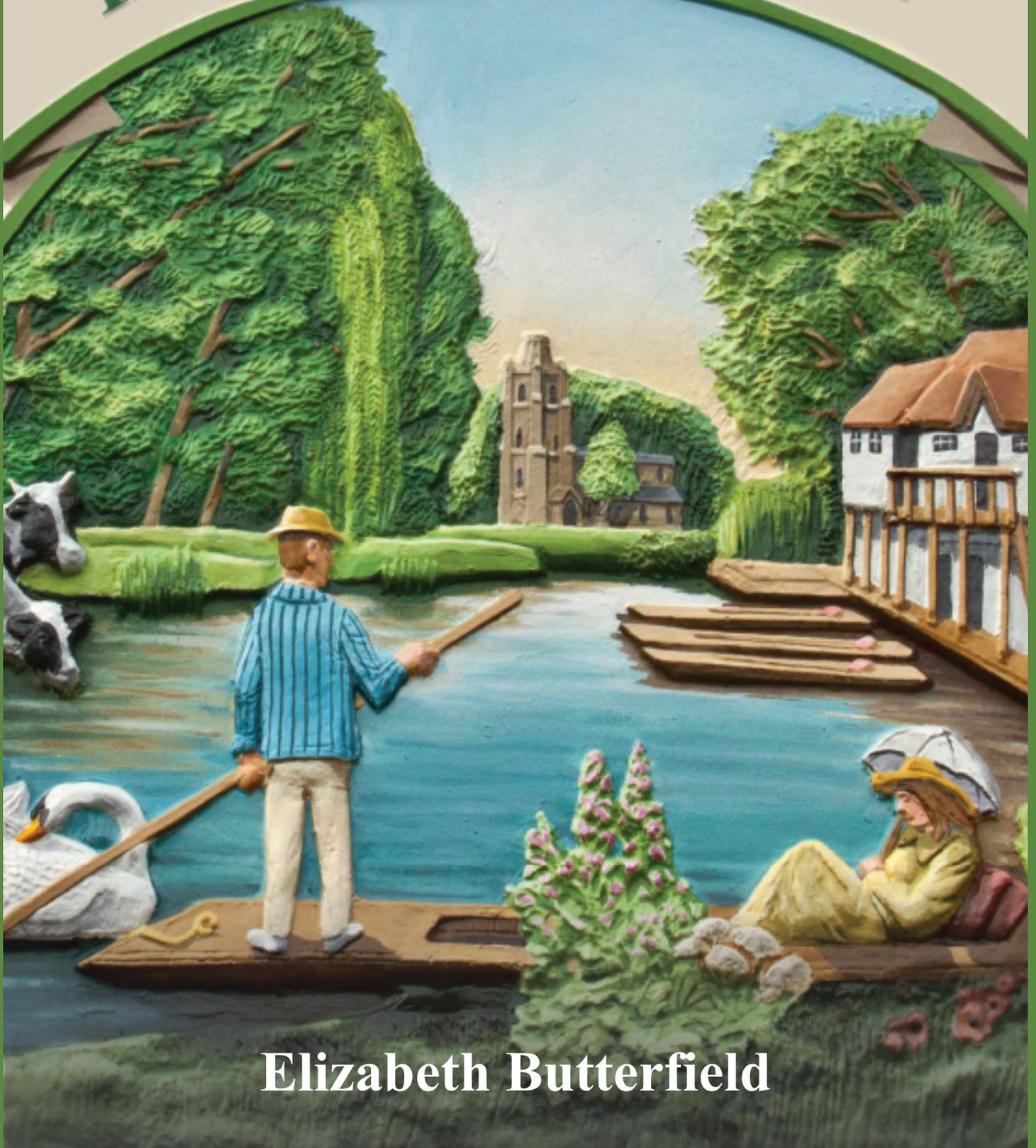


# THE GROWTH OF HEMINGFORD GREY



Elizabeth Butterfield

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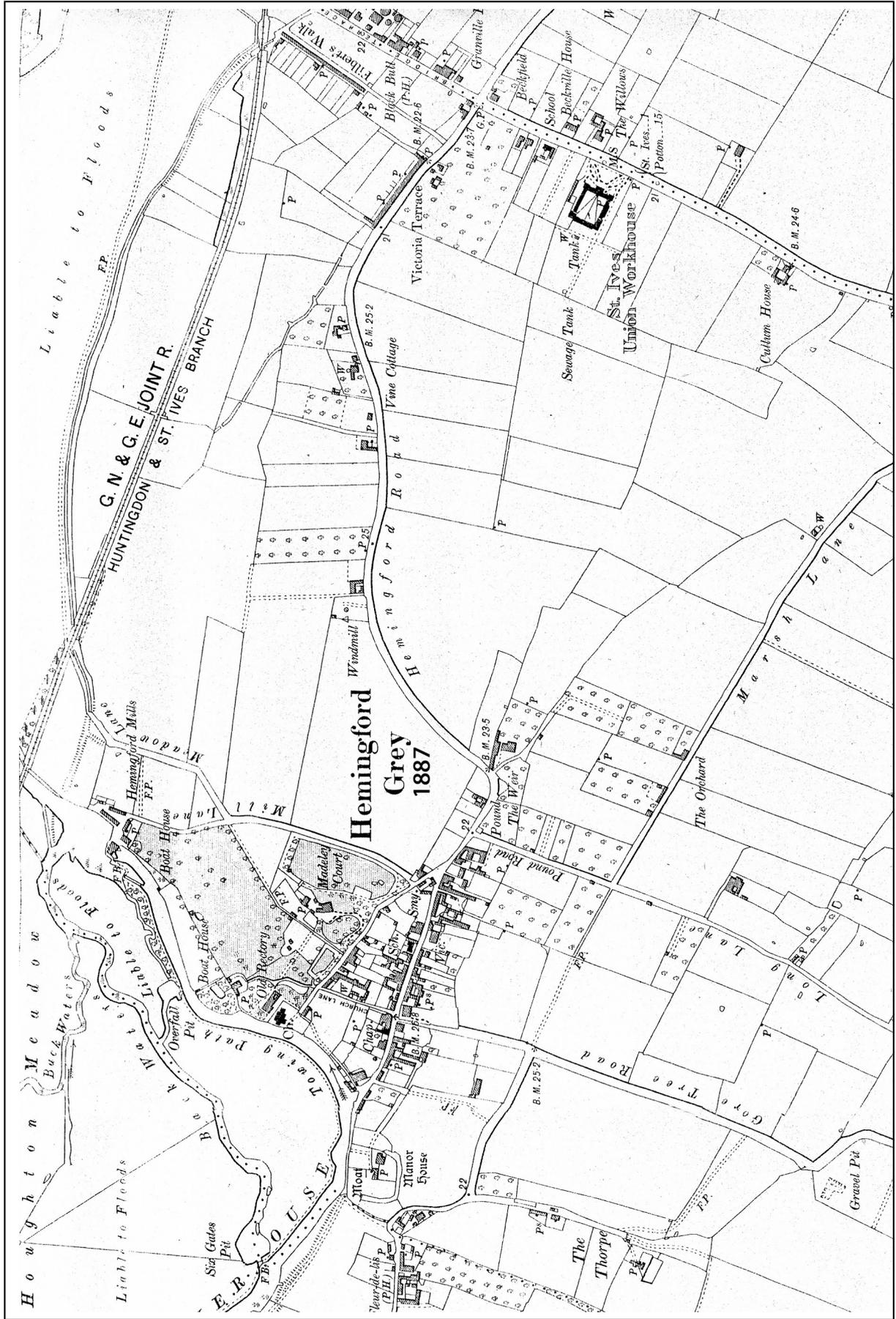
Elizabeth Butterfield

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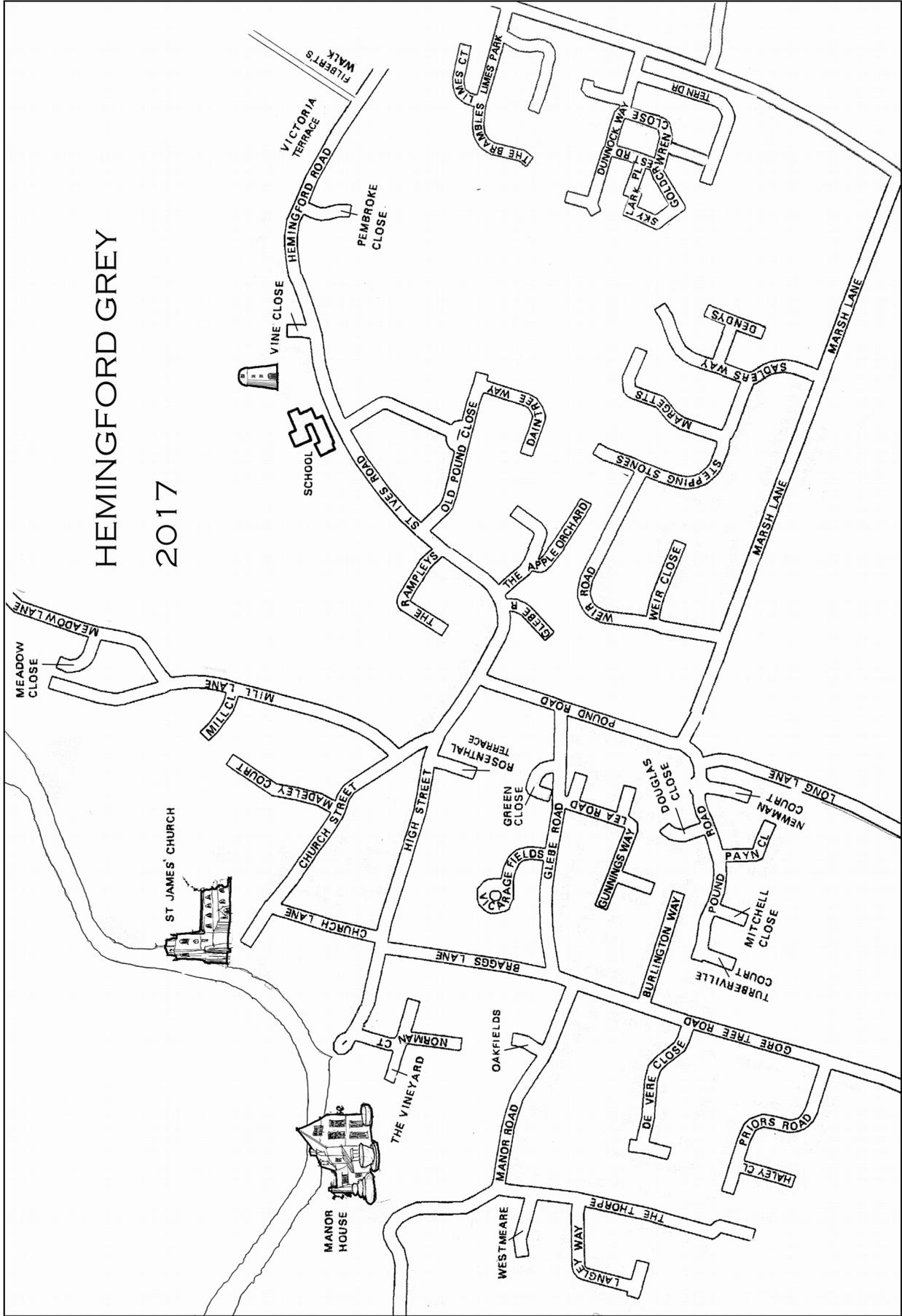
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# HEMINGFORD GREY

2017



# The Growth of Hemingford Grey

## Foreword

This small book began as a talk I gave to the Hemingfords' Local History Society in 2010, entitled 'The Growth of Hemingford Grey'.

In an earlier talk given by two members of the Society, Pat Douglas and Sarah Power, they had spoken of a World War II Hemingford Grey when the population was 688 (according to the 1931 census) and that by 2001 it was 2,524.

So I decided to try to find out when, how and where the village had grown. I have always had an interest in architectural periods and was aware of the rough dates of many of the village houses, but further research was needed.

Some of the information I have used is based on written sources, some on 19<sup>th</sup> century census returns, on maps (not always accurate) and on 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial directories. Also, several small books written about various aspects of the village have yielded much useful information, but many of the observations that I make are based on individual home owners, or past owners, giving me dates of their own or other properties and most importantly on the folk memory of older residents.

I am deeply indebted to everyone who has helped me.

Where I use house names and numbers, and street names, they are the present-day names unless otherwise indicated.

Elizabeth Butterfield

2017

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## Introduction

Hemingford Grey is a village some three miles from the town of Huntingdon and two miles from St Ives, historically part of Huntingdonshire but since 1974 administered as part of Cambridgeshire. The village lies on the Great Ouse, the river that rises in Wappenham in Northamptonshire, flows through parts of Buckinghamshire, past the flat lands surrounding Bedford, St Neots and Huntingdon and then passes to the north of Hemingford Grey on its way to St Ives, on to Ely and eventually out to the North Sea via King's Lynn and the Wash.

It's an old village. The highway which runs through Hemingford Grey on its way from Cambridge to nearby Godmanchester was built over a Roman road and Godmanchester was a Roman settlement. One of the streets in the village is called **The Thorpe**, a name of Danish origin, and that area is believed to be a Danish settlement dating back to 870 AD. Excavations for a house in **Mill Lane** in January 2014 revealed artefacts that not only show Romano-British occupation but also Iron Age finds. In this general area there have been earlier Iron Age discoveries.

The Parish boundaries are the River Ouse to the north as far as the Old Bridge at **St Ives**, to the east the **London Road** (A1096 once known as the Potton Road) running south from the Old Bridge across the Cambridge Road<sup>1</sup> to just north of the village of **Hilton**. Along the south, the boundary runs south-west over fields and along a brook until it meets an old road called **Mereway**, then moves north to the Cambridge Road, then runs west along it till it reaches a line from the western edge of the 1960s **Langley Way** development, turns north over a field edge, runs west of **Langley Way** and **Westmeare** houses, crosses the road leading to **Hemingford Abbots**, then along a brook in the field where the Annual Regatta is held, to meet the Ouse again.

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<sup>1</sup> In view of the fact that the A14 is in the process of being re-routed further south, I will be referring to the road that runs from Cambridge to Godmanchester as the '**Cambridge Road**'.

## Origins

The first map to show buildings of any discernible size and detail is the Ordnance Survey map of the village surveyed in 1887 and published in 1888. The full-scale map is 25 inches to the mile and, although it shows buildings, it does not necessarily show which are homes and which are barns, stables etc.

The population of the village in 1891 was 778 persons living in 191 households. There were, in addition, 105 living in the **St Ives Union Workhouse** on the **London Road**, within the Parish, but as the Workhouse housed the poor of several parishes, not just Hemingford Grey, on all censuses they are listed separately.

The 1887 map shows two main areas of houses. One, the core centre of the old village, was clustered round the triangle framed by the **Manor House** at the western end of the **High Street**, the **Church** and the house today called **The Apex** where the High Street and **Church Street** converge. (On some old maps and records these two streets are called **Front Street** and **Back Street**.)

The other main area of habitation in 1887 was at the eastern end, close to the eastern parish boundary of the **London Road**, and consisted of the 38 houses of **Victoria Terrace** (built in 1850), **Wellington Cottage** and, to the rear of Victoria Terrace, running north along what is now a pathway called **Filbert's Walk**, were the 31 houses of **Hemingford Green** built in the 1820s. Beyond that stood the **Old St Ives Bridge** and on its south-west corner **The Dolphin** (an old inn which has now been replaced by the Dolphin Hotel), and an old house adjoining it, since demolished. Due to parish boundary changes in 1895, this corner is now part of the town of **St Ives**.

Further south, along the London Road in 1887 was a public house (**The New Crown Inn**) built some time before 1851, on the corner of **Hemingford Road**. To the south of that was a large Victorian period house (Linden House, built before 1887), a **Mission** building of the 1860s, holding services, and from 1861 a school, and further south still the **Union Workhouse**, built in 1836 and opened by 1838. Even further south stood a mid-Victorian farmhouse, **Cullum Farm**.

Apparently, there were several scattered farm houses and homes attached to smallholdings, eg a late 1880s house on **Manor Road** called **Oakfield**, built by the Giddins family, an operating **windmill** on **St Ives Road** and a large working **watermill** on the river north of the church, both of which had houses nearby, but more of these later. On the 1901 Ordnance Survey map there are few material changes but a small letter 'P' appears at almost every property. This, it seems, indicates the presence of a pump to draw water from a well on the premises.

Before dealing with these in detail in 1887, let us look back. We know from various archaeological finds in the area that the Romans settled here and after they left there was Saxon occupation. During the time of the Saxons, the two villages of **Hemingford Grey** and **Hemingford Abbots** were part of one estate. The name **Hemingford** means the ford of the people of **Hemma** or **Hemmi**, presumably a Saxon chieftain. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century there was a division of this land and the invading **Danes** built a new settlement in the area of **The Thorpe**, circa 870 AD.

To the north of nearby Huntingdon, a Benedictine monastery known as Ramsey Abbey was founded in 969 AD, and an early church was built in Hemingford Abbots soon after 974 AD on the site of the present chancel there.

In 974 AD, Ailwyn, Earl of East Anglia, acquired 30 hides<sup>2</sup> of land from Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, in exchange for 40 hides of less fertile lands in Hatfield, Essex. He then gave this land (part of which was in Hemingford Abbots and another part, south of the Cambridge Road in Hemingford Grey) to Ramsey Abbey.<sup>3</sup>

In 1041/42 AD land was granted to Ramsey Abbey by King Hardicanute and his mother, Emma. (This would be the land north of the Cambridge Road that had been seized by the Danes in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.) Probably the Abbey linked this land with the portion of the estate south of the Cambridge Road, within Hemingford Grey's present parish, to form a separate estate of *other* or *east* Hemingford. In 1066 the Abbey leased this manor estate to Aelfric the Sheriff for his lifetime on condition that, after his death, it should revert to the Abbey. Aelfric was killed at the Battle of Hastings later that year and the Abbot of Ramsey regained it. However, not for long, as the local English landlords were soon dispossessed by the Norman conquerors and, although Ramsey Abbey managed to hold on to most of Hemingford Abbots (hence its name), it lost the northern portion of Hemingford Grey after 1077 when William the Conqueror granted it to Aubrey de Vere.

In the Domesday Book of 1086, Aubrey de Vere is shown as holding 11 hides of land as Tenant-in-Chief with Ralph Fitz Osmund as his sub-tenant. Ramsey Abbey held five hides with Aubrey de Vere as sub-tenant and a further two hides with a knight as sub-tenant. Domesday also mentions 13 villeins (villagers) and four smallholders. The villagers have five ploughs and the lordship has two. There are two mills (these would have been watermills), a fishpond and a meadow of 50 acres. The whole, in 1086, is valued at £12.

Here, one must make a distinction between owning the **Manor** (the area of land allotted) and living in the **Manor House**, which was not always occupied by the Lord of the Manor but was leased to others. The de Vere family remained overlords for several centuries with first Ralph, son of Osmond, as tenant; he passed it to his son Payn. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century **Payn de Hemingford** held the lands at Hemingford Grey and had the early part of the Manor House built (circa 1130) and the earliest part of **St James' Church** sometime before 1166. The Manor then passed through several members of the same family and one, Alice, married **Ralph de Turbeville** sometime before 1238, at which point the village became known as **Hemingford Turbeville** for a time. The Manor remained in the same family and another female heir married a **Sir John de Grey** (who died in 1266) and the village from then on acquired its present name. The Manor stayed in the same family until the reign of Henry VII when another John, by now 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Kent, got into debt and the Manor was seized by the Crown. Henry VII granted the Manor to one of his ministers, Edmund Dudley, but he was executed in 1510 and once again the Manor was returned to the Crown. It was then briefly back with Edmund Dudley's son, then sold to Sir Richard Williams (who took the name of Cromwell and was great-grandfather to Oliver

<sup>2</sup> A hide was originally an amount of land sufficient to support a family for a year and which a team of eight oxen could plough in a year. It varied by locality between 60 and 120 acres.

<sup>3</sup> In 974 AD Ramsey Abbey was granted a charter by King Edgar, in which this grant of land is listed.

Cromwell) but he soon exchanged it for other lands. It went through miscellaneous hands for nearly a hundred years and by 1635 had been granted to the **Newman** family, who already held parts of Hemingford Abbots.

By 1704 it had passed to **Cornelius Denne**, a London merchant, but once again it was seized for debt in 1721 and was sold to a **John Mitchell**. The Manor remained with the Mitchell family and by 1877 the joint Lords of the Manor were a Miss Mitchell and her sister who was married to a **Captain Douglas**, who held the Manor rights in her name. Their son, **Lieutenant-Colonel Sholto Douglas**, succeeded them as Lord of the Manor, but by now it was an empty title, as the rights and duties of that position had been virtually demolished by the **Enclosure Act of 1801**, which apportioned all the Hemingford Grey land to various landowners, and the **Local Government Act of 1894**, which created an elected Parish Council which took over many of the duties previously performed by the Lord of the Manor or the Church. Lieutenant-Colonel Sholto Douglas continued to be referred to as the Lord of the Manor into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## A Village Walk

Many of the houses we see in the village today, of various periods, have been built on the sites of earlier buildings, now long gone, so I intend to take you on a tour of the older part of the village based on the 1887/88 Ordnance Survey with some observations on later buildings.

Near the western boundary of the Parish lies a road still called **The Thorpe**, believed to be the area settled by the Danish invaders in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. On the 1887 map it is mostly farmland and orchards, but several houses on the western side are shown.



*3, 5 and 7 The Thorpe*

What are now numbers **3, 5 and 7** are all 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, while **number 9** is stated by its owner to be late 1600s.

The large **Thorpe Close House** at the far southern end of the road is mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with later additions.



*9 The Thorpe*

Old documents make reference to a village Pest House, where people would be confined if they had infectious diseases; the site of this has not been found, but it is believed to have been in The Thorpe area.



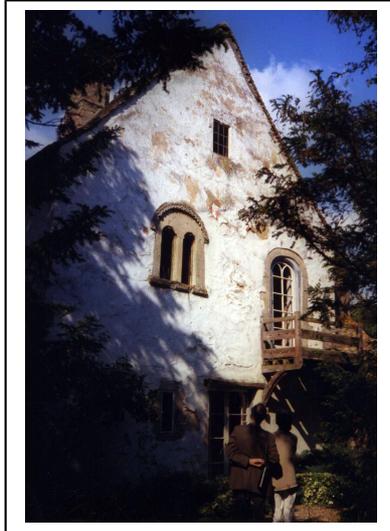
*Thorpe Close House*

On the corner where Manor Road in Hemingford Grey meets the eastern end of Hemingford Abbots' High Street is the aptly named **Corner Cottage**, a thatched building, originally of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; some years ago it burnt down and has been almost completely rebuilt, but has retained its listed building status as a Grade II 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage. Slightly to the east of Corner Cottage on the sharp bend in the road, is a substantial 19<sup>th</sup> century house named **Thorpe Cottage** (number 24 Manor Road), one of the

several places in the village where house numbering, which did not occur until the 1960s, is out of kilter with the adjoining homes because of infilling.

All the other houses in this area, on The Thorpe itself, Manor Road, Langley Way and Westmeare, were built later, as we shall see.

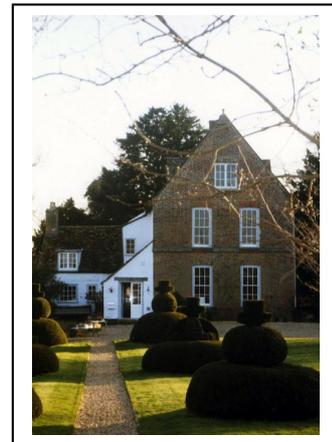
If we take the footpath near the Corner Cottage and walk north towards the river and then turn right and head east along the riverside footpath, we shall reach the garden entrance of **The Manor House**, listed building Grade I.



It is believed that the original house was built circa 1130 by the then Lord of the Manor, Payn de Hemingford. At some point the building was moated and over half of the moat remains to this day to the sides and rear of the building. From the river side the house looks 18<sup>th</sup> century and you have to enter the four-acre garden and go to the rear of the house to see the Norman architecture. It has been significantly altered over the centuries, but much of the Norman interior remains.

The northern, river, side of the house was enlarged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became a much larger building, enclosing within its walls the older

Norman part. A fire in 1798 destroyed much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century extension, but most of the Norman part, being built of stone, survived. This historic house is one of the oldest continuously inhabited houses in Britain.



The Manor House has had some interesting residents. From 1731-41, it was occupied by a family called **Gunnings**, who came from Ireland. They had two daughters, both born in the house, who grew up to be great beauties. They were the talk of London society in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and, in 1752, both married into the aristocracy, **Maria** to the **Earl of Coventry** and **Elizabeth** to the **6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Hamilton**. Elizabeth's wedding took place in the Mayfair Chapel in London, known to be a venue for clandestine marriages. It was said by Horace Walpole at the time that the ring used was one from a curtain! Maria died in October 1760, at the age of 27, probably from tuberculosis, but her health was said to have been weakened by the whitening make-up so fashionable at the time; this contained lead and caused poisoning of the system. Elizabeth's husband, the Duke of Hamilton, died in 1758 and she married again, this time to the heir to, and eventual **Duke of Argyll**. She was nicknamed 'the Double Duchess'.

From 1887-89 the Manor was rented to a family called **Fraser**. Six of the seven sons became artists, together with two sons of one of them, painting landscapes in watercolours. Some were more successful than others. They remained in the area, off and on, for many years and their works are much sought after today, particularly in the towns and villages bordering the Great Ouse.

From 1900-05 the Manor House was occupied by **Aubrey Hunt** (1856-1922), an American artist, and while there he built a boathouse, which stood by the river at the western end of the Manor House property. This boathouse was unfortunately swept away in the massive floods of 1947 and has never been replaced.

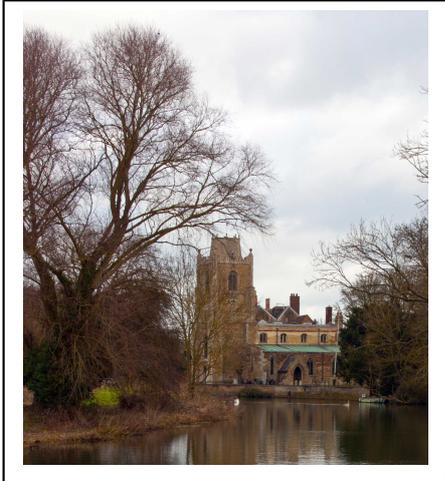
In 1939 the Manor House was purchased by a **Mrs Lucy Boston**, who made many alterations to the house to bring as much of it as possible back to its original Norman structure. She created a beautiful garden, full of old roses, large herbaceous borders, topiary chessmen and in 1953, Queen Elizabeth's Coronation year, had yews trimmed to represent the Coronation Orb and the Dove on the Sceptre. During the Second World War she entertained off-duty British and American airmen from nearby RAF Wyton to concerts on a wind-up gramophone from her large collection of classical music records (the 1930s' gramophone is still in use). In the winter, when she was unable to garden, she worked on a remarkable collection of patchwork quilts. She wrote a series of successful children's books, based on the house, commencing with 'The Children of Green Knowe'. It and her later Green Knowe books were illustrated by her son, Peter, and are still available in Penguin paperback. She was born in 1892 and died in 1990, aged 97, and was still sewing her quilts well into her 90s.

Her lovely garden can be visited every day except Christmas Day on payment of a small fee and the house, with its collection of quilts, toys of the fictional characters in her books and its unique and fascinating architecture, can be viewed by appointment. In the Manor House today is a painting of the house by Garden William Fraser, one of the Fraser family of watercolour artists, who had lived in The Manor earlier; this was inherited by Lucy Boston from a Cyrus Smith, an occupier of The Manor around 1910-14. He had acquired the painting and in his will left it to Lucy Boston and it is still in the possession of her family. A nice link between three occupants of the Manor House.



*Garden William Fraser: The Manor at Hemingford Grey 1899*

Leaving the Manor House, we walk east along the river path and as the river turns and starts to run north, we have a superb view of the 12<sup>th</sup> century **Church of St James** (which we shall visit later).



Across the river is an island, to the north of which runs the lesser course of the river, joining up again well past the Church. This island is part of the Parish, the boundary running along this backwater, which may at one time have been the main course. When there are serious floods, this island all but disappears under the floodwaters and it, and the flooded meadows on the Houghton side, have the look of a great lake with the high ground of Houghton to the north rising above the water. There are large willow trees at the water's edge and among them tall black poplar trees. This is a tree now rare in this country and some years ago, Cambridge University asked

the landowner of this island for permission to plant black poplar saplings there in order to increase numbers. Consent was given and several clumps of them are now thriving in the damp and waterlogged soil.

Moving east, on our right side is a thatched cottage, today called **Tallis House**, but previous owners have called it **Willow Cottage** and **Haslemere**. It is a Grade II listed building, said to be *early 17<sup>th</sup> century*.



Facing us is **River House**, an imposing, well-proportioned Georgian house, with **River Cottage** alongside. On earlier records River House is known as River View. On the Listed Building records it is described as *Grade II\* Mid-18<sup>th</sup> century L plan house with late 18<sup>th</sup> century façade with parapet*. It's nice to know that even in a small village in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the then owners were determined to be fashionable!

The 1891 census shows the house to be full of the artistic Fraser family, the same family who were living in the Manor House from 1887-89. The father, Robert Winchester Fraser, was by then a retired Army Surgeon and he and his wife still had three adult sons living with them, all described as landscape painters, a daughter-in-law and a grandson. In order to avoid confusion, the sons used to sign their artistic works as Francis, Robert, Garden, Anderson, Gordon and Baird and the two sons of Robert, when they grew up, used the names Robert Winter and Francis George.

In 1896 River House was purchased by **Walter Dendy Sadler (1854-1923)**, a successful professional artist, whose works depicting early 19<sup>th</sup> century life using local inhabitants and interiors as models were much reproduced as prints. Rooms at River House and what was then a nearby pub, **The Anchor**, now a house on Church Street, and other local places can still be recognised from the prints, two of which hang in the **Reading Room** on the High Street. When Sadler bought the house, the Frasers, who had been renting and now consisted of the widowed Mrs Fraser and her youngest son, soon vacated the house and moved elsewhere.

Dendy Sadler, as he was known, lived at River House until he died in 1923. His name is commemorated locally in two modern streets at the eastern end of the village, **Sadler's Way** and **Dendys**. In the garden at River House is a summerhouse that he had built. It too is a Grade II listed building and described as *circa 1900, circular plan thatched conical roof with finial. Rustic wooden tracing*. At about the same time, 1903, Sadler had a boathouse built, also thatched, and this survived the 1947 and 1998 floods and still stands today. Sadler was a prominent member of the village community in many ways, as we shall see as we progress through the village.

To the left of River House is **River Cottage**, what was a Grade II listed *early 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage* (it was delisted in 2017 as no longer of historical or architectural interest). On the 1887 Ordnance Survey, seven or eight tiny cottages are shown here and the present cottage appears to comprise what was once three cottages. Three further cottages were demolished when Sadler had his boathouse built and made a riverside terrace along the Ouse. On the 1841 Census, after stating the total numbers for the village as 'Males 399, Females 412', there is a note which says 'In barges, boats and other small vessels – Males 5'. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, watermen used this area at the bend of the river to tie up boats and barges when moving up and down the river carrying cargoes and there was a collection of boathouses, sheds and shacks here. With the coming of the **Huntingdon, St Ives, Cambridge railway**, which opened in 1847, and the railway from **St Ives to Wisbech**, which opened a year later and even later in 1878 extended to **Ely**, there was less need for river transport and the Giddins family, who owned the landing area, demolished the old sheds and built in their place a large new boathouse for pleasure boats with a tearoom above and also an artist's studio which could be rented out. Here on the river bank the Giddins family rented out skiffs and punts for pleasure use. Eventually too, this business ceased and in 1977 the Giddins' boathouse with its tearoom and studio was pulled down, but members of the Giddins family remained living in the cottage.

The railway line between Huntingdon and St Ives ran across the river to the north of the Church and along an embankment over what were then fields; it crossed the Great Meadow and the Ouse again

near the Dolphin Inn to arrive at the St Ives Station, which stood roughly where the modern busway crosses the St Ives by-pass.

Before we leave the riverside, I should like to comment on the **Village Regatta**. This has been taking place almost every summer since 1901. It was founded by the **Reverend Byrom Holland**, Vicar of the village from 1899-1910, together with Dendy Sadler and other prominent villagers keen on rowing and was for people from Hemingford Grey and Hemingford Abbots, competing in pleasure boats. It is one of the oldest village regattas left in the country. It used to take place on the old August Bank Holiday (first Monday in August), but nowadays is staged on the second Saturday in July and goes ahead rain or shine. The only gaps in over 100 years of activity were during the two world wars, 1915-18 and 1940-47. The late re-start after the Second World War was due to the long time it took to recover from six years of war and to get village life back to some kind of normality. Between 2006 and 2007 major flood defence work was taking place along the Regatta's course; in 2006 there was no access to the Regatta field so it did not take place. In 2012 it had to be postponed until the first week of September because the river in mid-July was running too fast to be used safely. The Regatta has survived because succeeding generations of people of the two villages who love the river and river sports have put an enormous amount of work into it. For several weeks prior to the event, youngsters from the age of eight are taught to cox, row boats and paddle canoes by adults volunteering every weekday evening to teach and supervise by the riverside.

Generations of dedicated village enthusiasts have worked hard to keep the Regatta going and there is a memorial on the river wall of the churchyard which sums up the contributions of some past villagers. The plaque reads:

The strip facing the river below  
This place marks the finish of the  
Vicar's Sculls placed here in  
Grateful remembrance of  
Les G Cowley  
George E Levitt  
Frank E Rooke (sic)\*  
Who worked tirelessly for  
The Hemingford Regatta  
For many years.

Hemingford Regatta Committee 1993

(\* Frank Rooke chose to spell his name with an added 'e' – his son, Gerry, reverted to the old family form of Rook)

The Regatta has had numerous changes over the years but many of the traditions remain. The beautiful trophies of Silver Sculls, donated by Byrom Holland, are still competed for. The original rules called for two adult males and a female cox, all to be resident in, or born in, Hemingford Grey but a new 2015 rule allows entrants from both the Hemingfords. As the winning boat passes the finish line at the Church, the bellringers ring a triumphant peal.

The various cups and trophies reflect the names of the many donors from both villages and are hotly contested for each year. Dendy Sadler gave one of the first trophies, the Sadler Challenge Goblets, awarded to a pair of ladies over the age of 18 and residents of either Hemingford Grey or Hemingford Abbots, competing in the Double Sculls event. One of the 'fun' additions to the Regatta used to be the Tug-of-War, with teams provided by the village pubs, the Axe and Compass for Hemingford Abbots and **The Cock** for Hemingford Grey. This was removed from the programme a few years ago as modern Health and Safety rules made the insurance premiums so high that the Committee had no choice but to delete it. It was an event much enjoyed by participants and spectators alike.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the participants in the Annual Regattas went on to rowing eminence. Tony Cowley (son of Les G Cowley) and Nigel Drake were later coached at the St Ives Rowing Club and went on to win a National Championship. Paul Ashmore was a National Champion in Lightweight Single Sculls in 1990 and 1991. Julia Chandler and Vicki Squires won a Junior National Competition. In an earlier generation, Humphrey Warren, who later lived in The Thorpe and raised his family there, had as a young man competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where he reached the semi-final of the Single Sculls. Under his guidance numerous local rowers went on to bigger things.

Many of the volunteers who help to make the Regatta possible also organise the annual **Fireworks** in November. These take place on a farmer's field to the south of the Great Meadow behind Victoria Terrace. They are spectacular and the profit from this popular event, attended by large numbers of people from St Ives and surrounding villages as well as from the Hemingfords, helps to finance the cost of the Regatta and other local charities.

But now we must continue our 'walk'. Behind us, as we stand here at the western end of the High Street, is **Orchard House** (number 76 High Street) built in 1952 and as we walk along the High Street, this 1952 house is the only easily visible house that looks later than 19th century. The High Street today, from this point onwards as far as the point of intersection with Church Street is, in appearance, a late Victorian street with some earlier houses interspersed. There are more modern houses tucked in behind if you look carefully but the general appearance is late 19<sup>th</sup> century, provided you ignore the overhead telephone and electricity wires, the motor cars and, on pick-up days, the wheelie bins!



The first house to our right, white painted with a thatched roof, number **74 High Street**, is described on the Listed Buildings' Records as *early 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage with 18<sup>th</sup> century and modern additions* and is Grade II listed. It was at one time two dwellings, as were many of the now single houses in the village. Our 'walk' has only just started and already we have encountered several 'listed' buildings – there are over one hundred in the parish.

<sup>4</sup> For a full history of the first hundred years of the Regatta there is an excellent book by Bridget Flanagan entitled *A Story Of Village Rowing, Hemingfords' Regatta 1901-2001*. This, in addition to an interesting history, includes some splendid photographs of past Regatta days. Copies are available from local libraries.

Next, a block of four terraced houses, numbers **66, 68, 70 and 72 High Street**. There are buildings clearly marked here on the 1887 Survey; these were substantially updated in the 1970s but retain a later 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance. At one time the four houses were known as 'The Pavement'. We now come to **numbers 62 and 64** and carved into the overhang of the front doors are the words 'Mafeking Villas 1900'.



*The Bells, Mafeking Villas and The Pavement*

There are buildings seen here on the 1887 map, but of a slightly different configuration; it looks as if these houses were being built at the time of the celebrations after the Relief of the besieged town of Mafeking in May 1900, in the Boer War in South Africa, and the owner possibly had some personal reason for so naming them.

Opposite, on the northern side of the road, is **Orchard Cottage**, number 65 and **Rose Cottage**, numbers 61 and 63. This last is Grade II listed as *early 18<sup>th</sup> century cottage* and the owner says 1730. It was, within living memory, two cottages. Next to it is **The Old Chapel** built as a Congregationalist Chapel in 1848 under the auspices of Potto Brown of nearby Houghton, a 19<sup>th</sup> century miller and philanthropist, with funding raised in Hemingford Grey and Houghton. Before the building of the chapel, the congregation had held meetings in private houses until they had the funds to build their own chapel. In later years, when attendance dropped away, the building fell into disuse and was turned into a house in the late 1970s. Tucked in behind the Old Chapel are two modern bungalows, numbers **57 and 59 High Street**, built in 1956.

Opposite is number 60, **The Bells** or, at another time, The Six Bells. It is listed Grade II and is *early 18<sup>th</sup> century*. The present owners still have the original Six Bells pub sign within the house. It is known that The Bells operated as a public house for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and possibly earlier and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, under various landlords. It is often mentioned locally that in past times Hemingford Grey had a large number of pubs for a quite small population, nine in 1891 for instance. However, it seems these



*Rose and Orchard Cottages*

were not all operating simultaneously and some were just alehouses, licensed only to sell beer not spirits. Also, at the period much beer was consumed as most of the water was not fit to drink, and many farmworkers and servants sometimes had part of their wages paid in beer.

In 1914, a Canadian artist, **Alfred Frederick William Hayward** (1856-1939), a painter of popular flower subjects, bought The Bells and turned it into a private home, using the small maltings building alongside the house as his studio. Hayward, a prominent villager, was, along with Dendy Sadler and others, a great supporter of the Regatta. Later, in 1923, Hayward bought **River View** after the death of Dendy Sadler and lived there for many years. If you look across the road from The Bells, you will see a double garage building with a date, 1924, two maple leaves and the image of a bull's head sculpted above the lintel – doubtless an addition to the River View property by its new Canadian-born owner.

Opposite, alongside the Old Chapel, is a row of five mid to late Victorian houses with slate roofs, numbers **49, 51, 53 and 55 High Street**. This row was once known as **Dharwar Terrace**, the corner, 2 Church Lane being earlier. I can find no exact clues to the origin of the name of Dharwar Terrace, but it is probably of Indian provenance. **Number 2 Church Lane** was at one time the Post Office for the village.



*Dharwar Terrace with the Old Chapel behind*

Back on the right-hand side, on the corner of Braggs Lane and the High Street, stands **Broom Lodge**, 58 High Street. Listed Buildings states that it is an *early 18<sup>th</sup> century house* but the owner has documents that lead us to believe it is older, a house being in existence prior to 1703. It is listed Grade II\* and has gable ends with definite Dutch influence. At this period, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the nearby fenlands were being drained using the expertise of Dutch engineers and there was a great deal of Dutch influence on architecture in the area. The house was not known as Broom Lodge until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



At an angle, across the road, is **The Cock**, 47 High Street, known to have been a public house for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a Listed Building Grade II *early 18<sup>th</sup> century* and incised on some bricks to the left of the most westerly front window is a date, 1767. The public bar of this pub was extended to the rear in 1987 and in 2001 it acquired new owners and reopened with an award-winning gourmet pub restaurant in what had been the public bar, and retained a bar serving real ales in the former saloon bar.



Over the road, well hidden by trees in the summer, is **Harcourt**, number 56 High Street, listed Grade II *early 19<sup>th</sup> century*, whose late owner, architect Peter Foster, said it was 1800.



In the courtyard of this house is an architectural studio building and two cottages, **Vine Cottage**, number 52 High Street, listed Grade II as a *late 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage*, and number 54, not a listed building but of late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century period, named **Stable Cottage**.

Harcourt was for many years in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the home of the **Margetts family**, who, after the local Enclosure Act of 1801, owned large areas of land in Hemingford Grey and elsewhere. When Thomas Margetts died in 1842, his widow and, later, his three daughters, continued to live in the house for many years. Here, at Harcourt, in recent years lived Peter Foster, a distinguished architect who, among other things, was Surveyor to the Fabric of Westminster Abbey from 1973 to 1988. His many works included restoration of several bombed churches and designs for historic houses. He died, aged 90, in 2010 and in his obituary it was noted that during his wartime service as a sapper in the Royal Engineers, he assisted in the evacuation of some of the airborne troops from Arnhem after their unsuccessful attempt to hold the bridge there.

Before we proceed further up the street, I should mention that Dr Susan Oosthuizen, an archaeologist at Cambridge University, asserted in an article contributed to '*Records of Huntingdonshire – Volume 3, No 1*' that the 13 villeins (villagers of the period) in the 1086 Domesday Book, held lands starting at this point (today's **Harcourt**, number 56 High Street) running east as far as today's Pound Road intersection with lands running back from each High Street frontage. If one paces out the demarcations between today's properties, and compares them with the 1801 Enclosure Act Map and the 1887 Ordnance Survey, it is remarkable that these boundaries have remained the same, although some properties have two sections rather than the original one.

Across the road, on the north side, is a row of mostly 18<sup>th</sup> and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cottages. The furthest west one, now numbered **45a High Street**, was in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a grocery store and post office run by George Geeson. He also owned the property next door (now **45b High Street**), land to the rear and a considerable area of farmland to the west and northwest of our present Primary School and was a prominent resident of the parish. The area to the rear of these two High Street houses is now a bed and breakfast establishment, **The Willow**, with modern buildings and car park. Further east, number **43 High Street**



*High Street North Side*

Further east, number **43 High Street**

was a more recent post office run by the late Lionel Benn and his wife Gwen for 23 years until their retirement in 2003. **Number 39 High Street**, the only thatched cottage in the terrace, is listed Grade II, described as *early 18<sup>th</sup> century*. It was for many years in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the home and workplace of the Woods family, wheelwrights and coach builders. **Number 41 High Street** dates back to at least 1801.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century censuses, it appears that the High Street was lined with the premises of various tradesmen. In most cases we do not know what the trades were in the various present-day houses, as street numbering did not happen until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. We are fortunate that some present-day owners have looked into the history of their homes and are able to enlighten us. Today, we still retain in the central part of the village a general store with post office and the already mentioned Cock public house, more than many villages possess. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed and transport both by bus and individual cars increased, there was no longer the need for a multiplicity of local suppliers and major shopping is mainly done in nearby St Ives and Huntingdon.



Numbers 44 to 50 High Street

Back on the south side of the High Street is **number 50, Pear Tree Cottage**. A previous owner says it dates back to at least 1800 or earlier. Next to it, **number 48 High Street**, is a small cottage with a steep pitched tile roof, Grade II listed *early 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage, one storey and attic*. A few years ago the roof was badly in need of repair and was stripped back to its bare bones, exposing the original roof trusses as a series of tree branches of the right size and shape. Because of the Listed Building status, the builders left these in place and modern planed timber supports were placed in between the old branches to more safely support the new roof, which was re-tiled using the original tiles. The steep pitch of the roof and the age of the building leads me to suppose that the original 17<sup>th</sup> century roof may

have been of thatch.

Numbers 44 and 46 High Street, attached to number 48, are 19<sup>th</sup> century. Number 46 was at one time a pub called The Chequers. It is mentioned in an 1854 directory, so numbers 44 and 46 are at least that early as well. Number 46 still has the metal hooks that once held the pub sign attached to the brickwork. Behind these cottages is number 42 High Street, a modern 1990s' house, set back from the road and so not visible as we look up and down our 19<sup>th</sup> century street.

Back on the north side of the street is the 1990s' period St James' Court. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century this area held some of the Poor Law Houses for the parish. Even after the introduction of the Union Workhouse in 1836 on London Road, there were still houses in the parish for needy people.



Some people had their rent paid to private landlords, with P.P. after their name on the census, denoting 'Parish Paid'. Some of these Poor Law houses continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and some were pulled down to make way for **The Reading Room**, built to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.



Written records show there was an earlier Reading Room dating from 1889 but there is no information as to which building it occupied. The foundation stone of the present building was laid in 1898 by Mrs Brooke, the wife of General Brooke who lived in **Madeley Court**, a large house, now demolished, in Church Street. The Reading Room was opened in August 1898 for use by men only. The first trustees of the new Jubilee Memorial Reading Room charity were the Reverend Peregrine Edward Curtois (vicar), George Geeson (grocer and farmer), Samuel Huckle (dissenting minister), John Harrison (basket maker) and EB Ebsworth (gentleman), all prominent locals. Village Reading Rooms were common at this time, as late 19<sup>th</sup> century compulsory education laws ensured that most people could read but many could not afford a daily newspaper or books.

The room was originally divided into two by a removable partition so that it could also be used as one main hall. There was a large window at the north end, now gone after the installation of a modern kitchen and toilet area replacing the outside lavatory and coal store in a yard at the back. Heating was a coal fireplace on the west wall. There were bookcases for the donated library books, some of which appeared to have belonged to the earlier Reading Room, and a handsome wall clock. Furniture consisted of simple kitchen-type wooden chairs and some tables for card games, dominoes and draughts.<sup>5</sup>

It is assumed that gas lighting was installed, as by then gas was available in the village from the gas works on the London Road, but water would have been drawn from a pump. Some daily newspapers were provided. By the early 1920s a dartboard was in place and a three-quarter-size billiards table installed in the front section of the room. Later, a full-size table was purchased, the partition being removed to fit it in. Later still, a table tennis table was brought in. The older men trying to read against the noise of these games complained and a net was erected to stop the table tennis balls landing on the billiards table! When the numbers playing billiards or snooker fell, the table was sold. One link remains with the billiards-playing era. In 1934, a Mrs C Hackett who lived at number 50 High Street (Pear Tree Cottage), across the street from the Reading Room, gave a handsome silver cup as a trophy for the billiards winner of the year. Seemingly she joined no village societies, nor did she use the Reading Room, now open to women members, but was known as a generous person. This cup has now found new life as the trophy for our Annual Village Quiz competed for by teams from many of the local clubs.

<sup>5</sup> Two handsome draughts boards donated by Mr JE Freeman, President of the Reading Room, in 1901 still exist.

After the Second World War, when the men came back and the village started to return to some sort of normality, many tastes had changed. The advent of television, greater availability of motor cars and the introduction of village sports clubs changed people's leisure habits and the original uses of the Reading Room ceased to be relevant. Hemingford Grey had no village hall and eventually by 1982 a new scheme was devised for the building; in July 1984 it was reopened, still with its original name, as the Village Hall, with modern toilets and kitchen. Its uses as laid down in 1984 were *for the provision and maintenance of a village hall for the inhabitants of the Parish of Hemingford Grey without distinction of political, religious or other opinions including use for meetings, lectures and classes and other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants*. The Workhouse Charity and the Langley Charity, which between them had provided for the poor of the village and which had owned the land, merged to form the Langley Trust, still available to give help to those in need, and the new Reading Room Charity owns and runs the Reading Room in its new use. Later refurbishments have included an updated kitchen and provision of a disabled toilet. The room accommodates 65 people seated and 50 if at tables. It is available for rent to local organisations at modest rates with rather higher rates for out-of-village renters. Links with the past are represented on the walls, with large framed photographs of some of the original trustees of the building mentioned earlier and also of Mr EG Bevan, who had been President of the earlier Reading Room, and of Mr JEF Freeman, one of the first Presidents of the 1898 Reading Room and a prominent local farmer. Also on the wall is a majolica plaque of St Francis. This used to adorn St Francis House, number 29 High Street, when it was run as a religious retreat, but that building has now returned to private residential use and the new owners no longer wanted it. A carved wooden board with scenes of the village, made by a local resident, and an illustrated map of the village donated by the Women's Institute who use the building are also on the walls today.<sup>6</sup>

**Number 35 High Street** is the only remaining building which was once one of the Poor Law houses. It was not built until 1911 and was sold into private hands after the Reading Room became a village hall.



Numbers 37 and 37a High Street, alongside number 35, were substantially refurbished at the time of the building of St James' Court. The original building of number 37 is probably mid-Victorian while number 37a is a Grade II listed building described as *late 17c or early 18c house*, followed by a detailed description of the exterior, but nothing from a first glance looks that early. To the rear, where the St James' Court houses now stand, was a workshop

where furniture was repaired and stored for a Huntingdon shop and at another time had been a laundry, all uses after the Poor Law houses were demolished. To the east of the Reading Room is the Parish Centre, above, built in 1853 as the first village school. It is a Listed Building Grade II, built on

<sup>6</sup> A small book entitled *The Reading Room Story*, written by a village resident, the late Bridget Smith, gives a very full account of the first hundred years of the life of this building and, though out of print, copies can be seen in local libraries.

land given by Mrs Elizabeth Desborough adjacent to her large property. It is said she also gave generously to the cost of the building, which totalled £379.

The building comprised a large schoolroom with living accommodation for a schoolteacher above. In 1853 it was described as a 'National School' and one commercial directory in 1894 says it could hold 100 children, but average attendance was 62. By 1898 it was the 'Board School', with a schoolmaster and two female assistants and an average attendance of 60. The school closed in the summer of 1903<sup>7</sup> and reopened in September of that year in the new building that had been built on the St Ives Road that still, much enlarged, serves as our Primary School today. The High Street pupils transferred there together with children from the **Mission School** on **London Road**. The High Street building, which still has its school bell atop the roof, today houses the Parish Church offices upstairs and downstairs in the main room, the Sunday School for children of St James' Church and numerous other activities during the week for young and old alike, as well as being available for non-church rentals.

In July 2003 we lost our village Post Office on the retirement of its current owners. Nobody appeared prepared to take it over and after a few months without a post office the Vicar, the Reverend Peter Cunliffe, and the Parochial Parish Council decided that the village must have a post office and set about organising it. What had been an entrance lobby to the large old schoolroom became the Post Office area, with a small secure area being built out of the place which once housed the playschool toy cupboard! Paid staff were recruited, several working part-time, and the Post Office opened for business in November 2003. After suitable training, the Parish Administrator, Dave Usher, was appointed sub-postmaster. When he left the parish in 2007, the Vicar was appointed in his place, with overall responsibility but admitting he would not be serving behind the counter! He was the first sub-postmaster in England to also be a vicar. Later the St James Community Interest Company was formed to run the Post Office and one of the staff was the Manager. The Post Office kept normal Post Office hours and in 2009 started a daily mobile service to the village of Over, whose Post Office had closed, by means of a fully fitted van; its rounds subsequently extended to the villages of Holme and Little Paxton each afternoon, staff working at the Post Office taking turns to drive the van. In addition to the normal Post Office services, stationery and greetings cards were sold and there was provision for photo-copying services. Unfortunately, by April 2016 the Post Office authorities had decided to move the Post Office services to the local Hemingford Stores, and many in the village are not happy with this decision. Had it not been for the local Church stepping in to maintain the Post Office services for over ten years, there would have been no Post Office to move. An even more recent innovation, opened in June 2011, is the provision of a Community Café, achieved by using a small room at the rear of the building, extended outwards into a yard. The café serves coffees, teas, cakes and light lunches six days a week. Paid managers are employed to organise and supervise and numbers of villagers give their time to help serve and clean. Others bake cakes, make soup and perform various unpaid duties. The yard has been turned into a pleasant garden with tables and chairs.

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<sup>7</sup> Some written records put the date of the new school at 1905. This is incorrect as all the Log Books and Minute Books of both schools held in the Huntingdon archives state that the changeover was 1903.

The money to pay for the building works and equipping the café was raised by means of a local appeal and some local grants were available. Any profits made by the enterprise go to charitable organisations, not to church funds.

The Vicar and the Church of this village feel very strongly that the Church exists for the benefit of all residents of the village, not just churchgoers, and by enabling us to keep a Post Office for ten years and providing us with a Community Café have certainly made their feelings clear. They are to be congratulated.

Across the road from the Parish Centre is a thatched building, now two houses, **The Old Bakehouse and Farthings**. It was, for many years, the village bakery run by the Darlow family and later a small



newspaper shop. It is a Grade II listed building *17<sup>th</sup> century cottage* and a previous owner says he can date it back to 1666. Parts of it are late 20<sup>th</sup> century additions, in keeping with the original. Tucked in behind is **number 38 High Street**, a modern home built in 1958.

Further to the east is **Grey Hall** (34/36 High Street), another Grade II listed building *built 1854 two storeys and attics*. This is built on glebe land (that part of the village land that was used to support the parish priest), so before this 1854 building there would probably have been an earlier parsonage here, which would have housed the Reverend Joseph Staines Banks, who when he died in 1848, in his 80s, had been vicar for 55 years!



Vicars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a prominent social position in the local community and usually had houses to match. While Grey Hall was being built for the incoming vicar, the **Reverend Peregrine Caxton Curtois**, vicar from 1849 to 1869, the parish seems to have been cared for by a curate named Charles Barnes, who is described on the 1851 census as 'curate of Hemingford Grey' and is a lodger at the Manor House, as none of the Curtois family appear on the 1851 census anywhere in the vicinity, nor in any local commercial directories. For the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Grey Hall was the residence of the Curtois family. When Peregrine Caxton Curtois died in 1869, he was succeeded as vicar by his son, Peregrine Edward Curtois, until 1899, when he was unfortunately killed by a train when crossing a railway bridge as a short cut to avoid floods near Houghton.

In addition to their duties as vicars, one finds them as chaplains to the Union Workhouse on the London Road, and in positions of authority on the local school boards and part of the structure of administering local charities.

The Vicarage remained at Grey Hall until the Second World War, when for a short time it went to a small house, **number 8 Church Lane**, which had been used to house servants for the Old Rectory. It was not there for long, however, as it moved to **Reed House, number 2 Manor Road**, in 1945 and stayed there until 1987 when the present vicarage was purpose built at **number 2 Braggs Lane** as part of the **1987 Vicarage Fields** development. This was part of the old Glebe Lands and when the Church Commissioners sold the land it was on condition that a new vicarage was provided.

After the vicarage left, Grey Hall was used as offices for a time for a business evacuated from elsewhere during the war and in 1945 became a small hotel run by Robert Giddins. It later returned to residential use, partly turned into flats and today, once again, is a single private residence. On the 1887 map, a small row of cottages is shown at the eastern edge of the property, close to the road.

Back on the north side of the road is **number 29 High Street**, known for many years as **St Francis House**, as it was in use as a residential religious retreat run by an Anglican Church community.

The original house was probably built in the early 1800s as the first mention I have found of its first owner, **Mrs Elizabeth Desborough**, comes in the Land Tax list of 1826 and she features in the 1841 and 1851 censuses, along with five indoor servants and a coachman and gardener housed nearby. She was born in 1782, the daughter of the Reverend Robert Fowler, Rector of Warboys. She married a William Desborough of Huntingdon, who was a banker and who died in 1810, leaving her with a daughter born in 1803, who died just before reaching her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1820. From Elizabeth Desborough's tombstone in the churchyard, it appears she also had two sons, one who died abroad while still young (the date has been eroded from the tombstone) and the other who died in 1875. Elizabeth herself died in 1867 at the age of 82, in those days 'a good age'! She was a major benefactor to the village with her donation of land for the first school and contributing to its cost and, later, to quote an 1864 Directory *in 1859 the Church was restored and Mrs Desborough contributed heavily*. Her house, at the time it was built, was the portion at the eastern end with the handsome front door. To the rear, facing **Church Street** in a separate building, were the stables. After her death, Ernest George Bevan and his family lived in the house. He was a partner in the private bank of Veasey, Desborough and Co, which eventually merged with Barclays Bank. He was a prominent resident, active on several village committees and from various records seems have been anxious to have everything his way! After he died in 1927, the house was occupied by his unmarried daughter, **Miss Muriel Florence Bevan**, who in 1950, gave the house and large walled garden to the West Yorkshire-based **Community of the Resurrection**. They extended the house by joining the old building to the stable block in 1951, installing numerous bedrooms and creating a chapel where the stables had been. It was named St Francis House and used as a religious retreat for all Christian denominations. People came to stay for three or four days at a time. The building was substantially refurbished in the mid-1980s and had 22 bedrooms. This flourished for many years but the Community sold the house and grounds in 2010 and it is now a private residence once again.

To the east of the main building was a small cottage, **number 27 High Street** (Listed Grade II – *17<sup>th</sup> century cottage*) which was part of the retreat property and that was where its warden lived. At one time called **Monk's Cottage**, it too has been sold to a private buyer.



Opposite, the thatched and half-timbered house is **The Glebe** (Listed Grade II – *16<sup>th</sup> century cottage*). Over the years this has been known as Glebe House, Glebe Cottage and Glebe Farm, but now is simply called 'The Glebe'. Carved into one of the black beams above one of the ground floor windows is the date 1583. At one side is a thatched barn Listed Grade II *17<sup>th</sup> century barn*. The large garden, which today boasts a swimming pool and tennis court, would once have been part of the Glebe Lands which funded the upkeep of the vicar. At one point in its history, the present building was divided into three homes. As part of a recent re-thatch of the ridge of this house, a thatched sculpture of a cockerel has been added.

Just to the east of The Glebe are **Three House** and **Shenfield**, numbers 28 and 26 High Street, both Listed Buildings, Grade II, *two 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed houses originally jettied on to the street*. Number 28 is aptly named, as it was once three dwellings. Shenfield was once two or three homes and the section furthest east, on what is now the corner of **Rosenthal Terrace**, was at one time a pub called the Lion and also a post office.

Running south off the High Street, **numbers 2 to 8 Rosenthal Terrace** and, on the corner, **number 24 High Street**, were, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, part of one of two large **maltings** in the village, a maltings being a place where barley was soaked with water, allowed to ferment, turned occasionally as required to make a mash, which then would be boiled to make beer. This maltings was built sometime before 1830, possibly late 1700s, as there appears to be a similarly shaped building on the 1801 Land Enclosure Map. The building had three floors, each possibly about six feet in height. The need for a maltings in every village passed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; better communications via improved roads and the arrival of railways made larger-scale brewing of beer more economical and gradually maltings fell into disuse. Around 1931, the building was turned into terrace houses, built with two floors replacing the original three. Some of the houses have since opened further rooms in the attics, creating a third floor, and one house (number 7) must have been adapted as a home earlier than the others, as it has three very low ceilinged storeys. Number 8, always called **The Maltster's Cottage**, is of a different height and the owner says it is 1830 in date. There is no number 9 and on the west side of the lane, opposite the range of cottages, is **number 10 Rosenthal Terrace**, 1920s in date, although there appears to be some building on earlier maps, so possibly there was an earlier building on the site.

**Number 24 High Street** is on the corner of Rosenthal Terrace and the High Street.

For many years from the 1970s, this was a small shop owned and run by a Mr Frederick Heath, a retired RAF officer. He sold wines and spirits, soft drinks, bread and various groceries and a few DIY products, but particularly he sold a vast array of sweets in large jars, so that children could have a few ounces for their pocket money. Many adults remember him allowing them to spend ages deciding which ones they wanted and he never seemed to get impatient with the little ones.

Beyond Rosenthal Terrace, still on the south side, is number **22 High Street**, once two Victorian cottages and one can see where the extra doors and windows once were. Next to it, now a gravelled

Japanese style garden, is the site of more buildings on the 1887 map – two cottages running east, a narrow gap between them, and number 22, and two more running south at right angles to them.

Behind, well back from the road is number **20 High Street**, an 1850s building which some say was at one time a stables area for the nearby **Holly House**, once a farmhouse.



Further east is probably the tallest house in the village, **number 18 High Street, Rosenthal**. It is Listed Grade II *mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, three storeys and a basement*. The listing also says *Home of Rosenthal, a local builder*. This is the only place I have ever seen this statement as an origin of the house name and no local directories of the period mention it. Commercial directories in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and censuses

mention more than one generation of the Gifford family (millers and maltsters) living at Rosenthal but no mention of anyone called Rosenthal. The current owner believes the house to be circa 1840. A Benjamin Gifford, aged 35, along with his wife Rachel, four children and three female servants are shown as living there on the 1841 Census and again in 1851. By the 1871 Census, John Gifford, son of the above Benjamin, lived there with this family.

During the Second World War, Rosenthal House was used as living quarters for the small boys who had been evacuated from a preparatory school in Ramsgate run by Benedictine monks. The school was set up in a large house in Church Street called **Madeley Court** while the boarding boys lived in nearby Rosenthal House. My one-time next-door neighbour, Doris Moody, who died in 2010 aged 96, was a young married woman living in the village in 1940 and she was the cook who prepared breakfasts for the boys.

Further to the east is **Holly House (number 16 High Street)**, Grade II listed *19<sup>th</sup> century house with 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage to rear*. Originally, this was a farmhouse with lands to the rear, farmed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Newman family, who also farmed **Woolpack Farm** lying to the south of the Cambridge Road. The large building adjoining Holly House is now our excellent **Hemingford Village Stores**, but until 1960 it was a barn.

Just around the corner from here, on what is now the start of **Pound Road**, stood the **village pound** on the south-east corner of the High Street and Pound Road. Here, in the days before hedges and fences enclosed the fields, livestock were to be tethered or herded and, if they strayed, were impounded in the village pound and held until payment was made for their release. Today, nothing remains of the pound but a small grass area where, in 2014, three small flowering trees were planted.

Before we resume our walk of the 1887 core village, we should stand for a moment at the point where High Street and Church Street meet. This triangular area was once the **Village Green** and if we strip away the present day pedestrian pavements we have a rather larger area. Here, it is said, stood the **pillory** and **stocks**, ancient punishments for which one would probably today be given an Anti-Social Behaviour Order. In more modern times, fairground rides were sometimes placed here on Bank Holidays. Until March 2013, a red telephone box stood here, but having been damaged was removed and is unlikely to be replaced as the need for it has been taken over by the almost universal use of mobile phones.

Around us, apart from the buildings already mentioned, are several houses built in the 1930s and 1940s of which I will write later.



Facing us, as we turn to go down Church Street, is **The Apex (number 25 High Street)**. There was a pub here from at least 1861, as it appears on the 1861 Census and was a pub until 1947 called **The Wagon and Horses**. The present building is 1875 in date and the name is memorialised on the current owners' house sign, showing heavy horses pulling a cart. What is now this

house's garage was once the blacksmith's forge and three generations of blacksmiths lived opposite at **number 3 Church Street**. Built in 1860, a wooden sign above the front door says 'Standen's', which was the blacksmith's family name. The house just to the east (**number 1 Church Street**) has deeds that go back to 1862 and though it was substantially rebuilt in the 1970s, parts of it are much older and unclear maps appear to show some building there in 1801.

Moving down **Church Street** (once known as **Back Street** and on the 1861 census as **Low Street**), we come to the intersection with **Mill Lane**. As its name suggests, this led to a mill, in this case to the **Watermill** which stood to the north of the Church, near where the Hemingford Lock is situated on the river.



The watermill was demolished in 1958 but the present **Watermill House**, built in 1800, still stands on the site of a much earlier building. Watermills in the Hemingford area are mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086; there are further references to a watermill in the reign of Richard II and it was certainly still operating at the time of the 1891 Census. The present house is a Grade II listed building described as *early 18<sup>th</sup> century* but the present owner says 1800.

On the 1887 map there are no buildings shown to the north beyond the watermill area. It is all farmland with a pathway or lane leading to the **Great Meadow**, still used as meadowland today, stretching as far as the London Road and the **Old Bridge** at St Ives. The Great Meadow, consisting of about 50 hectares which usually flood during the winter, was used to grow hay for winter fodder for draught animals. After the hay had been cut, the grass was allowed to grow again and livestock allowed to graze, a practice which continues today. From February 13<sup>th</sup> each year, no livestock may graze. The grass is allowed to grow until August 13<sup>th</sup> when it is cut, and only then are livestock (today only sheep) allowed to graze on it till floods prevent it. Originally, before the Enclosure Act of 1801, the land would have been allotted to villagers in strips. It is still owned by several parties but managed as a whole. The coming of the railway in 1847 reduced the amount of land, as the embankment carrying the railway ran across the south side of the meadow and, in the Second World War, some trenches were dug to deter enemy planes from landing; otherwise, there have been few changes in a thousand years. New flood banks were constructed in 2007.

**Diss Cottage**, at the junction of Mill Lane and **Meadow Lane**, does not arrive until 1910 when it was built by a man not only the Rector of Houghton from 1901–1930 but also an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. His full name was Frederick Kingsley-Brackenbury-Oliphant and he designed the cottage. It's in the Arts and Crafts Style and Grade II Listed as a *Vernacular Revival House*.

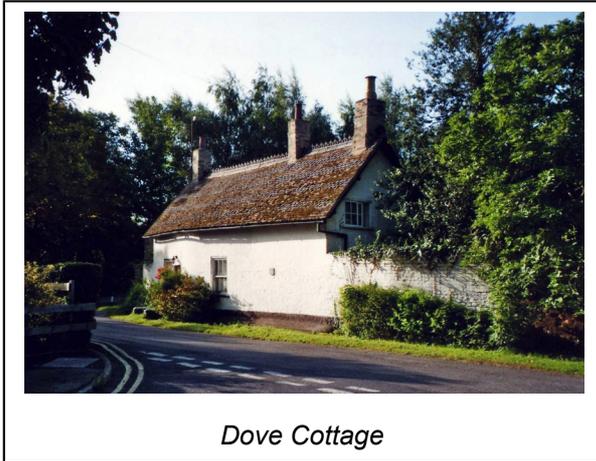


Returning to our walk, we move down **Church Street** and on our left is the rear boundary wall of the 29 High Street property; this continues well down the street, with an opening which would have led to the stables property where Mrs Desborough's coachman, listed on the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Censuses, would have lived. Opposite on our right, where **Hidden House** and **Three Elms** (built circa 1963) stand today, was, in 1887, a large area of parkland, appearing on the map to be landscaped with a drive and a substantial house in the centre with stables to the rear. The area of land ran along Church Street to the west as far as the footpath now named **Love Lane** and to the east to Mill Lane down to the corner where Diss Cottage was later built and where Mill Lane meets the top end of Love Lane. The house, **Madeley Court**, was probably built in the 1870s and appears on the 1887 map, by which time it was the home of **Read Adams**, the first mayor of the newly designated Borough of St Ives. Earlier maps appear to show parkland and a house earlier than the 1870s but there is no census record of anyone living there or in earlier censuses from the 1840s to 1870s.

It is possible that the building which seems to be there on the 1801 Enclosure Map housed the Geldart family, but censuses prior to 1841 give only resident numbers and no names. Among later owners was General Brooke, whose wife laid the foundation stone for the Reading Room in 1898.

During the Second World War when Britain was threatened with invasion, many people were evacuated from southern and south-east coastal towns; junior school pupils of the St Augustine's Abbey School in Ramsgate with a number of their teachers, who were Benedictine monks, set up their

school in the large house of **Madeley Court**. As already mentioned, some of the boys had their dormitories at Rosenthal House. The school also took boys from the village. Eventually, the school left and by 1960 the house was pulled down to make way for a development of several houses, leaving only the stables building, now converted into a house, **number 7 Madeley Court**. Another remnant is the high brick wall lining the east side of Love Lane and running down as far as **Mill Close**, which was built in 1977. The present houses in Madeley Court were built between 1963 and 1968.



*Dove Cottage*

Behind us, to our left, the boundary wall of 29 High Street is interrupted by **Dove Cottage**, **number 4 Church Street**, a Grade II Listed building *18<sup>th</sup> century with roof raised in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*. On the 1887 map, this small cottage appears to be divided into two homes and to the rear is a dovecote. The old wall continues running west, pierced today by entrances to three houses, **numbers 6, 8 and 10 Church Street**, built in the mid-1960s. Where today's **number 12, Birch House**, built in the early 1970s, stands stood a

row of 19<sup>th</sup> century cottages, running north to south off Church Street and inhabited until the 1960s. Opposite on the north side of the street, are **High Trees** and **Charnwood**, built in 1963 and 1961 respectively on the old Madeley Court land, and **Fairways**, built in 1983/84 on part of the land of **Hemingford Grey House**. Back on the south side of the street, next to Birch House, **numbers 14 and 16** have their building date of 1824 etched on the bricks of the rear chimney. Alongside, **number 18** was, until recently, two properties built in the 1850s; **numbers 20 and 22** were once a single unit and probably of the same period, as is **number 24**.

On our left, opposite Fairways, is a small row of mostly white-painted brick cottages, now even **numbers 26–36 Church Street** but originally known as **numbers 1–8 Alfred Place** and are so named in the 1851 Census. They were built as workmen's dwellings, for labourers required for work at the nearby maltings. Today, these cottages have been modernised and some linked to each other. The originals consisted of one room upstairs, one downstairs and a one-storey lean-to kitchen at the rear with a tiny yard. A communal area with an outside privy for each cottage, a yard to hang washing and a well stood to the south of what is now number 26 (which today combines three of the original cottages). Today, at number 26, the once communal area is now a private garden and all the lavatories have gone, but the well is still there and the remains of a pump can be seen next to number 32. These cottages are all listed Grade II *mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cottages originally associated with malthouse* and would have been built sometime in the 1840s. On the 1851 Census, some of these cottages have numerous inhabitants – one has an Agricultural Labourer aged 34, with a wife and six children, another has an Agricultural Labourer of 47, his wife, one child and two lodgers, another has a Bricklayer aged 33, with housekeeper and four children and yet another houses a widow, described as a laundress with an adult daughter, also a laundress, who has four children. Rather a tight fit in one up, one down cottages! Yet another, inhabited by just one person, has a note appended 'P.P.',

meaning Parish Paid, so someone poor enough to be 'on the Parish' as the saying went. On some records, these dwellings are known as Cleveland Cottages.

Today, beyond these cottages and along a narrow gravelled lane, lies the second set of 19<sup>th</sup> century maltings in the village, also now converted to houses and to which we'll come shortly when we visit **Church Lane**.



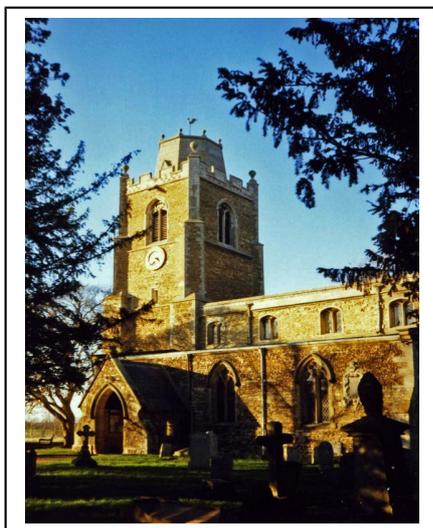
Leaving Alfred Place on our left we come to **number 38 Church Street**, a half-timbered and thatched building. It is Grade II\* listed *mid to late 16<sup>th</sup> century cottage of two buildings, timber framed, rough cast and rendered*, and said by a previous owner to go back to at least 1550. It was, for many years, a pub named **The Anchor** through most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (probably earlier) and into the 20<sup>th</sup>. The artist

Dendy Sadler used the interior of this building as background to at least two of his prints.

Across the road to the west is **number 8 Church Lane**. Built in 1904, a date helpfully displayed on a stone shield on one of the walls, it is a thatched building and was originally divided into two homes, hence the thatched porch on the western side where there is no door. It was built to house servants for the **Old Rectory (Hemingford Grey House)** across the road behind the wrought iron gates. For a short period, during the Second World War, number 8 Church Lane served as the Vicarage.

Back on Church Street, **number 42** is another building created to house servants for the Old Rectory. It again has a stone plaque stating its date – this time 1937.

Further to the west and almost up to the gate of the churchyard, is **The Old Cottage (number 44 Church Street)**, well named as it is known to go back to the mid 1500s. It is a Grade II Listed *late 16<sup>th</sup> century cottage with later additions to left and right hand* and the present owner tells me that the local conservation officer says that the well in the garden contains mediaeval bricks.



Here at the western end of Church Street, we find the **churchyard** and the **Church**. The wall at the far end of the churchyard overlooks the river. The earliest part of the church building dates back to the mid 1100s and is a Listed Building Grade I. Dedicated to **Saint James**, it has seen many changes down the centuries. The then Lord of the Manor, **Payn de Hemingford**, is believed to have had the first church built before he died in 1166 as well as the older parts of the Manor House. In 1741 a hurricane blew the spire off the church and it has never been replaced. Instead, the 18<sup>th</sup> century parish tidied up what was left and stuck several stone balls on what remained of the truncated spire and left us with an unusual, and

possibly, unique tower. The view of the Church from the bend in the river some 200 metres upstream has graced many a calendar and one of the scenic posters issued by British Rail in the 1950s, not long before the St Ives to Huntingdon railway, which ran behind this view, had ceased to operate.



Behind the Church lies the house now known as **Hemingford Grey House**, but for many years known as **The Old Rectory**, which is strange as Hemingford Grey's parish priest has never been a rector, always a vicar. The house is listed Grade II\* *dated 1697 house with service range to south-east and modern additions to south-west*. Originally, it housed the incumbent of the church

alongside and replaces an earlier building that had been severely damaged during the 17<sup>th</sup> century Civil War and *was ruinous and unfit to live in*. When the new house was built in 1697, the vicar at that time, the Reverend John Allen (vicar from 1687 to 1701) petitioned *the well-disposed gentlemen of the University of Cambridge* to help him meet the cost, the patrons at the time being Clare Hall (today's Clare College).

According to the list in the church, Hemingford Grey appears to have had a lot of vicars who stayed for a very long time and many must have been of great age when death interrupted their good works. The vicars possibly lived in the Old Rectory until the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1841, according to the Census, it was lived in by a Reverend James Linton who, the Census notes, *was a clergyman of the Church of England, not having the care of Souls*, ie not a parish priest. He and his large family later moved to Hemingford Abbots where again he was not the Parish Priest, but listed in the 1851 Census as a magistrate, and appeared to be having Hemingford Park (the large house in grounds at the western edge of Hemingford Abbots designed by Decimus Burton) built.

The Abbots census of 1841 states that the *supposed increase in the population was the influx of persons proceeding from the new building for the Reverend James Linton, carpenters, bricklayers and labourers with their wives and children*. By the 1851 Census in Hemingford Abbots, Linton appears to be installed in his new house (then called Oak Park) and is described as a magistrate aged 54 with a wife of 49, three daughters and two sons, a governess, five female servants, a coachman and a footman. Obviously a man of considerable private means!

Back in Hemingford Grey, the 1851 Census has an auctioneer from St Ives, Allpress Ashton, and his family living in the Rectory. By 1849 the Rectory had been sold to John Lawrence who undertook to *keep the chancel in repair* so presumably Allpress Ashton was a tenant.

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Rectory building stayed in private hands and for many years was the home of a Lieutenant-Colonel Watt and later his widow, who were prominent members of the village community. Lieutenant-Colonel Watt was ADC to Field Marshal Sir John French, Commander of the British Expeditionary Force from the outbreak of the First World War until his replacement in December 1915 by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. In March 1916, the President of the French Republic conferred the decoration of Croix de Chevalier on Lieutenant-Colonel Watt. From 1973–2011 the Rectory was run as a conference and training centre, some clients arriving by helicopter which landed in a nearby field. The main house has now returned to residential use and what was the stable block has been converted to a separate home, named the Coach House, having been a garage at one period. The nearby field was for some years a home for rescue donkeys. In the garden there is an enormous plane tree said to have been planted in 1702. The house is difficult to see from the road and all that is visible are the large wrought iron gates. The best view of the house is to go behind the church at the river's edge, and best of all, if one has the opportunity, is to see it from a boat on the river. Certainly by 1854, the vicars are living at **Grey Hall** on the High Street but it is unclear where the Vicar was living in the 1840s.

We now retrace a few steps and walk south down **Church Lane** towards the High Street. On our right past number 8 (the house that was built to house servants from the Old Rectory) there is **number 6 Church Lane**. This started as a small house built in 1946, set in a very large garden with access at



*The Maltings, Church Lane*

the rear over a public footpath to a mooring area on the river. On our left as we continue down Church Lane are two sets of maltings; the most northerly set, now named **The Maltings** and **The Maltings Studio**, have their front entrances on Church Street. After they fell into disuse as maltings, they were for a time used as a furniture store and in 1974 converted to a house in one half and an architect's office and art studio in the other. By 1982 this second half had also become a home.

Further down are numbers **3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 Church Lane**. The original building was built as a maltings, probably in the 1840s. Internal evidence suggests that the maltings may have ceased operating as early as the late 1880s, but it is not until the late 1930s that the building was converted into the five terraced houses we see today. The property was bought in 1934 and between then and early 1939 the five houses were created, along with number **30 Church Street**, which lies behind number 3 and is accessed by a small lane off Church Street. On the 1887 map, on what are now the gardens of the five terraced houses, stood two dwellings. One was in what is now the front parking lot of number 3, its gable end tight on to the street, and extended halfway back to the Maltings at the rear. It was demolished after the Second World War when the resident died and the house was declared unfit for human habitation. The plot was then added to the garden of number 3. The other small house was set back from the road in what are now the gardens of numbers 5, 7 and 9, running parallel to the maltings. It was demolished by the late 1930s but both small homes are mentioned in the 1934 Sale of Land, each having a rateable value of £5 a year, so obviously not very substantial.

**Numbers 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 Church Lane** have all been modernised over the years, some with front and back extensions, some with just rear extensions, and numbers 9 and 11 have utilised their attics. Numbers 3, 5 and 7 still look from the front much as they would have done when converted in the 1930s with their little bay windows and 30s-style front doors. Evidence of an age before the village had piped water are the several wells found in the area, most now filled in and capped.

Opposite numbers 3 and 5 is **number 4 Church Lane**, a modern house built in 1966 on land that had previously been part of the garden of number 6. Opposite number 4 is **Oak Cottage, number 1 Church Lane**, another Grade II Listed building *late 17<sup>th</sup> century cottage, one storey and attics*. It's a substantial thatched cottage with a large garden and was once very much hidden by trees and shrubs, much improved recently by the new owners' judicious pruning and new plantings.

On our right, as we come to an end of our triangular tour, is **number 2 Church Lane**, on the corner of the High Street alongside the four Dharwar Terrace houses. On our left on the High Street is **The Cock**, public house and restaurant and I can thoroughly recommend a drink or a meal!

So that was the core of the old village, as it was on the 1887 map. To the east of where the village shop now stands was the village **Pound**, on the south-eastern corner where today's **Pound Road** meets the **High Street** and looking further to the east in 1887 towards St Ives, the only other buildings in the High Street were what are now **3 and 5 High Street**, the latter appearing to have been two dwellings and possibly number 3 being the outbuildings of number 5.

Here the road starts to run north-east and becomes St Ives Road; opposite, on the corner of **The Apple Orchard**, tucked behind trees is a house now called **Weir Corner**. The present building looks partly mid-Victorian, but there is a dwelling of some kind there from the 1841 Census when it was a farm, market garden and orchard occupied by James Giddins and family and some kind of building appears on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps.

In 1887 there was nothing more along the St Ives Road until we reach **The Windmill**. The mill, now



without sails, still stands. It was built in 1820, replacing an earlier mill said to have existed since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and is a Grade II Listed building *19<sup>th</sup> century*. The windmill operated until 1933 when its owner, Erastus Watts, whose family had owned the mill for several generations, died aged 79. He was operating the mill on the day he died and had been working there for over 60 years. It is said that it

was the last windmill operating in the county, still grinding grain. **Mill House**, the dwelling sitting in front of the mill, appears to be of the same 1820 date but strangely the house does not show on any Ordnance Survey maps until the 1920s, although the mill itself does.

In 1887, there were no more houses along the St Ives Road until two houses on the north side, fronting on to what would have been smallholdings. They are now numbered **6 and 12 Hemingford Road** (St Ives Road, half way along its length, takes on the name of Hemingford Road, but it is one continuous road). Number 12 is known to have been built in 1877 and number 6 is of roughly the same period. Beyond them, to the east, lie the 38 houses of **Victoria Terrace**, all built in 1850 and erected more as a suburb of St Ives than as part of the village. At the east end, **number 1 Victoria Terrace** was built to serve as a pub, **The Queen's Head**, and both it and **number 38** at the west end were built larger than the rest of the terrace. Behind the houses were gardens, allotments, a paddock for livestock and two water pumps; each house had a brick privy. (There was no mains sewage in the village until after the Second World War.) All 38 houses are Grade II listed. On the 1851 Census there



12 Hemingford Road



is a note regarding the inhabitants of Victoria Terrace saying *occupied by parties principally from St Ives* in order to explain the sudden jump in population from 1841. All these houses were severely flooded in 1947 and again in 1998. Since then, in 2006/07, numerous flood defence systems have been installed in the Hemingfords and St Ives areas and Victoria

Terrace has a pump which kicks in whenever the groundwater level rises to a dangerous point.



Opposite Victoria Terrace is number 7 Hemingford Road, today called **Wellington House**. On the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Censuses it was occupied by a gardener, a term at the time often meaning a smallholder. Known through the years as **Wellington Cottage, House or Farm**, its name leads us to suppose it was built sometime after 1815 and Wellington's victory at Waterloo. By 1928 it was being used as a home by Erastus Watts.

Behind Victoria Terrace, on what is now a footpath running north to close to the foot of the Old St Ives bridge, is **Filbert's Walk**. Here in 1820, a St Ives builder, John Green, erected 31 cottages which, like Victoria Terrace, had occupants whose trades related to close-by St Ives. In the 1841 Census, it is called **Hemingford Green**, by 1851 it is called **Green's Walk**, by 1861 it is **Hemingford Green** again,

but the 1871 Census calls it **Filbert's Walk** and it remains so on the 1887 Ordnance Survey. The 1841 Census states *the supposed increase in population (of the Parish) is the 31 cottages built called Hemingford Green and occupied principally by parties from St Ives. Males 114, females 134.*

Partly because of the serious floods that beset this low-lying area, many houses became derelict and by 1960 all had been pulled down and only the footpath name of **Filbert's Walk** remains. While it still existed as housing, there was a pub half way down called **The Railway Tavern** at one time and **The Green Man** at another. The pub was closed during the Second World War and after the war the licence was not renewed.

At the corner of London Road and Hemingford Road stood another pub, **The New Crown Inn**, known to be a pub by 1850. Later it was referred to as **The Old Crown** and then became known as **Armes Corner** because its publican for many years was James Armes. It was a pub until 1970 and, after some use as a business offering alternative health therapies, is now a private house.



Moving further south, along the London Road beyond Armes Corner, was a large house **Linden** (pre-1887) and to the south of this lay **The Mission**, a building housing a chapel, school and accommodation.



*Linden House*



*Mission House*

The land for this was purchased from a Charles Clark in 1860; the purchasers, on behalf of the Church, were the Reverend Peregrine Caxton Curtois, Vicar of Hemingford Grey, and three prominent locals who were churchwardens: Mr John Laurence (who owned the Old Rectory, but usually it seems rented it to others; he is described on the document of sale as *of St Ives, gent*), Mr Thomas Knights of Hemingford Grey (described as a *merchant*, he was one of the Knights family who owned the Watermill and the Maltings which are now the houses in Church Lane) and Job Watson Esq (listed on several Hemingford Grey censuses as a *surgeon*). Here, on this land, they were to erect *a building or buildings to be used as a school and for a licensed room or place for the celebration of Divine Worship according to the forms and ceremonies of the Church of England and for a house for the residence of a Master or an officiating Minister.*

The plans allowed for a schoolroom of 18ft x 38ft, plus a parlour, kitchen, pantry and bedrooms upstairs. There were outside lavatories to the rear, both for the household and the children. The plans show a bell above the School and the finish is in the Gothic Revival style. The building still exists, minus the bell and gothic finials, and is now three homes (**Two Marks**, **Eaton Cottage** and **Gable End**).

The children of the Workhouse, which was only some 100 metres south, did not attend this school. There was a schoolteacher on the staff of the Workhouse who taught them. In 1903, pupils at the school were merged with those from the High Street school to form the new combined school on the St Ives Road, which, much enlarged, is still the **Primary School** today.



To the south was the St Ives Union Workhouse (Listed Grade II), built in 1836 by an architect called N Nash, at a cost of £4,000, to house the poor of 23 parishes. Originally built to accommodate 400 inmates, by 1863 it could hold up to 450 persons. The buildings were partly converted in the 1930s to form some social housing and in 1988 the whole area was redeveloped, keeping the Grade II Listed buildings and adapting them to modern flats

and adding additional houses to the rear. They now bear addresses of **Limes Park**, **Limes Court** and **The Brambles**; the names were chosen for the large row of lime trees that front the area, while The Brambles reflects the vast area of that vegetation that used to lie to the rear.

South again was **Cullum Farm**, still there today, built circa 1840. To the south along the Hilton Road, there was a toll house for the Turnpike Road, positioned roughly halfway between the southern parish boundary just north of the first houses of today's Hilton, and the Cambridge Road. Here the toll keeper lived and even after the road was freed from tolls it was used as a cottage, but is now no more. Also, on the south side of the Cambridge Road, there were several farms and cottages within the Parish. Four families are listed on the 1891 Census on **Grove Lane**, others at **Britten's Farm** and nearby houses, all in farming occupations. **Woolpack Farm** and adjacent cottages, **Topfield Farm** and **Linton's Farm** are all in the area on the 1887 survey. Also on the 1887 survey is a cottage or small farmhouse at the southern end of Gore Tree Road where it meets the Cambridge Road.



Further north, on **Marsh Lane**, stood two small houses, or smallholdings. One house remains today as number 7 Marsh Lane (on left), the other lasted until the mid-1990s, when it was pulled down to make way for three new bungalows, numbers **23a and 23b Marsh Lane**, and one to the rear, **14a Stepping Stones**.

Where the houses of the cul-de-sac off **Manor Road**, called **Oakfields**, stand today, there was a large house called **Oakfield**, built by John Giddins for his family and his second wife in the late 1880s. They were the family that ran the boathouse on the river and were builders.

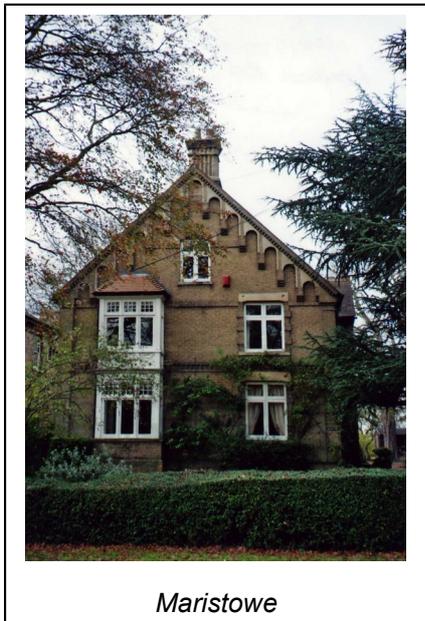
**Long Lane Farm** appears on the 1887 map and is listed on the 1881 Census. **Mulberry Cottage** nearby is older, not only appearing on the 1887 map but seems to be there on an earlier map of 1836 as well. In earlier times, Long Lane ran as a road or track all the way south to the Cambridge Road.

So that was the village in 1887.

## Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

In 1894, an Act of Parliament set out a policy for the creation of elected parish councils. These were to take on most of the responsibilities previously held by various church and lay institutions. In January 1895, the first elected Hemingford Grey Parish Council was formed. One of its first duties was to organise a new burial ground for the Parish, as the churchyard at the Parish Church was filling up. After much argument as to costs and which piece of land to buy and other matters, the new burial ground was opened in 1898 on a plot of land known as **Giddins' Pound Orchard**, purchased from Giddins' Trustees. The land was on the eastern side of what is now called **Pound Road** and is today known as **The Cemetery**. Unlike the Churchyard, the cemetery was available for burials of people of all faiths. The Lych Gate at the entrance was installed after the First World War as a tribute to those who had served. Also in 1898, the aforementioned Reading Room in the High Street was formally opened.

The 1901 Ordnance Survey shows little change, but a large house, **Maristowe**, was built in 1896 on



*Maristowe*

the London Road to join Linden House already there. The **Mission** building is still there on London Road and there are buildings at what is now called **Geaves Farm** on the Hemingford Road. 1903 brings the new **Primary School** on St Ives Road, taking all the pupils from the 1853 school in the High Street and those from the Mission School on London Road. Alongside the new school building was a house built for the head teacher and family. The last head teacher to live there was Don Beadle, who, in addition to being head teacher, was prominent for many years on the Parish Council. After he retired in the early 1990s, the County Council sold the house and it is now a private residence. Among the governors of the 1903 school was the artist Dendy Sadler, once again showing his interest in the village.

Along the north side of Hemingford Road, west of Victoria Terrace and the two smallholders' houses (now numbers 6 and 12) was **Vine Cottage** on the site of what was to become **Vine Close**.

1908 brings us **Orchard House, number 1 The Thorpe**, and also **number 11 High Street** facing up Pound Road. 1910 brings us **Diss Cottage** at the intersection of Mill Lane and Meadow Lane, mentioned earlier.



*School House*

**Number 35 High Street**, next to the Reading Room, was built in 1911 as one of several Poor Law houses, the only one remaining today, though it is now sold into private hands. For some years, a

potter, Jane Searle, later Jane Barker, used the front ground-floor room as a studio. She no longer resides in the village, but some of her work can be purchased at the shop at The Manor House and she usually exhibits locally every other year in an early summer show in Hemingford Abbots.

The Great War of 1914-18 and its aftermath now interrupted the physical growth of the village and no new building took place. As with other communities, many of the young men went into the armed forces and the Reading Room today has a framed list of those members of the Friendly Society who served. It lists 55 names serving in various regiments and Royal and Merchant Navies; five are listed as killed in action, one was a prisoner of war and one drowned. There were other men serving from the village who were not Friendly Society members; in all, 17 men lost their lives and their names are commemorated on a plaque in the Church, a high proportion of the young men of the parish.<sup>8</sup>

A further Ordnance Survey map dated 1926 shows the first set of **Council Houses** to be built in the village. These are known as **The Rampleys**, so named after the Rampley family, farmers and smallholders who sold the land in 1920. The houses are situated on the west side of the **St Ives Road** just before it curves round to become the **High Street**. Today, there are two sets of homes referred to as The Rampleys, the set in front built circa 1921 and the set at the rear built much later in the 1980s. **Number 5 St Ives Road**, a bungalow opposite, appears to have been built prior to the 1926 Ordnance Survey.

In the period between the wars, in fits and starts, as the economy improved, declined and improved again, several homes on individual sites grew up around the village. At the eastern end, on the **London Road**, **Cranbrook** (1922) and **Haverford** (1927) were built, and further south in 1926 a bungalow, later to become the **St Ives Motel**, since demolished, and now **Field Lodge**, a new, large care home.

On the **Hemingford Road**, to the west of **Victoria Terrace**, **number 14/16**, (a semi-detached building) was built along with a cottage (**number 18**) and a bungalow (**number 20**), while over on the south side opposite are **numbers 65, 67, 69 and 71**, all built in the late 1920s or early 1930s. The owner of number 69 says it is 1931. A little further west on the north side is **Flowermead**, there by 1926, standing alone among fields and orchards, but demolished in the 1990s and replaced by a totally new house bearing the same name.<sup>9</sup>

Moving further west and also built in the 1930s are **Mansfield House, 28 Hemingford Road**, **Wayside** on the **St Ives Road** and a pair of semi-detached houses, **42/44 St Ives Road**, one of which is the farmhouse for **Docksey's Farm**, built in 1936 for the Clifton family. The farmland it seems has always been called Docksey's Farm, though no-one knows why, as no-one named Docksey seems to have existed! Gradually, farmland on the north side of this road linking the old village area with St Ives is being covered by housing.

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<sup>8</sup> A small book, *Keep the Home Fires Burning – The Hemingfords 1914-1918* recalls those years and notes the homes from which many of those young men came.

<sup>9</sup> It is here at *Flowermead* that the road changes its name to **St Ives Road**, which then runs east as **Hemingford Road**, being all one continuous road from the London Road, named **Hemingford Road/St Ives Road/High Street**.

Meanwhile, in the 'core village', opposite the present village shop, **Udipur, number 13 High Street**, a bungalow, was built in 1925/26, but completely demolished around 2000 to be replaced by a new five-bedroomed house, retaining the original Indian bungalow style façade. A little further west, **Mymar, 23 High Street** was built in 1932. In 1931, the Maltings on the High Street became **Rosenthal Terrace**, with its row of houses replacing the empty building and joining the **Maltster's Cottage** and **numbers 7 and 10** already there. There is no number 9.

By 1934 a row of identical bungalows had been built along the south side of **Manor Road (even numbers 4 to 18)**. **Number 2a** was a later infill in the 1970s in the garden of **number 2**, the house with a reed thatched roof, also built in the 1930s, originally known as **Reed House** and from circa 1945-87, **The Vicarage** and now **Tanglewood Thatch**. To the west of the row of bungalows is **number 20 Manor Road**, a two-storey house, built in 1934, substantially rebuilt in 1984 and now further extended.

Round the corner from Tanglewood Thatch is **Gore Tree Road**, running south towards the Cambridge Road. On the west side of the road, two bungalows, **numbers 3 and 5 Gore Tree Road** were built on land purchased in 1938. Number 5 was demolished in the 1990s and two new homes built on the site, a **new number 5** and **Oak Tree Cottage** on the corner with **De Vere Close**, completed by 1999.

Where Gore Tree Road, Manor Road and Braggs Lane meet, and facing Manor Road is **number 2 Braggs Lane**, a small cottage bungalow, rather hidden by hedges, built in the 1920s. Across the road, at the south-west end of Braggs Lane, **Oaksway**, now **number 15 Braggs Lane**, was built in 1937, a two-storey house, sitting back from the road, with great oaks nearby. To the south of number 2 Braggs Lane and across the footpath, **number 2 Gore Tree Road**, also built in the 1920s, has been substantially enlarged, nearly doubling its original size. The strange numbering of these houses is an example of trying to number houses many years after the ones alongside were built. I believe that house numbering in the village did not take place until the early 1960s. Further south along Gore Tree Road, among open fields, **number 16 Gore Tree Road** was built between 1930 and 1934.



*2, 4, 6 and 8 High Street*

Between 1934 and 1939, the Maltings on **Church Lane** was turned into five terraced houses, which I noted on our 'walk' round the old village.

Just before the outbreak of war in 1939, four large bungalows were built at the eastern end of the High Street, **numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8 High Street**. Behind them and similar in style, **number 2 Pound Lane** was planned as part of the same small development, but hostilities called a halt to all non-essential building and

number 2 Pound Lane had to wait.

In the mid to late 1930s electricity became available to the main areas of the village but many homes continued to be lit by gas or oil lamps. A 1940 edition of Kelly's Directory states that *gas and electricity are both available in the village* but the provision of electricity locally was comparatively new and many homes were still lit by gas. The coal gas works was on the eastern side of the **London Road**, just beyond the Hemingford Grey parish boundary, to the north of the present London Road roundabout.

In 1937, 42 Church Street was built and called **The Lodge** and like its neighbour, **8 Church Lane**, was designed to house servants of the Old Rectory opposite.

And now another war intervenes; all non-essential building work is stopped and does not resume until late 1945/46.

## Post-World War II

Obviously, there were many changes during the war years as young men and women left home to serve, evacuees came in and, as mentioned earlier, a whole preparatory boarding school from Ramsgate was accommodated in the village. Other evacuee children attended the local primary school but were taught in separate classes by the teachers who had come with them. Prisoners-of-war worked on the local farms.

Several of the young men who left the village were serving with units that had to surrender to the Japanese forces in the Far East; they were imprisoned and endured great suffering. One was Rodney Giddins, who had joined the Regular Army before the war and was in Hong Kong when it surrendered. Rodney was one of the Giddins family, who were builders and owned the boathouse business at the bend of the river and lived in the adjacent cottages. Rodney survived somehow and later lived for many years in his much loved home at River Cottage with its great view of the river, a memory that may have helped him to endure his wartime sufferings. A later incomer to the village, Peter Kendall, who moved into Orchard House, opposite the Giddins' cottage, had also suffered at the hands of the Japanese. For Peter it was three and a half years in Changi jail in Singapore and work on the infamous Burma-Siam railway when he was a wartime officer in the Indian Army.

Still living in the village, now in his 90s, is Jack Millard, who was an able seaman in the Royal Navy. He received British campaign medals for service in the Pacific, Atlantic and Mediterranean areas but it is only since early 2013 that a specific medal has been issued by the UK for service in the Arctic convoys, the gruelling trips to take desperately needed supplies to Russia's Arctic ports. Jack has now received, over the last few years, not only the UK medal for Arctic service but two medals from Russia relating to the same service, the most recent in 2016 celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in what the Russians call the Great Patriotic War.

Probably the only visual reminders of the Second World War are the large area of water filled ponds lying behind houses on Meadow Lane and Mill Lane. Here, on farmland, vast pits were dug to provide gravel to make concrete for the runways for the nearby bomber airfields. The defending Spitfires and Hurricanes could take off and land on grass, but the heavily laden bombers needed a more solid foundation. Today, one large area at the other end of the village, mostly excavated later and known as the Marsh Lane Walk, provides a pleasant stroll for people and dogs (on leads!) and has become a haven for wildflowers and wildlife.

Back on the Home Front, villagers entertained nearby service personnel to dances in the Reading Room and Lucy Boston held gramophone concerts at The Manor for airmen stationed at Royal Air Force Wyton. Older men served in the Home Guard and deep furrows were cut in the Great Meadow lying to the north-east of the village to deter enemy planes from landing.

In marked contrast to the carnage of the Great War of 1914-18, only three young men lost their lives in the Second World War and their names are on a memorial tablet in the south aisle of the Church.

Immediately after the War, four houses were built on the **High Street** opposite today's village shop, **numbers 15, 17, 19 and 21 High Street**. They were built by 1946 so probably had been planned prior to 1939. They were subject to post-war building regulations that prevented the use of timber, which was in very short supply for anything non-essential. They were, therefore, built without soffits, those pieces of wood that hide the raw ends of the roof timbers where they protrude beneath the slope of the roof. Over the years since the war, as the owners of these homes have maintained and updated their buildings, all have now been neatly clad and covered. One of them held out, soffit less, until just into the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

Another house subject to the same strict laws was **number 2 Pound Road**, planned before the war along with **2, 4, 6 and 8 High Street**. It was not completed until just after the war and up to 2017 still has no soffits. Also built in 1946 was **6 Church Lane**, a house set back from the street in a large garden with access over a public footpath to a further piece of land alongside the river. A small cottage type house to begin with, it has since been enlarged.

Its owner for many years, Mrs Sabine Warren, was fond of her large garden, screened from the road by numerous large trees. I knew her only in her old age, but in earlier years she had been a local JP, a Cub Scout leader and was involved with the Church, the Regatta and other village activities. She was the widow of Humphrey Warren, one of the major players in seeing that the new bridge to St Ives took its present route rather than the original planned version, which would have cut across the Great Meadow to the St Ives church, ruining a superb historic view. He was also a major supporter of village rowing. After Mrs Warren's death, the property was sold and is now lived in by a family with young children who are enjoying the spacious garden and, as they grow older, will find that the boat mooring area on the river will be put to great use. The garden has recently had to have a very tall ash tree felled, as it was suffering from the disease that is sadly affecting this species. Since the year 2000, Church Street has lost several horse chestnut trees, also disease afflicted, and a few more show signs of not lasting much longer.

The local council started providing Council Houses again and in the late 1940s a long row of these, mostly semi-detached red brick houses with front and rear gardens, appeared opposite the School, **odd numbers 7 to 49 St Ives Road**, to be followed by the houses in Old Pound Close, **numbers 1 to 34** by the 1950s and on **Daintree Way, numbers 1 to 28** by 1958. To the south of Daintree Way lies **Daintree Green**, created at the same time as an Open Space for public use, with a children's play area, allotments and mown areas for informal games. It has the great advantage of not being adjacent to any of the village's larger roads, so the danger of children running off into traffic is minimised.

The name Daintree comes from a Richard Daintree, who held large areas of land in the village and in 1851 was living in the Manor House at Hemingford Abbots with his wife and five children. One of the children, also named Richard, was a geologist and photographer who gave his name to several features in North Queensland, Australia, including the Daintree Rainforest.

In December 1944, when the Second World War was still raging but it was only a matter of time before Germany and Japan were defeated, a public meeting was held to decide a suitable memorial to

commemorate the peace. A decision was made in favour of a playing field to serve the needs of both Hemingford Grey and Hemingford Abbots, to stand as thanksgiving for victory, a tribute to those who had served their country, while providing something of value for the villages. A piece of land, to the south of the Manor House and close to the boundary between the two parishes, was given by Lieutenant-Colonel SD Hayward<sup>10</sup> for this purpose.

The cost of turning this land, then known as The Vineyard, into a playing field was estimated by the National Playing Fields Association as £2,500. The Ministry of Education offered £1,350 subject to the balance being provided by the villages. A local appeal was made to lay out and equip the field. The money was raised and, between 1946 and 1949, provision was made for two football fields, a cricket square between them, two tennis courts, a bowling green and a children's play area.

This first complex was formally opened on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1949 by the actress Lana Morris. The first pavilion consisted of recycled wartime Nissen huts which did valiant service for many years and were not replaced by the first proper pavilion until 1964. Until then, a long 'six' hit from the cricket field landing on the roof of the Nissen huts often resulted in showers of rust falling on the cricketers' sandwiches!

The first single storey wooden Pavilion, ordered in 1964, cost £3,066 and was formally opened on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1965 by Colonel Alexander Woods, President of the National Playing Fields Association. The Pavilion and Playing Fields have had many improvements since these early years, as we shall see later.

The devastating floods that followed the icy winter of 1947 covered large areas of the village. Because we are told that the High Street flooded, we visualise that the river burst its banks at the corner of the river at the western end of the High Street. But we would be wrong, as the serious breach in the banks occurred much further downstream and vast areas were flooded all over the Great Ouse basin. Eventually, coming from the flooded fields to the east of the village, the water came back, flooding many parts of the village, including **Victoria Terrace**, the **High Street** and **Church Street**. **Church Lane**, being a foot or so higher than Church Street, escaped the flood and the houses remained dry, although the gardens were awash.

In 1955, a private non-council development of 16 semi-detached houses was started in a close off **Gore Tree Road**, later to be named **Burlington Way** after its builder, Mr Arthur Burling. He was, I learn, required by the local Council to build two of the houses to begin with so that the Council could see that he knew what he was doing! One presumes that the Council were satisfied, as he went on to complete the rest and all 16 were completed by 1966. **Number 17** on the northern side, close to Gore Tree Road, was a later addition in the late 1960s.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, several individually built houses arrived: **number 57 Hemingford Road** (1948), **8 Gore Tree Road** (1949/50 and later modernised) and buildings at **Geaves Farm** on the **Hemingford Road**.

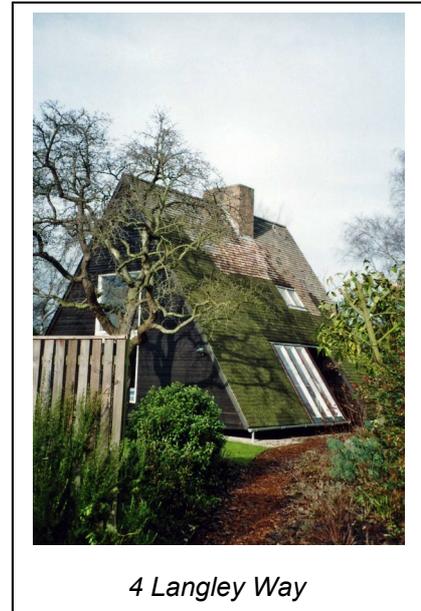
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<sup>10</sup> Lieutenant Colonel SD Hayward was the son of AFW Hayward, the Canadian-born artist who had lived in Hemingford Grey from 1914, first at *The Bells* on the High Street, and later, after Dendy Sadler died, buying *River View*, where he lived until his death in 1939.

In 1956, behind the disused chapel on the **High Street**, two bungalows were built to become **numbers 57 and 59 High Street** and in 1958 a house was built down a small access lane behind the Old Bakehouse, numbered **38 High Street**. When the driveway to this house was dug it revealed foundations of earlier homes or buildings running north/south. The south side of the High Street in this area is thought to be one of the earliest areas of the village to be built.

At the western end of the village, off **The Thorpe**, where soon **Langley Way** was developed, there was a smallholding and on part of this land in 1958 what is now **number 4 Langley Way** was built.

This was individually designed by the architect Peter Boston, son of Lucy Boston, owner of the Manor House for many years, for her artist friend, Elisabeth Vellacott. The house is interesting, triangular in shape, with cedar wood shingles, the roof on one side almost touching the ground. Nearby, in a large plot on the corner of The Thorpe, **number 22 Manor Road** was built. **76 High Street, Orchard House**, at the river end of that street, with a fine view of the Church, was built in 1952.



*4 Langley Way*

At the other end of the village, opposite the 1850s' **Victoria Terrace**, a row of eight semi-detached bungalows, **numbers 17/19, 21/23, 25/27 and 29/31 Hemingford Road** were built in the late 1950s by I J Stocker, who went on to create many more homes in the village. For many years, estate agents, when advertising houses for sale, would say *Stocker Built* as a mark of a quality build.

If from this narrative, builders seem to have been very busy around the village in the 1950s, they were even busier in the period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Taking these years as a whole, I will deal with them geographically rather than chronologically. Starting with the eastern end of the village, opposite **Victoria Terrace**, terraced houses appeared, flanking the earlier bungalows. There were several groups built from the mid to late 1960s and numbered **odd numbers 9 to 15 and 33 to 51 Hemingford Road**. To the east of them all stood **Wellington House**, to the east of which land, part of a smallholding, was sold off and three houses individually built, **Crossways, number 1 Hemingford Road**, circa mid 1960s (the house built for himself by AF Burling who created Burlington Way), **White Lady's, number 3 Hemingford Road**, built late 1950s and **number 5 Hemingford Road** built in 1960. Number 1 was demolished in February 2017 and three new houses will be built of the plot. There is no **number 53 or 55 Hemingford Road** as the houses in these positions were numbered as part of the later development at **Pembroke Close**. **Number 55a Hemingford Road** was built in the late 1960s just to the east of **number 57** (a house built in 1948) and to the west of it are **numbers 59, 61 and 63**, all built in the early 1960s with number 61 undergoing a complete rebuild in 1988. The remaining houses on the south side of the Hemingford Road were all built before 1939.

On the north side of Hemingford Road, to the west of Victoria Terrace, a pair of houses, **numbers 2 and 4 Hemingford Road**, were built in the late 1960s to the east of **number 6** (one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century smallholders' houses) while to the west of number 6, **numbers 8 and 8a** (behind number 8) were built

in the early 1960s. **Number 10** was built in the 1970s and **number 12** in 1877, another smallholder's house. Further to the west, even **numbers 14 to 20** were all built in the 1920s and 1930s. **Vine Close, numbers 1 to 4**, was built in the late 1960s replacing the old **Vine Cottage**. Beyond Vine Close is **Milford House, number 24 Hemingford Road** (early 1960s), **Geaves Farm**, with some buildings from as early as 1901, and **Mansfield House**, a 1930s home, then, by the 1970s, **The Paddocks**, a large house with a long drive set back from the road. Further infills followed in the 1990s.

Beyond here, to the west, the road is named **St Ives Road**, and several individual houses were built to join earlier ones: **South Lodge** (1960), **Windmill Bungalow** (1970) to the west of the old Windmill, **number 40 St Ives Road** (early 1960s), originally named **Cliftonville**, after its then owner, Mr Clifton, and over on the south side of **St Ives Road, numbers 1 and 3**, added in the late 1960s.

On the southern side of the St Ives Road, where it turns into the High Street, is a street called **The Apple Orchard, numbers 1 to 12** built in 1964/65 and **numbers 14 to 17** added later.

These were built on land that had been orchards and had been owned for many years by one of the **Giddins** family, who are shown as living there on the 1841 Census and through most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Close to the entrance to The Apple Orchard is the eastern section of **Glebe Road**. Here, alongside a house called **Weirside** (built after 1950), **numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7 Glebe Road** were built in the mid 1960s. Nearby, on the High Street, **number 1 High Street** was built in the mid 1960s and **number 7 High Street**, late 1960s and greatly enlarged circa 2000.

To the west on the High Street, **number 9**, a bungalow, was built in 1960 and one small section of it serves as the village hairdresser's. In the 1960s our present **Village Stores** first became a shop. Before that it had been a barn for the farmhouse to the west of it.

We now move up **Pound Road**, where all the original homes **numbers 1 to 21** on both sides of the road were built between the late 1950s and 1965. Most have been altered since, some totally demolished and rebuilt larger. **Number 17a** is a 1995 infill and **number 21** was demolished in 2000 and two new homes built on the site. Later, **numbers 7 and 9** both sold part of their garden to provide sites for new homes in Glebe Road in the 1970s. **Number 1a**, tucked in behind the shop, was built in the 1960s.

In 1963 another development began around what is now **Glebe Road**. Access off **Pound Road** was opened up and seven bungalows built in a semi-circle round **Green Close** by IJ Stocker Ltd. Green Close is named after Ann Green, who held this land after the 1801 Enclosure Act. Eventually, Glebe Road was extended westwards to join the top of Braggs Lane. When **numbers 1 to 7 Green Close** were completed, work began on **Lea Road on the southern side of Glebe Road, comprising odd numbers 1 to 23 on the eastern side and even numbers 2 to 10** on the western side. All are shown as complete by the 1970 Ordnance Survey. At the same time, development continued with the building of 20 houses in the two streets called **Gunnings Way**, again all shown as built by the 1970 Ordnance Survey. The name Gunnings Way derives from the two beautiful Gunnings sisters, who were born in the Manor House in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and both married aristocrats.

Moving from Pound Road and turning eastwards on to **Marsh Lane**, the whole development of modern houses in **Marsh Lane**, **Weir Road** and **Weir Close** began in the late 1950s, all houses being complete by 1962. Before the development, it had all been open fields, with the exception of two 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouses with smallholdings adjoining and a house on the edge of the gravel pits built in 1936, then replaced in 1974. One of the small farmhouses remains, number **7 Marsh Lane**; the other was demolished to make way for **numbers 23 and 23a**, two bungalows built in the 1990s. With the exception of the houses at the far north-eastern end of the road, all the modern houses were built between the late 1950s and the early to mid-60s. Odd numbers **31 to 47 Marsh Lane** were built as part of the Sadler's Way development in the late 1960s.

Following on from the Weir Road development, houses in **Stepping Stones** were built in the mid 1960s, **odd numbers 1 to 13 Stepping Stones** on the east side and **numbers 2 and 4** on the west. By 1970, **numbers 15, 19 and 21** were added on the east side and **even numbers 6 to 22** on the west. **Number 14a Stepping Stones** was built in 1995 on land that had been part of one of the smallholdings on Marsh Lane.<sup>11</sup>

The developers moved on, building **Margetts** in the late 1960s, some flats as well as individual homes. Margetts gained its name from the family who used to live at **56 High Street**, now called **Harcourt**, on the High Street/Braggs Lane intersection. They owned much land in the village and local area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and memorials to them exist in the Church, where they were churchwardens for 150 years.

**Sadler's Way** and **Dendys** were completed by 1970/71. The names of the two streets derive from the artist Dendy Sadler who lived in River House by the river for many years.

By 1962, **White Rock** was built on Long Lane close to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Long Lane Farmhouse already there.

In the 1960s there was a plan to run a curving road from the point where **St Ives Road** becomes the **High Street**, past the small green where the village sign now stands, behind **numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8 High Street**, round the cemetery to meet **Pound Road**, west along **Glebe Road**, across to **Manor Road** and then across fields, by-passing the zig-zag bend into **Hemingford Abbots**. This would have made a splendid, fast racetrack for through traffic, but fortunately wiser heads prevailed, or possibly there was no money for it. Land that was being held for this plan became available for other uses and two houses were built at the northern end of the cemetery, **numbers 2a** (1970s) and **2b Pound Road** (early 1980s).

By 1961, seven houses were individually built on the west side of **Mill Lane**, between **Church Street** and **Meadow Lane**, namely **Corner House**, **Lark Rise**, **The Chestnuts**, **Willowside**, **Holly Bank**, **Ruhpolding** and **Innisfree**. On the eastern side of Mill Lane was a large house, fronting a disused water-filled gravel pit, built in the early 1960s called **Beltane** and, further north, still on the eastern

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<sup>11</sup> One may ponder today on the names *Weir Road* and *Stepping Stones* as now there is no weir and no stepping stones; however, before the village had drains to take away groundwater there was a weir and there were stepping stones. Mains drainage was installed in the mid-1960s and 1940s digging of the gravel pits changed the water flow.

side, **Waterways** with another old water-filled gravel pit to the rear. Peacocks and other ornamental waterfowl were kept on the ground for many years.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the houses just mentioned, the only new house on **Mill Lane** was a bungalow built to the north of the Meadow Lane intersection, later to be replaced in 2003 by a house called **Maybank**.

On **Meadow Lane, numbers 2 and 3** and **High Meadows**, the last house before the lane ends at the gate to the **Great Meadow**, were all built in the 1960s or later.

On Church Street, **Hidden House** and **Three Elms** were built in the early 1960s. At the time that the latter was built, there were indeed three elm trees. Today the house remains, but alas no elms.

1963 brought the installation of streetlights to the village. There was concern among residents reflected in the Parish Minutes, where one resident did not want a lamp outside her front door and another one did! The lady occupying Hemingford Grey House at the time did not like the modern looking lamps and bracket holders and offered to pay for a *suitable* bracket for *a light to be placed on her park gates*. The matter was eventually resolved by putting the lamp on the wall of number 8 Church Lane, where some of her servants lived!

Starting in 1963 in the close called **Madeley Court** off Church Street, the old Madeley Court house having been demolished by 1960, the present houses were built. First to be built were the two homes on either side of the entrance to the close, built by 1963 and today called **Normanhurst** and **Ashdown**. The old building that had served the original house as stables was remodelled and is now called **Madeley Lodge**. Over the next few years, between 1964 and 1968, the rest of the houses were built, all by the builder Felix Murray Ltd, but to individual designs, namely **Holmoaks, The Well, The Lawns, The Rosary, Jamal, Newhaven, McCardle, March House, Dunster, and Hawkswood**. **Meadow View** in the north-west corner was built later in 1977 when **Mill Close** to the north was developed. Many of the houses have been substantially altered over the years, and The Well, number 5, has been completely demolished and rebuilt since 2000.

Just prior to the Madeley Court development, in the early 1960s **numbers 6, 8, 10 Church Street** and **High Trees** and **Charnwood** were built, to be followed in the early 1970s by **Birch House**. **Fairways** to the west of Charnwood came later, in 1983/84.

Turning the corner to the left, **number 4 Church Lane** was built in 1966 on a small piece of land, once part of the garden of number 6.

Across from where Church Lane meets the High Street, is **Braggs Lane** and here at various times between 1959 and 1970, eight houses of different design were built on the western side, filling in the gap between **Broom Lodge** on the corner of the High Street and the 1937 **Oaksway House** on the corner of Manor Road. At that time, on the eastern side of the road, there was only one house, **number 2 Braggs Lane**, already mentioned, built in the early thirties on the corner of Gore Tree Road and today's Glebe Road.

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<sup>12</sup> *Innisfree* has since been demolished and two large houses built on the site, completed early 2015. *Beltane* was also demolished and replaced by *The Mandarins* in 1988. *Waterways* was rebuilt in the 1990s.

The name Braggs Lane derives from one **Mary Bragg**, a widow who died in 1718. In her will she left some land in Mill Fields and the Great Meadow, the income from which was to be distributed *among the poor of the parish, having first regard to the poor 'old maids'*, one pound and ten shillings (£1.50 today) in sums of one shilling and sixpence (7.5p) and one shilling (5p) on St Thomas's Day (21<sup>st</sup> December) each year. Five shillings (25p) was to be paid to the bellringers at the same time. Over the centuries, this charity appears to have got lost!

**Braggs Lane** is a short street which becomes **Gore Tree Road** to the south of the **Manor Road** intersection. There were a few scattered homes here by 1960 and the building of **Burlington Way** was in progress. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, **numbers 4, 6, 10 and 12 Gore Tree Road** joined **numbers 2, 8 and 16** already on the eastern side from earlier times. On the western side, **number 1 Gore Tree Road** was built in 1961 on land between **The Vicarage, number 2 Manor Road** and **number 3 Gore Tree Road** of the late 1930s. **Number 9 Gore Tree Road**, to the south of **number 7** was built in 1956 and **numbers 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 and 21** all appeared on the 1970 Ordnance Survey. Number 11 has since been demolished and three small houses, **11, 11a and 11b** built on the land. Number 21 has been demolished and replaced in 1986 with a modern bungalow. **Numbers 23 and 25** were all built later than the 1970 Ordnance Survey. **Number 19a** was a very recent infill in 2013.

Off Gore Tree Road to the west, two new streets were added in 1965/66 to be named **Priors Road** and **Haley Close** and, in the same development, three new houses were added to the south-east side of **The Thorpe (numbers 18, 20 and 22)**. The naming of Prior's Road reflects the parish's link with the Huntingdon Priory in the Middle Ages; Haley Close was named after the new-born daughter of the builder's foreman. Westward, along Manor Road, **number 1 Manor Road**, on the northern side, was built in 1963 on part of the land where the 19<sup>th</sup> century house **Oakfield** once stood. In the mid-1960s a caravan park on the land between the river end of the High Street and Manor Road to the east of the Playing Field made way for **numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7 Norman Court**, the street names reflecting the nearby Norman Manor House.

In the mid to late 1960s at the western end of the village off **The Thorpe**, the **Langley Way** and **Westmeare** developments took place. The land, which had been a smallholding with orchards was purchased in 1963 by the builder RA Singfield and the architect of the houses was Hugh O'Neill, who lived in the village with his family for many years. The only building on this piece of land at the time was the house built for Elisabeth Vellacott in 1958, which became **number 4 Langley Way**. Langley Way was built first, followed by Westmeare.

The name Langley Way comes from Robert Langley, who in his will dated 1656 left land in the Isle of Ely, the rent of which was to be distributed to *poor widows and others of the poorest sort* and to pay bellringers. There is a legend that he was lost in the snow and the bells of St James' Church led him to safety, but as that tale is told of three other villages in Huntingdonshire, it is unlikely and the will definitely states that the money was left *in memory of his father*. This charity still exists as the Langley Trust, to help anyone in need, administered by trustees who include the current vicar. The name Westmeare comes from the old word *mear* or *mere* for a boundary and Westmeare lies on the western boundary of the Parish.

At the same period as Langley Way and Westmeare were being developed, houses on both sides of the Thorpe were under construction. On the eastern side, at the southern end, what are now **numbers 18, 20 and 22 The Thorpe** were built as part of the **Priors Road** development to the east. All the other houses on the eastern side with the exception of 2a and 2b were built in individual styles in the mid to late 1960s. **Number 2a, Ambar Lodge**, was built later in 1974 on land to the south of the house on the corner of Manor Road and **number 2b** even later in 2011 when **number 22 Manor Road** was demolished and two houses built on the plot. On the western side of The Thorpe, **Orchard House** built in 1908 and the row of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes, today's **numbers 3 to 9 The Thorpe** already existed. So too **Thorpe Close House**, often referred to as *Old Thorpe*, at the far end of the lane looking out over fields to the south. Odd **numbers 11 to 17 The Thorpe** were all built during the 1960s, with number 11 possibly on the site of an earlier building. All are there by the 1970 Ordnance Survey and aerial maps. Next to them was a house of the same era, later totally razed and by 2013/14 two new houses **Greythorpe** and **Brook End House** were built. Beyond them to the south is **Sherrayne (19a)** built in the 1990s and further still down a lane to the west, **Pendover**, late 1960s, **Meadowview** and **Thorpemead**, probably 1990s and certainly post 1985. **Thorpe Acre** was built in the late 1970s or early 1980s on land that had been part of the grounds of Old Thorpe.

In the Parish Minutes of February 1962, mention is made of main sewers going in across the built areas of the village. Up to this time, people had to rely on septic tanks but with all the building going on there was an obvious need for something more. At the same time as household sewers were being installed, drains were constructed to take away rainwater from streets in the village; also, the village pond on the triangular piece of land where the village sign now stands was drained, much against the wishes of the Parish Council.

Moving now to the early 1970s, **Birch House, number 12 Church Street**, was built, replacing a small row of Victorian cottages and further down the street, in 1974, a disused building, once part of the Maltings, was turned into an architect's office and adjoining small art gallery in one half, named **The Maltings Studio**, and the other half turned into a house called **The Maltings**. A 1934 house alongside the water filled gravel pits on Marsh Lane was demolished and **number 42 Marsh Lane**, a more modern home, built in its place by 1974. Odd **numbers 1 to 7 Norman Court**, off the western end of the High Street, were joined by twelve further houses in 1975, even **numbers 2 to 24**, and the deserted Congregational Chapel in the High Street converted to a home now named **The Old Chapel**.

**Foxes Close Farm**, set amid fields at the southern end of **Gore Tree Road**, was built sometime between 1975 and 1985.

On the north side of **Manor Road**, at its eastern end, **Oakfield**, a large Victorian house built and occupied by one of the Giddins family, was demolished in the late 1970s and the land used to build a small cul-de-sac, called appropriately **Oakfields**.

Off the western side of **Gore Tree Road**, **De Vere Close** was built in the 1970s. IJ Stocker acquired the land in 1971 and all the houses seem to be there by 1974 and all appear in a 1975 aerial photograph. When the footings for the foundations of these houses were dug, it was discovered that parts of the area were full of rotting turkey carcasses. The land had previously been a poultry farm and

an earlier outbreak of fowl pest had caused the owner to destroy all stock. In those days, they buried the remains and, before building work could continue, all rotten remains had to be removed. It was a filthy job and in a conversation I had with one of the men employed at the time, he told me the stench was unbelievable. **Oak Tree Cottage**, the house on the corner of **De Vere Close** and **Gore Tree Road**, is a 1999 infill.

In 1977 a triangular area of land on the west side of **Mill Lane**, north of the **Madeley Court** development and south of **Diss Cottage**, was developed into six homes to form a cul-de-sac named **Mill Close**. Alongside, an additional house was tucked into a spare piece of land that adjoined the northern end of **Madeley Court** to become Meadow View, number 15 Madeley Court.

Further to the north, circa 1977, on a piece of land off the west side of **Meadow Lane**, nine new houses were built to form **Meadow Close** and as part of the same development, an additional two houses were erected on **Meadow Lane** to become **numbers 7 and 9 Meadow Lane**.

Also in 1977, **number 10 High Street** was created. This is the house next to the Village Shop, with the large Monkey Puzzle tree in the garden. It had been part of **Czardas**, the house on the corner of **Pound Road** and the **High Street**.

In 1978, the Primary School in Hemingford Abbots closed because of falling numbers and the remaining 25 children transferred to the school in Hemingford Grey. The Hemingford Abbots School had been founded in 1840, earlier than the school in Hemingford Grey.

In 1979/80, **numbers 1, 2 and 3 The Vineyard** were built on a piece of land between **Norman Court** and the **Manor House**. Number 3 has recently had a pargetted plaque added to its gable end, showing its building date of 1979, warming the heart of researchers such as I looking for house dates!

During the 1970s, several more individual houses were built: **2a Pound Road** on land that had been held for the proposed bypass via **Glebe Road**, **10 Hemingford Road** and **Arlberg House** on the west side of **Gore Tree Road** on land that had been part of the large garden of **2 Manor Road** (still the Vicarage at that time) and **Willowmere** on the east side of **Meadow Lane**, with one of the many local water-filled one-time gravel pits to its rear.

In 1980, after much discussion over the route they should take, a new bridge and approach roads were erected across the Ouse to St Ives from a point where the village boundary lies at **Armes Corner** on the London Road. A traffic roundabout was created just to the east of the Parish boundary with spokes leading to the new bridge, the Low Road to Fenstanton and south to the Cambridge Road and the village of Hilton. The old 15<sup>th</sup> century bridge was now closed to most vehicular traffic but still provided a cycle and pedestrian route into the town. The new bridge and approach roads cost £2.5 million. The bypass was named **Harrison Way**.

By 1982, the wooden Pavilion on Manor Road was coming to the end of its useful life and plans were made for a two-storey brick building to cost £70,000. Grants of £41,000 were available and the balance was raised by the Trustees and by the various clubs that used the facilities. John Major, our

Member of Parliament, opened it on 17 September 1983.<sup>13</sup> By then the buildings comprised squash courts for the Hunts County Squash Club founded in 1967 and a gymnasium, as well as a meeting room and a lounge for club members.

During the 1980s, part of the front section of the 1920s **Rampleys** development of council houses on the **St Ives Road** was demolished in order to get easy access to further land at the rear where a further set of houses, **numbers 1 to 24 The Rampleys**, was built and then the demolished part of the front section was rebuilt.

**The Maltings Studio on Church Street**, which had served as a small art gallery and architect's office since 1974, was transformed into the architect's home and workplace in 1982 and the art gallery ceased to exist. Nearby, on land belonging to Hemingford Grey House, **Fairways** was built in 1983/84.

Further additions to the village in the 1980s were **Mill Lodge**, built in front of the disused windmill on St Ives Road, and **Lloydons** (2b Pound Road) another house benefiting from a piece of land made available by the decision not to put a main road through the side of the cemetery to Glebe Road. Tucked in behind Lloydons and the earlier houses of the eastern part of Glebe Road (numbers 1, 3, 5 and 7) and Weirside were now added **numbers 11, 15 and 17 Glebe Road**, forming a cul-de-sac. There is no number 9, presumably left for the subdivision of the larger plot on which number 7 stands, and no number 13 for possibly superstitious reasons.

The western end of Glebe Road was now extended and a road built to meet Braggs Lane to the west and odd **numbers 31 to 43 Glebe Road** were built on its southern side in 1983/84, slightly back from the road itself. **Number 2 Glebe Road** was built on land which was once the garden of number 7 Pound Road and opposite, on the southern side, **Brentville** was built on surplus land of number 9 Pound Road. All the land now covered by Glebe Road, Vicarage Fields, Green Close, Lea Road and Gunnings Way was once the farmlands allotted to the Church, the produce from which helped support the local parson, and over time became the property of the Church Commissioners of the Anglican Church, who sold it off to developers now that local vicars were paid salaries.

**16 Gore Tree Road**, the last house on the left before the fields on the eastern side of the road, had originally been built in the early 1930s, at which time it was surrounded by open fields in all directions. That house was demolished in 1985 and the present, larger, house built in its place but today only has field views to the south-west. Opposite, on the west side, **21 Gore Tree Road** replaced an earlier 1964 bungalow, circa 1986.

1987 saw the development of the rest of the Church lands when the semi-circle of houses opposite the **Glebe Road** development came into being as the aptly named **Vicarage Fields (numbers 1 to 11)**. Adjacent to them and built at the same time is **number 6 Braggs Lane**, currently the Vicarage. Before the land was developed there was a larger open space here, used as a playing field before the Peace Memorial Field on Manor Road was created.

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<sup>13</sup> John Major was Member of Parliament for Huntingdon from 1979-2001 and Prime Minister from 1990-1997. He lived with his family in Hemingford Grey for seven years from late 1977 when he was first adopted as Parliamentary Candidate.

**Pembroke Close (numbers 1 to 6)** was built in the 1980s on land on the southern side of Hemingford Road where **Pembroke Villa** originally stood. It had been built in fits and starts between and after the two wars, although I am told it was never really finished.

**The Mandarins** on the eastern side of Mill Lane replaced the earlier 1960s house **Beltane** around 1988. The property includes yet another old gravel pit, now water filled, providing a wildlife haven.

In 1988, the **Union Workhouse** on the **London Road** was redeveloped. A new street, named **The Brambles**, was added to the rear of the main building and some 50 plus homes erected. The main workhouse building was turned into several flats and ancillary buildings adapted. Street names **Limes Court** and **Limes Park** reflect the large stand of lime trees that fronts the complex. Parts of the old Workhouse had already been adapted to some form of social housing prior to the Second World War; the 1988 development was a completely modern rebuild yet retaining the original 1836 exteriors, which are Listed Buildings Grade II.

In the 1990s, the thatched old bakehouse building opposite the Parish Centre, formerly a home and newspaper shop for many years, was enlarged and turned into two homes now named **The Old Bakehouse** and **Farthings**. Later in the decade, a small house, **number 42 High Street**, was built to the west and back of these. Across the road, behind the Reading Room, the cluttered buildings of a furniture repair store were cleared and replaced by **St James' Court (numbers 1 to 6)**, six new homes of varied design, roofed in slate and tile to reflect the nearby buildings.

Along the St Ives and Hemingford Roads, the few remaining gaps on the north side were filled. **Flowermead**, a 1920s house, was demolished and another modern one built in its place, retaining its former name. On land alongside to the west, **Bramley House** appeared, then **Thornleigh** and **Silver Birches** to the east, these last two on **Hemingford Road**. Further west alongside **Docksey's Farm**, **numbers 46 and 48 St Ives Road** were built, another area where house numbering is out of order due to infilling.

## The Last 20 Years

In the mid 1990s at the far western end of the village on Manor Road, where it starts to curve round the zigzag bend, **numbers 26** (1993) and **28 Manor Road** (1992) were built and immediately to the right of these **number 30 Manor Road** in 1997. These three houses were built after land that was being held for the projected sweep-through by-pass was released and the threatened road plan abandoned. Here too, postal numbering is totally askew, with **number 24 Manor Road**, the number allocated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century **Thorpe Cottage**, further round the corner and almost hidden by trees coming after numbers 26, 28 and 30!

1995 saw the demolition of one of the two smallholdings or orchard farmhouses on **Marsh Lane** to be replaced by three large bungalows, **numbers 23a and 23b Marsh Lane**, and **14a Stepping Stones** tucked in behind. Nearby, in **Pound Road**, **number 17a** was built in the side garden of **number 17**. **Number 5 Gore Tree Road**, a late 1930s bungalow, was demolished and replaced by a modern one, and in what was part of its garden, another bungalow was built on the corner of **De Vere Close**, called **Oak Tree Cottage**.

At the top, southern end of **Pound Road**, commencing in 1997, a large development of houses stretching over open fields was started and completed circa 2000. A battle had gone on for many years over the size of this development, originally envisaged to cover a much larger area and to stretch almost to St Ives, covering many fields. Residents opposed this, wanting very much to remain a village and not become a suburb of St Ives. Eventually the plan was whittled down and 70 houses built. During construction, the development was named **Pinder's Green**, the land being off Pound Road and Pinder the name given to the man who looked after the ancient livestock Pound. When complete, the new streets were named **Douglas Drive**, **Mitchell Close**, **Newman Court**, **Payn Close** and **Turbeville Court**, after one time Lords of the Manor, with the main street running through the development treated as an extension of **Pound Road** and numbered accordingly. The first Lord of the Manor, Aubrey de Vere, had already given his name to **De Vere Close**.

Although the Pinder's Green development stretches west as far as Gore Tree Road, there is no vehicular access on that side and all traffic comes in at the eastern side off Pound Road and Marsh Lane. There is, however, a foot and cycle path at the Gore Tree Road side. One house, **number 14 Gore Tree Road**, was built as part of the development, in the same style, being the last to be constructed as the area was used for access during the main building works. A quarter of the houses were built as social housing at affordable rents.

The builders of Pinder's Green, Beazer Homes, were required by law to provide amenities in the expanding village. Among these needs was the provision of extra classrooms at the Primary School on the St Ives Road. Built in 1903 to take the children from the High Street School and the Mission School on London Road, it had already been enlarged several times. Now two classrooms were added in 1999, along with other amenities to take in the expected influx of children from the new houses. The Pavilion on Manor Road also benefited. In 1999, the Hayward Hall downstairs and the Manor Room upstairs were added at a cost of £250,000, of which £90,000 came from Beazer Homes, £40,000 from the Parish Council, £51,000 from the various sporting clubs using the facilities, £35,000 from a

brewery loan and £20,000 from the Trustees. On 3 September 1999, the 60th anniversary of the start of the Second World War, the new rooms were officially opened, again by John Major. Later, in 2000,



*Pavilion and Playing Fields*

a fourth squash court was added, with a viewing area enabling the National Under-23 Squash Championships to take place there. Also in 2000 and once the Pinder's Green development was complete, number 21 Pound Road, a late 1950s bungalow on a generous site, was demolished and two two-storey houses built, **numbers 21 and 21a Pound Road**.

In 1998 severe floods had once again assailed the village. Not as serious as

the ones in 1947, but houses in **Victoria Terrace** were flooded to a depth of several feet and it was months before inhabitants could return to their homes. The newer houses opposite, on the southern side of the street, being built at a higher level were not flooded, although they did have trouble with access. Two houses at the western end of **Church Street** were flooded, along with several homes in the **Meadow Lane** and **Meadow Close** area. Until the floods subsided, church services were held in the school, as although the church building was not awash, access to it was only available to those with rubber boots!

Since then, in 2006 and 2007, major flood defences have been built in the hope of preventing future damage, not just for this village but for the adjoining areas of Hemingford Abbots, St Ives and Fenstanton. Defensive banks were raised and strengthened, floodgates placed where landowners had access to boathouses and pumps installed. What is known locally as 'The Regatta Field', just into the parish of Hemingford Abbots, was used as a working area, housing some of the large vehicles and piles of materials needed for such a huge undertaking, with the result that in 2006 the Annual Regatta had to be cancelled. To date, these defences have held but the river has not yet reached the 1998 level, nor indeed the higher level of the 1947 flood. For those with keen eyesight, the levels are marked on the Environment Agency's sign stuck in the river at the western end of the High Street.

The 2006/07 flood defences cost some £9.3 million over a 4.5 km stretch of the Ouse. The original top bricks used on the walls along the river path by the Manor House proved unequal to the succeeding winters and crumbled. They were replaced with dark 'engineering' bricks, with rounded tops and the railings, much hated by villagers and considered unnecessary, were removed. As some of the flood problems in the Victoria Terrace area were caused by a rise in ground water level, a pump was installed to kick in whenever the area became too damp, with the result that gardens sometimes get a little too dry. As with many things in life, one cannot always win!

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several individual homes were built on infill sites or as replacements of older homes: **Water's Edge** on **Meadow Lane**, a large house replacing a very small one adjoining

one of the small lakes left after gravel extraction, **Island Hall**, on the riverside at the end of **Mill Lane**, **Waterways** at the intersection of **Mill Lane** and **Meadow Lane** replacing an earlier building and **Maybank** on Mill Lane, again a replacement.

Circa 2005, on the west side of **Gore Tree Road**, three small houses **numbers 11, 11a and 11b Gore Tree Road** were built to the rear of number 9, replacing an earlier number 11.

In 2007, **number 45a High Street**, one of the Victorian terrace houses in front of the Willow Guest House, was sold off and returned to its original use as a small house, the same happening to **number 45b High Street** in 2009. The Guest House continues to operate from the courtyard behind.

2010/11 saw the demolition of **22 Manor Road** (built in the 1950s) and the building of a new **number 22** and **Papatheo** alongside it to the west with an entrance on The Thorpe (**number 2b The Thorpe**). Also in 2011, in Haley Close, **number 10 Haley Close** was added next to number 9.

In 1959, the railway from St Ives to Huntingdon closed, rails were pulled up, bridges demolished and the land sold off to adjacent properties. The St Ives to Wisbech line closed in 1967 and in 1969 the St Ives to Cambridge line was closed to passenger traffic, but much of the route was retained to haul gravel from the pits being excavated to the east of St Ives. Eventually, this use too ceased, but it was fortunate that the railway right of way and adjoining land were retained, leading to the installation of a very successful Busway, completed and opened in August 2011, two years later than planned. Here buses can run unimpeded by other traffic and a cycle path and bridleway runs alongside. Although not within our own Parish, it is a welcome addition to nearby public transport.

At the Pavilion in 2011, grants from the National Lottery and other funds enabled the trustees to buy better chairs for the Hayward Room, refurbish the floor and provide audio-visual screening systems. Monthly screenings of fairly recent films are shown. In 2013 a similar upgrading of the Manor Room took place and it was renamed the Chris Page Room in tribute to the man who had given many years of service to the Pavilion and the village. In June 2011, the Community Café in the Parish Centre was opened.

The very large development on London Road was started in 2012. Some 190 homes were planned, houses and flats, of which 40% were to be social housing of some kind at affordable rents. The project is now complete, the streets being named **Dunnock Way, Tern Drive, Wren Close, Goldcrest Road** and **Skylark Place**, reflecting the names of birds seen within the Parish.

In 2013, **number 19a Gore Tree Road** was built on land just to the north of Priors Road. The red telephone box, a familiar sight near the Village Shop, was removed and not replaced.

On 2 January 2014, the restaurant at The Cock on the High Street closed for a few weeks, leaving the pub portion in operation, so that a major refurbishment, rebuild and addition to the kitchen area could take place. The restaurant was back in operation by 7 February, while the remainder of the work with additions to the flat above, updated toilets and a covered way to enable disabled people to reach the toilets from the restaurant continued. In February 2014, **Field Lodge Care Home**, with room for 72 residents, was opened on the **London Road**, immediately to the south of The Limes, on a site that

had once been the **St Ives Motel**. The architect of the building wisely chose not only local Cambridgeshire pale yellow brick, but also to design the front windows of the building in a style that echoes the windows of the 1836 buildings of the Old Workhouse to the north.

There were severe gales in the village at this time and many trees were brought down. Tragically, a bank of trees near the river fell on top of a boatshed where many of the Regatta boats were stored, wrecking some of the larger and newer ones beyond repair and damaging others. Insurance could not cover all the costs and an appeal was launched to raise £15,000-£20,000. The Committee took the decision, before all the money had been raised, to order new boats immediately to ensure they would be ready for the June practice on the river for the mid-July Regatta. The Committee had faith in the village's commitment to the cause and the money was duly raised, for the boats and boat sheds.

It was anticipated that the large development on the London Road would increase the village population by 20%. At the eastern end of the village there has been for many years a petrol filling station, car wash and general store, but no further amenities appear to have been provided or planned for the new development, other than a small square with children's play equipment. More classrooms were added to the Primary School and more play space outdoors, as well as more staff car parking, bicycle parking and also an innovative scooter parking space. The current fashion for the 'must have' scooter for young children had parents accompanying children to school, the children whizzing along on scooters and parents then having to carry the scooters home, often with a younger child in a buggy, only to return in the afternoon, with the scooter to pick up their offspring! Most of the work entailed on these projects was complete ready for the autumn term 2014.

The 1960s house **Innisfree** on **Mill Lane** was demolished in 2013 with plans for two large houses on the site in place. When footings for the foundations of these houses were being dug, excavations revealed items of archaeological interest. The county archaeologists were called in and items of Romano-British and Iron Age occupation were found. Work had to be halted for a period, but eventually two new houses arose and were finished by early 2015, named **Trinovante** and **Iceni House**, reflecting ancient British tribes of the area.

## The Village Today

So that was the village as it had been in the past, but what of the village as it is today, in the summer of 2017? When advertising properties in the area, estate agents frequently use the phrase 'much sought after village'. Sometimes their prose can be a touch inflated, but in this case, they speak the truth. This village does seem to tick every box. It is still a village and residents want to keep it that way. Any planning application for the remaining fields separating the village from St Ives to the east and Hemingford Abbots to the west is rigorously opposed. We like its proximity to St Ives, but don't want to be part of it! The Primary School is judged to be good and one only has to look at the village website ([www.hemingfordgrey.org.uk](http://www.hemingfordgrey.org.uk)) to see that there really is something for everyone. In addition to services, the Church runs activities ranging from mothers and baby groups, through toddlers to after-school activities for children of all ages. There is a Parish Lunch most months, and a monthly Saturday morning breakfast for fathers and young children, a fortnightly Women's Pleasant Hour and an occasional walking group. I have already mentioned the Community Café within the Parish Centre premises. Concealed beneath the floor of the main room of the Parish Centre is a baptismal pool. It was introduced to the room in 1975 by the Reverend Donald Brown, who felt that baptism by immersion should be available for those adults who wished it.

The Church has a ring of eight bells and a team of bellringers ring for Sunday services and for weddings, and, as mentioned earlier, a peal is rung to celebrate the final race of the Annual Regatta. We still have our excellent village shop, known as **The Hemingford Stores**, which sells newspapers and magazines, fresh bread and other bakery products, a wide variety of groceries, beers, wines and spirits and is an agent for dry cleaning. Tickets for the monthly film at the Pavilion are on sale here, as are tickets for lotteries. Notice boards outside the shop not only take paid advertisements but display information regarding local events and Parish Council meetings. From April 2016 it also provides Post Office services. Another shop, associated with the petrol filling station on London Road, also stocks a good variety of items and the petrol station includes a car wash.

In the Reading Room on the High Street, two branches of the Women's Institute meet (Hemingford Grey WI and Langley WI). There is a need for two branches because the Reading Room does not have the physical space to accommodate all who wish to join. The Hemingford Grey WI is the earlier branch, formed in 1919 and rapidly approaching its centenary. The Reading Room is also used by the Flower Club, meeting every two weeks, the Beer and Wine Club (monthly), the Cromwell Video Camera Club (fortnightly) and other groups. Also using the Reading Room is the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), which has a thriving local branch running four ten-week sessions of adult education each year. The Hemingford Grey Gardeners' Society meets monthly from September to May and organises a biennial 'Open Gardens Day' to raise money for charity. An Art Club meets regularly and exhibits twice a year at Hemingford Abbots Village Hall, many of its members being Hemingford Grey residents and including many accomplished artists. A Country Dancing Group and a Ladies Choir, both affiliated to the WI, meet in the Parish Centre room.

For pre-school children there is a Play Group in a separate building on the Primary School premises and a Parent Teacher Association is attached to the School.

At the Playing Field and Pavilion on Manor Road there are facilities for football, cricket, tennis, lawn bowls and a children's play area outdoors as well as four squash courts and a gym indoors. All these are well maintained and run as separate groups paying club fees and through them contributing to the upkeep of the playing areas and the Pavilion building. In the two large rooms in the Pavilion, various dance and fitness classes take place and there is a monthly Tea Dance. Scouts, Beavers, Cubs and Brownies meet there. Pavilion Pictures shows some classic 'oldies' but mostly recently released films of good quality shown on modern digital facilities and the room has air conditioning. There are also free showings of films for younger people. The Pavilion Bar and Lounge are open on weekdays from 6.00pm and from 12.00 noon at weekends. Its two balconies afford views of the cricket and football pitches on one side and the lawn bowls green on the other. There is a small pool table and a television screen for showing sports events. Membership of any of the sports clubs gives one access to the Bar and Lounge and a Sports and Social Club modest membership fee gives access for others. Other dance classes take place at the Primary School and a Badminton Club also uses the school premises.

Several local groups use the Pavilion. The Hemingfords' Local History Society (HEMLOCS) meets monthly in the autumn, winter and spring months, hosting speakers on local history and arranging summer visits to nearby places of interest. An Investment Club also meets there monthly. A branch of the National Women's Register meets fortnightly in members' homes.

For those who enjoy the open air, there is the river to fish in season<sup>14</sup> and many footpaths by the river and elsewhere in the village for walks. There are usually mallard ducks to delight small children, sometimes swans with cygnets in tow, and the occasional visit by flocks of Canada Geese. Kingfishers have been spotted and early walkers often see herons poised in the reeds waiting to pounce on their unsuspecting prey or overhead flapping their wings slowly and methodically with heads and necks pulled back looking strangely uncomfortable. Moorhens and coots nest in spring and their chicks walk on the waterlilies. Terns can be seen in the summer, not only along the river, but also on the old gravel pits on Marsh Lane, where they nest on the central island. This area, known for many years as the Marsh Lane Walk, is of interest to bird watchers and botanists alike. It's an excellent place to walk, but in the interests of the wildlife, dogs should be kept on leads.

A field, known as 'Arthur's Meadow', to the south of the Cambridge Road, is owned by the County Wildlife Trust and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); it has many wild flowers, including several species of orchid. Another County Wildlife Site is the Hemingford Great Meadow on the northern boundary of the village along the Ouse. It too has many wild flowers among the grasses, including Yellow Rattle and Great Burnet. Skylarks nest there in spring and various gulls and waterfowl feed on the insects that emerge to the surface after floods. The Meadow is mostly privately owned but two small strips are owned by the Wildlife Trust. There is public access across the right of way and along the permissive path around the perimeter. A local villager, Cathy Goss, is a voluntary warden and a representative from the Parish Council, Derek Clifton, is the Meadow Reeve.

There are some large trees in the Parish but little or no woodland. Several large trees bear bunches of mistletoe. In recent years some horse chestnut trees have had to be felled because of disease and

<sup>14</sup> The River Great Ouse is a designated County Wildlife Site Water Course managed by the Environment Agency, which also controls the fishing.

now the tall ash trees are also suffering. The road verges along the Hemingford/St Ives Road have masses of daffodils in the spring, planted by members of the WI, and other verges in Manor Road planted in memory of a past resident.

A grey seal has been seen as far upstream as Hemingford Lock. It is of interest that were it not for the lock at Earith downstream, the Ouse at Hemingford Grey would be tidal. Other fauna often seen are squirrels (too many in the opinion of some!), rabbits and foxes, hares and badgers and Muntjac deer make frequent unwelcome visits to local gardens, seen, if at all, at night.

Other amenities include a mobile library that calls once a month, a fishmonger who travels in a van from Grimsby most Wednesday mornings, a vegetable stall on the lay-by on the London Road every Saturday and a milkman who delivers three times a week. To the south of The Limes (once the workhouse) just before reaching the large London Road development of houses and flats, there is Field Lodge, a newly-built care home opened in 2014. Among the hundred or so people living in the village who are self-employed is a hairdresser (on the High Street opposite the Village Shop) and a chiropodist (opposite the Primary School).

There is a defibrillator, housed at the Pavilion, paid for by villagers raising money.

On Daintree Green, the open space to the rear of Old Pound Close and Daintree Way, there is an area for informal games, a children's play area and the village allotments. The village is a tourist attraction, mainly because of The Manor, but also for diners seeking out the good fare at The Cock. Residents take for granted the several thatched houses and cottages scattered through the old part of the village, but foreign tourists constantly comment on them.

The Cock most years, usually on an August weekend, offers three different musical groups each evening or afternoon. They hope for good weather as the groups play in the garden where there are not only the usual beverages on offer, but also a wide selection of real ales. There is a Rock Group and a Folk Group on different evenings and on one afternoon there is a Brass Band playing popular tunes. To appease the neighbours, the evening groups finish by 11.00pm. The weekend is much enjoyed by many people.

The Regatta, staged on the second Saturday in July, remains an important annual village event, as are the November fireworks in a field near the Old Bridge.

There are several farms in the village, some with sheep grazing and delightful lambs in the spring, others arable with a variety of crops, also a large poultry farm at the junction of the London and Cambridge Roads, an area which has recently received permission to erect a tall wind turbine, very much against the wishes of the residents. It commenced operation in early 2016.

The proposed route for the A14 is planned to run further south than the present one, but will still run over parish fields, leaving the current road for local access to Godmanchester and Huntingdon.

By 2016, the population of the Parish probably exceeds 3,000, as the new development on the London Road had not been started at the time of the 2011 Census, when numbers were 2,532.

Today, the Parish Council is responsible for the upkeep of cemeteries, village maintenance, park amenities, allotments and footpaths and cycle routes. It has the right to consider planning applications for houses, new roads and traffic signs and comment on them to the Huntingdonshire District Council, but has no right to block anything.

The Parish has had an elected Parish Council since 1895, formed not long after a Government Act of 1894 authorising such councils. Previous to that, village matters were dealt with by a mixture of church and lay authorities. The Huntingdonshire District Council provides rubbish collection and street cleaning, maintains the Electoral Register, collects Council Tax (which includes Parish Council and County Council costs) and deals with and decides on planning applications, while the Cambridge County Council deals with education, roads, social services, recycling and trading standards.

In the Middle Ages, the parish did not just look after the spiritual needs of the residents but was responsible for their physical needs as well. The parish collected taxes (in the form of tithes) and was responsible for roads and burials, common lands, pumps, weights and scales, clocks and caring for the poor. With the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536 in the reign of Henry VIII and the parcelling out of church lands among his followers, various duties fell upon the new major landowners. Farmlands were still in strips and continued so until the Enclosure Acts, the one applying to Hemingford Grey being passed in 1801. At this point, various duties previously performed by Lords of the Manor were devolved to the Vestry until passed to the new Parish Council in 1895.

The charm of the village was not always so apparent; Slater's Commercial Directory of 1851 states that *Hemingford Grey, Hemingford Abbots, Houghton and Wyton are all inconsiderable parishes, destitute of commercial importance*. Some 160 years later, it is true that not many people are employed in the village. Most working people work in nearby St Ives, Huntingdon and Peterborough, some commute daily to London, some are self-employed working from home. It is probably some recompense for those people who have to make long journeys to work that they return to such a pleasant village.

Nikolaus Pevsner, writing in 1968 in the Bedfordshire, Huntingdonshire and Peterborough volume of the Buildings of England, commented favourably on the older buildings but added a last line saying: *Hemingford Grey, which even ten years ago was still perfectly rural, has recently suffered an invasion of small speculative houses and bungalows. It is a great pity. We, who live here now, and truly love the village for everything it holds for us, would not agree with him.*

## Acknowledgements and Thanks

I have tried to be accurate as to dates of houses and buildings but much of the information comes from other people's memories. If I have any house or street wrong, I apologise.

I would like to thank the staff of the County Archives and the Reference Section of the Library in Huntingdon and of the Norris Museum in St Ives; they have all been very helpful over several years of research. Thanks also to the Committee and members of the Hemingfords' Local History Society, who have encouraged and assisted me to continue the project and have undertaken to publish it.

I am especially indebted to the late Gerry Rook for his phenomenal memory of the village in which he lived all his life. Countless individuals have given me the dates of their own houses and I thank them all. Some have also been able to give me access to their deeds, enabling me to get information about nearby areas; I wish to thank Nita Luxford, John Moore and Gordon Oscroft for this particular help and John Rolfe, who not only gave me a copy of his history of his 1908 home but also lent me numerous 20<sup>th</sup> century aerial photos which helped me enormously. Peggy Seamark shared her knowledge of Victoria Terrace and the surrounding area and Donna Stephens helped me with Mill Lane, Madeley Court and the Apple Orchard. Derek Clifton, who has lived all his life in the village, gave me several pieces of invaluable information and Dr Walshe gave me a detailed history of Broom Lodge, allowing me to tour his lovely house and extensive garden.

Sarah Power took on the task of deciphering my handwriting and typing the first drafts of this book and she, along with Pat Douglas, inspired me not only to give the original talk to the History Society but encouraged me to turn it into a written history. It would not have been possible without them.

Stuart Harrison has reshaped and edited the text and provided many useful additions and corrections and I could not have completed the project without him. He also provided additional photographs.

Syd Deakin has done sterling work on the maps at the start of the book and David Nolan of Brightspark Creative designed the front and back covers. My thanks also to Diana Boston for kindly allowing me to include Garden William Fraser's painting of the Manor House.

I have consulted several of the books about the village and I attach a list. Many of them are out of print but copies are available in the local libraries at Huntingdon and St Ives.

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The author, Elizabeth Butterfield, has lived in Hemingford Grey since 1988, though she has known the village since the late 1960s. The increase in population and the changing nature of the community after the Second World War prompted her to find out when, how and where the village had grown. While undertaking her research, Elizabeth prepared a talk to the local history society, HEMLOCS, and led some guided walks around the village for interested residents. This book assembles material drawn from written sources, census returns, maps, commercial directories, the knowledge of home owners and the memory of villagers, and will ensure that the results of Elizabeth's painstaking work will be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations.

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More information and material can be found on the HEMLOCS website,  
[www.hemlocs.co.uk](http://www.hemlocs.co.uk).