

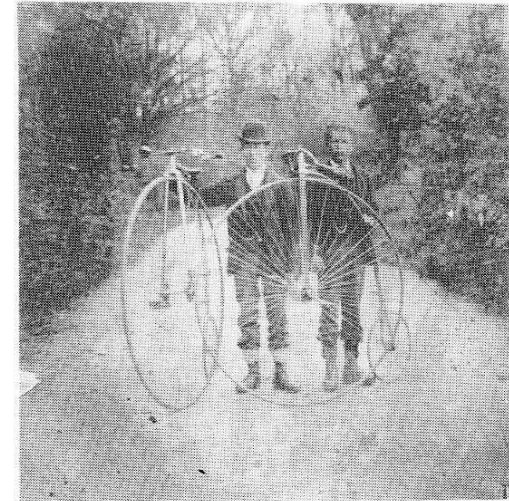
OLD WHEATHAMPSTEAD

Our Village Past in Pictures

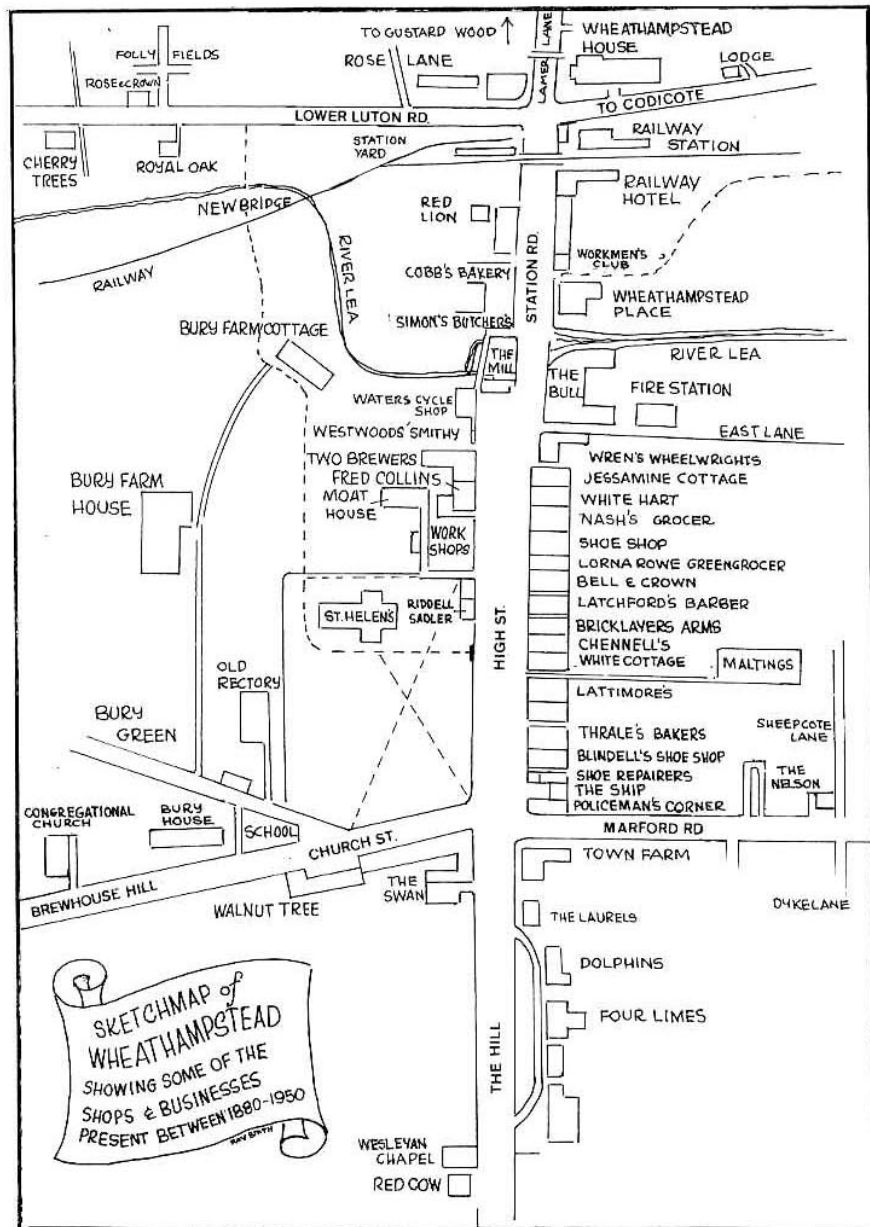


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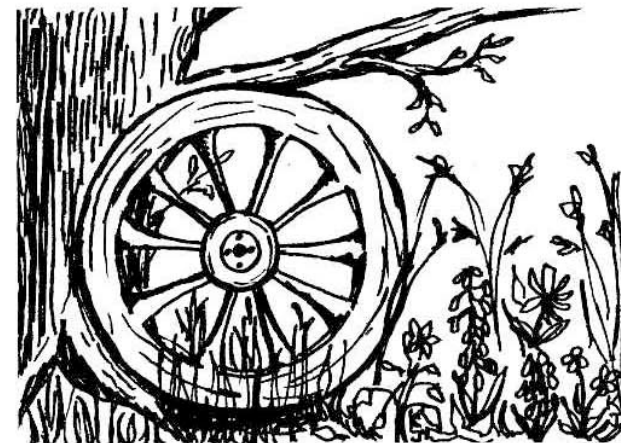


"Me and my pal...". Ernest Arthur Bracey (right) and friend somewhere in the leafy lanes of Wheathampstead with an "ordinary" or penny farthing bicycle which was in vogue 1875-88.. Photo taken in 1901 (courtesy Joyce George).



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KJ

Introduction

Wheathampstead Local History Group has had much pleasure tracking down and discovering "Old Wheathampstead" in photographs. It is always exciting to discover a new view or face from the past and we are most grateful to all who have so kindly lent us their photographs to share with others interested in forgotten scenes from Wheathampstead's past.

The larger part of this selection comes from Geoff Odell's collection of pictures of the village, and it is largely thanks to Geoff that so many forgotten scenes have been preserved. A member of one of Wheathampstead's long-established families, Geoff was, until his death in February 1990, a familiar figure in the village, always to be seen, camera at the ready, keeping a watchful eye on the village that was his birthplace and life-long home. He would have been pleased to see his collection given some permanence in the form of a book. We should like to dedicate this book in memory of Geoff Odell - a kindly and courteous man and a true "villager".

The photographs shown here range in time from the 1860s to the 1970s, spanning over a hundred years of change, from mid-Victorian to modern times. We have tried to illustrate as wide a range of settings, people and activities as possible, including pictures of Gustard Wood and the Folly as well as the centre of Wheathampstead itself. Hopefully, the book will reveal not only the picturesque village that was, but also something of the strength of past community life, in the village's schools, churches, football teams, pubs, trades and shops in amazing variety, farms, the mill, fire brigade, railway, even a hospital, and local industry, not to mention home-made entertainment.

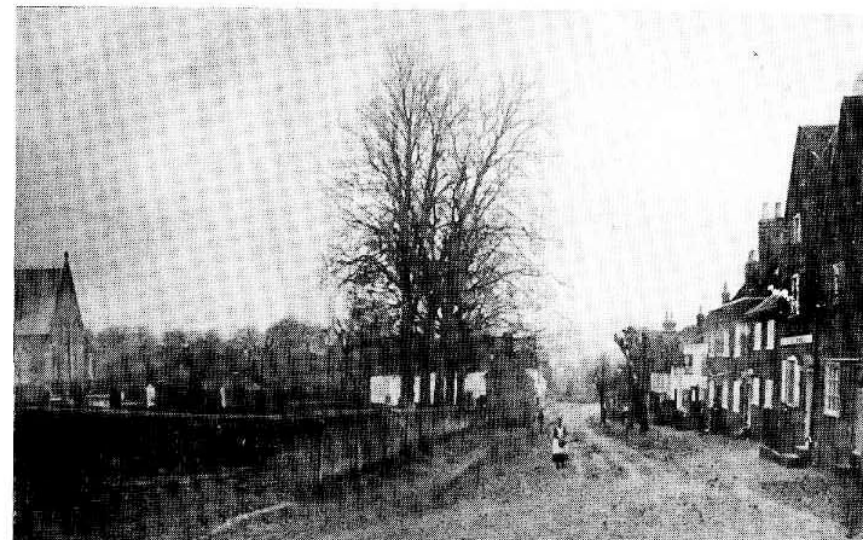
Most of these photographs have been shown at one or other of our three exhibitions: "Old Wheathampstead - our village past in pictures" (1987), "Changing Wheathampstead" (1989) and "Around Wheathampstead" (1990). Knowing very little about the people and occasions recorded in the pictures before we started, we soon found that showing them was the best way of finding out. A great deal of information has been derived in this way, and we hope that anyone who can throw more light on the photographs presented here will come forward and let us know. For the earliest photographs we have had to make educated guesses based on fashions, forms of transport, the state of the roads, presence or absence of telegraph poles, etc.. We hope we have got it right.

Ruth Jeavons
(Recorder of Wheathampstead)



1 Members of the Westwood family outside their blacksmith's shop, previously *The Two Brewers*, c. 1907. Further up the High Street, on the same side, can be seen the old workhouse.

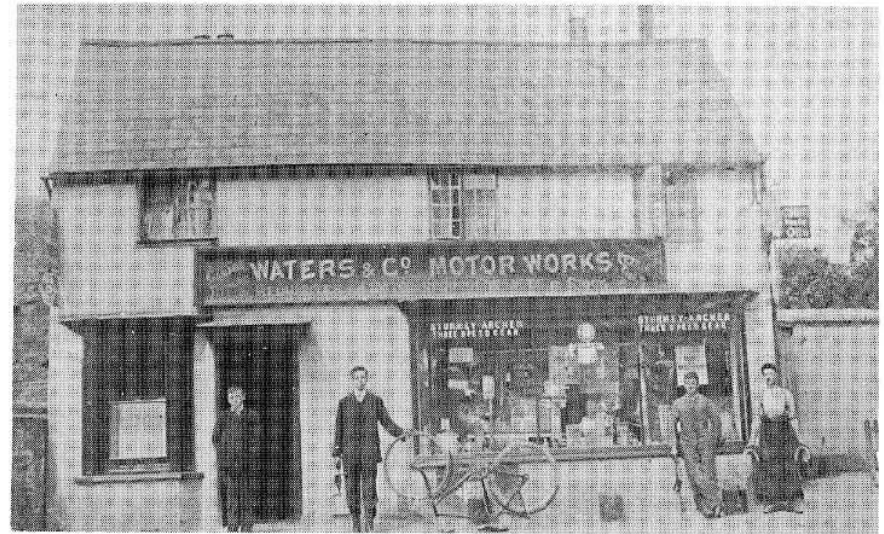
2 An early view of the High Street c.1870 before the church lych gate was erected.





3 The High Street in winter, c.1910 showing Latchford the village barber's shop on the right and several villagers, mostly children, all looking straight at the camera.

4 Looking up the High Street, c. 1906. Mr Wren's wheelwright's shop with some cartwheels waiting to be repaired on the left. The White Hart next door.



5 Waters and Co., the bicycle shop, c. 1935. The local farrier is standing to the right of the picture, a horseshoe in each hand. Perhaps he senses a change in the air.

6 Riddell, saddler and harness maker, outside his shop in the High Street, showing his wares, c. 1908.





7 Mr Fred Collins at the door of his hardware shop. The petrol pump sold Red Lion Glycol at 1s 6d a gallon.

8 The grocer's shop, Nash's, c. 1880 on the site where Dillons is now. The Nash family are recorded as keeping a shop on the site in 1851. They were there at least 40 years. The Bell Inn can be seen further up the street.



9 Looking down the High Street, c. 1920 showing Lattimore's and buildings since demolished to make way for Granary Close. The children are standing under the awning of one of the baker's.

10 The same view taken in the next decade.





11 A peaceful village scene, c. 1970. Children fishing in the River Lea near the mill.

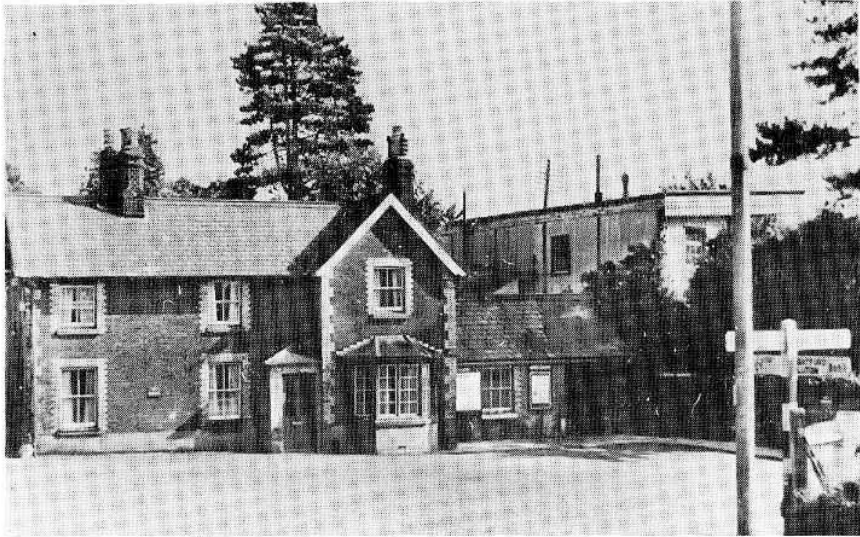
12 An early view of the old boarded mill and The Bull inn, c. 1885, showing the cattle pens.



13 Cattle on the mill bridge, c. 1919. Mr Chennell's cows being taken down to the river for a drink.

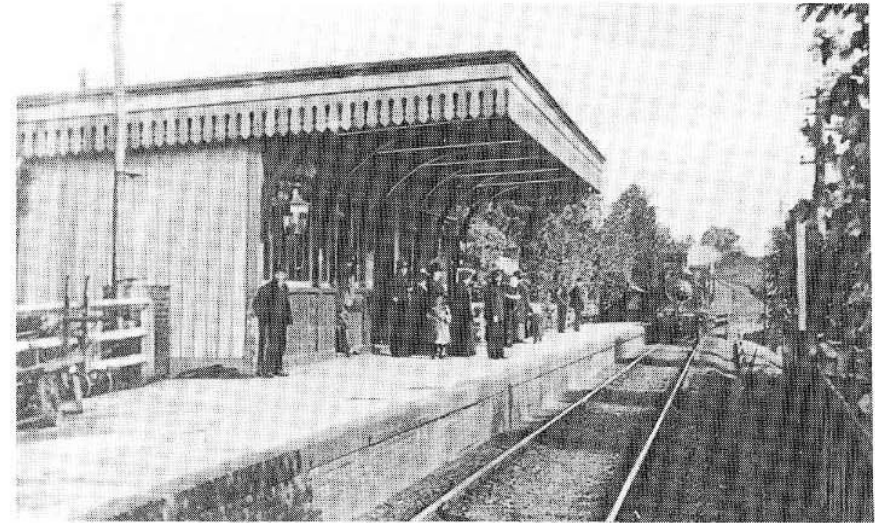
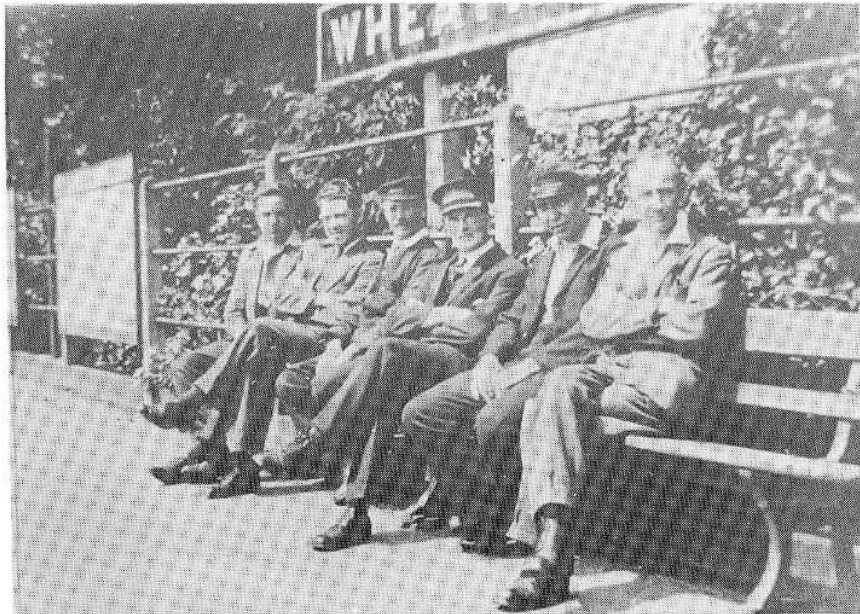
14 The mill c. 1890 showing some of the workers. Jim Bygrave from the Folly standing in the doorway above (courtesy Peter Titmuss and Mrs Win Dean.)





15 The station master's house before its demolition after the railway was closed in 1967 after more than 100 years of service to the community.

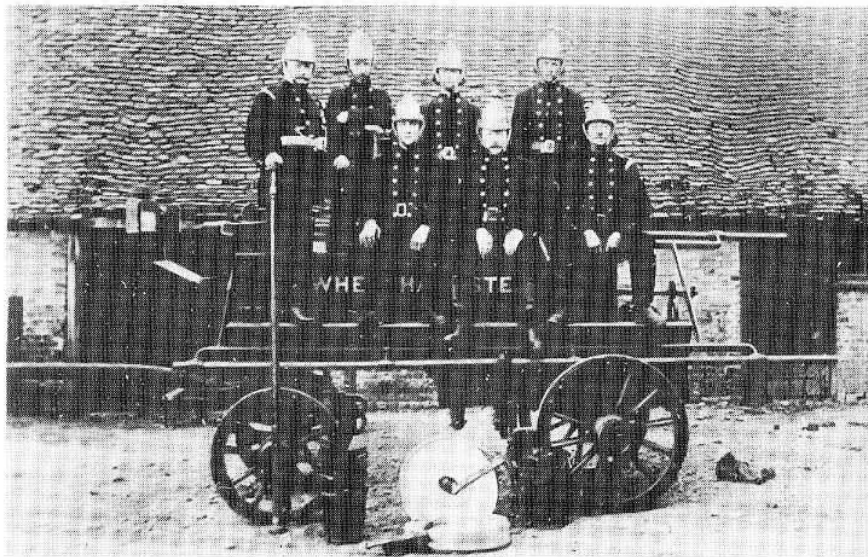
16 Mr Lee the station master (centre) with his team of railway workers. Mr Lee was also lay reader, choirmaster, organist and founder of Wheathampstead Youth Club.



17 A train arriving at Wheathampstead at the turn of the century. A direct route to London in 1892 took less than an hour. Most people travelled to Luton for their shopping as it was quicker and cheaper to get there by train than to walk to St Albans.

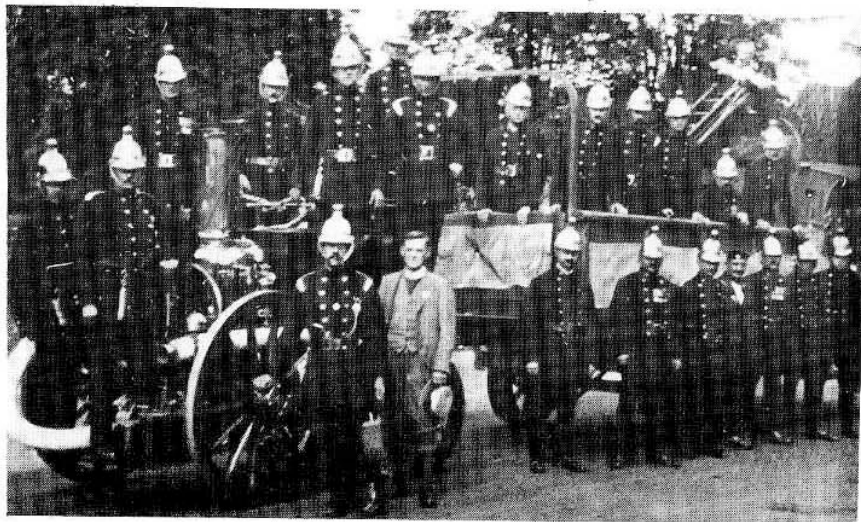
18 The level crossing at the top of Sheepcote Lane. The crossing keeper's cottage to the right.





19 An early photograph of Wheathampstead Fire Brigade taken in the Bull Yard, c. 1905. This engine was called "the old Manual". First catch your horse! Usually it was the two horses from Place Farm, next to the river, but anyone's horses could be commandeered. Water was pumped by hand.

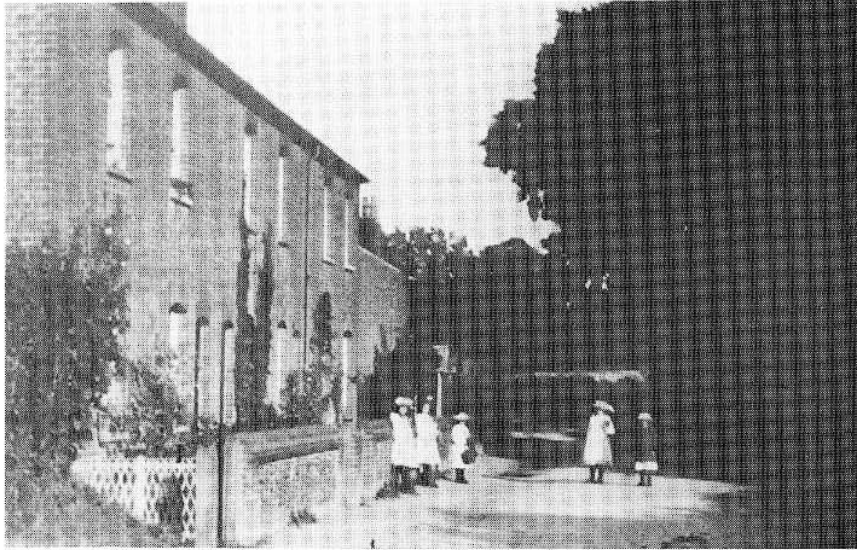
20 The Merryweather, the first steam-driven fire engine (1920) named "Joyce" after Mr Berry the Congregational minister's daughter. Mr Berry is standing in the picture with the firemen.



21 Helmets. Wheathampstead's own home-based industry started by Tom, Eddie and Len Noblett in 1924. The picture shows the workers outside the "Top Factory" (the former Hope Brewery) their first site in Wheathampstead, on Brewhouse Hill in the 1950s.

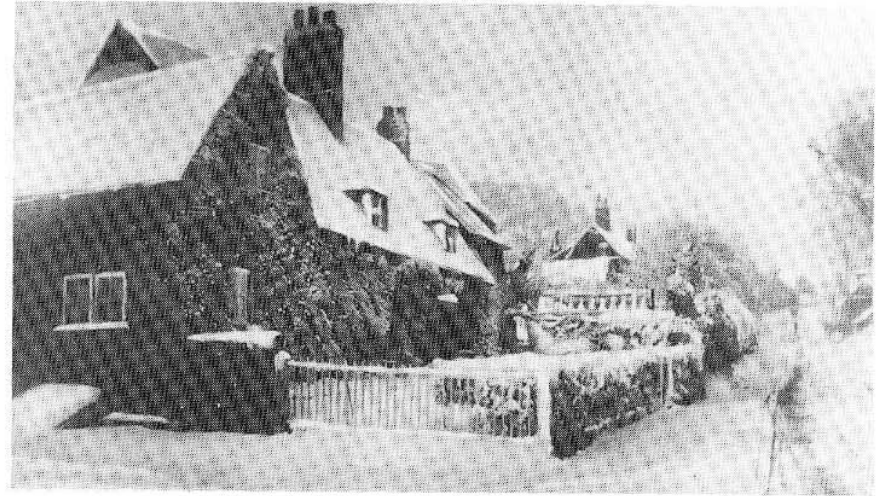
22 An industrious scene in the sewing room in the new building at the "Moat Factory", the present site, in the 1970s. The ladies are making anti-riot helmets.





23 New Marford, c. 1903 showing the cottages adjoining the present Marford Stores at the top of Necton Road.

24 The Hatfield Road winding its way to Hatfield, c. 1910. The photograph shows the Nelson pub and adjacent cottage with its well.



25 Town Farm at the junction of Marford Road with the Hill, 24 April 1908.

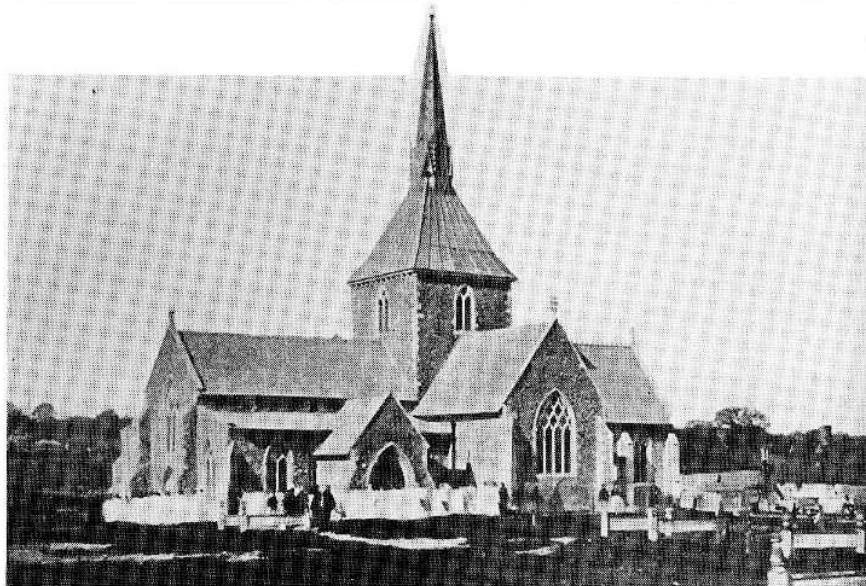


26 Town Farm before and after the bulldozers came in May 1971.



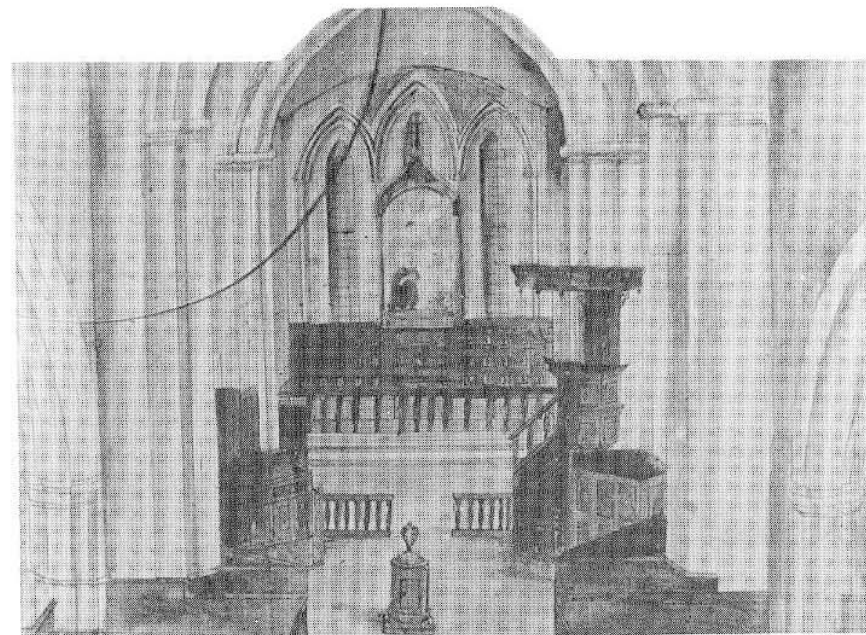
27

One of the oldest surviving sixteenth century houses in the village, its demolition, in spite of a preservation order, caused a national storm of protest.



28 A procession to Evensong 24 April 1866 showing the choir fully robed. It is likely that this was the special thanksgiving for the restoration of St Helen's church at which Dean Stanley preached.

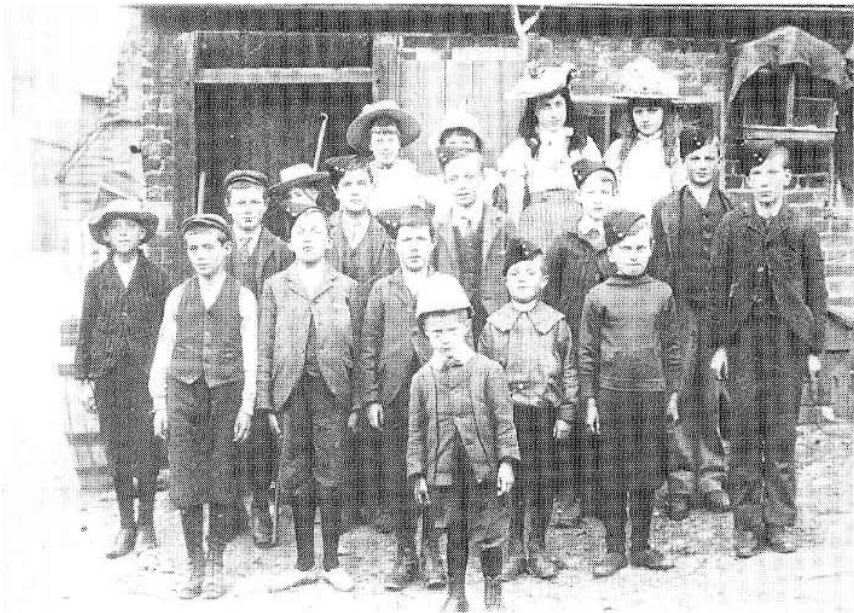
29 A photograph of the exterior of St Helen's church showing the extent of dilapidation before the 1866 restoration.



30 A photograph of a watercolour sketch showing the east end of St Helen's church as it was before restoration. The oil painting appears in a prominent position over the main altar, almost completely blocking the east end windows.

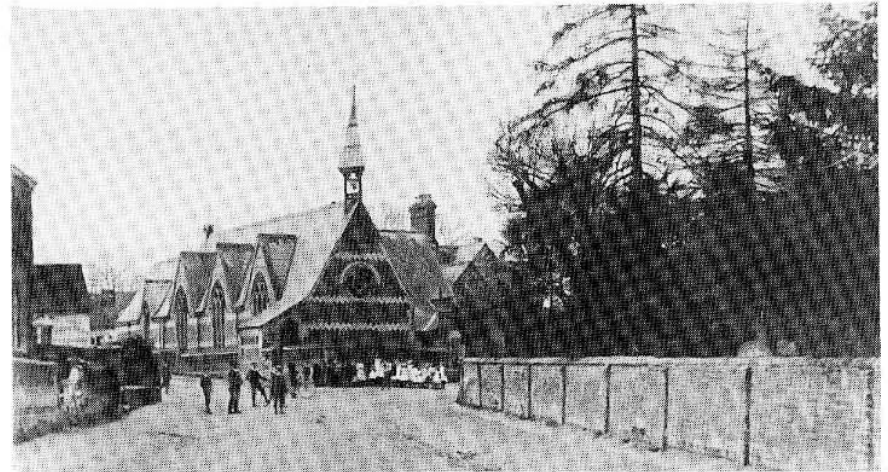
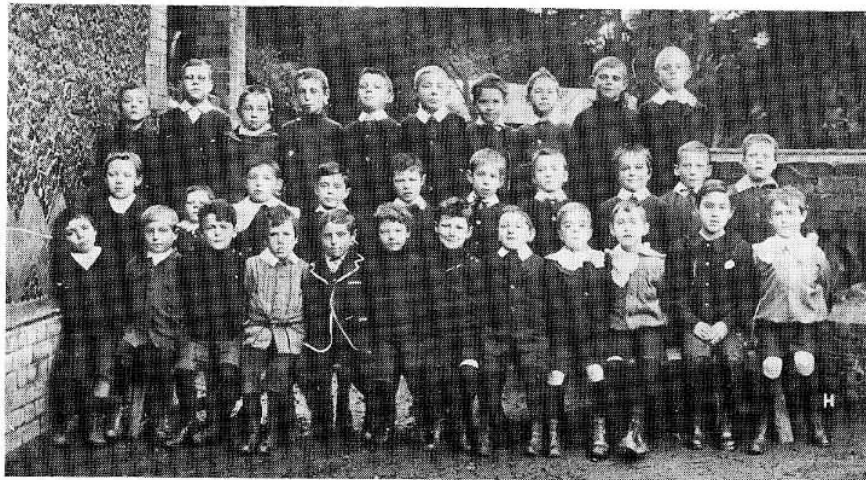
31 A photograph of a watercolour sketch showing the west end gallery in St Helen's church before restoration. This was where the village choir would have sung to the accompaniment of a barrel organ when Canon Davys arrived. The boxed pews in the chancel are an interesting feature.





32 The Boys' Brigade and supporters in the yard of the Westwood smithy (the present NSS newsagents) all dressed up for a special parade, c. 1910. The small boy in front has found alternative headgear, perhaps a relic from the Boer War borrowed from his father? (courtesy Mr and Mrs Spicer).

33 A group of smartly turned out St Helen's schoolboys c. 1910 (courtesy George Hawkins).



34 The National School built by Canon Davys and ready for use in 1862. Some children are neatly lined up in front of the building, presumably those attending the school, while others play with their bicycles in the road.

35 Could this be May Day? On the first of May, the children would dress up in "all sorts of bits of finery", recite a rhyme and go round the village knocking on doors to collect money for a special tea. Here is a fragment of one of the rhymes, as recollected by a villager in the 1950s.

"Branch of May I've brought you here
And at your door I stand,
It is but a sprout but it's well budded out,
It's the work of our Lord's hand..."





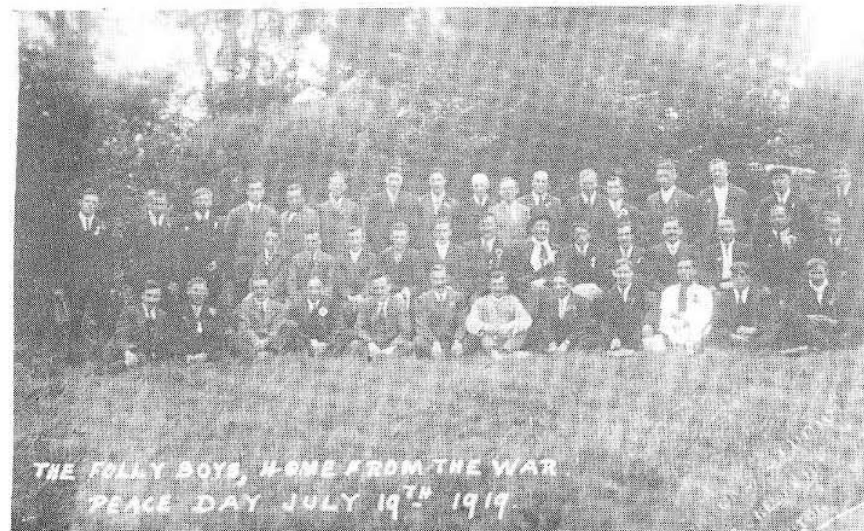
36 Lower Luton Road, c. 1890 showing the road when it was still a dusty track before macadamization.

37 A group of First World War soldiers from the Folly. Harry Smith, Dave Archer, Frank Hawkins, Jim Elmore and Sid Arnold are in this picture (courtesy Mrs Cissie Elmore).



38 The Folly boys off to the War (1914).

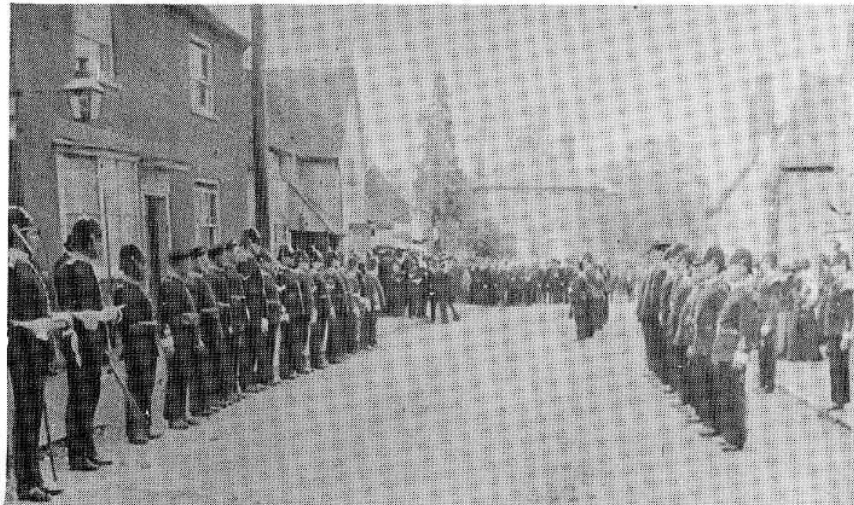
39 The Folly boys home from the war, Peace Day, July 1919.





40 The dedication of the village war memorial, 1920. Canon Nance is officiating and Field Marshal The Earl of Cavan from Wheathampstead House represents the army (to the right).

41 A village blacksmith's funeral, 1910. James Westwood leaving his home and forge for the last time, with the accord of full military honours. He was a member of the fire brigade and the Ancient Order of Foresters as well as being a village bell ringer and one of the oldest members of the volunteer battalion of the Herts and Beds militia. The funeral was "exceedingly impressive", reported the local paper at the time.



42 The British Legion on parade in the 1950s marching outside the Bull. Mr Cory Wright from Mackerye End and Mary Minall the organiser in attendance.

43 Wheathampstead Home Guard, 1944.





44 Chennells, the dairy, post office, grocery, chemist and druggist, 1897. The photograph shows the Bricklayers Arms just below.

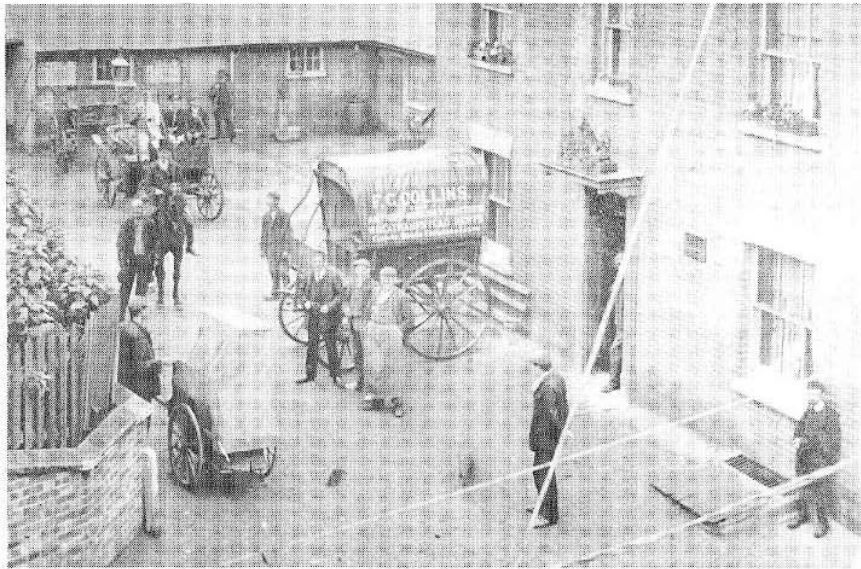
45 The Bell and Crown public house, c. 1920. A good view of the workhouse on the left.



46 The Swan, c. 1880 showing a smart couple in a pony and trap outside. Visiting for the day, perhaps?

47 The Ship Inn and the Swan at the junction of Marford Road with the High Street, c. 1950.





48 A busy scene in the yard of the Railway Hotel, later called the Abbot John.

49 The Royal Oak off the Lower Luton Road, c. 1890.



50 An evening at the Rose and Crown with Gypsy Petrulengro, King of the Gypsies, who lived in a bungalow at Manor Way (courtesy Mrs Linda Shields).

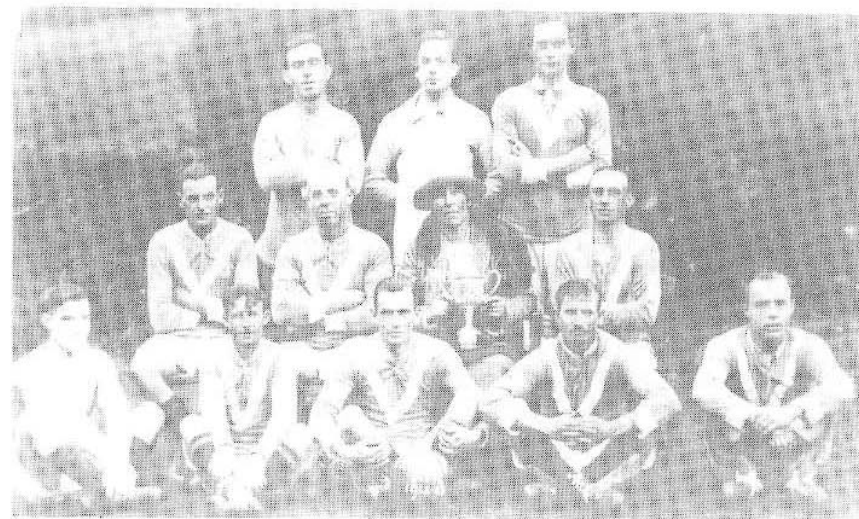
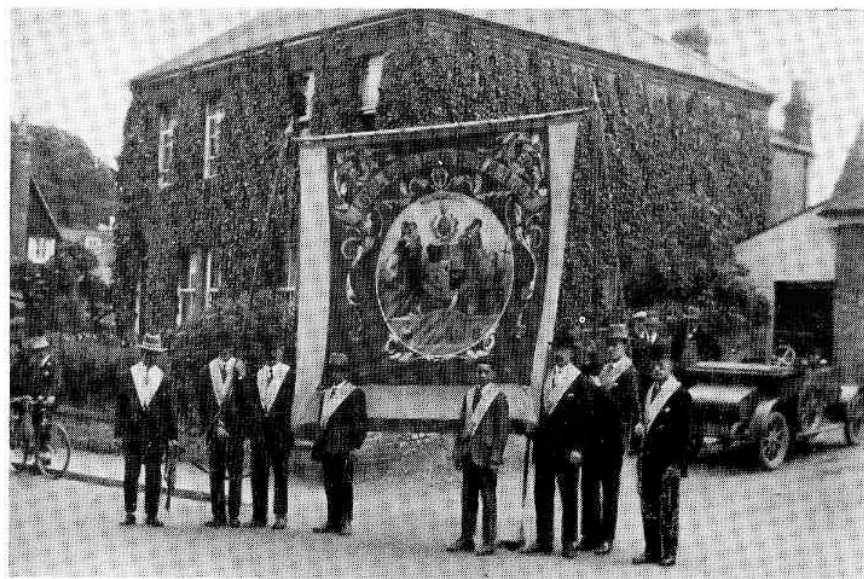
51 A party outside the Royal Oak, c. 1890. Several of the men are holding clay pipes.





52 Wheathampstead football team, 1907-8.

53 Members of the Oddfellows Friendly Society, the Loyal Grove Lodge, with their banner in Church Street in the 1920s. Friendly Societies came into being to provide a form of social welfare in the days before the welfare state and a national health service.



54 The Folly Athletic Football Club, 1922-3. Miss Olivia Upton-Robins (centre) holding the cup.

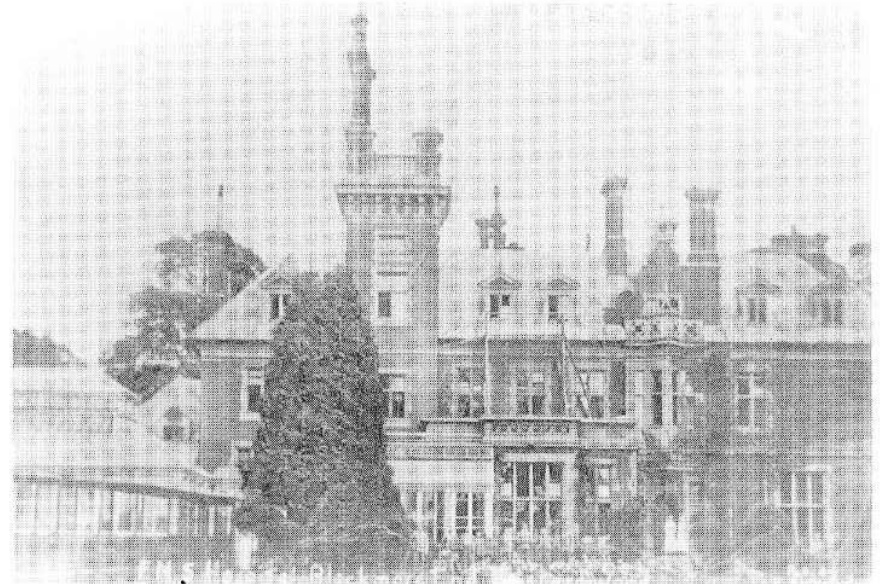
55 The Gustard Wood Minstrel Troupe, 1909. Led by Herbert Cobb (second from the left, front row) who played the concertina and was a ventriloquist, this group of entertainers were all labouring men who enjoyed getting together to entertain their fellow villagers. Bert Cobb, the son, followed on in his father's footsteps organizing the Serenaders concert party in 1933 (courtesy of the Cobb family).





56 A motor bike and side-car on Brogdell Hill, Gustard Wood, c.1914-18. Sheep safely grazing in the churchyard at St Peter's and keeping the grass short too.

57 The Tin Pot at the start of this century. Derek Minter is the child. His mother's first husband was lost in the Boer War, but his best friend came back to care for the young family (courtesy Mrs Stratton).



58 The Federated Malay States (FMS) Hospital, Blackmore End at Mr Burleigh Baxendale's house at Blackmore End, 1914-18.

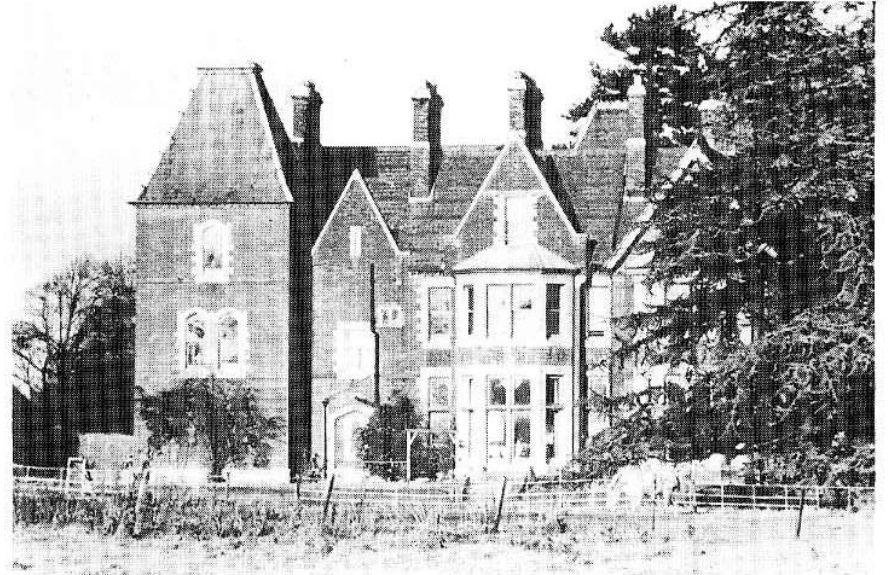
59 First World War soldiers, possibly convalescing at the hospital, well on their way to recovery outside the Cricketers, Gustard Wood Common.





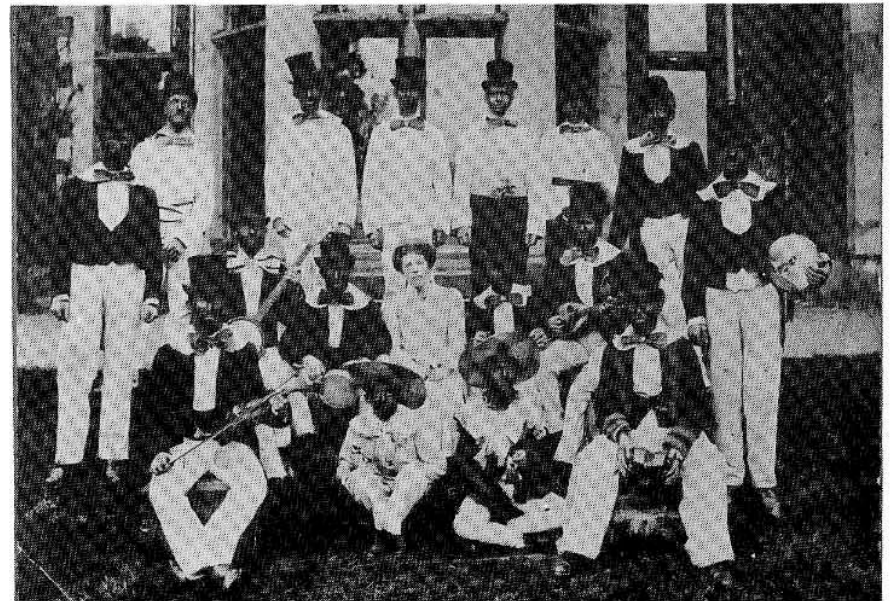
60 *The old school at Gustard Wood. Opened in 1875 it used to stand on the site now occupied by Junipers, the house next to the common.*

61 *Inside Gustard Wood school 1929-30.*



62 *Delaport House as it used to be when the Norburys lived there.*

63 *The Gustard Wood Minstrel Troupe with Miss Olivia Upton-Robins (centre) outside Delaport House (courtesy the Cobb family).*





64 *A peaceful scene at the Cherry Trees, c. 1890. There doesn't seem to be much for the policeman to do here. The family of the house on the right have all come to the front gate to have their picture taken (courtesy, Miss Frances Jowett).*

65 *A wintry scene in East Lane showing Julian Pearce, c. 1896 (courtesy Ian Willis).*



Acknowledgements

We should like to thank the following who have kindly lent us photographs and given their permission for us to publish them: Mrs Doris Cobb and family, Mr Peter Timuss and Mrs Win Dean, Mrs Joyce George, Mrs Cissie Elmore, Mr George Hawkins, Miss Frances Jowett, Mrs Stratton, Mr Ian Willis and Mr and Mrs Frank Spicer. We are also grateful to Mrs Amy Coburn for her help in dating and captioning the photographs and for being ever-willing to share her knowledge of Wheathampstead's local history.

Roy Smith kindly printed most of the photographs that appear in the book, and John Giles designed the format and layout. We are also grateful to Ricky Leaver who gave up his free time to typeset the text.



Some members of the Wheathampstead Local History Group taken in 1989. From left to right Roy Smith, Jill Roberts, Geoff Odell, Ruth Jeavons and John Giles.