1952. The compulsory purchase resulted in arguments which culminated in the resignation of the Pate's headmaster Mr Heawood. More detail about the saga is in our Volume 2 pp.33-34.

Most of the area so purchased was not actually built over until the end of the 1950s: this included Dowty Road, Coronation Square and Pakistan House. Ironically, a large chunk of the land (3 acres) was re-incorporated into the grounds of the 1960s school building!

An aerial photograph shows the area in 1954, looking north. Princess Elizabeth Way is on the left. At the top, Newton



Sochi Court flats which were demolished in 2003 (DE 2001)

Road's housing is partly complete. In the middle, Ellison, Dowty and Laxton Roads are laid out but not developed. The line of Edinburgh Place is at the bottom. The pavilion can be seen at the bottom left as a substantial building resembling a pair of houses, standing next to a big tree. A plainer building, backing onto Winterbotham Road, later performed the function of changing rooms for the new school fields, even before the school building went up. This can be seen on a 1962 aerial view, which also shows that the big tree still stood until Sochi Court was built in 1965. Its location since 2004 is occupied by Sochi Mews.

## SHOPPING LIST

Plans for 32 shops off Coronation Square were approved in 1955, and shops began to open in 1960. Simona Pakenham writing in 1970 said: "Coronation Square ... has the impermanent air of a frontier town in a new country; buildings that look like piles of matchboxes contrasting strangely with the oriental-



Friday market in front of Edinburgh Place shops (DE 1997)

Russian dome of the Grammar School across the way." (From Cheltenham: A Biography). The shopping area has certainly bedded down since then, and has outlasted the school with the

dome. The weekly open market was a much-sought-after distinction in centuries gone by. It began in 1996.

The following list of shops is made with the help of Kelly's street directories, published up until 1975. The most long-lived shops at Coronation Square include these:

The fish-and-chip shop at no.48 Amberley Court in Goldsmith Road was known as The Takeaway from 1963-2001, then The Golden Chippy from 2002-05, and The Godfather from 2006 to now.

The Trustee Savings Bank (T.S.B.) was at no.36 Edinburgh Place from 1975-97, renamed as Lloyds TSB from 1997-2003.

The ladies' hairdressers at no.46 Edinburgh Place, Michelle from 1963-75 at least, more recently Goldwell from 1997-2005 at least.

The wine merchant's at no.48 Edinburgh Place was Galleon from 1961-75

at least, more recently Victoria Wine from 1997-2006 at least. (Now BetFred bookmaker's).

The newsagent's at no. 50 Edinburgh Place: J.J.H. Bailey from 1961-68, NSS from 1969 to 1975 or later, Forbuoys by 1997 (incorporating unit 52) and including the Post Office from 1999. These closed in 2007.

The chemist's at no.56 Edinburgh Place was Cleverley from 1961-75 or later, Cooks by 1997 and until 2003, and then Lloyds (formerly at unit 84) since 2003.

John Walker Greengrocer's was at no.58 Edinburgh Place from 1963-2003. (This unit is now part of Lloyds Pharmacy next door).

The baker's at no.60 Edinburgh Place was originally Elizabeth Cafe from 1963-67, then A.H. Palmer from 1968 to at least 1975; Mountstevens by 1997 and until 2002. (The unit is now Scrivens Opticians since 2005).

The supermarket at the biggest unit, nos.62-66 Edinburgh Place, was Burtons in 1960/61, FineFare from at least 1963-75. More recently it was Solo (part of Somerfield) by 1994 and until 1997, and is Somerfield since 1997.

The baker's at no.78 Edinburgh Place was Leopold & Son from 1963-2003. It is now Greggs since 2005.

The drycleaner's at no.80 Edinburgh Place was County Cleaners (Chester) from 1967-71, then Sketchley from 1974-2002. (Since 2008 this unit is Cheque Centre credit service).

The dental surgeries have been upstairs at nos.6&7 Gresham Court on Princess Elizabeth Way since 1963.

The Post Office was at no.2 Gresham Court from about 1971 until 1999, when after a raid they moved to 50 Edinburgh Place (see above).

Dromin bookmaker's were at Gresham Court from 1965 to at least 1975, originally at unit 4, then at unit 5. William Hill were at unit 5 by 1997 – they moved to unit 3 in 2001, and subsequently have taken on unit 2 as well.

Finally, the pub was the Royal Toby from at least 1965-75, The Lion by 1997 and until 2002, and The Gold Cup from 2002-05. It is now empty.

## **INSIGHT AND INTRIGUE: BUILDING G.C.H.Q.**

**I**n 1940 the Ministry of Works bought up about half of Benhall Farm and built six single-storey office-blocks. When the London Blitz began, War Office staff moved in. By 1941 there was a military school, sick bay, stores, police H.Q., telephone exchange and canteen. The possibility of army billets was being discussed, and this was all in addition to the ongoing administrative staff here. In 1942, the War Office staff chose to return to

London. So instead in moved General John C.H. Lee and the “Services of Supply” for the U.S. Army. The Americans constructed a major network of telecommunications. In 1944 the Services of Supply moved to France, and Benhall was instead occupied by the Ministry of Pensions (whose main H.Q. was in Blackpool).

Meanwhile, the Government Code & Cypher School had in 1939 moved from London to Bletchley Park, and then in 1946 to Eastcote (Middlesex). But when a still larger site was needed, the criteria to be considered were complex. It would need to have good links to London but should be at some distance. The site should have extensive adjacent fields for the radio aerials, and good telephone systems. Housing for staff would be a major issue to address, because all new construction was still being controlled by central government. And existing vacant office space was a final requirement....

In 1947, a visiting G.C.H.Q. official heard that the Ministry of Pensions intended to move back to Blackpool, and observed many advantages to the Cheltenham location for their own needs. In addition to those listed, the town of Cheltenham was the hub of a long-distance coach network, and provided schools, a good shopping centre, and the Races. Also, the locals had become used to being employed by government offices.

Accommodation was going to be a problem. The local Council had started planning the Hesters Way Estate in 1942 and produced a preliminary layout in 1946. G.C.H.Q. produced a modest estimate of requiring 500 new flats and 850 new houses for incoming staff. The Council would provide the sites and manage the building programme. Once funding was agreed in principle, G.C.H.Q. persuaded other interested government departments to locate themselves elsewhere. The Gloucestershire Echo broke the news in 1949 in an interview with housing committee chairman Councillor Bush.

In 1950, G.C.H.Q. staff began to move in. The Treasury had agreed to fund 512 houses and 400 flats in Cheltenham. Half of the housing would use rapid construction techniques – either pre-fabs or no-fines. Work on the 512 houses began in 1951 in Ashlands, Barbridge, Oldbury and Hesters Way Roads, along with Newton and Ellison Roads and Kingsmead Avenue/Dormer Road. In 1952 the houses for “managerial” types were provided at Ledmore Road in Charlton Kings and Oldfield Crescent in St. Mark’s. The 400 flats were begun in 1952 - mostly Scott and Edward Wilson Houses and Monks Croft.

The possibility of a huge radio aerial station here was dropped in 1951, due

Aerial view of GCHQ - Ron Prewer



2004 demolition of the last old central building at GCHQ (C) M. Holtam



to space and opposition to the loss of good farming land. (This eventually ended up at Rugby in Warwickshire).

Benhall G.C.H.Q. was gradually occupied from 1951 to 1953 as the buildings were upgraded and the house-building programme made quick progress. By the end of 1953, 900 Civil Service locals had been recruited, to balance 700 left behind in the London area. By comparison, Cheltenham's Housing Committee had a waiting list of nearly 3500 for housing in 1952, and a building rate of around 400-500 houses per year. This situation produced a source of tensions and anger. However, by the end of 1953, half the flats were complete, and most incoming staff and their families had moved into Cheltenham.

It was not until the mid-1970s, when Benhall's office-blocks were completed, that G.C.H.Q. totally vacated its Eastcote site.

[The above chapter is adapted from "How G.C.H.Q. came to Cheltenham" by Peter Freeman (2002)].

G.C.H.Q. is described as a surveillance arm of NATO, alongside the US's National Security Agency. In the 1980s it was reckoned to employ 15% of the local population, and is still perhaps the biggest employer in Gloucestershire. The large central building here was built about 1981. In the late 1990s the location was under debate. In 1999 the possibilities of amalgamating at Oakley or relocating to Brockworth were rejected, and consolidation at Benhall was finally confirmed. Redevelopment commenced in 2000. The new "Donut" was finished completely in 2003. The demolition of the remaining 1940 office-blocks along Gloucester Road took place in 2004, followed by that of the 1981 central building.

## ADDRESSED AT ARLE

A little has been said about the Saxon origins and records of the hamlet or village of Arle. The earliest mention seems to be in connection with Gloucester Abbey, which around 750 AD was given 20 hides of land here: "in Alre XX hidas." Twenty hides is a huge area: perhaps the entire villages of Arle and Alstone with all of their estates. The 1334 Lay Subsidy Roll lists only ten people in Arle: probably just the landholders are included. In the 1522 military survey, 17 inhabitants are listed in Arle: these would be only heads of households. In 1608, there were 26 adult males in Arle – mostly of different surnames and therefore presumably living in different households. Hearth Tax records of 1686 indicate 19 families living in Arle. In 1712, thirty houses are recorded in Arle (according to Atkyns's history). About 29 houses are in the 1831 Inclosure record, grown to 43 or more by the census return of 1841.

Early censuses and directories give addresses just as "Arle" – there being so few residents that neither houses nor roads needed names. The 1834 Inclosure record does once refer to the highway we call Village Road by the name of "Arle Lane." If the north end of Village Road had any name in its early development, technically it was Arle Road: a name that spread towards town. That is to say, the road currently named Arle Road linked up and so did not necessarily need a different name. Coates's map of 1776 calls Village Road "Arle Street," whilst Arle Road is called "Churchs Lane." In 1765 a national Bill had required all roads to be named, and all houses to be named or numbered: a process however that was still not complete even at the end of the 20th century, though maybe just about done now. By 1881, most houses in Arle had been given formal address names, such as Arle Court Dairy, Arle Court Stables, Post Office Terrace. Other houses had been given numbers, addressed as 6 to 17 Arle Village: these applied to the southern end of Village Road and are mostly demolished now.

Village Road is an attractive name, referring of course to Arle Village (not Swindon Village).

## ARLE'S NORTH END

Nos.105-139 Village Road were built in 1962. On the opposite side of the road from these there were originally two cottages, later extended northwards into a row of eight. Nos.1 & 2 were probably built at the same time as Arle Farm, i.e. about 1806: these are the original pair, as shown on the 1831 Inclosure map. The six new additions are probably of the 1880s – they in the



1891 census, named as 1-6 New Cottages. Labelled as Arle Cottages, officially the row is actually called Arle End Cottages – (e.g. this term is used in the 1920 electoral register and in postcode directories). They were built by the Wood family for farmworkers, as recalled for us by Mrs Joan Roberts. See our History of Hesters Way Volume 2 p.27 and Volume 3 pp.13,14 for

her recollections of life here. She and her husband Charles worked for the Wood family at Arle Farm for 28 years and continued to live here at no.6 Arle End Cottages after the farm went.

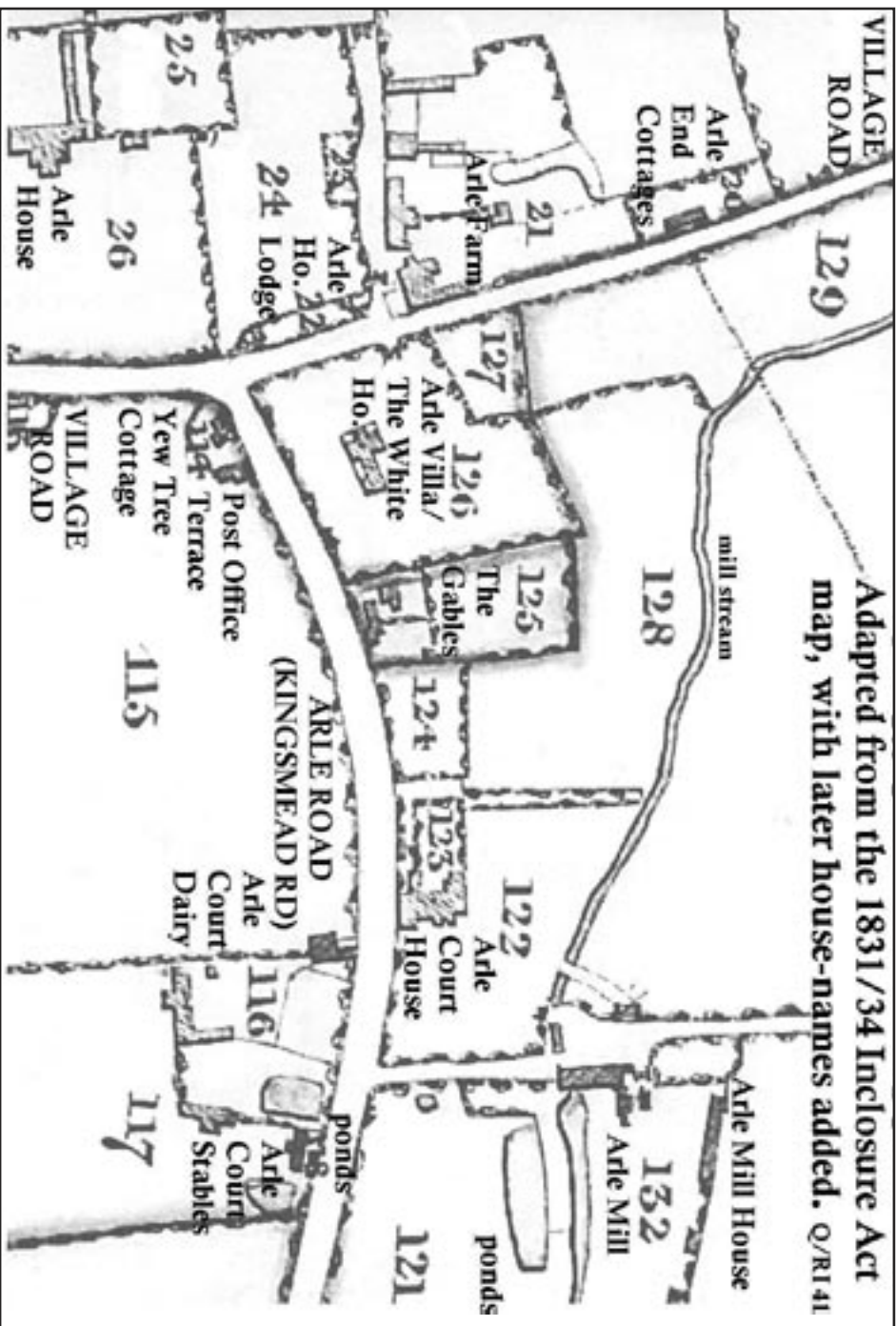
Much further back, in the 1901 census, the resident at no.6 Arle End Cottages, James Burrows, is recorded in the profession of labourer. But the directories of the time indicate his home as Arle Post Office during a few years, by 1899 and through until 1901. The location is also marked on the 1901 O.S. map as a Post Office. [This would have been after the Post Office Terrace location had closed and just before the Voice family opened up in Yew Tree Cottage – see below].

Audrey Stevens (no relation of other Stevens families in Arle), in communication with us, recalls her childhood living locally in about 1932-33. She makes particular mention of the Wise family who lived at no. 7 Arle End Cottages.

Gershom Wood (jnr) told us that after the compulsory purchase of Arle Farm, the row of eight cottages still belonged to his father, who was by that time living at Moat House in Uckington. The Council were not keen to buy the properties and then be held responsible for either rehousing the tenants or raising their rents. Mr Wood offered to sell the cottages to the tenants for £500, and seven of the cottages sold in this way. The final one sold 25 years later, just before Gershom snr's death.

## THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE

Yew Tree Cottage at no. 95 Village Road was also the Arle Post Office. The existing building may be no older than 1880, although there is a building



shown on this site on the 1831 map and indeed on the 1776 map. In the 1881 census at this location is listed The Post Office, where the resident is William Pace, whose occupation however is milkman. The house is named Yew Tree Cottage in the 1891 census, with resident Arthur Voice, occupation labourer: at that time the Post Office functioned from one of the old cottages nearby – see below. Mr Voice later took on the function of postmaster, and the building is again listed as Arle Post Office from 1901. It was operated by the Voice family here through to about 1934. The Voices still lived here until 1954.

Mrs Webb of Box Cottage recalled for us that as a child she went to the Post Office to collect the 10/- per week pension for her father, Stephen Booth. Mrs Voice remarked that if he could get himself to the Cross Hands for a drink, then he could jolly well come and collect his own pension. She also refused admission to the shop to Mrs Clements of The Old School House, who'd had a baby but not been "churched."

The Post Office function moved in 1934 to The Woodbines nearby. The house returned to the name Yew Cottage, obviously taking its name from the yew trees on the corner. The yew tree now growing up through the middle of the pavement was originally in the garden: some land was taken for road-widening at the junction.

## **POST OFFICE TERRACE**

Where no.42 Kingsmead Road now stands, behind Yew Tree Cottage there used to be two old cottages, shown on the 1831 Inclosure Act Map. These two cottages were referred to in the 1881 census as Post Office Terrace. The more southerly one was the Post Office in the 1891 census. (By 1899 the post office ran from no.6 Arle End Cottages – see above).

The 1920 electoral register indicates the inhabitants of this pair of cottages then as being Morse and Scotford; during 1927-34 they were Spinks and Peart. The pair of old cottages was finally demolished in 1963 to make room for the present houses nos.38-42 Kingsmead Road.

Audrey Stevens nee Peart lived at cottage no.1 until she was four years old, i.e. around 1933. She recalls: "I think it was one down and scullery, and a bedroom, with loo down the garden. I wonder if the old well is there still: it was on the edge of the Voice's garden and the two Arle Road cottages which were built at an angle to the road. The three cottages must have shared the well: it was open to the elements and surrounded by two planks of wood on each of the four sides. There were strands of green algae floating on the inner sides of it. A couple named Spinks lived next door to

us when we lived there. My Mum and Dad used to pass me over the well to see Mrs Voice, and I was once instructed not to ask for biscuits (she kept a tin of Nice biscuits on the mantelpiece over the fireplace). However, after agreeing to be more polite and not ask, I merely said 'You do have some lovely biscuits in that tin, Mrs Voice!'"

## OLD SCHOOL

The Old School House once stood where there is now a gap between 105 Welch Road and 64 Village Road. The book "Six Years" by Carolyn Greet records how the school was built for the children of Arle estate-workers in 1859-60. Edward Welch in his diary first mentions the school in September 1859: "Went down to the school;" recording however a week later, "School changed to Arle Court," implying that the venture was still getting off the ground. Entries in December also imply two locations. Early in 1860 he records supplying some books and listening to singing.

The building is shown but not distinguished as anything special on the 1884 large-scale Ordnance Survey map, so had by that date already ceased to be used as a school. The building had been divided into four houses, still owned by Arle House. Our History of Hesters Way Volume 3 p.5 says that one of the occupants before World War I was the Faulkner family.

Mrs Webb, who otherwise lived her whole life at nearby Box Cottage, stayed briefly at The Old School House with her sister Gertrude whose husband was away. This would have been during World War I. She recalled that when he came home from war her husband bought his wife a bunch of roses and carnations. But he was later killed in the Battle of the Somme, and his body was never found.

The 1920 electoral register would indicate the inhabitants as 1. Iles, 2. Howell, 3. Venn, 4. Joynes. The Cripps family was at no.3 by 1937. Some electoral registers list Gilbert Cripps separately from the others, suggesting perhaps that there were two parts and two entrances to no.3. His address is given specifically as Ye Olde School House.

Mrs Freda Bendall nee Williams (latterly of Marle Hill Parade) moved from Fiddler's Green Farm to Ye Olde School House (as she knew it). She started work at the age of 16 at Arle House as a houseparlour maid. She got married from The Old School House, in 1931, at St. Mark's Church.

Audrey Stevens recalls the families who lived here in the 1930s as follows: "The School House where Mr & Mrs Ireland and son Frank lived, also Mr & Mrs Cripps and daughter Elsie. A Mr & Mrs Ralph also lived there with a son and two daughters. The fourth house which was part of The Old

School House (originally built I think for the children of the Arle House estate), was occupied by an elderly couple." The building can be glimpsed in one of Audrey Stevens' photographs as shown in our Volume 3 p.27.

To build up an idea of the layout of the place, we interviewed several former residents. Mr Biggs, latterly of Swindon Village, lived there when he was 6 or 7 years old, probably about 1949. He recalled that the school was L-shaped. This would imply that three of the dwellings would have made up the original school, whereas the fourth always seems to have been a little different, sometimes recorded in directories as Arle House Cottage. Mr Biggs said he lived in the front part, that lay along the Village Road, which was split into two houses. There was a date on a wall, possibly about 1860. The building was covered with pebble-dash or rough-cast in a horrible dull grey colour.

Mrs F. Ireland, latterly of Rhodesia House also lived here up until 1947. Her husband worked for Col. Denne at Arle House, and their cottage was "tied" but they paid rent. She recalled The Old School House as small: the front two cottages had one room downstairs and two upstairs. The back two cottages had two rooms downstairs and three upstairs. But they all had gardens.

Miss Lewis, latterly of Barlow Road, had been brought up in the two houses at the far end of Village Road, known as Arle End and Waldrist. She described The Old School House as two cottages in one, with doorways at each end and no doors or windows facing the street. In other interviews, Mr Long, latterly of Swindon Village, described the building in the same way. The families he recalled living there were Iles and Cripps. He said that there were rumours that the site was an old Priory – archaeologists visited the site years ago.

Mrs Ralph, latterly of Aldridge Close, moved here from Wales about 1930. She recalled The Old School House as stone-built but rough-cast. Mrs Ireland lived next door to her. There was an attic which had been a schoolroom. The four cottages were let by Col. Denne to his workmen.

Mr M. Darvill, assistant to the Borough Surveyor at the time it was knocked down, described it as "a rather tumble-down property..., it had some interesting odd bits of stonework in some windows and doors. It was reputed to have been on the site of some monastic foundation, but no traces were found."

A newspaper reported on the demolition in December 1951, to make way for a sewer! This applies only to the front half (nos.1 & 2 Old School House) which intruded into the line of the roadway. The rear half (nos.3 & 4 Old School House) would have been demolished about 1956. But oddly,

all references are in the singular "School House" – so there seems to have been a connecting corridor between the two sections.

In regard to its supposed antiquity, the Inclosure Act map of 1831 does show a building on the exact same site called Whitehornes Homestead. A dwelling is also suggested here on Coates's 1776 map. Whether it's origins were earlier or later than the other three, no.4 Old School House – the southernmost of the four - was different: it had also been known as Arle House Cottage. Maybe it was first intended as the schoolmaster's house, and hence the school was then built beside it?

Nos.62 & 64 Village Road and nos.101-105 Welch Road were built about 1956/57, once The Old School House had been demolished.

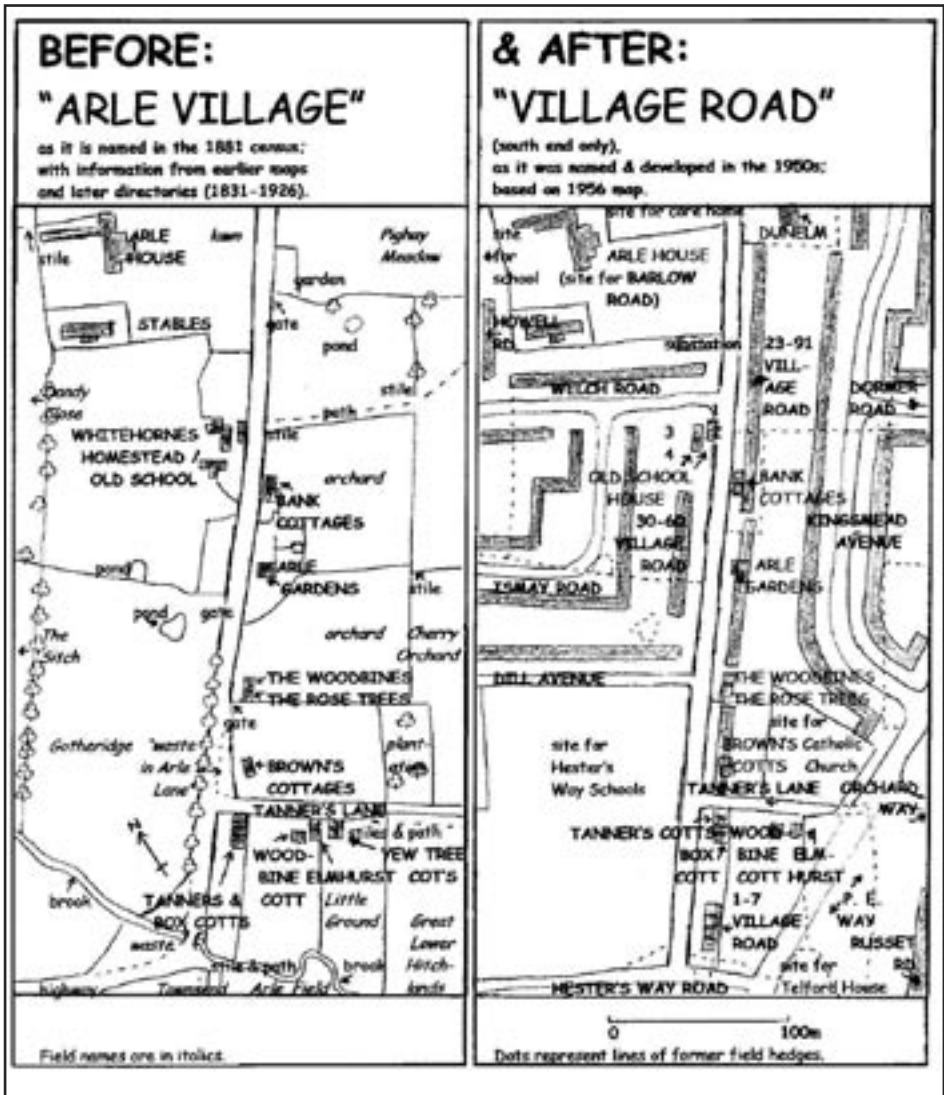
## THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE

The modern houses with even nos.30-60 on Village Road were built in 1953, as were also on the other side odd nos.23-33 and 39-91. It was this urbanisation that created the need to pin down the exact name of the highway, finalised as Village Road in 1953 (although the north end was still addressed just as 'Arle' in the electoral registers until at least 1959).

Nearly opposite The Old School House used to stand a pair of dwellings called Bank Cottages, nos.1 & 2, which were demolished in 1951. They stood about the location of where nos.59 & 61 Village Road are now. Mrs Ralph recalled for us that Bank Cottages were brick-built, similar-looking to Box Cottage which still stands. Mr Biggs recalled that they stood back on a rise, about 6 or 7 feet higher than the road level, which is why they were called Bank Cottages. (The road is still four steps lower than the front gardens at this point, just south of the mini-roundabout). [Mrs Ralph and Mr Biggs were the two former residents of The Old School House that spoke to us – see above].

Residents here in 1920 according to the electoral registers were Alfred Iles and George Peart. They are specifically named as Bank Cottages in the 1901 census, but were older than that. They are marked on the 1884 map, and the Peart family was residing here by about 1895. The Pearts rented the property from the Browns of Arle Court Farm.

Earlier still, Bank Cottages are probably the addresses described as nos.5 & 6 Arle Village in the 1881 census. At that date, widow Margaret Pearce lived at no.5, with lodger John James, whilst milkman William East lived at no.6. These correspond to un-named dwellings recorded in the 1871 census as inhabited by labourers Samuel Pearce and William East. The 1861 census has no definite equivalents, (and nothing is on the 1865 O.S. 1" map),



suggesting that Bank Cottages dated to around 1870.

Audrey Stevens recalls: "When the Council started buying up land at Arle and Hesters Way for building, they "raped" the area in the name of "progress," demolishing some houses and leaving some. We lived at 1, Bank Cottages which belonged to "Jock-er" (Jockey) Brown: (I suppose so nick-named because he was quite a short man and usually wore riding breeches and gaiters). Our house was rented at 6/6d [28p] a week, but No.2, Bank Cottages was a tied-cottage to a Mr Johnson, his wife and four girls,

Dorothy, Joyce, Margaret and Vera. He was a cowman for Jocker Brown. Both houses were demolished.”

Quite close to Bank Cottages had stood an old smallholding or market-garden called Arle Gardens – roughly in the position of the present no.51 Village Road. A homestead belonging to Mr Cooper is shown on the 1831 Inclosure Act map on this spot: his 4½ acres of land at that date extended from the site of Bank Cottages to Brown’s Cottages (inclusive). Market gardener Thomas Voice is indicated as resident at Arle Gardens in the 1891 and 1901 censuses, and this equates to what is called “no.7 Arle Village” in the 1881 census. Tracing the gap between the 1831 map and the 1881 census, this location probably corresponds to the un-named market garden residence of Richard Smith in the 1871 census, with lodger Jane Tawney. This would be the home of market gardener Thomas Tawney recorded in 1841-61 (with lodger Thomas Crisp agricultural labourer in 1851).

The 1920-37 electoral registers indicate that James Wasley lived here (without naming the property). Mrs Hulbert described it simply as a big red house, where Mr Wasley lived. Like Bank Cottages, the house called Arle Gardens was demolished in late 1951 or 1952.

Then came a pair of attached cottages called The Woodbines and The Rose Trees. They stood opposite Dill Avenue, and were replaced in 1962 by the new nos.37 & 35 Village Road. The cottages are addressed as nos.8 & 9 Arle Village in the 1881 census, then occupied by farrier Henry Greengrass and farm labourer John Haines respectively. These presumably correspond to the un-named addresses in the 1871 census occupied by Mary Acocks (whose son was a railway carman) and John Haines. The 1861 census would indicate John Haines in one, and labourer George Crisp in the other. There are no equivalents apparent in the 1851 census, suggesting a construction date of around 1860.

The Woodbines appears in the 1920 electoral register with resident James Allen, and it incorporated Arle Post Office from 1934/5 into the early 1950s. The Rose Trees is so named in the 1920 electoral register, with the resident being then William Humphris. Members of the same two families were the final residents of the cottages in 1961: Olive Allen at The Woodbines and Ellen Humphris at The Rose Trees.

Audrey Stevens recalls: “At the end of the garden of 2, Bank Cottages, was the market garden run by Geoff Wasley, a red-brick very square detached house with a cellar. Then came the garden belonging to The Post Office (run by Misses Allen), next door to them a Miss Humphris and her garden.” When the Voices of Yew Tree Cottage retired, “the Misses Allen (Julie and Olive) set up Post Office in one of their front rooms (and sold groceries,

sweets and birthday cards). Another sister Hilda Allen spent a lot of time there too; they all looked after their elderly father who was blinded in the First World War. Julie ran the P.O. She was a dear lady who had been crippled by polio and had to use two crutches – she always looked as if she was in pain and probably was.”

## **BROWN'S COTTAGE**

Audrey Stevens continued her description of Village Road: “Then quite a large garden [belonging] to one of two semi-detached small cottages (called Brown’s Cottages), no doubt owned by Jocker Brown, the second one inhabited by a family called East in the 30s/40s. Another quite large garden, then Tanner’s Lane.”

So there was another pair of cottages, Brown’s Cottages, immediately north of Tanners Lane, about where nos.25 & 27 Village Road are now. Presumably they belonged in their latter years to the Browns of Arle Court and took their name from them. Brown’s Cottages were demolished in 1951. They are indicated in the 1920 electoral register with residents Charles Fletcher and Ernest Godwin.

But they were much older than that: there is definitely a building shown at this spot on the 1831 Inclosure Act map, presumably these same cottages. They would be nos.10 & 11 Arle Village in the 1881 census, with occupants widow Edith Deane and farm labourer Merriman Clare. Working backwards through the records from that date, in the 1871 census are labourers John Pound and William Cooper in the first dwelling, and labourer Merriman Clear in the second. In the 1861 census were gardener Thomas Deane in the first, perhaps also with joiner John L. Jones, plus agricultural labourer Samuel Clare in the second. Labourer Samuel Clare is also listed here in the 1851 census: his surname is spelled Clear in the 1844 directory.

So, there were various cottages at this end of Arle dating from the middle of the 19th century, mostly demolished in 1951. As to why some old cottages survived the 1951 demolitions, whilst others did not: it might be thought that the surviving ones were ignored by the Council because they were privately owned, not part of bigger estates such as Arle Farm, Hesters Way Farm or Arle Court Farm. However, Mrs Hulbert commented on living at Browns Cottages with damp and mice, etc. It seems more likely that all the demolished buildings were considered insanitary, e.g. riddled with dry rot, due to poor maintenance. Compliance with smokeless zone

regulations could apparently also be an issue. Others may have been lost purely to road-widening.

## BOX AND TANNERS COTTAGES

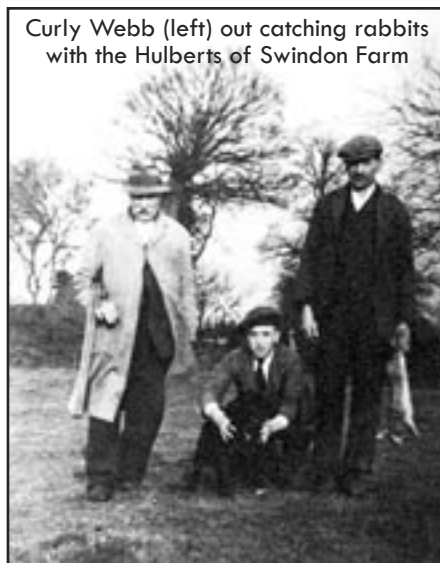
Tanners Lane has a complex history, (which will need of a long chapter of its own in some future publication). South of Tanners Lane can be found Box Cottage. Mrs Webb, a recent owner, claimed to have deeds to Box Cottage going back to 1760. She spoke to Mrs Hyett in 1985. Mrs Webb was the daughter of Stephen Booth snr, and lived here from her birth in 1894/5 until her death a hundred years later (apart from a brief stay at The Old School House opposite around World War I).

Mrs Webb recalled her memories of living here all her 100 year life. Her eldest son was from her first husband, who died during World War I, though not from enemy action: he was a baker who suffered from asthma and died from pneumonia. She recalled District Nurse Boston who delivered her children. [With her last son she had problems and hence an operation - so no more children, although she had always wanted a girl].

A photo she had showed her brother John (known as Jack) Booth with his bride Alice Isabella Betteridge. The older bridesmaids were Evelyn Clarke and Dora Upton, who were maids at The White House. Jack's children later lived at the old smallpox hospital at Elmstone Hardwicke.



Stephen Booth with his wife, two sons, daughter and a niece outside Box Cottage around 1926



Curly Webb (left) out catching rabbits with the Hulberts of Swindon Farm

The garden at the side of Box Cottage used to extend as far as the junction of Hesters Way Road. Regarding the new estates she said: "It's rotten to see all the fields gone." As children, they used to walk across the fields to where G.C.H.Q. is now.

Mr and Mrs Hulbert of Swindon Farm recalled Mr Webb well, as a bit of a tippler. Mrs Webb used to threaten him with a poker until he gave her some of his wages. Mr Hulbert would go poaching with him. [Cf. Mary Green's memories in our Volume 3 p. 25].

The 1831 Inclosure Act map records a single dwelling at this plot, described as a "house, garden and orchard" belonging to Mary Betteridge, which would be Box Cottage. Landscape historians might like to consider from the shape and layout here whether this third-of-an-acre slice of ground might have been carved out of one side of a former village green before 1760. Mary Betteridge owned four acres altogether, including the plot where Woodbine Cottage in Tanners Lane was later built. We have been in contact by e-mail with a Betteridge descendant in Canada.

Box Cottage was a pair – the second doorway can be seen on close inspection of the frontage. Old cottages did tend to be built as pairs, as opposed to terraces which were technically precluded in rural areas by a law that applied from the 1600s right up to Victorian times. The law was that any newly-built cottages for agricultural labourers had to have at least 4 acres of garden – this was later reduced to half an acre. This means that any terrace of cottages is likely either to be for non-agricultural use (e.g. factory-workers or almshouses) or is more recent than might be supposed, as with Arle End Cottages or the three Tanners Cottages here. The 1884 O.S. map shows the full row of five, although the 1881 census includes no more than three (addressed as nos. 15, 16 & 17 Arle Village). Tanners Cottages must date from around 1882, and are named after the adjoining Tanners Lane.

The 1922 electoral register indicates the residents would have been: Daniel Birt at 1 Tanners Cottage, Thomas Ralph at 2 Tanners Cottage, Ernest Evans at 3 Tanners Cottage, and Stephen Booth (snr) at Box Cottage.

In the 1950s a sweet shop operated from the back of Tanners Cottages. This supplied the schoolchildren on the new estate who went past - on their way to and from the schools at Rowanfield - whenever they had a penny to spare. Mrs Webb recalled that it was the Roberts family who ran the shop for a while before they moved to the far end of Village Road.

Audrey Stevens recalls: "Box Cottage which was occupied by Mrs Webb, husband "Curly" Webb (yes he had dark curly hair), and son Jesse, who always had a great source of comics and books. I used to pester the life

out of him for these, and they were always kept in a chest of drawers just inside their front door. The next two or three pairs of houses are still there. The first one "St Dye" was occupied by a Mr and Mrs Blake (she was French and gave French lessons, and...had a CAR). And the end one (The Brooklands) a Mr and Mrs Parker with grown up sons – one named Bobby Parker became a Chief Inspector or some high position in the Police Force later."

The present nos.1-17 Village Road are built within the grounds of Box Cottage. Nos.15 & 17 were built in 1995 and nos.9 & 11 date from the late 1960s. Nos.1-7 were built in 1934/35: Mrs Hulbert nee Kearsy recalled



that the builder of these four houses was a man named Yeates. These houses were named - no.7 St. Dye, no.5 Mayfair, and no.3 Seaborne. Number 1, now called Deseret, was formerly known as The Brooklands, referring presumably to the stream called the Lynn Brook that now runs underground beside the house: it used to run diagonally across the school playing-field opposite.

Two further smallholdings seem to have stood at the end of Village Road from the 1930s until maybe 1951. The Nest (nos.1 & 2) and Yvonne Gardens were apparently located where Edward Wilson House is now, but are difficult to locate with certainty on the maps. The Peacey family are recorded at The Nest in the 1933 electoral registers through to 1949. Our Volume 2 p.35 mentions the compulsory purchase of The Nest in 1949. The Bowd family are recorded at Yvonne Gardens only in the 1934 electoral register, though also mentioned in Kelly's Directories until 1939.

## THE VILLAGE POND

Mrs Joan Roberts of Arle End Cottages – see our Volume 2 p.28 – recalled that (when she and her husband worked on Arle Farm) a carthorse slipped into a boggy pond and had to be pulled out. The location she gave for this event was ‘the Sitch.’ The Inclosure Act reveals this to have been the name of a field near Village Road opposite Tanners Lane – towards Milne Walk. A large pond is marked on the old maps, accessed by a gateway roughly opposite The Woodbines and located behind where nos.3-5 Dill Avenue are now.

The story as told in our Volume 1 pp.10,11 suggests that this was known as ‘The Village Pond,’ although not located on common ground. Dorothy Herring nee Johnson (formerly of Bank Cottages) in Hesters Way News No.6 described it: “There was a large pond where Hesters Way School was built, then fields up to the [Old] School House where Dill Avenue is.”

## FROM THE GROUND UP IN AND AROUND SPRINGBANK

There had probably been a farm-house at the centre of our area since the area was enclosed for dairy farming, which might well have happened around 1750. The first mention we can find of it is as “A farm called Hesters Way” mentioned in an auction notice of 1793. It stood on the site now just behind nos.1 & 3 Farm Close, off Ashlands Road.

In the 1840s, the farm was owned by the Welch family of Arle House, and residing in the farmhouse was William Gibbins, who farmed 84 acres of land. The “Hesters Way Estate” was up for sale again in 1854, and sold in 1860. The 1861 census shows as resident at Hesters Way Farm widow Hannah Piff. She lived here with her adult children plus farm and household staff, and farmed 180 acres.

## HUNGRY FOR LAND

Market gardens had been springing up around the edges of Cheltenham to feed its growing population. In the 1830s, two things radically altered the prospects for gardeners on the west side of town. Firstly, the Inclosure Act freed up the land for private use and development. Secondly, the railway opened up massive potential for custom in Bristol and Birmingham, and the main railway station was right at hand. From Rowanfield, just west

of the station, new crofts spread southwestwards towards Hatherley, and north-westwards along Arle Road and into Swindon Village. The Hesters Way area took a little longer to pick up on the trend, but the following article shows that by 1860 a ragged collection of new



smallholders were here, trying to cash in on the opportunity.

The article in St. Mark's Parish Magazine written in 1890 but recalling 1860 describes Hesters Way. Revd. Griffiths describes there the "outlying district of Hesters Way" as an otherwise unrecorded string of smallholdings. He says: "There were some houses built very much like any other ordinary buildings, while some showed still greater ingenuity in gathering together the various materials which came most readily to hand... One had even secured part of an old railway carriage, and this tenement was very easily distinguished from the rest."

Their dwellings had perhaps stood for a short time along Hesters Way Road and were done away with when the land changed hands in 1867. Revd. Griffiths does imply that there had been a subsequent clear-out when he says: "There was an originality in the style of dwellings in those early days which has not even now been altogether lost. But it was not by the variety of architecture that the eye was most arrested, but by the independent little settlement that each proprietor had made for himself... The property was not always hedged in, or walled round, but each family knew well where his border ended, and where his neighbour's first commenced."

These farming families didn't necessarily own their land, incidentally. For smallholders, it's best for them if they can rent, buy, sub-let and sell their land as-and-when they require, according to their successes and ambitions. If there are major landholders in the area willing to enable and encourage such an approach, then that's what will happen. So, along the road through Hesters Way there may well have been more smallholdings in 1860 than there were in 1890, but the numbers may have been fluctuating all the time. This flexible approach to life makes it a little difficult for the historical researcher today to pin down who was where and when, even

with the census returns, street directories and electoral registers.

Because many of these market gardeners were renting their properties, they had an understandable reluctance to build themselves a substantial house. Many of the dwellings that went up were called bungalows, although 'cabins' might be a fair description of some. Sometimes, a temporary or agricultural building may have got rebuilt as a substantial house.

## THE LOST GARDENS OF HESTERS WAY

According to James Hodsdon's Historical Gazetteer of Cheltenham, the area was divided up in 1867 with the specific intention of developing smallholdings here. So at the end of the 1860s a new track was laid through the farm fields, which has since become Hesters Way Lane. Another track was built at right-angles to this, which route in due course has become known as Springbank Road. Smallholdings of around four or five acres were available to purchase along either side of these new lanes. But Cheltenham had largely stopped developing in the 1860s, so there was no demand for new sites. This attempt to invest in our area was generally a failure.

Maybe the first new house to be built was the one called Tichborne Villa. Perhaps it was intended as a kind of showhome, an example to potential crofters of the sort of dwelling they might want to build upon their new acreage. Tichborne Villa had a twelve-acre plot, of which the narrow strip around the house and alongside the highway had been planted up as an orchard. (The same orchard around the house can still be seen on an aerial photo of the area taken in 1962. The site is now around no.143 Hesters Way Road, where the housing estate either side of Wentworth Road dates from 1964).

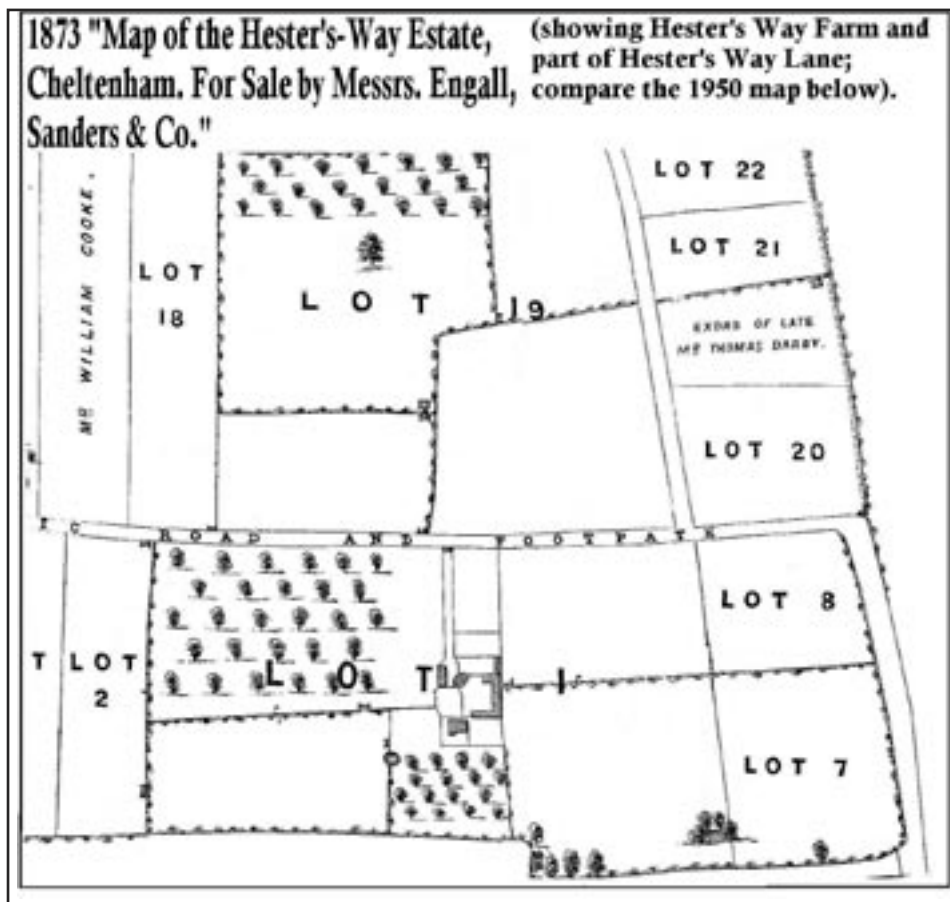
A Mr Joseph Turner was one of the first wave of occupants. He built his house on a two-acre plot behind Tichborne Villa's grounds. Sarah Turner was still living here in 1891. Later directories (e.g. in 1920) name this dwelling as Ivy Cottage. (This was last occupied in about 1959 - the location is now near no.69 Springbank Road).

Another plot with an early dwelling of around 1870 was owned by Mr Pippett. Mr Pippett's property was at the far end of Hesters Way Lane, and is now known as Hope Farm.

A third early dwelling was owned by Thomas Darby. Mr Darby's four-acre property was nearer to the entrance of Hesters Way Lane, a plot of ground subsequently heavily exploited for brick-making. (Note the mention in one set of sales particulars: "an Excellent Vein of BRICK EARTH lies under a

considerable portion of the estate"). The house here is named as Brick Kiln Cottage in the 1881 census, as its driveway went past the Brick Kiln (which was on a site now just behind Bayliss House off Welch Road). The driveway was part of a track that led towards Hayden. This track can still be followed as a public footpath, starting at Bayliss House, through the playing-field, across Springbank Way, behind Somergate Road and thence out into the open fields. It was quite common in those days to have your own brick kiln on-site when building a house on suitable soil, but the brickworks established here was a much bigger concern. The 1884 Ordnance Survey map indicates that the workings had become partly flooded, but were still in use. Brick Kiln Cottage was still here in 1901 but not for long after: (its location would now be at the end of Beaumont Drive).

At two other plots which were purchased in that first wave of around 1870,



the owners did not initially build any dwellings. Mr Cockerill owned the site opposite Hope Farm: by 1891 the dwelling called Woodbine Cottage had been built there (now known as Hope Cottage). And William Cooke owned the plot of ground next to Tichborne Villa: in the 1920s a house called Rothdale was built there.

## SALES BY AUCTION

Hesters Way Farm and its fields were up for auction again in 1873. The 133 acres for sale included most of the earlier projected smallholdings off the west side of Hesters Way Road. Only the five plots mentioned above had already been purchased by prospective market gardeners, whilst a further twenty remained available. The auction notice in the newspapers described the area as follows:

### THE HESTER'S WAY ESTATE

Comprising a BRICK-BUILT FARM HOUSE,  
with COTTAGE adjoining, with Yards, Garden, Stabling, Cow Byres,  
Cider Mill, Piggeries and other useful Out-offices:

also another substantial built RESIDENCE, with convenient  
Buildings, and several excellent Closes of very superior Old Turf  
and Meadow Land, choice Orchardng, and productive Garden and  
Arable Land, embracing in the whole an area of about **133 ACRES.**

The Property possesses extensive frontages to good Roads,  
and will be divided into TWENTY-EIGHT LOTS,  
Presenting many Beautiful and Desirable BUILDING SITES.

And offering eligible opportunities either for  
OCCUPATION OR INVESTMENT.

The “substantial built residence” mentioned was probably Tichborne Villa. The 28 plots included an additional eight on the east side of Hesters Way Road, surrounding and including the farmhouse. But still in the 1870s, Cheltenham was not really expanding. Charles Brunson with Ernest Brunson farmed 120 acres here between at least 1881 to 1901. When we, who interviewed her, Mrs Webb of Box Cottage remembered that Mr Brunson was killed when his horse shied at the corner of the road. After him, she recalled Mr Gabb from Cardiff buying Hesters Way Farm, as well as Tanners Cottages in Village Road. Frederick Gabb (snr) was here by 1907, with two of his children.

Mr Gabb sold Hesters Way Farm to Mr Harris of The White House (in

Kingsmead Road) – this would have been in about 1924, when Mr Harris divided the old farmstead into two dwellings. Edgar Fletcher lived in one half and worked the farm until its compulsory purchase. Various residents occupied the other half of the house, including Mr Rachael from 1942. [See our History of Hesters Way Volume 2 p.24 for Mr M. Fletcher (jnr)’s memories of the building and of farm life]. The farm was compulsorily purchased in 1949 from Mr J. R. Brown, that is, he of Arle Court Farm. The Fletchers moved out in 1951 – they went to Tanners Road - and the farmhouse was probably demolished in 1952.

If the estate presently known as Hesters Way were to be defined strictly by the boundaries of Mr Fletcher’s farm, it would include all the area between Hesters Way Road, Marsland Road and Princess Elizabeth Way, with the exception of the east end of Winterbotham Road. It would also include a narrow strip of land beyond Princess Elizabeth Way, from Montreal Drive southwards to about Eastnor House. There were ten fields plus the farmyard, including four ponds. But the land originally held by the farm had also included the Springbank area.

## THE TRAVELLERS

Meanwhile, in the 1880s, development had picked up around Cheltenham. But a new set of market gardeners who moved into this Springbank area were largely renting, not purchasing. It was not until around World War I that there was much house-building here. One thinks of farming people as keen to put down roots figuratively as well as literally. But this new generation seems to have been a restless breed, moving around and across the local landscape. There was also a good deal of swapping locations between families, as we shall see.

Amongst the market gardens across Rowanfield and Swindon Village there was often a family connection. The smallholdings of Hesters Way seem to have formed a group separate from those, with its own “clans.”

Tichborne Villa is recorded in the 1881 census, with the resident Emanuel Grinnell farming twelve acres. By 1901 the Grinnell family were at an old cottage on Gloucester Road (where Benhall House is now). A descendant now living in Australia who is in contact with the Neighbourhood Project informed us that by 1914 Frederick Grinnell had established a smallholding called Springbank Cottage. This was not the building of that name still standing, but a different property! It stood near Ivy Cottage.

Arthur Voice’s family was best known for running the Post Office at Yew Tree Cottage in Village Road. But, his connections too were market



**MR. ALBERT GODWIN,**  
of Tichborne Villa, Hester's  
Way, near Cheltenham, who  
died on June 22th, aged 59  
years. He leaves a widow,  
two daughters and three  
sons.

gardeners, living at Arle Gardens in Village Road during 1881-1901. George Voice was living at Tichborne Villa in 1891.

Another of the earliest families here was the Godwins. The 1881 census records George P. Godwin as farmer of four acres at Brick Kiln Cottage. By 1901 other Godwins had also spread across other properties, including Ivy Cottage and Tichborne Villa. In 1925-39 they also lived at the adjoining house, called Rothdale. These three were all at the southernmost end of the Springbank area, as we call it now.

A property near Hesters Way Farm is in 1921 recorded by name as The Rockery, when it was the residence of Edgar Crisp. A relative Jesse Crisp also had an adjoining property called The Poplars in Hesters Way Lane.



Springbank Cottage (CG2010)

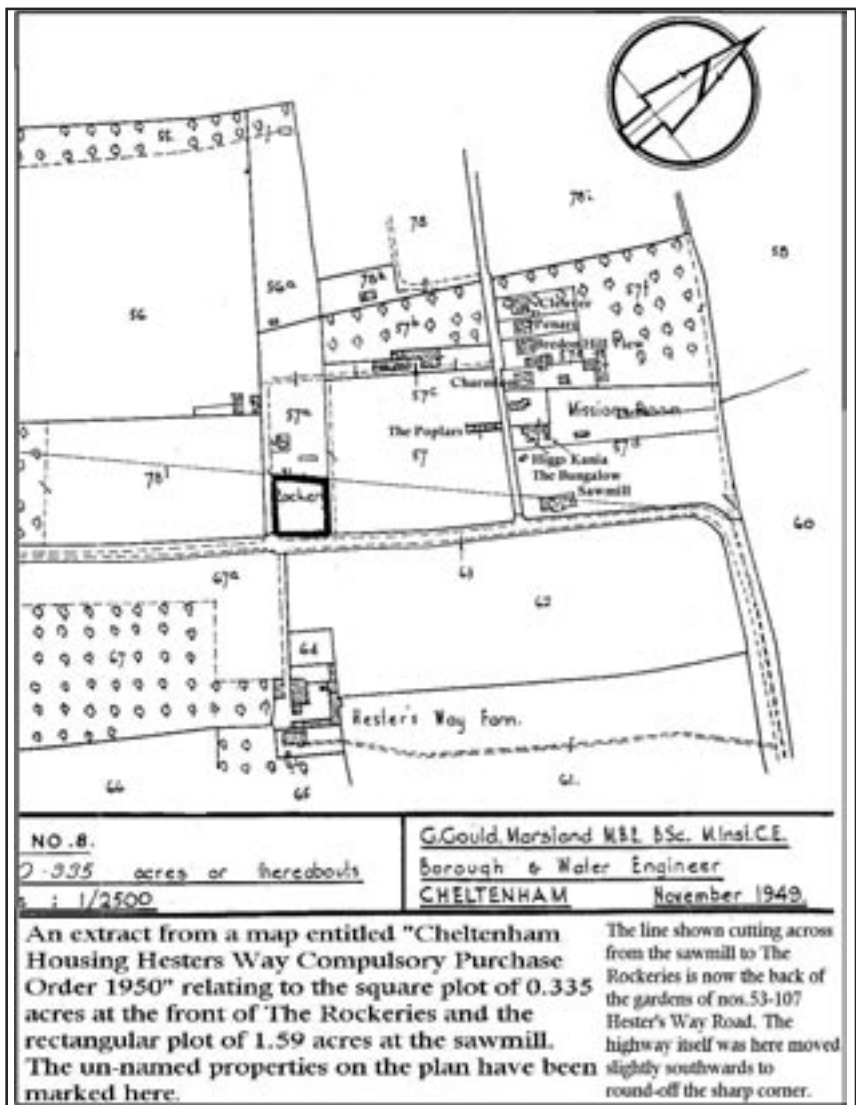
Frederick Gabb and his son Frederick jnr were living at Elm Farm in Fiddler's Green in 1901, but by 1907 were at Hesters Way Farm. Frederick jnr was later at Ivy Cottage, around 1923-32, but then moved again to The Rockery, renamed as The Rockeries. The story of the Gabb family at The Rockeries is covered in our previous Volume 2 pp.20-23 and p.35. Frederick Gabb was here until 1964: a house called Long Acre now stands near its site.



"The Brow" in Springbank Road, now surrounded by other houses (DE 1997)

The Kearsy family spread across the area in the 20th century. They started at Woodbine Cottage and moved by

1901 across to Hope Cottage Farm. These are the two dwellings which are still standing at the furthest end of the lane that now leads beside Arthur Dye School. The two properties are now named Hope Cottage and Hope Farm respectively. But the earlier censuses suggest there had been a third un-named property there too, (maybe on the site now occupied by Hopelands Cattery). Thomas Howell was in this third property in 1891, and Ernest Howell succeeded him there from 1921. In 1926 Ernest Howell moved to Woodbine Cottage, and the Howells were here until 1962. The



subsequent resident renamed it Hope Cottage. (Woodbine Cottage was apparently a tiny dwelling – four rooms altogether, with a pony-stable and cart-shed attached to one side. About 20 years ago the place was virtually rebuilt, in a new layout but on the same footprint).

The Kearsays had left Hope Cottage Farm by 1942. They had also occupied two other properties nearby. Frederick Kearsay was at the house called Springbank until 1937: this is the house still standing. Also, from 1936 the Kearsay family were occupants of The Brow, presumably having themselves built (or assembled) this bungalow, which still stands as no.20 Springbank Road.

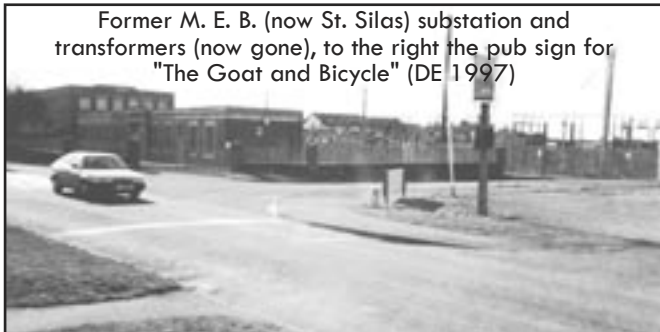
In more recent decades, the Theyer family lived at Hope Farm, and they also could be found at other nearby properties at various dates, e.g. during 1946-58 they were at Rothdale, which they renamed Revells. This was a big red-brick house, as Mrs Hulbert described it to us. Comparison with the photo in our Volume 1 p.32 shows that the photo there on p.14 is of Revells, (not Tichborne Villa as the caption says). The church of St. Silas is on its site now.

Most of these diverse original dwellings were swept away as the Hesters Way estates were built. An idea of how this rural area must have looked – or at least of how it might otherwise look – can be gained from a stroll along Lowdilow Lane in Elmstone Hardwicke.

## MOVING WITH THE SPIRIT

It was not only the families that were mobile in this area: even the local church was. Hesters Way Mission Room was assembled from a second-hand prefabricated building moved in parts from Alstone Lane in 1885. (See A Chronology of Cheltenham by Stephen Osmond p.39). This mission church was planted by St. Mark's parish, following on from a couple of years of holding meetings in a nearby cottage. The wooden building had

Former M. E. B. (now St. Silas) substation and transformers (now gone), to the right the pub sign for "The Goat and Bicycle" (DE 1997)



its roof repaired with corrugated iron in 1890, leading to the place being known locally as the Tin Church. The land was presumably leased, as it was only purchased outright in 1919. (See Osmond

p.53). Its official designation was St. Mark's Mission Church, according to directories.

Hesters Way News No.6 published a letter from Dorothy Herring nee Johnson. She recalled "the little Hesters Way Tin Church which was lovely. The aunt and uncle of Felicity Lott - the great Cheltenham soprano - used to play the organ in that church. They were Mr & Mrs Legg and lived in the house on the corner of Malvern Road/ Gloucester Road. We used to have some lovely times as children in that little church. Jesse's mum [Mrs Webb of Box Cottage] and my mum were great friends, and they used to lay people out in those days ready for burial."

In 1952 the building was renewed and dedicated to St. Silas. In 1959 another building was erected alongside for the church, and the previous one was then used as the Sunday School hall. When it came to expanding again, a larger building was precluded by the instability of the ground. So in 1985 the original site was sold, and the houses of Park View were built here (in 1990). The congregation moved into the former M.E.B.. offices in Hesters Way Road.

Meanwhile, in March 1928, the S.W.S. Electric Power Co. had bought a site in Hesters Way Road (next to Rothdale), and constructed a new sub-station for Cheltenham. Supply commenced in November 1928. (The previous Arle Road works, by the Moors Estate, closed in 1932). These 1928 transformer buildings were eventually demolished in 2003 – they were rather dull single-storey buildings but with some art-deco character.

In about 1961 a new Midland Electricity Board office, for the Cheltenham and Stroud district, was built beside the substation, on the site of the 1920s house called Revells. A hundred staff operated here from 1965, until 1983 when operations were moved to Gloucester. A few staff remained at the adjoining substation. The office building, although described when new as a "hideous brick block," now functions well as the St. Silas Church. (This information is from "Electricity Comes To Cheltenham" by Reginald Acock). The church moved here from its previous site in about 1987. About 2009, the parish of St. Silas was merged into that of St. Aidan at Coronation Square, which is where the regular services are now held, although occasional services are still held here.

## **A PLACE TO GROW**

Directly opposite the mission hall, a smallholding or market garden called The Poplars was built sometime around 1900. Jesse Crisp was here by 1920 and up to 1932. Mrs F. Ireland, living as a child at Fiddler's Green Farm

(probably in the 1920s), recalled how she would be sent to collect a gallon of cider from the cider mill run by Mr Crisp. Once, when she had the jar of cider in a sack, she was stopped by a policeman. When he asked "What you got there," she answered "I dunno," and got away with it!

During World War II, the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) met at The Poplars, when the Morris family were resident - see our Volume 3 p.13. The location was perhaps strategic, chosen to guard the nearby electricity works – see our Volume 2 p.21. From 1954 to 1963 the final owner was George Kent. He operated a grocery store from here, until the area was redeveloped. The Poplars would have been demolished about 1964, to allow Hesters Way Lane to be widened and developed in 1965. The current shops are essentially on the same site, i.e. Champion Chippy and Nisa stores.

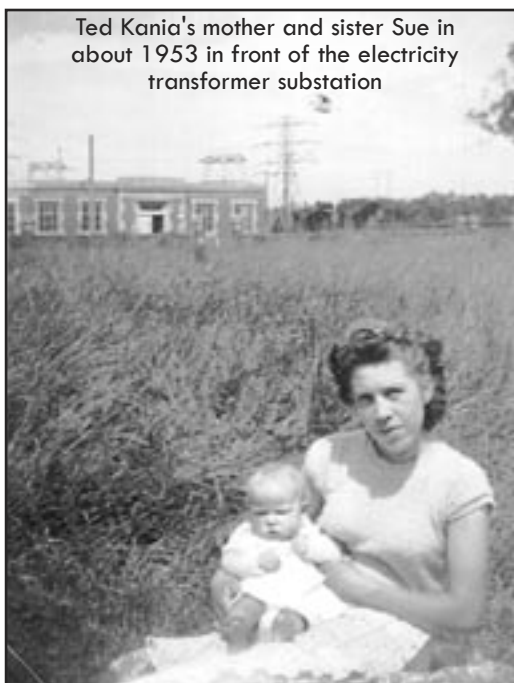
A house stood just south of the Mission Room for some time, known as The Bungalow in the 1925 electoral register, when occupied by Violet de Courcy, but before that the building is listed without a name, e.g. in 1922 when occupied by George Clements. It was occupied by Albert F.

Higgs from 1934 until 1960, i.e. of the Higgs family previously "famous for killing pigs." (The location is now Park View).

Visible on the 1950s maps is a small rectangle marked behind Higgs's house. Perhaps originally a prefabricated extension, this was a separate dwelling for a while, occupied by one of Wimpey's building workers, a Polish man Mr Kania and his family. Mr Kania's son Ted recalled for us his childhood here: see above

A big sawmill also operated at this corner, where Hesters Way Lane meets Hesters Way Road. Just before World War II some people from Blockley set up here on two acres of land which had

been lying idle for years, as Mrs Hulbert nee Kearsley recalled for us. Mrs Grace also recalled this place making coffin boards, planks, etc. She could get a plentiful supply of cheap firewood from here - " a whole load for



Ted Kania's mother and sister Sue in about 1953 in front of the electricity transformer substation

sixpence." See also our Volume 2 p.25 for Mr Fletcher's memories of working at the sawmill as a teenager. Another local tells us that the sawmill grounds were unfenced, so the local children used to play on the heaps of sawdust.

A briefer mention can be made - to round off this survey - of the

surviving dwellings which were built before World War II. These still stand incongruously in the middle of the estate.

The Homestead stands where Hesters Way Lane meets Springbank Road. It dates from sometime around 1910 and was originally known as The Bungalow. It is recorded as The Homestead from 1937 onwards.

Immediately to the north of the Mission Room, a house known as Charmion was here by 1927. Mr Challis moved here in 1937, and it later became the headquarters of Challis & Hart scrapyard and car-breakers. The house was renamed St. Silas Vicarage in 1987, but was sold off by the church in about 1999 and was renamed Old Silas.

Adjoining Charmion, Mrs Ivy Grace lived in the house called Clenver from 1937 onwards, with her husband Clement Grace. In conversation

with us in 1997, she said that Grace Bros. had completed this and the neighbouring houses Penare and Bredon Hill View in that same year. The directories don't quite agree with this, and would suggest the other two are older, from 1936 and 1933 respectively. Maybe the houses were rented out

whilst they were still being completed. Penare still retained its typically 1920s-period diamond-shaped roof-tiles until about 1999. Bredon Hill



View was by 1943 the home of Thomas Hopkins, a Welshman apparently. This was for a long time (still in 1963 at least) the headquarters of his dairy business, and many people still recall him delivering milk locally by pony-and-trap.

## **SPRINGBANK AIR CRASH**

An article of 5th July 1959 in the Gloucestershire Echo describes an event that took place in the Beaumont Drive area - before that street was built of course. The headline reads "Pilot Cheats Death Three Times in Hesters Way Air Crash." [This edition of the Echo was a single-sheet newspaper, an "emergency edition" produced during a printers' strike].

Mr Richard Alan "Max" Maxwell's Tiger Moth plane struck a power cable whilst he was crop-spraying. He crashed into fields only 200 yards from the housing estate. Mr Maxwell chatted with police and ambulance men as he smoked a cigarette through a slit in bandages which completely covered his burned face! Then he was taken to hospital as crowds watched. (This information was provided to us by Mrs Grace, who located the event in the area behind her garden at Clenver).

## **SPRING FORWARD, FALL BACK**

It seems obvious that the suburb called Springbank derives its name from the cottage still standing, behind Arthur Dye School. However, to be strictly accurate the suburb derived its name from the highway that ran through its centre, Springbank Road. This road in turn presumably derived its name because it followed the line of an earlier driveway that had led to Springbank Cottage. This is not the cottage that still stands but another one, built and occupied by the Grinnell family from about 1914 to 1958 that stood roughly where no.35 Springbank Road is now. (The nearby house still standing was called just Springbank, but is now usually known as Springbank Cottage to avoid confusion with road-names in the vicinity).

The Residents' Association of the new estate around Grenadier Road put forward the name Springfields for the north end of the area in 1996, by association with Springbank. Hesters Way Partnership subsequently dubbed the whole area described here with the acronym "SACS," i.e. Springbank-Arle Farm-Cavendish Park-Springfields. The term Arle Farm has come somehow to have a major image problem, not helped by the Echo's tendency to label all of West Cheltenham's trouble-spots as being in

“Arle.” Therefore it may be that the term Arle Farm will tend to fall out of use, and the two designations Springbank and Springfields will eventually come to cover all of this group of suburbs. Since 2002, Springbank has become the name of an Electoral Ward, giving still greater identity and individuality to the suburb.

## FIDDLER’S GREEN FOLK

The 1834 Inclosure Act shows that there were then just three houses at the Green itself, that is, at the rough circle of tracks that lay at the south end of Hesters Way.

The first dwelling here was at the site now called Holmlea. The 1834 record is of a house, garden and yards belonging to Mr Buckle. The house is not named in the early records – (it was possibly known as Elm Lodge). The name Holmleigh is recorded in 1934, when occupied by one of the Godwin family who were spread across the Hesters Way area.

Mrs F. Ireland recalled that her husband worked for Col. Denne of Arle House, but when he came back from World War II there was no farmwork for him; so in 1947 they moved to the smallholding Holmleigh. In that cold winter, her husband struggled to get to market (whilst her son was happier laying paths around the chicken sheds, etc). They earned 30/- in those days, of which 7/- went in rent. Her husband had a gun, which helped to supplement their diet with rabbit (until myxamatosi took effect).

The spelling of the house-name changed to Holmlea in 1950 with the new residents the Wasley family. The house appears to have been rebuilt in the last few years.

The second old dwelling here was the Elm Farm site. It was a dairy farm, maybe first established at the beginning of the 1800s. In the 1834 record it is an un-named house belonging to Mr Clutterbuck. In 1901 it is recorded as Elm Farm, then occupied by Frederick Gabb (senior and junior) who moved on to Hesters Way Farm in 1905. More recently, the farmer was Thomas Lees from 1932-37 (who had previously been as Harthurstfield Farm), and finally Harry Cock from 1938 (who had previously been at Fiddler’s Green Farm). Mrs F. Ireland’s memories suggest that Thomas Lees had been renting the property from the Unwin family of Arle Court, whereas Harry Cock owned the place between when the Unwins sold it and the Council bought it. The final resident was William Cock, up to 1962, and then the area was redeveloped from 1974 onwards. (The site of the farmhouse is around where nos.70-72 Fiddler’s Green Lane are now).

The third dwelling in this vicinity in 1834 was a cottage belonging to Mr

T. Betteridge. This cottage gets a brief mention in 1844 in our History of Hesters Way Volume 3 p.33, when Elizabeth Wicksey inherited it from her uncle John Betteridge. The site was approximately where no.14 Fiddler's Green Lane is now.

## PHEASANT LANE

On the north side of Pheasant Lane, Fiddler's Green Farm maybe dates from the 1870s. The farmer here in the 1891 census was Gordon Winstone (son-in-law of Harriet Yeend).

By 1901 the farmer was Robert C. Smith, probably a connection of the family who ran Benhall Farm. Around 1905 the farmer was Mr H.A. Tucker, who moved on briefly to Elm Farm. In 1907-8 the farm was occupied by "Messrs. Wood Bros." according to directories. This presumably refers to its ownership as a business by W. & S. Wood dairy farmers of Arle Farm, who

certainly farmed land in this vicinity. William Cock was resident here from 1909 up to 1936. Mr Tarling was resident from 1937 when the Cock family moved to Elm Farm, though the directories imply that Mr Cock continued to work from Fiddler's Green Farm.

Freda Bendall nee Williams recalled for us that before 1916 her family lived at Fiddler's Green Farm. (Later they lived at The Old School House in Village Road). At the farmhouse she remembered a bacon rack in the ceiling; but the building was later altered and extended. She and her sisters attended Hatherley School. She remembered a Miss Turner would supply bread three times a week to the Nunney's farm (Harthurst), and she and her sisters went there to collect it. As a girl, she often suffered bilious attacks. Her mother sent her once, with her sister, on a haycart to the nearest doctor's surgery. This was Dr Foster at Churchdown. She was better by the time they got there, so they were given tea and cakes and sent home.



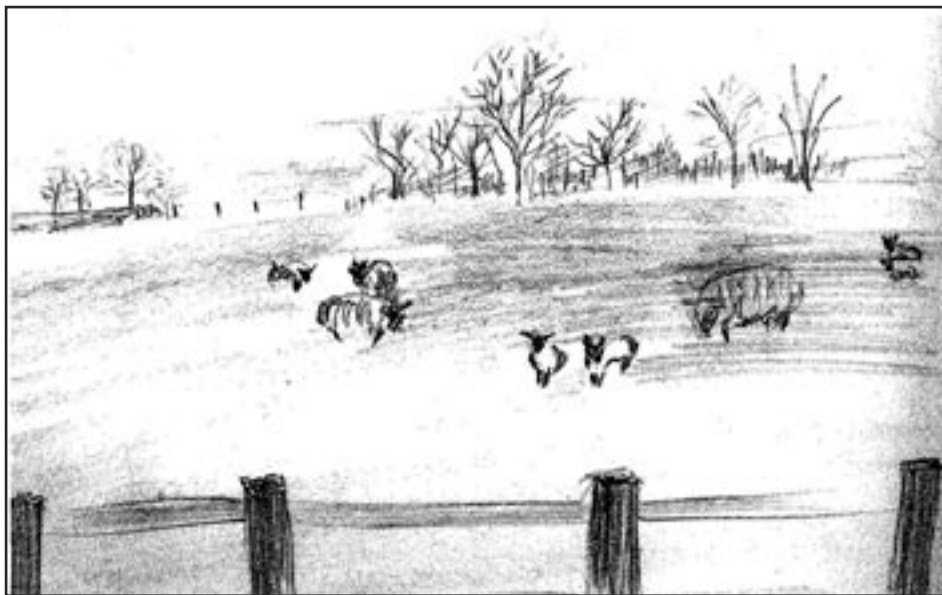
At the entrance drive to the farm stands Fiddler's Green Lodge, which maybe dates from the 1880s. Agricultural labourer Harry Savage lived here in 1891 according to the census return. Sidney Short lived here for several decades, around 1910-46.

On the 1831 map, two old homesteads are marked on the south side of Pheasant Lane, just opposite Fiddler's Green Lodge. It may be that the Farm and Lodge here were built in the late 1800s specifically to replace these outdated dwellings.

## AT HARTHURSTFIELD

The area from Harthurstfield towards Hatherley Lane, around Gloucester Road, has a very complex history. Rather than attempt to summarise it all, here follows just a brief mention of the two buildings at the T-junction here, most often known as Harthurst and Harthurstfield Farm.

A map of 1759 implies that there was only one farmhouse at that time. This would have been the black-and-white building of the 1600s that stood on the bank of the Hatherley Brook. In the 1834 Inclosure Act it is described as a homestead belonging to Revd. Jones. The 1841-53 records indicate William Noakes as the farmer at Harthurst, farming 30 acres. By 1861 Isaac Nunney was living here, farming 40 acres. The Nunney family were still here right up to the house's demolition in the early 1970s. Harthurstfield





Left: the entrance to the Park Home site; centre: Park Stores; right: the Reghency farmhouse (DE 1997)

Bungalow, which now stands next to the site, still has a few old farm constructions in its gardens. The Nunney family continued to live here.

The later Harthurstfield Farm was located opposite, south of the T-junction. On the 1759 map, the main farm structures are only called "Barton, etc." - located where the current shop and dentist's are. The Regency appearance of the current building, now called Harthurstfield House, dates it to the early 1800s. The 1834 Inclosure Act describes it as a homestead belonging to Mr Gray. The records of the 1840s call the place Harthurstfield, with gentleman farmer James Fowler. In the 1850s, the farm bailiff was William Russell on 130 acres. The 1861 census first calls the building Harthurstfield Farm.

The development of the mobile home park here has been gradual, beginning pre-War. There were about 18 caravans by 1952, but numbers exploded to 145 in the early 1960s, and reached the current layout numbering 1 to 157 in the early 1970s.

## RETIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS: ELMBANK SENIORS' CLUB

A very enjoyable visit was made to the local pantomime by senior citizens from the Elm Farm and Springbank estates. This was followed by a tea party at the St Silas Church Hall in Hesters Way Lane. Here, the formation of Elmbank Seniors' Club was discussed. This led to their inaugural meeting, held on Monday January 9th 1984 at the chosen venue, St Silas Church Hall, by kind permission of the Revd. Stuart Kimber.

The necessity of such a club had been urged for the previous two years, but a suitable venue had not been found. The late Alderman Foster, then chairman of the joint Committee of Senior Citizens' Clubs had invited Joan Barnes to attend their meetings. They joined their ideas with those of the Springbank Residents' Association, and these were fulfilled largely through discussions between Mrs Margaret Tizzard and the vicar.

Meetings were held on the first and third Monday of each month. Under the chairmanship of Mrs Gwen Kings and later Mrs Margaret Hughes, with a hard-working committee, the club grew from strength to strength. The support was loyal and enthusiastic, even from members who later moved away from the immediate area. Meetings attracted 50 to 60 members, featuring speakers, slide shows, and very popular singing and Scottish-dancing groups. There were also outings and group holidays. Support for charities was made possible by good treasurers and various fund-raising events. For example there were bring-and-buy stalls and a strawberry tea in a member couple's garden.

With the membership getting older, grateful use was made of the services of a wheelchair bus from Cheltenham Transport for the Disabled, with volunteer drivers from Cleeve View Rotary Club. Although not directly involved in St Silas Church, the members joined in with the historic walk to the new church premises in Hesters Way Road, and very much appreciated their new meeting-place there. The vicar Revd. Richard Avery conducted an annual Thanksgiving Service for them. Hesters Way Baptist Church was also very supportive, and various events were also held there, as members came from both churches. A link was also maintained with Arthur Dye School, with entertainment by the children at Christmas, and later a similarly enjoyable link was made with Hesters Way Primary School. [Thanks to Joan Barnes, honorary secretary, for the above information].

About two years ago the club was relaunched, as the new venue at Springbank Community Resource Centre became available. A new name was also chosen, POPPs, standing for Playtime for Older People Project.

The membership continued to hold their meetings twice a month, on Wednesdays at the Springbank venue, whilst also on Fridays making use of Hesters Way Community Resource Centre near Coronation Square.



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Springbank Community Resource Centre opened in 2007



'Clenver' in Hesters Way Lane in 1997 (see p. 71)