

Archived by Wheathampstead
History Society from the website
compiled by the late Brian Joyce.

Before the 1950s Memories of Wheathampstead

by Jack Hyde

My name is Francis John (Jack) Hyde. I was born in Necton Road, on the 1st January 1926, and apart from being in the army for nine years have lived in Wheathampstead all my life. We moved to The Dairy in Lamer Lane (see picture on right) when I was about three, and moved to **Astridge Farm** about 1942. At that time the farm was part of the Lamer Estate, owned by Cherry-Garrard.



The picture on the left is my mother at Ashridge Farm.



The picture above shows Jack (2nd from left) when stationed in Gibraltar.

When I hear people say what a lovely village to live in I have to smile, thinking what it used to be like when I was a boy. Most certainly it is still a nice place, but it has lost some of its charm because of the growth here. However, I perhaps should not make too much of this as I was fortunate in being able to move into one of the new houses when I left the army at the beginning of 1953.

Taking a look back before the 1950's it is difficult to remember how it was, the growth in the village and places like **Blackmore End** have changed greatly. The area between **The Slype** and the **Broadway** has all been built on, and where **Blackmore End Lodge** stood and the ground behind have also been built on. A few houses in the Slype have been built, but little has changed on the common itself and Lower Gustard Wood.

Coming into the village, where **Garden Court** is now there was "Garden House", which had large doors facing Lamer Lane. The area on the South side of Codicote Road and the area which was the **Railway Pub** out-building and garden have all been built on.

Kingfisher Close, the Post Office and Hairdressers have all been built where there was only one house and fruit trees and some waste ground.

The Mount has had new buildings, and **Murphy's** old buildings are now housing. There used to be the **Workingman's Club** where there is now an office block opposite the Post Office. Between the Post Office and the Mill, on the other side of the road, there was a **Baker's shop**, (Cobb's and later Hall's) and **Simon's Butcher's** shop and slaughter house. The Mill was a working mill, and where the Chemist is now used to be the private dwelling of the **Titmuss** family. The **Bull Hotel** has changed - at one time the pub was just the south end of the building with the door as it is now. There is another door further north and this used to be the entrance to private houses. The remainder was more houses entered from the yard at the back.

East Lane has changed completely, on the left was **Westwood's Blacksmith's**, and the old **Fire Station**, no car park but a pretty wooden structure bungalow with a veranda. Opposite side was **Woodley's grocer** shop, no telephone exchange or bungalow (since demolished in 2007), further along the **W.I. Mead Hall** and opposite the row of terraced house's - still there. Further up were some other houses - since demolished and new houses built. There was nothing beyond this, only a bungalow at the far end on the left and, on the right, the **Sewage Works**.

The **High Street** shop's and premises have changed a number of times, from East Lane was Mr. Wren the **Wheelwright** and the family in Jessamine Cottage which is still the same. Next was **Westwood's Painter and Decorator** with a yard at the back; then **Stapleton's** grocer's; **Rowe's** greengrocer's, the **Bell Hotel**, (and I am sure at the rear were stables) and next was **Latchford's** gent's hairdresser. A private house then **Chennell's** Post Office and General Store's, at the rear **Frank Chennell's** had a **Dairy**. There was then private house's. Where the Thai Restaurant is now, Charlie Collins has a **furniture showroom**, then **Latimore's** next was a **Baker shop (Garret's)** and **Blindell's** shoe shop. At the rear a

yard with a small Dental Mechanic's workshop. Then came the private house which was **The Ship Inn** (before my time). On the corner of the High Street were the two **Police cottages**.

The west side of the High Street starting from the Mill, was the **Spinning Wheel café**, later to become the Post Office, and now the Estate Agents; from there was a bus stop and shelter, and then **Pearce's Paper Shop** - he also used to charge-up people's accumulators used for powering radios in the old days. Next was Mrs. **Collins General Store** including paraffin and on the corner of the building was a petrol pump. The area beyond that built in the late 1930's (previously the location of the Workhouse) was made up of a **café, fruit and vegetable shop (Pateman's)**, a **wool shop** and next a chemists and later **Barclays Bank**. At the rear was access to the Helmets Factory with the entrance up the church drive between the Bank and a **fish & chip shop**. Lastly was **Stuart's** gents and boys outfitters.

Church Street had a **hairdresser's** (Bert Night owner and Frank Hill), **butcher's shop** (Balls) which had its own **slaughter house**; behind this was a small working **garage**, then a semi detached house - still there. Next was **The Walnut Tree Pub**, they also had a little **shop** selling tobacco and sweets.

On the other side near the churchyard was the **Rectory**, now Rectory Close. There used to be the **Church Hall** (now a small open space) opposite the old **Junior School** which is now offices.

The Bury has had a fairly large estate built on it, we used to play on Ash Grove, during school breaks, there was an unmade road leading to **Bury Farm** and **Bury House**, and the cottages near the river.

Brewhouse Hill has had a number of houses built on the left and near the top was **Helmets**, now offices. At the top of the hill more houses have been built. Wheathampstead Hill is much the same a few houses built in here and there. **The Red Cow Pub** has gone. The Wick Estate (Wick Av., Butterfield Rd etc) was not there - just fields.

Marford Road has changed on the right **Town Farm**, completely gone and new houses built instead, on the left nothing only the **Telephone Exchange**. **The Memorial Hall** is on the left, and houses behind the Catholic Church have also been built since the 1950's.

Necton Road has had a few houses added and there used to be a small **Grocers Shop** (Bangs) on the corner. The **Conquerers Hill Estate** and **Hillydyke** have all been built since the 1950's, as have **Garrards Way** and **Four Limes Development**.

The **Lower Luton Road** has had some changes, there used to be a **Butchers Shop (Gales)** and a shop at the bottom of The Folly. Houses have been built where **Hink's Yard** used to be (now Leasey Dell), and the **Cherry Tree Pub**, is now a restaurant. Just passed Castle Farm there were **Water Cress Beds**. I think they closed because of the water from the river Lea being polluted.

Some features have also gone mainly of course the **Station, Station House**, the **bridge** across Station Road, also the **Station Yard**. Where the entrance to Garden Court is now, used to be a **foot bridge** from Murphy's House to the Orchard. In Lower Gustard Wood on the left of the hill up to Owen's Corner was a Hall up on the bank - "**Robin's Nest**" no longer there. **Bert Cobb** used to put on shows there. Many pubs are no longer, the **Plough**, the **Railway** and later **Abbot John**, the **Bell**, the **Red Cow**, the **Walnut Tree**, the **Three Oaks** and the **Cherry Tree** - all changed.

January 2008