ROADS AND TRAFFIC IN THE HORMEADS

Like any other country parish, Hormead is criss-crossed with lines of communication trodden out by human foot, later by oxen and horses, and then some of them widened by the passing of carts and wagons. Finally a few of these ancient walkways have been adopted as roads for 20th century traffic propelled first by steam, then the petrol engine.

Throughout the ages some lines of communication were always more important due to their geographical position and the use made of them. We have streets and roads, also lanes and ends, and these names tend to reflect the degree to which they have been used as main or minor routes.

Taking each category of route in turn, we'll trace their history in our villages.

Footpaths

The ancient rights of way were developed as direct, if not straight, lines across the land for people to move quickly whist going about their daily business. For the most part that meant farming strips of land in different fields. The shortest routes lay across intervening meadows and pasture and along headlands. Everyone knew where it was safe to tread, with no damage to neighbours' crops. It is only in recent times, with the change of land use (pasture ploughed to form arable) that there has been conflict of interest between the owners of the land and the footpath users across that land.

Footpaths are now used mainly for the pleasure of walkers – a minority group – and not as essential routes to get to work. Footpaths are rarely more than four feet wide, many of the narrower.

Lanes

We have a number of named lanes in the parish, some that have never been developed and metalled to form roads but are wide enough to be used by vehicular traffic, others that constitute minor roads.

In Hare Street ***Swan Lane*** leads past the Old Swan out into the fields and was a "private carriage road and driftway called Kings Lane Road of the breadth of 20'." in the Enclosure Act of 1823. It took its name from the large field to the south of the lane. It was known as 'Swan Lane' by 1888 and marked as such on the OS map of 1899.

Stonecross Lane was a continuation of Worsted lane, over the main road through Hare Street, but had fallen into disuse. The very large stone that probably gave its name to the lane lay to the south at some distance – before being broken to pieces to repair the road in 1849. The main interest of Stonecross Lane is that, with Worsted Lane, it follows the line of the old cart baulk – a baulk being a wide unploughed boundary between two parishes, Great Hormead lying to the north, Little Hormead to the south, of these lanes. This lane has been ploughed up and absorbed into two fields.

Worsted Lane was Horstead Lane in 1656 and there is an earlier record of a Holstrethegge in 1511. It was a bone of contention between the two parishes and argument as to which parish should repair it was carried to Court in Hertford on more than one occasion. In 1667 this resulted in both being indicted 'for neglecting to repair the common cart-road called Hostreet Lane, in the parishes of Hornmead Magna and Hornmead Parva, leading from the highway to Hornmead Parva.' The highway here is the King's Highway, viz. Hare Street.

The early use of Worsted Lane was described in the East Herts Arch. Soc. Trans 1932-3:360:

> "Now when the Romans came to Britain a tribe called the Trinobantes inhabited Essex and another the Catuvellauni, Hertforshire. But the division between was not the present Essex & Herts county boundary, but more probably the Rib and Quin valleys. The trackway from the Trinobantes stronghold, Stocking Pelham, the stockaded Pelham, to their frontier post at Much Hormead Bury, and from there Worstead

Lane, the 'war stead' or warpath, ran down from this frontier post to the territory of the Catuvellauni."

At this early date there would be a ford of somekind across the Quin, later a small bridge was built carrying the road over the river. On this bridge a metal plaque issues the following warning:

COUNTY OF HERTFORD
TAKE NOTICE THAT THIS BRIDGE IS INSUFFICIENT
TO CARRY WEIGHTS BEYOND THE ORDINARY
TRAFFIC OF THE DISTRICT AND THAT OWNERS AND
ALL PERSONS IN CHARGE OF LOCOMOTIVES AND ALL
OTHER PONDEROUS CARRIAGES ARE WARNED AGAINST
ATTEPTING THE PASSAGE OF THE BRIDGE
BY ORDER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL
C. E. LONGMORE
CLERK OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL
HERTFORD 23RD OCTOBER 1899

Following Worsted Lane round, a pedestrian used to enter ***Churchend*** after the junction with the road leading through Little Hormead to Furneux Pelham. Churchend was rerouted after 1823 to take a sharp bend out of the road just south of St Nicholas Church.

Nearly opposite the Church there is a wide lane leading out to the further north-east parish boundaries between Great and Little Hormead, where the pest house was situated. In 1823 this was described as a public footpath to Little Hormead 4' wide. This muste have acquired its name post 1603 when an isolation house was built at the height of the Great Plague of that year. The little hut, or house, was derelict by the 1870s, but the name of the path across the fields to join Sparkes Field Lane has stuck, and is still referred to as ***Pest House Lane*** today.

Churchend ended at the Church, with a narrow chalk lane connecting it to Worsted Lane. In the 1851 census and the 1871 census only three households were entered as being 'At Church End', the cottage opposite the Church (now called Church End Cottage), and a pair of semi-detached houses in the grounds of that house near Pest House Lane.

Willow Close, a lane made up in 1963, live sup to its name by being enclosed. It was named after two Councillors – Mr. G C WILson and Mr LOW. Numbers 13-18 were built in 1946/47, numbers 1-6 in 1948, 7-12 in 1952, and the flats, numbered 19-30, in 1973.

Horseshoe Lane is a name used only since the 19thC and on the OS maps 1897 and 1923 the road is indicated as starting by the Three Tuns, up the hill and round to meet Churchend past Box Tree Cottage. The 1978 map shows the hill section as 'Horseshoe Hill'. The name was derived from The Three Horseshoes, halfway up the hill, which functioned as a public house from mid 18thC to 1955. One of the earliest documents referring to the pub said it was a 'copyhold cottage or tenement situate at Smith Hill in Hormead Dane called the three Horse Shoes' (1787).

Smith Hill was almost certainly so called because the Smith family owned an orchard and both 'coppy and freehold housen' on this hill. There were Smiths in the parish register in the C16th and in the Muster Book of 1583 among the 'cheif inhabitantes and householders' was Thomas Smith who was armed with a bow. In 1705 Samuel Orger paid militia tax of 1d 'for Smith hell land'. The hill, therefore, was known as Smith Hill far longer than it has been Horseshoe Hill.

Across the road, at the bottom of Horseshoe Hill, there are two small lanes leading west to the field beyond, and in the last century to the windmills. ***Anderson's Lane*** was first so labelled on a map surveyed in 176, but how it got is name is a mystery. There was neither resident nor landowner in the village called Anderson, nor a field of that name. In the 1823 Enclosure Award it was 'Ansty Road ... a Public Carriage road and

Highway ... leading to Ansty Mill.' At that date, the road would lead past our own single windmill en route to Anstey.

A narrow lane for the Brick House leaves Anstey Road to the east but before we reach ***Brick House Lane*** the same route was called ***Parsonage Green*** where it passed in front of the old Parsonage House and farm, derelict in the 1920s and now nothing left except the pond.

The Halfacre in 1823 was a private road, unnamed. On a map surveyed in 1876 it was Halfacre, and on another map dated 1921 it was Halfacre Lane. I believe it acquired the name 'Halfacre' after the Enclosure Act of 1823 when the only house in the lane was the one at the top of the lane (built about five to ten years previously), still called The Halfacre, to which allotments of land were granted amounting to roughly half an acre.

Proceeding along the Hormead Road towards Brent Pelham, ***Hall Lane*** leads off north to Hormead Hall, the earliest record of its being so named that I can trace is in the census of 1851.

Beyond Dane Farm the road twists and bends and narrows into a lane, ***Conduit Lane*** which in 1823 extended from Dane Farm to Lasting Dale Field. On the 1897 OS map it is clearly shown as extending from the conduit at the bottom of Black Ditch to Broweneymead Lane, where the road becomes Brent Pelham Road. The lane acquired more official recognition in April 1913 when the County Surveyor approved 'An overground telegraph line along the public road at Great Hormead from the post Office to Conduit Lane". The post office was then in the Old Stores (where Miss Weir now lives). ***Bronwneymead Lane*** never led anywhere, except round the eastern boundary of Lasting Dales Field. Even on the 1823 Enclosure Map it is ruled off with a firm line at the end of that field. Surely it went somewhere some time!

Roads

The highway through Great Hormead has had various names, including Hormead Dean (or dene, a small valley) later corrupted to Dane; Hormead Lane; Old Street lane 1628/9; Hormeads Street or Road. The Dane, Dane End and Hormead Dean all appear in the Sessions Rolls 1807-09. From other documents it would also appear that Dean was used only for the part of Hormead Road that actually lay as a valley between the two hills i.e. the part from the bottom of Horseshoe Hill to the bottom of the black ditch where Conduit Lane began. Early in this century it was still only a rough track filled with large stones and a local resident remembers riding her bicycle from Hare Street to Great Hormead and being delighted, c1926, to find she was having a smoother ride after the stones had been rolled and tarred into position by a steam roller. The neat kerbs and pavements did not appear for another ten years.

The road through Little Hormead seems to have been the ***Furnix Pelham Road*** without alternative through the centuries. It was referred to as an ancient highway in 1802 and in 1651 the 'overseer of the highway' for Little Hormead received a certificate from the County Court stating that the 'parishioners of Little Hormead have done their day's work for the highways, excepting Mr Ball the Minister of the Parish, and William Plummer.' (William Plomer was related to the Elringtons who owned Little Hormeadbury and was too grand to work on the road himself but should have sent money or a cart and horse in lieu).

The road to Buntingford, taking sharp angles round the edges of fields, follows an old cart track or baulk between the parishes of Great Hormead and Layston. In the 1830s and 1840s the bottom end of this track was Owles Hill, now this section of the Bungtingford Road is ***Bell Hill*** after the old inn on the corner of Hare Street and ***Buntingford Road*****.** There were many tracks across the field to Layston Church from Hare Street because part of that hamlet lay in the parish of Layston up to 1938. The major route, however, was round the north-east corner of High Field (from which the Highfield Kennels take their name) and this doubled as the main road for vehicles going on further to Buntingford and beyond. In 1923 the road was widened by the charity land (past Upstones) but in 1926 villages were still complaining that Bell Hill was so narrow that two vehicles could not pass each other.

Hare Street the Turnpike Road, and King's Highway, all cover the same portion of the London to Cambridge road where it passes through Hormead parish. The houses situated along a street like this collectively form a 'linear village'. Formerly called Langport, it was a vill in Edwinstree Hundred in the Domesday Book of 1086, and the context of the Walden Cartulary of 1387 makes it clear that Langport (meaning a long town) was in Great Hormead Parish.

The name Harestreet first appeared in extant literature in 1472, with the more familiar spelling of Hare Street in the session book of 1593. This road probably developed from a track used by people journeying to the Belgic town of Braughing. The Belgae were a nation of mixed Celtic and Teutonic blood from northeast France and Belgium who came to Britain in several invasions from the late 2nd Century BC, They settled Kent then crossed the Thames and formed the state known as Catuvellauni whose capital was originally at Wheathampstead then later, when Caesar stormed the capital in 55 and 54 BC, at Prae Wood, near St Albans.

The Romans used Braughing as a station along the trunk road where their horses could be changed and the soldiers and traders accommodated for the night. Braughing was on a major Roman Road from Great Chesterford, via Meesden and Brent Pelham to Great Hormead park and Braughing. The great Roman Road to York, later called Ermine Street (then the Old North Road and A10) bypassed Braughing, Hare Street, Barkway and Barley, which last became a subsidiary local road. This alternative route takes the traveller further east into the barley and wheat growing area of East Herts and it is the importance of these crops, and their use to support the growing population of London, that has influenced the amount of traffic on the road through Hare Street.

Traffic

For centuries local traffic on all the village lanes would include only pedestrians, horses and farm carts and wagons pulled by oxen or horses. In addition, Hare Street would see the passage of pack horses in long strings (usually 12 or more), drovers with herds of sheep and cattle, pedlars and tinkers of all kinds. Near Christmas, flocks of geese and turkeys would be driven through on their way from Norfolk and the fens to the London markets,. Highways, before Elizabeth I, were broad tracks, upwards of 50 yards, to accommodate these large flocks. More rarely pilgrims would come through the villages on their way to the Walsingham shrine. It is thought that one who paused to visit St Mary's Church, Little Hormead, in the 13thC or 14thC left the graffiti on the doorway. From the 13thC when Cambridge established its university and developed its collages after the first charter was granted in 1231, students would use this road from the south. Much later a very famous graduate of Magdalen College, Samuel Pepys, certainly passed through Hare Street for he says in his diary that he sometimes chose the route through Puckeridge to Barkway (eg August 1661).

Being part of the main King's Highway was hard on the parishes of Layston, Great and Little Hormead where Hare Street passed within their boundaries. Up to 1555 each manor had been responsible for the upkeep of its roads, but after 1555 the onus passed to the parish. The Highways Act (Statute for mending of Highways, 2&3 Philip & Mary, C.8) stipulated that the inhabitants of each parish were to be responsible for the repair and upkeep of the roads within the parish. Every person holding land of an annual value of £50 and everybody keeping a draught of horses or plough in the parish had to provide, at the appointed time, one wain or cart furnished after the custom of the county to carry things convenient for that purpose and also 2 able men with the same.

Each year two men of the parish were elected to be Surveyors of the Highway and they had to organise their fellow villagers to set aside a day to collect stones from the fields, car them to the roads and tip them onto the surface. There was no payment for this service and it was a most unpopular job. Trying to fill in the deep ruts and potholes – some feet deep – was an onerous task. It was particularly resented when those same ruts and been created by through traffic such as huge barley wagons pulled by six horses. Added to this was the upkeep of bridges, cleansing of itches, unblocking of culverts, and it is not surprising to find that the system of local labour was inadequate, particularly on the county's major highways.

From 1665 travellers passing through Wadesmill were required to pay a toll towards the upkeep of the road which carried the very heavy maltings traffic. The great wagons lumbered through the villages six days a week, but strict regulations ensured that Sunday would be a quiet day with respite from through traffic. Our village constable (a local farmer or trader elected to act in that capacity for a year) took two men to court for breaking the law forbidding Sunday travel. In 1682 he apprehended two Cambridgeshire higglers (itinerant dealers) and presented them at Hertford charged of 'travelling with their loaded horses on Sunday in the road through the parish of Great Hormead from London'. The men lived at 'Meldred' and Thriplow and were almost certainly caught passing through Hare Street.

The establishment of the Turnpike Trusts improved the condition of the roads by levying tolls for their upkeep and Hare Street shared in this improvement afdtr the road from Puckeridge through Barkway to the County boundary at Barley was included in the Wadesmill Trust in 1733. The road from Barley to Cambridge had been turnpiked in 1724.

The Wadesmill Trust was composed of local gentry, parsons and farmers. Two Great Hormead landowners served as Trustees in 1719, Daniel Welch and Edward Pryor. The Trust set up milestones along the route in 1742, showing the distance from Shoreditch Church where stage coaches then set out for Cambridge. The Hare Street milestone was put in place opposite the old bakery and gives the mileage as LONDON 31 WARE 10 and BARKWAY 4. The setting up of the milestones is recorded in the Wadesmill Trust minutes. A general meeting of the Trust held 2nd October 1741 at the Bell Inn, Puckeridge, "It is ordered that Mile Stones be fixed and placed down at the end of every Mile of the said road to be repaired by this Turnpike – beginning in that part of the said Road that leads from Barkway to Puckeridge one mile distant from the last milestone in Cambridge Road and from Wadesmill to Royston in the northern Road with the numbers of miles from London on each stone. And the said Mr Anthony ffage the Treasurer of the Turnpike do take upon himself the trouble of getting and providing the said stones and putting and placing the same in a proper manner". The Trustees met a year later and the treasurer duly reported: "And the said Mile Stones having been putt and placed down by William Goodhall pursuant to the said Order and Expense of the said stones and of putting and placing them down (amounting to twenty pounds seven shillings and four pence) being approved by the said Trustees now present."

A turnpike was originally the rounded pole, or turned pike, which prevented cattle from straying. The term was applied to the toll gates and then quickly adopted to describe the road itself. The old system of parish labour on the roads was now transferred to members of the Turnpike Trust and their surveyor of the highways took on similar duties to those held by the old parish surveyor who now only had the minor roads and lanes of Hormead to attend to.

If Hare Street improved, the same cannot be said for the side roads. Arthur Young in 1804 said of Hertfordshire in general, 'The roads of a county to near the Metropolis, can scarcely be bad: six great leading turnpikes passing through so mall district would along give this character but there are many crossroads nearly as good as turnpikes. The worst were found in the country between Pelham and Welwyn'. This puts the Hormeads and Hare Street right in the path of the worst crossroads. Thirty years later the village street was probably in better repair than at any time before, for the passage of the Telegraph Stage Coach would not admit of a really bad road surface.

The extraction of gravel from local gravel pits was an important item in the budget of the turnpike trusts. Payments were made by them to the owners of such pits and recompense made after the gravel had been extracted from pits such as the one behind Girton House and the north of it through the C19th and into the C20th. Two residents of Clock House carted gravel as a means of livelihood.

For non-turnpike roads, the Highways Act of 1835 substituted a rate for compulsory labour, but the responsibility of the vestry to maintain the roads and bridgdes in its parish remained until 1888. Most of the existing roads in the countryside are thus on

foundations of gravel and chalk and stones collected from the fields and put down by local and pauper labour.

Vehicles

For more than 2000 years the two-wheeled cart was the most used form of transport for goods in the British Isles. Carts carried bulky materials for the farmer – lime, gravel, stones, dung, straw and hay and other crops. In the 17thC the wagon (with four wheels) was introduced to carry greater and bulkier loads drawn by teams of oxen and horses. The tolls paid by wagons and carts were calculated by the weight they carried, unwieldy cranes weighing these goods vehicles at the toll gates.

Various attempts were made to restrict the damage done to the roads by the heavy wagons by legislation governing wheel width and the weight carried, but in the early days these regulations were few and generally ignored. Charles II permitted wagons with four wheels and drawn by ten or more horses to carry loads of sixty to seventy hundredweight, but in the last half of the 18thC a four wheeled wagon drawn by four horses was charged according to the breadth of the wheel – less than 6" the toll was one shilling, six inches and the toll was 9d, and with a breadth of over 9" the toll was 6d. This was in an attempt to prevent narrow wheels grinding into the road surface and causing great furrows.

These regulations affected our local farmers not only carrying barley to Ware, but also great loads of hay and straw to London. The many stables in London were ready customers and villagers alive today can remember travelling up to London with a load of straw and then coming home late in the evening. A call at a favourite stopping place did not incur the wrath of the law then, since the driver only had to scramble back onto his cart and the horse knew his own way home. The number of carriers in our villages and surrounding parishes was large – many of them going up to London twice a week.

Stage wagons, the precursors of stage coaches, were originally used for the transit of goods, then adapted for people. The stage wagon came into use about 1500. It had four large wheels and the body was covered with cloth stretched over a wooden framework.

By 1570 goods traffic had become a permanent feature on the roads and one of the 16thC pioneers of this traffic was Thomas Hobson who operated a service between London and Cambridge. He was especially licensed by the University whose letters he carried. He passed his thriving carrier's business onto his son when he died in 1568. Thomas inherited the wagon, six horses and 'all that harness and other things thereunto belonging with the nag'. The nag was ridden by the waggoner alongside the wagon and it rumbled along.

Thomas developed a lucrative second line of business by letting out saddle horses complete with harness, boots, bridle and whip. His stables in Cambridge housed 40 horses which the students hired for their journeys to and from the University. Hobson insisted that they take the horses in strict rotation and did not allow them to choose their own mount. This gave rise to the ironical term "Hobson's Choice".

When Thomas Hobson died in 1631 many stage wagons were operating from towns all over the country. The long vehicles carried as many as 20 people in exceedingly uncomfortable conditions. They were very slow, due to the state of the roads and the animals. They easily became bogged down and it was quicker to walk. Many passengers walked at least part of the way for their averaged only two miles and hour riding. It was obvious that some better form of transport for humans was desirable.

Stage coaches were used for public conveyance in England from the mid-17thC and remained on the roads for approximately two hundred years. By 1640 there were several stage coaches arriving in London each week, though with the exception of Cambridge, their points of departure were all within 30 miles of the capital. They only ran in the summer months, the roads being impassable in winter. They were slow, low-slung vehicles carrying 6 to 8 persons and swung both side to side and up and down. Steel springs were introduced in Pepys' time; later the broad rimmed wheels were

reduced in width and dished, giving the wheel greater strength. Finally a welded hoop of iron on the rim all combined to give greater speed and comfort for the passengers.

Early stage coaches were drawn by the same horses from their starting point to their destination. When coach services became in greter demand the increased number of journeys enabled owners to arrange for relays of horses and the time taken was cut as average speed increased. It was also possible to fix a timetable and specific staging points. The older coaches had picked up and put down passengers more or less where the passenger required. The stages were fixed about the end of the eighteenth century, giving rise to the importance of inns which became staging posts.

The Bell in Hare Street was the stage coach inn on the London to Cambridge route served by the Cambridge Telegraph. On this short route, a little over 50 miles, the same coachman would drive all the way, on longer routes the coachman rarely drove more than 50 miles. The Cambridge coaches changed horses at Puckeridge and Barkway, only pausing at The Bell to put down and take up passengers. An 1806 plan of Hare Street shows a large yard at the rear of the inn with an entrance in Hare Street and exit in Bell Hill so the coach could drive in and straight out without turning and so losing time.

By the time the Cambridge Telegraph was in service in the early 19thC the coach left Fetter Lane daily at 9.00 in the morning (except Sunday) and arrived in Cambridge at the Sun Inn at 3.00 in the afternoon. The return journey commenced in Cambridge at 1.00 in the morning and arrived at "9 the same morn". By 1836 the time had been cut to 6 hours and one coach left Cambridge at 10.00 am daily whilst another left Fetter Lane at the same time to travel in the opposite direction.

Ideally there were four coaches called Cambridge Telegraph – two at each end, one in service, and the other in reserve. In late 18th C values it cost £4 a month, including the wages of horse keepers and stable hands, to keep a coach horse on the road. The lifespan of a horse on a stage coach route was only 3 to 4 years and they were then sold to farmers for lighter duties. The horses trotted and tried to keep a steady pace of ten miles an hour. Galloping could only be sustained for a short distance and was only indulged in to make up lost time.

The turnpikes were at Wadesmill and Barkway. Mail coaches (none of which had names and none of which came this route but ran from Puckeridge to Royston via Buntingford) were exempt from tolls, but stage coaches had to pay them. Anyone living in these villages wishing to travel in the faster mail coaches had to go to Buntingford or Royston where they had the choice of three per day up to London.

The Cambridge Telegraph service was withdrawn in the late 1840s when its owner foresaw the threat from the railways. He sold his extensive coaching business and invested in the London & Birmingham Railway to become a very wealthy man. For a few years a rival coach proprietor ran a service from Petty Cury in Cambridge via Hare Street and Ware to the Bull Inn, Holborn. The railway finally ended the days of the stage coaches in this district in the mid 19thC.
The first person in England to own a private coach was Elizabeth I, but private coaches were few and far between until the 19thC due to the expense. Pepys saved up for years for his and only as a man of substance could he afford to keep one. In the 18thC the number on the road grew steadily. Between 1750 and 1850 there were two main types – those driven by the owners themselves, and the most costly carriages driven by coachmen. *The Spectator* of 1837 estimated that it cost £200 to run a carrige including coachman, footman, and all other incidental expenses.

The number of private coaches in the Hormeads was probably always quite small. Some of the London gentlemen who owned estates here, e.g. at Hormead Bury and Ashdown Farm, may have travelled up to visit their tenants. William Little, a builder, had a chaise house built when he rebuilt Bradbury House (now The White House) c1860. Gigs were more common and Charles Moore of Girton House used one to get to Buntingford Station and so to business in town during 1896-1936. In 1910 when Ashdown House was put up for sale the extensive accommodation for horses was a marked feature of the details of the outbuildings: 'Chaise House and Harness Room'. By the time the next big house

in the villages was put on the market, Bradbury House ten years later, there is a decidedly equivocal note concerning their outbuildings: 'Detached stabling for 2 horse and coach house or garage'. This was William Little's clearly labelled 'chaise house' of sixty years before.

From the early 17thC the quickest way to move about the country was by posting, i.e. the hiring of a horse, perhaps also a guide, in each town along the route. This service was provided by postmasters who were also often innkeepers. In Hare Street the posthouse was just south of The Beehive and faced directly down the road to Great Hormead. Behind it were many stables. For most of this century it was known as the Charles's house since that family lived there until it was demolished in 1966. The room at the southern end of the house was an office for the hostler who conducted the posting business. He lived in a little room over the office. The postmaster did not let out his good horses to strangers whose sole idea was to reach the next town in the shortest possible time. Consequently there was much grumbling about the nags used for this purpose. A post-boy in a bright yellow jacket accompanied the post chaises when a customer wanted both horses and chaise for hire. The boy rode postillion on the nearside horse of the pair (or four) pulling the vehicle at a gallop. Post houses and postmasters were put out of business by the railways.

Though the railway did not run through the villages, a note of its influence on the Hormeads is appropriate here. The loss of the stage coach to local residents was probably slight since few residents would commute to London or Cambridge – thata was a railway age possibility. It may even have been more peaceful, if less interesting, a life for Hare Street residents. The road probably became less well maintained and The Bell would suffer loss of custom. The blacksmiths and wheelwright would be little affected since the coaches and horses rarely required their services other than for accidents or breakdowns. The increase in the use of private coaches and gigs probably benefited the local tradesmen. A.T. Bentley had a number of gigs which he used to take people from the villages to Buntingford, some smarter than others to suit his clientele. He charge 2/6d for a horse and gig by day, 5/- for a night ride. Another enterprising villager was Mark Hammond, a coal merchant of Wedlands, who sent a horse and cart to collect the coat from Buntingford station, load by load, until it was all stacked up in the yard behind the house (1910-1914).

The Northern & Eastern Railway ran from Shoreditch Station (later renamed Bishopsgate) to Broxbourne from September 1840, with a branch line to Hertford East opening in 1843. This branch line curved away one mile north of Broxbourne to serve Rye House, St Margaret's and Ware en route to Hertford. The branch (13¾ miles long) from St Margaret's to Buntingford was begun as a private venture in 1859 but ran into financial difficulties due to the problems arising from 8 crossings over the rivers Rib and Ash. The track was finally completed for the first trains to run on 3 July 1863. When they reached Buntingford a large banquet was provided in celebration of the event. Goods sheds and sidings were built at Buntingford in 1864 and the line prospered in a modest way until Dr Beeching decided to close it. The service to Buntingford ended on 16 November 1964. The hundred years that the station was open provided jobs in Buntingford for people in our villages. It also gave access to jobs down the line and not a few Hormead men helped build the Tottenham and Enfield suburbs.

What a strange mixture of vehicles the oldest inhabitants of our villages can call to mind. The wagons which outlasted the carts and many coaches and gigs were used until well after World War II. These were adapted to perform so many different functions: the rag and bone man's simple structure, the bread man's covered van or wagon, even the curious phenomenon of a horse drawn horse-van/ Horses and carts trundled hay up to London for all the horses still stabled there. Horses were used on the farms until superseded by tractors, but that was not until the 1950s.

During the last years of the 19thC pedal cycles were in use and the Bentley family had a cycle business before they owned garages in Hare Street. William Soper advertised as a Cycle Agent in 1902 and he was a member of a family which had steam engines to rent out for agricultural purposes. 'Billy' Soper of Mutton Hall Farm had steam ploughs to rent out in 1902 and then operated later from Stonebury Farm. Increasingly farm

workers round here gave their occupation in the parish registers as 'Machinists', i.e. agricultural machinery technicians. The steam rollers used on the roads kept them in a suitable condition for rubber-tyred vehicles by compressing the stones and flattening any sharp edges. Tarred surfaces were spread on the village roads from 1926 onwards.

One village resident remembers going from Mutfords Cottages when a small boy, about 1904, to play all day by the roadside on the A10. Fortified by sandwiches and lemonade, he hoped to see a car pass by during the course of the day – and thought himself very fortunate if he saw one.

The first motor car in the village was owned by Lord Romer of Hormeadbury. His chauffeur went away for a month to see the new car being built. Then, when it was ready for delivery, a mechanic came to the Bury with the new car and stayed a few weeks while the car was running in and to instruct the chauffeur.

By 1913 the Parish Council of Great Hormead was so alarmed by 'the increasing danger to the public caused by extra motor traffic on Horseshoe Lane' that they requested the County Council to put a danger sign at the top of the hill. The Clerk to the County Council cautiously replied 'I think the Motor Caution Sign might be erected as desired by the Parish Council'. The following year, 1914, because Mr Oyler was using 'the main road Hare Street to Brent Pelham' to such an extent 'carrying materials for his fruit farm in 3 lorries (two of them with trailers, each of which often does three double journeys a day with produce and manure. At the present time they are also carting bricks to build cottages in connection with the farm)..' the County Council decided to order 220 tons of material 'over and above that included as the estimate for the current year. The total cost of this metal, including spreading and rolling, would amount to about £200'. Mr Oyler did the village a good turn, and no doubt all the little boys thoroughly enjoyed seeing the old steam road roller trundling backwards and forwards for days, if not weeks, on end.

Due to Hare Street being on such a busy road, garages appeared surprisingly early in motoring days. 'Motor Engineers' were noted in the local directory from 1926 onwards. The Bentley family had two garages here, B.J.Bentley in 1933 and A.T.Bentley from 1936 onwards.

Commercial traffic through Hare Street always was greater than through the rest of the parishes of which Hare Street formed a small part. Today container lorries rumble through Hare Street, a fate not shared equally by the Hormeads, and in the past, drovers, wagons, carts, stage coaches, motor vehicles carrying passengers and goods between Cambridge and the capital would leave the Hormeads in relative peace. It would seem that whatever the age, Hare Street has been the busiest and noisiest part of the three villages – plus ça change, plus c'est la mẽme chose.

C. E. Jackson
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