GOING TO WORK IN THE HORMEADS

For centuries going to work in the Hormeads meant going to work on the land or in trades closely related to agriculture. This was not a wealthy parish for there were no rich landowners living in stately mansions, but a very small community left much of the time to its own devices and having to rely on the individuals who lived here to supply all the necessary services, food and equipment in order to survive without outside help. Every man, woman and child was expected to contribute to the survival of the whole community. This called for far greater diversity in men's capabilities, an assumption that women would not only take care of the house and children but either assist with their husband's jobs or some other task in order to supplement his income, and it was also taken for granted that children would be employed to do small tasks the moment they were capable of so doing.

For the men living here there was little choice of occupation. The geographical position of the villages in prime cereal growing country meant work on the land would occupy most of them either directly or in supporting trades as blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carters, harness and collarmakers. Having a balanced combination of skills was vital so that what a man did for a living was of such importance that many surnames are indicative of trades, e.g. Baker, \butcher, Wright, Miller, and the most frequent, Smith. Every cottage was supposed by law to have 4 acres of land attached for its support, thought this was not always the case. A man was thus expected to be a good gardener, growing his own food and looking after a pig, cow or perhaps a goat; also a woodworker to some extent to do house, barn and well repairs, besides teaching his children his skills.

With farm labour being so poorly paid for most of our history, wives of labourers often had to supplement their husband's income by taking in laundry, needlework, specialising in millinery, midwifery, keeping a small shop for groceries and odds and ends, or going into service as domestic servants.

Throughout the history of the village, however, one remarkable feature is the manner in which wives took over their husband's businesses, even such unlikely ones as smithies, if they were so unfortunate as to lose their husbands prematurely. Women's paid farm jobs included weeding and hoeing and collecting stones from the fields in order to fill in holes in the roads, unpaid jobs for farmers' wives included looking after the poultry and dairy and, like everyone else in the village, helping to get in the harvest.

Children worked alongside their parents at harvest and gleaning. School was of secondary consideration at harvest time. Farmers hired some boys individually for tenting (bird-scaring), tending of sheep, cattle and pigs in the stubble, helping with the threshing machine, weeding or stone-picking, and collecting acorns for pigs. Pea and bean picking was work for women and children whilst older children went potato picking and cleaned the tops off swedes. Young boys earned a copper or two as ploughboys, then went on to be cowkeepers, hose boys and stable lads, while gradually being introduced to all the skills necessary for them to become good all round farm hands.

The main crops were wheat and barley, some oats, peas and beans. Huge wagonloads of barley were sent to the Maltings at Ware, causing such devastation on the road surfaces teat Wadesmill Turnpike was created in 1665 in order to finance road repairs. There were many more sheep here so that in the 17th century we had resident weavers and woolcombers, besides shepherds. The first owner of Little Meadow was a wealthy shepherd, whilst the owner of Hare Street House built a small cottage specifically for his shepherd (now called Gardener's Cottage due to change of occupation of its later residents). Many more cows in the village in the past grazed the meadows (The Meads) by the river and pastured on the open commons prior to the enclosure of Great Hormead in 1823 and Little Hormead in 1864.

Horses were indispensable until the invention first of the steam and then the petrol engine. many traders were engaged in keeping the horse in the furrow then, when the engine took over, they were superseded by engine-drivers and 'machinists' or agricultural machinery technicians. All, however, lived and work to assist the farmer.

Farmers

Until the end of the 17th century the men who owned the farms were yeomen – usually with smallholdings of little more than 40 acres – who employed labourers. Some of the labourers were husbandmen who owned small plots of land insufficient to provide them with a livelihood and so worked a number of days for the larger landowners.

As the country prospered in the 18th century farms were made larger by owners buying additional land as it came on the market and then land became so valuable that it was bought as an investment by wealthy merchants who had no farming knowledge and so had to employ farm bailiffs.

In the 18th century and 19th century when our large estates changed hands, they were sold in London in the coffee houses or inns and later in auction rooms. Smallholdings were usually auctioned in the inns at Buntingford or Bishops Stortford. The large estates were bought by silk merchants, bankers, salterers, goldsmiths, and many others who had made their money in the city and wanted an investment in land.

By the 19th century in Little Hormead there were four landowners at Little Hormeadbury, Mutfords, Stonebury and Bull's Farm. In Great Hormead there were farmers employing labour at hormeadbury, Hormead Hall, Chapman's Farm (now Little Meadow), Dane Farm (now Juded's), the Tithe Farm (from 1812 owned by Hormeadbury), and other smallholdings like Milburn's. Hare Street, being divided between three parishes (the two Hormeads and Layston) had no large landowner but some smallholdings, e.g. Ashdown Farm and Hare Street House Farm. Hare Street, being on the King's Highway, had a much more commercial role to play in providing supportive services both to the local farming community and passing traffic with smiths, wheelwrights, alehouses, etc.

Traders

In the trades, apprenticeships were served by boys, often with their own fathers, so that the business could be handed down from father to son. There was one exception to this rule however, for blacksmiths never trained their own sons. I do not know the reason – perhaps it was too dangerous a job for father to get impatient and fly into a rage with his own son. Apprenticeships lasted seven years, followed by a period when the newly trained craftsman worked for a master craftsman as a 'journeyman' to gain experience before setting up on his own and taking an apprentice in his turn.

Blacksmiths

I have only found one in Little Hormead and that was James Smith, 1836. In Great Hormead there have been four: John Winters (1819-29), William Wallis (1871 who probably assisted Joseph Thomas Jo eleyn c. 1866-90 in Half Acre lane), and Charles Johnson (1899-1902). In Hare Street there were more smiths and, since the forge was a hot and dusty place, our village blacksmiths were not found only to be right next to an inn, but to facilitate an adequate supply of liquor most of them were innkeepers as well.

Some of them when they grew older gave the smithy to their sons and concentrated on the inn. Business was so brisk that there were at least two smithies in Hare Street until tractors cut out the farriery work. The smith would shoe both horses and oxen, the latter used well into this century as beasts for transport.

In the days of long distance road carriers teams of 4, 6, or 8 oxen were yoked in pairs by trace-chains to a central draught pole on the fore-carriage of a tarpaulin covered wagon. For shoeing the cloven hoof, cues cut in two pieces were secured by nails – 54 to the outside and 4 to the inside. Oxen were regarded as hardier than horses, ate rougher food, and were cheaper. Also they could be fattened up after a few years use and sold for food.

Horses were first used in draught in East Anglia some time in the 12th century and the two animals were then employed for the next 8 centuries but it was not until the larger, stronger, war horses were turned onto the land (when cannon replaced them) that they were favoured on the farm more than oxen.

For centuries Hare Street had a smithy between Three Jolly Butchers and Oak Cottage. It finished in 1940 and would have gone on longer but for the untimely death of one of the smiths, Jimmy Norris, which so upset the owner smith Edward Ernest QWisbey, that he shut it down. (James was only 58 while Ernest was 72).

The second smithy in Hare Street was for many years in the inn yard of The Swan (1854-1906) having been moved there from a site behind some cottages adjoining The Bakery. This smithy was owned by the Barron family c.1818 onwards, whose history is given in *Inns and Innholders of the Hormeads*.

Our smithies were affected both by farm mechanisation and the mass production of metal goods which combined to reduce the number of smiths in Hertfordshire from 219 in 1878 to 122 in 1937. Until 1945 the blacksmith was the most important of the village craftsmen for he made the tools for other craftsmen, kept the horse and ox on the road, kept the farmer's implements in good repair, and much of the housewives' equipment as first made and then later repaired by him. Closely connected with the work of the smith was that of the iron founder.

Ironfounding

Hare Street had an iron foundry alongside the smith in the yard of The Swan, established by 1850 and continued until 1892, consistently employing three men – the founder, ironmoulder and assistant, during its time of operation. The foundry turned out smoothing irons, cattle troughs and some unusual tombstones shaped like coffin lids.

Two families were connected with the iron foundry – William Barron & Son, Ironfounders and Smiths; and Saggers. William farmed the Brickhouse land but was a blacksmith by trade who married the innkeeper Alice Tonson of The Swan after she lost her husband, and after William's death his son Henry survived him only by four years, dying in 1882 when his widow Martha leased the smithy and foundry to Thomas Saggers of Buntingford. The lease for ten years ended in 1892 and Martha Barron died in 1893, ending the long associatin of innkeeping combined with a smithy on the Swan site.

Collar-Makers, Saddlers and Harness-Makers

The blacksmith kept the hose shod, while the collar-maker ensured he was equipped for work. As early as the 13the century the first use of the horse in draught had necessitated the complete redesigning of harness to suit the horse. Rarely will one set of harness fit two horses equally well and with the horse the equipment must fit comfortably or he can be surprisingly uncooperative.

The craftsmen involved in fitting out the horse for its different jobs were: the saddler (who made riding and draught saddles, obtaining the frames from the saddle-tree maker), the horse-collar maker (who stuffed the flannel collar with straw and made sure the outer surface was perfectly smooth so that it would not chafe the neck), and the harness-maker (who produced the numerous straps and bands required in the harness).

John Judd lived in Hare Street in the early 18th century working as a collar-maker with his son, but the mother and son firm of Wright lasted much longer in the 19th century. William Wright married Mary Pigras of Layston in 1816 and their son Charles was born in 1818. Mary continued the business after the death of her husband in 1826 until Charles could take over. They stayed at Wayside until Mary died and then Charles took his own family to the new house, Wedlands (1864/6) where his son Benjamin Cannon Wright succeeded his and stayed until 1903. Benjamin employed Edward Camp, a harness-maker, until the business closed.

Wheelwrights

This is a very old craft. By the late Iron Age the spoked wheel made of wood had reached a stage which would have been recognisable to a 19th century wheelwright. The 19th century wheel was constructed from a lathe-turned hub of elm; the spokes were cleft oak and the felloes hewn from ash or elm and clamped together by an iron tyre. The wheelwright worked in close association with two other craftsmen: the sawyer who cut up the timber for him and the blacksmith who did the forge work necessary for the wheel. The Wheelwright's

shop was only two doors away from the blacksmith's in Hare Street and there was a pub (The Three Jolly Butchers) in between – a perfectd arrangement.

From the mid-16th century the quality of wheelwrighting and wainwrighting improved greatly and the number of vehicles on English roads increased steadily. Baggage wagons were already on the roads but farm wagons were rare until well into the 17th century. The wheelwright dealt with the construction of the wooden part of the wheel for all the coaches, carts (with 2 wheels) and wagons (4 plus wheels) on the road and farm.

Different parts of the country had their own style of carts and also distinctive patterns of colouring. The north east Herts cart had a blue body, wheels and shafts and ladder painted orange, and the body was locked by a strap stick. Carts for bulky materials like lime and travel had cross boards on the cart bed but they did not have the sides of the cart parallel for the bed was 2" wider at the rear, allowing the load to loosen as the cart body was tipped. The tailboards opened like doors and had three catches to close them safely. Bulky loads such as dung, coal and roadstones required floorboards arranged so that they were long-boarded, i.e. the planks ran parallel with the cart sides. Shovelling the materials across the surface of the boards was therefore unimpeded by joints.

The hand cart was once the principle means of transport for carpenters and builders as well as tradesmen who travelled the villages with their pots, pans, coal, bread and vegetables. Each had his small hand cart or larger horse drawn vehicle.

The east Hertfordshire wagon was a spindle-sided design with two midrails. The headboard was not as high as the sides and was supported by the upper midrail. The wooden strouters were cupid bow-shaped. It was exclusively used for harvesting and generally painted dark brown with buff wheels and undercarriage. All the line decorations on the body, especially the front top rail, were painted a bright butter yellow.

Road wagons, used by carriers whose memory for errands and messages was phenomenal, were gaily painted in a variety of colours and recognisable at some distance. They had wide, dished wheels and were pulled by a team of up to 12 horses. Four craftsmen were involved in building a wagon: the carpenter who constructed the body and underframe, the blacksmith did all the iron forge work – wheel tyres and other sundry pieces, the painter applied enough coats of paint to outlast a generation of farmers, the wheelwright made the wheels. The making of the whole wagon, not just the wheel, was always under the supervision of the wheelwright.

The wheelwrights of Hare Street have always occupied the site we now know as Mead Villas and part of the area of the yard which now adjoins Shangles/Timbers. Before the wheelwright George Choldcroft had the two Mead Villas cottages built in 1874, there was another cottage on this site, with sheds behind which had served as the home and workshop of wheelwrights since before 1714 when Thomas Clifton was there, then his son William until 1782. William Rayment was also in the business c.1747-1824 and then the Choldcroft family came in 1824, George being in charge until 1891 and William until 1911. Two craftsmen were employed in the workshop so they were assisted by William Mole c.1822-28 and then George Mile c.1841-1882. The last wheelwright was William Walter Choldcroft c.1880-1908 who combined the job with inn keeping at Three Jolly Butchers.

Some villagers still remember Walter Choldcroft who was a good craftsman who knew his job having been trained as a coach building in Hertford and would only use the best, well-seasoned timber. He painted carriages for the country gentlemen round here and would not allow the doors of the shed to be opened when a newly painted carriage was drying off. He lived through the years when those same gentlemen were acquiring motor cards and wisely allowed his son Ernest to train as a post office engineer. In the whole of Hertfordshire there were 123 wheelwrights in 1878, by 1937 there were only 21 and in 1978 there were only 9 master wheelwrights in the whole of England.

Carters and Carmen

Itinerant traders have been given a variety of names. A higgler was a dealer who owned a horse and cart and carted material for another. A kidder was a vendor of small wares, a kind of middleman who bought up farm produce and sold it at a market. A badger was a

corn-dealer, miller or miller's man who bought produce and sold it elsewhere. All these men had to obtain a licence at the end of the 17thC and beginning of the 18thC. Badgers included Edward Baker and John Cannon of Great Hormead; Joseph Milton and Joseph Clark of Hare Street. Robert Furly was a kidder of Little Hormead and Thomas Walker a midder of Great Hormead. James Gould was a higgler in Great Hormead in 1859, so the term lingered on in use for some time. He was also a carrier travelling to Bishop's Stortford Thursdays 6.00 am and Hertford of Saturdays at 6.00 am.

The higglers and kidders of early days became carters and dealers in the 19thC, e.g. William Sharpling described his activities under the general term 'dealer' in 1860 but actually peddled earthenware round the villages.

A carman was one who drove a car or cart when a 'car' was a vehicle on wheels, with no connotation of 'motor' being inferred. The carters often worked for the farmers, taking surplus produce to market and up to London. There was a remarkable woman called Sarah Tolfts who was a carrier (and deaf) in Great Hormead, 1861, and David Bardwell who also went from Great Hormead to Cambridge each Monday and returned Tuesday, 1897-99.

Our most noteworthy carter, however, was John Dew of White Ash, Little Hormead, to 1895. His death was reported in the newspaper: 'As was his wont, John Dew, aged 78, a carrier from Hormead to Hertford, though suffering from a cold, went on his journey from Hormead on Saturday as usual. He returned home through Puckeridge in the evening, making his customary calls but next day he was so ill that Dr Dixon was sent for and found him suffering from acute pneumonia, from which he died in the evening. The poor old man, quaint in dress, cheery, kind and obliging and so well known by residents living by the side of the roadway he had traversed for some 40 years, was faithful to his calling to the last. All who knew him regret he has passed away so suddenly and feel sorry the old carriers call for parcels will no longer be an incident on the Hertford market day. He was of the old-world school, a type of man of rare integrity and resource who are rapidly disappearing'.

There were at least five carters in the villages in the early part of the 20thC including Alfred and Joseph Wick, and a Hummerstone from Great Hormead. Mechanisation drove most of the carters off the roads after World War II.

Wagoners used to either walk or ride a nag alongside their slow lumbering wagon. James Casbon's wagonners left home in Barley early Thursday morning, trundling through Hare Street on their way to London, and back again on Saturdays. They struggled to get their heavy loads, often of male barley, along roads which we would consider quite impassable. If conditions were too difficult they put up at an inn (not the smart coaching inn The Bell) such as The Swan or Three Jolly Butchers. John Watson was one such wagonner who came from Barkway and stopped over in Hare Street. He stayed a little too long and not strictly on business either, according to the parish register: Baptisms Great Hormead – Sarah daughter of John Watson, wagonner of Barkway and Mary Sharples of Great Hormead 19 June 1831.

Sawyers

Nearly all the workers with wood needed the sawyers, with the few exceptions of carpenters or builders who had their own sawpit. They worked with the tree trunk on the ground for many centuries, but from the mid 18thC the sawpit was used. Pit sawing was done by two men, the senior on top of the work, the junior down in the pit getting all the sawdust in his eyes. The very long saw was pushed up and down, the top man keeping it in a straight line and sharpening the teeth at intervals. Sawing planks from the centre of a huge trunk required a keen eye and accurate manipulation of the saw. Lengths were cut until the whole trunk had been converted into planks which were then stored.

Sawyers often worked to the wheelwright's specification after the wheelwright had chosen the timber and marked it up for each job he wanted the different lengths for, in the forest. The two sawyers usually travelled from job to job and much of their summer work was in the woods, but in the winter on the wheelwright's premises cutting the timber to correct smaller lengths. They never lived long in one place and we have George Camp active from his home in Hare Street c1841-5 with William Smith, probably working as a pair; and William Tofts c1849-52.

Carpenters

There was, and still is, work for the carpenter in any village. They undertook an astonishing variety of tasks. In earlier days they were the maker of ladders, travelling chests, cow-stalls, doors, coffins, sash-windows, gates, staircases, even of pumps. The latter were very important before water was put on tap as the well owners were all careful to keep their pumps in good repair and these were made of elm, before iron was preferred. part of the pump equipment included pipes of elm and even an elm bucket before galvanised iron buckets were manufactured in the late 18thC. Carpenters also constructed the body and under-frame of wagons.

They needed a lot of ground near their cottages for storing their timber and in their yards stood butts of elm and oak to season – one year for every inch of thickness. There was sometimes also space set aside for a sawpit.

The list of carpenters in the villages is a long one, indicative of their usefulness and important position in village life. A number of them were also referred to as 'builders' since they were employed during the course of any bu8ilding project. Most worked for themselves, with one assistant, often their own son, but there was a master carpenter in Hare Street c1838-1835 who employed 2 men. In Little Hormead James Burnett described himself as a journeyman carpenter, 1861-71, whilst he worked there.

Builders

All building trade work was seasonal for in winter the building stopped when the frosts came and bricklayers and carpenters were then on the look out for winter jobs. Many builders had another job or trade to cover the closed season, e.g William Lawrence the master carpenter and builder was also the tenant of The Bell, appearing in the local directories as 'William Lawrence Bell and Builder' from 1850-90, but in reality he had handed over the building business to his son by 1871 when he had built it up to be large enough to employ six men. William Lawrence junior was even more successful, employing 8 men and 2 boys by 1881 while his wife took care of The bell.

There were no builders in Little Hormead until this century, but Nathan Bardwell was both farmr and builder in Great Hormead 1890-1922. Thoroughgood is another family of Great Hormead and Hare Street builders, but the division between 'builder' and 'bricklayer' in the old directories is a false one, because Nathan Bardwell was also listed as a bricklayer in 1871. Since the term 'builder' is misleading, we shall now abandon that heading and look more carefully at the making of bricks and then their laying.

Brickmaking

Bricks were introduced by the Romans into Britain. They were usually thin and square, red in colour, as may be seen from those incorporated into the tower of St Alban's Abbey. It was not until the end of the 17thC that bricks were used for house building for 'ordinary' people in small houses. It is curious therefore that in a will of 1641, Thomas Brand of Hare Street House, left 'all those 5 acres of arable land and wood ground called Stonieland Close wherein sometime stood a brick kiln or clamps for brickes, laying... southwards to other lands of me the said Thomas Brand commonly called the Sheeps Layes.' The location is one the east side of Hare Street, past north End bungalow.

Clay for making bricks was dug in autumn and piled up to mellow, being turned constantly, so that the wind and frost penetrated the while. Hand-made bricks were then made in the milder months of the year. The brick master needed very little 'plant' or equipment and it is thought that this is the reason so many farmers tried their hands at brick making in the 19thC if they happened to have clay on their land.

Once the kiln had been built everything also depended on manual labour. Children were also employed, running barefoot up and down the clay until it was like a paste and ready for shaping into bricks. Perhaps this was the role of 11 yr old Fred, the son of William Smith, who worked with his father in the Hare Street brickfield in 1861. This was on an old site marked 'Brick Field' on early maps, being the name of a large field now incorporating the site of modern bungalows Kemp's Close, High View, Amberley and East Bank, with the land

to the west. Behind them stands the Old Clay pit, now filled in and planted as a spinney, from which the clay was brought down to the brickyard nearer the road to be made into bricks. Francis Caton Piper, the farmer of Ashdown House, owned this land and operated a brickfield here c1860-86. In the directories he was described as a 'farmer, brick and drain pipe maker'.

Some Hare Street cottages were constructed of brick during this period – Mead Villas in 1874 and Rosemary/Melgum and Vine Cottages, but I do not know if the local bricks were used. Locally made bricks were softer than modern bricks, and deep red. Some were stamped with a 'P' and this impression was made on about one in twelve bricks in a batch. Though P is Piper's initial, it was also the initial of Porter, the owner of a second brickfield in Hare Street.

On the road to Buntingford there is a very sharp bend in the road on the corner of which stands Brickfield Cottage. A small cottage was erected there c1860 for workers in the brickfield behind. They made Georgian bricks, narrow than those of today, but the same length. In 1862 W. Gibbons of Buntingford made bricks and drainpipes on this site, followed by PORTER OF THE @Brick Works' on the map 1899. Thomas Nevett of Buntingford (who impressed TN on his bricks) to 191-0, then H. Bitten. The firm of Gibbons was the Buntingford contractor who restored Great Hormead Chu4rch in 1874, rebuilding the chancel and organ chamber and adding the south porch. The workers in this brick field came from Nuthampstead: William South and William Howlett. A number of the male members of the Howlett family worked there besides William. In one half of the cottage, George Howlett lived with his sons William and John. George died in 1898 whilst at work, leaving his thumb print on a brick at the moment he died.

Piper's workers lived in Hare Street in Layston Cottages: David Bysouth born Barkway; William Collins born Langley and William Foster born Hare Street who lived at Wayside.

By 1900 the map surveyors were marking the Piper site as an old clay pit but the Buntingford Road site was still 'Brick Works' on the 1919 map.

Bricklayers

Bricklayers kept a sharp eye on the brick carts leaving the brick fields and noted in which direction they went. That was when many men possessed the skills of bricklaying, but our first bricklayer was a most notable man. The Brick House was so called because it as so unusual a material to use at the time it aw built – at least a century before it came into common use for houses. In 1597 '1e new Brick House' passed by Will to Michael Brand.

Our first bricklayer was Henry Brand, carefully labelled as a bricklayer when he married in 1579 and again at his burial in 1608 in Great Hormead churchyard. Elizabethan vicars were not given to noting men's occupation in the parish registers, so Henry had obviously made his mark. The next bricklayer in the Hormeads lived at Milburns in 1675 and was called Samuel Clarke. He was active at the time houses were having brick chimney stacks built to serve the fireplaces and creating inglenooks in 17thC farmhouses. Chimneys were quire tall, and very skilfully built in the way the shafts, sometimes octagonal, were finished off with decorative moulded and spurr3d cape like those of the Old Rectory in Great Hormead.

I can find no more bricklayers until the 19thC when Prime Taylor, a master builder, was employing four men from c1840 until 1880 – the Thoroughgoogds, also master bricklayers and farmers – Thomas, Thomas, William and George spanning the years 1845-1912. Aleck Barron was a Hare Street builder in c1915-47 and in the New Cottages, Alfred, Ernest and Frederick David Wilson were registered builders from 1934-1960. W J Bentley was listed in the directories from 1922-36, but probably these are but a few who could lay a straight and satisfactory course of bricks.

Thatchers

This was another seasonal job and seems to have been another example of a special skill that was handed down from father to son. Great Hormead was the home of two families of thatchers who lived in Horseshoe Lane. The Dews owned the cottage at the top of the hill

that was pulled down c1908 where John lived, and William was at Holly House prior to that being rebuilt in 1880. They were thatchers in the 1860s and 1870s.

The Bunyan family lived next to Baker's Cottage (then there was a small cottage in the garden) where William was a thatcher and another Bunyan, James, was noted as a thatcher here in 1814/18.

The above are the main traders in the villagers, represented over a number of centuries. There were occasionally further specialist traders, here for a short while, such as woolcomber and weaver, tailors and rope makers. There were many others like gardeners, who worked either full or part time in that capacity.

Most of the above traders had a 'shop' attached to their homes. Not until the 18thC did the word 'shop' mean a village shop as we know it, rather it referred to a workshop. Grocers, butchers, bakers, had shops or rooms in their houses where their goods were on sale. Walking round the villages one cap spot some of the cottages that once were shops by one front window being larger than the other front window.

The Village Shop

We are fortunate today (1991) to still have a shop in Hare Street and Great Hormead. These have shaped our idea of what a village shop is like – compact, with shelves packed with an extraordinary assortment of goods ranging from basic necessities such as bread and potatoes right through to luxuries like chocolates and cigarettes. This is because we make so few things for ourselves now, but the further back in time we go, the more basic are the contents of the village shops and the more likely the goods on display to have been made in the village rather than brought in from outside. As close as the 19th century the few items imported included sugar, salt, and perhaps some soap. Anyone good at making sweets, or especially gifted at making a good ale, could earn a few extra shillings. We do not know of all these enterprising villagers operating from their front parlours, but we name a few.

Groceries were the favourite store contents – everyone needs food. In Little Hormead a lean-to at the back of White Ash was a grocery store during the second world war, whilst William and Mary Corbett had a grocery store from 1850-78, if not longer, at Glebe Cottage.

In Great Hormead a similar kind of store was kept by the Cannon/Warren family first in Three Horseshoes Cottage c1833 (and one of the windows betrays which room was used for this purpose) before the house next door was purpose-built incorporating a shop and cellar underneath in the design of 1880. Ten years later the shop also got a Post Office for Great Hormead. When George Wilson took this shop over in 1914 he was both grocer and draper, a dealer in clothing, pots and hardware. The Post Office had not remained there however, but had become part of the village stores on the bottom road. In the directories for 1906-26, the entries for this shop give some idea of what Harry Ambrose Hammond sold there as the village 'grocer, draper, sub P.O., ironmonger, patent medicine vendor, trap proprietor'. Hammond had worked in the post office for the Warrens but he fell out with them and temporarily took the Post Office to Cosy Cottage during construction of the purpose-built shop adjoining the shop keeper's house (both now houses known as 'The Old Stores'). Not mentioned in the directories was a mangle in a back room where the women could mangle their clothes first for a ½d and then a 1d when demand grew. There was a wall letter box and a telephone kiosk by Hammond's new shop after 1902. In 1929 the bottom road Post Office also became a Telegraph Office. After 1933 Donald Tyler had the shop. The Post Office remained there until 1963 when the shop closed and then was moved back to Holly House, which is still a shop and Post Office today (1991).

The first telephone in the villages was put in for George Benjamin Oyler at Hormead Hall and he had the number '8 Buntingford' from 1914. David Robinson had a small shop halfway up Half Acre from 1866-99 which could not compete in range with the store nearby. George Witham, or his wife, also had a small shop at Homeside from 1862-1890.

In Hare Street a large number of houses were once used as shops, reflecting the more commercial nature of Hare Street in comparison with Great and Little Hormead which have been almost entirely agricultural.

At some time or other Mount Cottage and Beehive Cottage were greengrocers; Leveret Cottage a grocery; Clock House a drapery; Japonica Cottage was a bakery with a flour-lift into a loft at the back and a large shop-window in its facade. Girton House was once a butcher's shop and at another time a pub. Charles Wright had the first Post Office in Hare Street, c1862, as an additional job to his collarmaking and harness business ate Wayside. Letters arrived at 7.00 am and were dispatched at 6.45 pm. Between 1864 and 1866 Wedlands was built and Wright moved his business and the Post office over the road. By 1870 there was a wall letterbox in Hare Street. It took until c1912 for Little Hormead to have its own letter box and even longer to acquire a public telephone. During World War II the Kings ran a small grocery shop from White Ash and when that closed the villagers asked for a telephone kiosk in Little Hormead as they no longer had this facility provided by the Kings.

The 'Stores' in Hare Street was built onto Woodstock some time between 1848 and 1856 for John Warren, a clothier who owned Woodstock. He had a door between the two and an attic which ran the full length of the houses. The Warrens were related to the Cannons and Warrens of Hormead, all of whom prospered to such a degree that they built both Holly House and Wedlands in white bricks to a very similar design, ran the post office in both places, and were staunch chapel supporters. The village stores in Hare Street kept open, producing home-killed bacon and sausages and providing a delivery round among a variety of services, until 1967.

The more important of the specialist shops was the bakery. It is assumed that everyone baked their own bread, but this was not always so. Some houses, but not all, had a bread oven built alongside the large open fireplace. Housewives took very large joints – particularly the Christmas turkey – to be baked in the village baker's larger oven. The Moules were the bakers in Hare Street, first at Japonica Cottage and then when Fred Moule moved across the road in 1901, in the house built by the Hayden family opposite the milestone. Fred Moule built the bakehouse on to the southern end of the house we now call 'The Old Bakery' (closed in 1976). The Moules provided the village with delicious fresh bread, either at the shop or delivered by Alf Wick who drove a pony in the bread-trap for three-quarters of a century.

Butchers

Many of the village butchers had close connections with an inn. Before refrigeration nearly every man was his own butcher, keeping and salting one or two pigs. The pig was the meat supply of most villagers who rarely indulged in 'butcher's meat', i.e. beef or mutton. Innkeepers owned land on which hens and pigs were kept to supply the needs of visitors.

In the early days of the 20th century a pig was killed each week by the owner of The Bell, which provided accommodation for travellers. This tradition was of long-standing, for the first village butcher for whom we have written records was George Longe of The Bell, a butcher and innkeeper 1654-9. Robert ~Christy (1655-1730), Richard Smith (died 1755) and his son Jeremiah Smith (died 1774) were all butchers with close ties with The Dogge's Head in the Pot, as the Three Jolly Butchers was called until Jeremiah's wife re-named it in 1780. There is a story in the village that Abigail Smith called it Three Jolly Butchers after her three sons. However, the parish registers of Layston show they had three daughters and when Jeremiah died in 1774 he left the inn to his youngest daughter Abigail (hardly the act of a man with three sons). There might have been two other men in the Smith family, besides Jeremiah, who inspired the new name.

Henry Shedder had a butcher's shop at Girton House 1829-31, followed by William Fossey 1831-c1834. Charles Chapman who lived next to the Beehive was trained as a shoemaker, this being his main trade, but local inhabitants talked with nostalgia of his excellent port sausages which he evidently made rather better than his boots. Samuel Halsey lived at Wayside where the front room of the house was his butcher's shop c.1922-29 when Wayside was a two-room cottage. He came to Hare Street to marry Grace Bardwell in 1914 so may have been there rather longer than the trade directories suggest.

Shoemakers

The last main group of shopkeepers were the shoemakers or 'cordwainers'. Like other shopkeepers they were not above dropping everything and going off to assist with the harvest when necessary. Indeed, after harvest, when the farm labourers had received their harvest money, was the best time of the year for the sale of new shoes. Villagers had one new pair of shoes a year. The rest of the year the shoemaker was busy with repairs. In Hare Street this meant a fair proportion of work on Londoner's shoes. A good shoemaker with a reputation had shoes brought out to him by itinerant traders and people regularly travelling this route to Cambridge and further into East Anglia.

Up to the end of the 19th century the term cordwainer frequently replaced that of shoemaker, but by then the terms were interchangeable. Cordwain was a Spanish leather made of goatskins tanned and dressed or, later, of split horse hides and used to make expensive shoes. The cordwainer made these while the shoemaker worked at the cheaper end of the trade.

There has been an unbroken line of shoemakers in Hare Street from 1700 to Charles Chapman, the last one, in 1922. Great Hormead has also had at least ten shoemakers between 1764 and post 1937, the last being Ernest Henry Skinner. Two small brick buildings in Great Hormead as associated with shoemakers and menders; one in the garden of Little Meadow (Harry Spicer) and another in the garden of Great Hormead Dane (E H Skinner who was apprenticed in London). The shoemakers and menders in these small buildings had both a shop and workshop combined and bring us nearer to conditions in the 20th century with the workplace being separate from the home.

Servants

Domestic servants and outside servants were always employed at the manor houses, large famsteads, and rectories. The number employed there and in smaller households is often correlated with the prosperity or otherwise of the villages. There were few in the 17th century but in the Militia Lists of the 18thC (preserved for the Hormeads 1758-86) there were as many servants as there were farmers (115) and traders (52). In addition there would have been a maid in many households. In the censuses 1841-1881 there were 40 maid servants in Little Hormead alone and another 40 in Hare Street, while Great Hormead numbered 60 with a butler and a footman in addition, though these figures are perforce approximations.

The increase in the number of servants in the 18thC was due to increasing wealth as Britain became a great trading nation and the rose of the middle-class and well-to-do gentry. This continued through the 19thC until the last decade. In 1871 the living at Little Hormead was a rectory with the annual value of £311 and the rector employed four servants; the living at Great Hormead was a vicarage with the annual value of £121 and the vicar employed two servants.

However service in London was the main aim for many. The perks were better, the chance for advancement greatly increased, and there was all the glamour of working in the capital. The Porter Charity of Little Hormead frequently made grants in the second half of the 19thC to fit out girls going into service in London and elsewhere. This was to ensure that they made a good appearance on arrival at their new job, clad in sensible shoes, clean cap and apron. They would begin as scullery maids, then progress to being maid of all work, housemaid, chambermaid and cook, perhaps even housekeeper in a large establishment. here in the Hormeads they would be called housemaids but expected to assist with cheese and butter making, with the chickens and kitchen gardens besides work in the house, and probably to lend a hand outside at harvest time. Their house were long, but they were clothed and fed and it was less hard labour than if they had gone to work on the land like their brothers.

Other trades

Over the centuries there were many other traders in our villages, e.g. tailors, ploughwright, a rope and twine-maker, cattle-dealer, and the most improbable-sounding 'marine-store dealer', Joseph Boswell. The sights, sounds and smells generated by all the activities in the

villages must have made them far more vibrant communities than we know nowadays. With all the clanging of steel and banging of hammers; clattering of horses' hooves on rough roads, shouting and calling to one another in their open workshops, the residents would have been much more aware of what everyone was doing and how hard – or otherwise – they were working. The changeover from those scenes with their background of workshop yards and ramshackle sheds, piles of scrap and stacks of wood, to the tidy facades and neat sheds of today, occurred just after the second world war.

The impact, first of the steam engine and then the petrol engine, has been profound. The first 'engineer' I have traced in the villages was William Wilson who worked on the railway in 1880, but men who gave their occupation as 'engine-driver' in the later 1880s and 1890s onwards were usually agricultural steam engine drivers working in a team of five who went round the farms with the steam engine, water tank, caravan (in which they lived during the week) and cultivators, ploughs, etc. trailed at the back. The five men were 2 engine drives, 1 cook (who could relieve the others when necessary), 1 foreman (who could do all the other jobs) and 1 cultivator man who operated the machinery and rode the plough etc. The four jobs done by the sets or pair of engines were mole draining, cultivating, ploughing and, when less busy on the fields, pond-clearing.

William Soper was noted in the 1902 trade directory as a 'farmer & steam plough & threshing machine owner, Mutton Hall farm'. The pair of engines were given names, just as the horses had all had their names. John Patten of Hadham Hall had five sets: Prince & Princess (driven by Mr Stanley Scripps of Hare Street), Darby 7 Joan, Windsor & Sandringham, Southend & Tilbury, and Beattie & Jellicoe. Patten's engines were used on his different farms and taken to his repair yard in Bishop's Stortford for their winter overhaul.

The 'agricultural machinists', the Aldridge brothers, were in the directories from 1922 as owners of threshing tackle and drums. They adapted later to making very early trailers for tractors.

Sir Robert Romer had the first motor car and chauffeur, while he lived at Hormeadbury 1900-1911. Garages and petrol stations gradually developed from the initial sale of petrol in cans for the odd motorist, to the use of hand-pumps, and then full-scale forecourt service with underground petrol storage tanks. Motor engineers and garages flourished after Frederick Nash was first listed in 1926 in Hare Street as a motor engineer. The Bentley family were first represented in the directories as motor garage owners by B J Bentley in 1929, and A T Bentley as a motor engineer in 1933. The first lorry driver appeared as early as 1938 – Thomas Skinner being of that occupation (in the Parish Registers). Now that nearly every adult in the village is a 'motor engine driver' it no longer occurs to us to describe ourselves as such. Nowadays ownership of a horse is more likely to be remarked on – a complete reversal of what would have been the case only sixty years ago. Similarly only a tiny percentage of villagers now work in the village and fewer on the land itself. Today the villages are described as being good residential areas within easy commuting distance to centres of work.

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