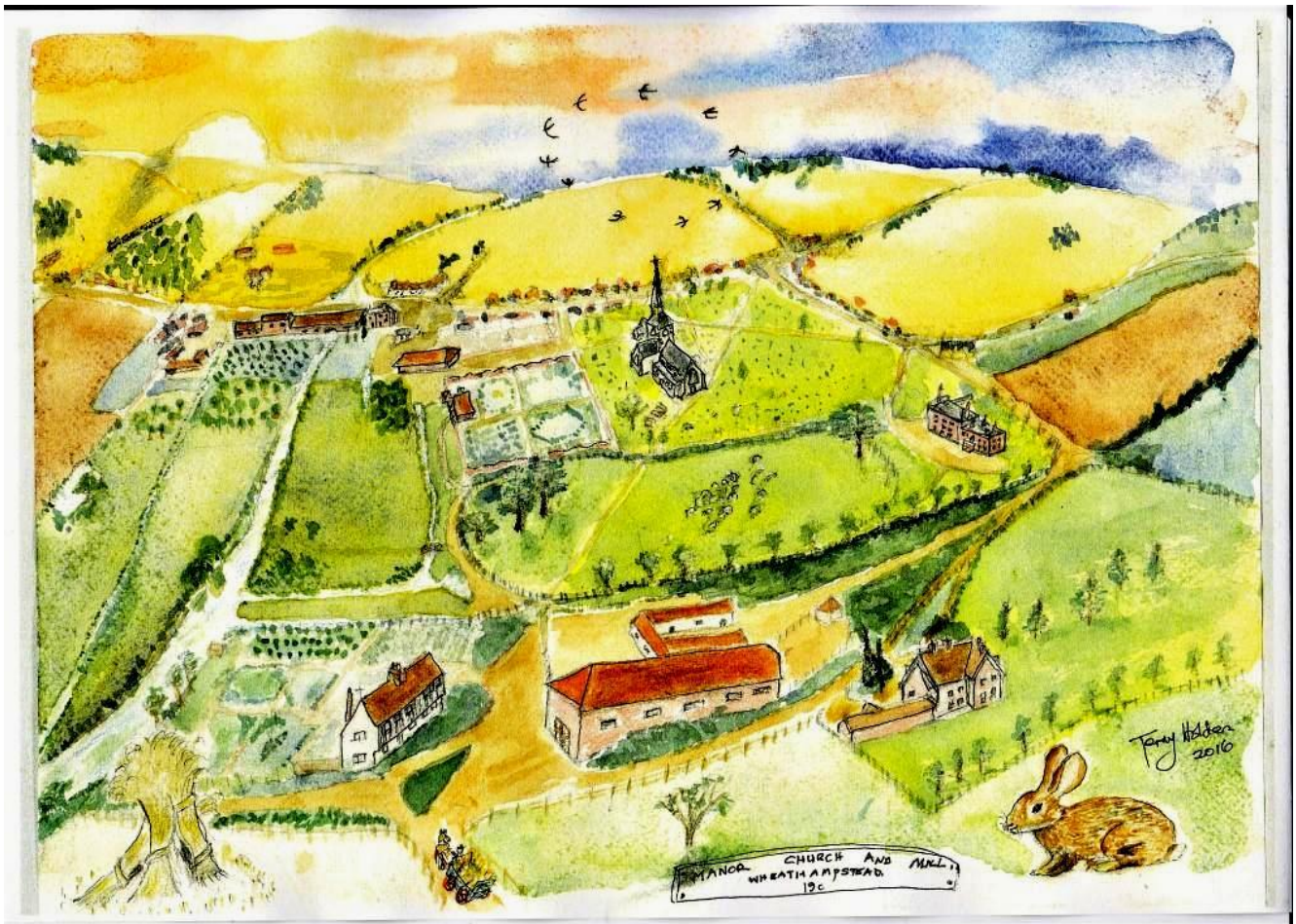


THE STORY BEHIND MY PAINTING
"MANOR, CHURCH AND MILL IN 19th CENTURY WHEATHAMPSTEAD"



Being under no pressure to complete the artwork, it took me nearly the whole of 2016 to very gradually develop the picture as and when I had sufficient information and the inclination to indulge in my love of sketching and painting.

Because of my keen interest over the years in village history and heritage, and to add some credibility to my picture, I wanted to research the major elements to enable me to reproduce something reasonably representative.

Having lived in a number of different houses in the village over the past 54 years, three of which were at Bury Farm where the Manor House (Bury Farm Cottages and The Old Farmhouse) is sited, it seemed appropriate to capture the village from that point, looking east, into a rising sun. This also fitted in well as during 25 of those years my Employer was Jarvis of Harpenden, the builders that developed the whole of the Bury Farm estate. Furthermore, throughout the final phase of the estate, which just happened to be adjacent to the Manor House, I became Manager of Jarvis Homes and it was then that my interest in this previously moated 15th century property really began to grow.

Our first house at Bury Farm was located immediately opposite the Manor House and sat directly upon what was the site of the "Great Barn". Eleven 11 years later we purchased The Old Farmhouse

and its extensive garden. This gave me the exciting and challenging opportunity to design and build my own house within the curtilage of and adjacent to this important Grade 2 listed property.

As I particularly wanted to show the relationship of Manor, Church and Mill, being the earliest key buildings within the village, I thought an interpretation of the view from the west during the 19th Century would give the greatest scope to illustrate how the village looked and worked at the time, before modern development started. It also enabled me to include the various waterways and ponds that existed at that time, demonstrating the vital part the River Lea has played over the years. The combination of all these facts led me to thinking this picture would be an enjoyable and nostalgic project to undertake.

Therefore, being keen on the watercolour technique of ink and wash, I decided on this method to help me highlight some of the hopefully recognisable important buildings. As I am also an enthusiast of the artist Graham Clarke, who produces the most wonderful coloured etchings, I have tried to follow his style to some limited degree. His pictures often have an element of humour and some unreality of scale within them, which I wanted to include. Hence my oversized rabbit! This also had the benefit of people not taking my picture too seriously! The name of the field above which the painting is orientated happened to be named "Coney Clappers" at the time, which I felt tied in well.

The sheaves of wheat attempt to replicate Van Gogh's "Wheat Sheaves" and at the same time incorporate the Wheathampstead Parish logo.

My grandfather worked with and looked after the shire horses on Lord Ivor's estate in Norfolk so he is also represented driving the horse and cart, which had to be blue and red.

Each May the swifts return to St Helen's Church to nest, so they had to feature, screeching as they fly encircling the spire.

The village in the 19th century would have been full of artisans serving all manner of requirements but gradually they in part gave way to some industrialisation as the needs of the 20th century progressed.

Regrettably we no longer have the railway serving the village, thanks to the Beeching closure of the line in the 1960s, so it was essential that a steam train was shown.

Many areas of farmland adjacent to the High Street have been developed with housing since the 19th century, which together with further changes in commercial and industrial businesses has since also led to the redevelopment of this "brownfield" land.

Shortly after the closure of the railway a bypass was built to the north east to relieve the volume of traffic coming through the High Street.

With the current risk of surrounding Green Belt land being used for housing development, this project made me appreciate how fortunate the village still is in having held on to our separation from other conurbations.

Terry Holden
November 2018

Resources Used

Maps

- 1758 Yeoman Survey of Bury Farm (Field Names)
- 1879 Ordnance Survey Map
- 1890 Ordnance Survey Map
- 1900 St Albans C&DC Map Wheathampstead Ordnance Survey
- 2016 Ordnance Survey Street Map of Ash Grove and Rectory Meadow

Information

- Land Registry Supplementary Plan of Title No HD135718 Jarvis Access Road (to KEP)
- Heritage Trail Leaflet of Village Centre Wheathampstead Parish Council
- Information Board - Crinkle Crankle Walls and Garden Wheathampstead Parish Council.

Photographs

- 1946 Aerofilms - Aerial View of High Street to New Bridge (East to West)
- 1946 English Heritage - Aerial View from High Street looking from East to West
- 1946 Aerial View of Helmets looking West
- 1952 Aerial View of Wheathampstead Place and Murphy Chemicals looking North
Aerial View over Murphy Chemicals looking South West
- 1960 Aerial View over Churchyard looking South West
Aerial View of Churchyard and beyond looking East
- 2 Photographs of Bury Farm House - David and Ann Godfrey Evans
- 3 Photographs of Bury Farm Gardens - David and Ann Godfrey Evans
- 4 Photographs of Bury Farm farm buildings - David and Ann Godfrey Evans
- Photograph of The Great Barn from Bury Farm Cottages looking South
- Photograph of Georgian Rectory from North looking South

Artwork

- 1840 Watercolour View from North of Church and Georgian Rectory by J C Bucklor
- 1850 Watercolour looking South over Rectory Meadow by J Oke
- Van Gogh Image of Wheatsheaves