

This is not a complete history of Chalfont St. Peter - more a recollection of the village over the years.

Chalfont Park was build about 1755 by Charles Churchill the Great Duke of Malborough. The estate had four lodges - at the top of the hill a large house known as Chalfont Lodge. which is now a school - and North, South and East Lodges. The Farm, known as Coldharbour Farm, surrounded by woods and fields, had an avenue of fir trees which was like an underground tunnel. The trees were blown down by a strong windstorm in 1914 and were cut up and sent to France during the war. The park is now a golf course with a cricket ground beside the river. The house is now owned by the British Aluminium Research with gardens overlooking the lake and small waterfall, along the side of which runs a footpath which ends near Woodside Hill.

Across from Woodside Hill is Kingsway. This was a cornfield with a stile at the bottom leading to a public footpath, which was in existance until the railway was built. The first train ran from London to High Wycombe on the 6th April 1905. The bridge spanning the Lower Road is 50 foot high with 5 arches each 50 foot wide.

Chiltern Hill leading to Denham Lane was a footpath known as Bone Alley and crossed the River Misbourne by two bridges. Behind what is now Sankeys yard there was an island in the river. By the side of the main A.413 at the bottom of the hill was a stile and iron gate, and two large trees stood beside an open ditch which channelled flood water out of the village centre into the river.

The paths alongside the High Street were cobbled until 1924. The bakehouse built in 1825 was converted into cottages, one of which is now a shop. Next to this was the workhouse and then The White Hart. Mrs Welch owned a shop next door and Barclays Bank opened two days a week in a cottage between this shop and the corner sweet shop, all of which have since been rebuilt as they are today.

On the opposite site of the road was a ditch for the storm water which was filled in when the narrow Gold Hill Lane, or Market Place, was re-surfaced. The Bakers Arms was originally built in line with the adjacent cottages, but was rebuilt further back from the road. Next to this was the entrance to Barrack Yard with its old beams, and also The Carpenters Arms, which were cleared to make a car park - this car park disappeared when the Precinct was built. Unfortunately too, a row of shops and cottages built about 1658, with 18 inch thick walls, and of great historical interest were demolished when the Precinct was constructed. One of these shops was owned by Mr Briden who made his own paint, and another was a grocers shop. . On the other side of the river to The George and Mr Bonsey's butchers shop, where one could watch the cattle being killed and the meat hung. An annual tithe to the Church was paid in one of the large rooms at The George. Next door was a drapers shop and then Mr Upham's bakery which was enlarged when he bought one of the neighbouring cottages dating back to about 1600. Behind these was Swan Farm also built about the same time. Both Swan Farm and most of the cottages were pulled down to make way for the By-Pass, but not the Tithe Barn used by the Youth Club.

On the opposite side of the road stands The Greyhound Inn. Built in the 17th century it was the inn where the horses were changed for the Aylesbury to Uxbridge coaches. The oak-beamed stables were at the side of the House. An archway led through from the courtyard towards the river.

The Misbourne flowed across the road, and was spanned by two footbridges. The river was 15 to 20 feet wide and was quite deep. Until a bridge was built in 1904, motor-cars quite often became stranded and had to be pulled out by Mr Bonsey and Mr Briden's men, for which service either a penny or half-penny was charged. The bridge has been widened several times.

Mr Briden maintained the village's street lighting - by cleaning and lighting oil lamps in the evening and putting them out in the morning. The cost of this was met by subscription. There were four lamps - one on the workhouse, one on the corner of Gold Hill, another on a cottage near the bottom of Joiners Lane and the fourth at the bottom of Grassingham Road. The one remaining lamp was until recently still visible on the workhouse (now the cottages nearly opposite the Bakers Arms). When it was taken down it fell to pieces, but money was collected to erect it in Cordons Close. Oil lighting was replaced first by gas lamps and later by electricity.

The Church mentioned in 1196 fell down during a storm in 1708. The present Church was built in 1<sup>7</sup>14 although much altered in 1853 and was also restored a few years ago. Brasses of Knights and Ladies are displayed in the Chancel, the earliest one bearing the date 1398. Under a charity of 1770 provision was made for the distribution of loaves of bread in the Church every Sunday. Six bells hang in the West Tower (The Register shows that one of my family was baptised on 10th May 1617). A large chestnut tree stood in the churchyard until 1969. The neighboring vicarage was sold, the site cleared and replaced by a car park.

A row of cottages, one said to have been mentioned in Domesday, lead towards the Market Place. There was a barber's shop, and Mr Keys the Post Master had the post office in one half of his grocers shop. The Post Office has been moved several times once being in a cottage at the bottom of Grassingham Road, and finally transferred to its present situation in the Market Place. The post was carried to Gerrards Cross Post Office, which stood near to the Bull Hotel until 1913, and Mr Mathews was the Post Master there for over forty years. Although there was no mail cart, there were three deliveries daily.

Allotments occupied the land where the Market Place and the shops now stand, and the Memorial Hall was built on the site now known as The Broadway.

On the opposite side of the Market Place are the grounds of The Grange which is built on the site of the house occupied by Isaac Pennington between 1657 to 1665, whose step-daughter became the first wife of William Penn, and the house was used as a meeting house for Quaker meetings. It is also said that Judge Jeffreys stayed there whilst his house at Bulstrode was being built. It was run as a hotel before being sold and converted into the Holy Cross Convent School.

Mr J.N.Hibbert, who also gave land for allotment gardens, and for the extension of the churchyard, and erected Almshouses and the Infants School (pulled down in 1962), gave and endowed the Cottage Hospital, which was opened in 1871 by the Lord Bishop of Oxford. It has of course been greatly enlarged and modernised, mostly due to the generosity of public subscription and the support of such organisations as the League of Friends.

Gold Hill Common is well named when the gorse bushes are in bloom. Bracken, heather and some of the smaller wild flowers cover most of the slopes, and the football pitch was levelled out as part of a scheme to provide work after the First World War. There is a fine row of chestnut trees in front of the houses on the east side of the Common, and nearby was a pond which was filled in.

There was also a small pond on Austenwood Common, where the owner of Holly Bush Farm, and certain other people known as copy holders, had the right to graze their cattle. There was a cattle pound. At the top of School Lane was a laundry and the washing lines were put up on the common.

The pond at Layters Green is smaller than in the past. The Lord of the Manor who lived at Mumfords Farm operated a tollgate. Mumfords Lane crossed the railway line, and Mouse Lane, one of the oldest highways in Buckinghamshire branched off towards the Bell House Hotel and Beaconsfield.

To return to the centre of Chalfont St. Peter again. Joiners Lane was very narrow, leading to Hill Farm which still has some timbers dating from about 1400. At the bottom of the hill stood the 17th century Kings Arms and a row of cottages, then Lion Yard next to Grassingham Road, and fields beyond.

On the other side of the road, next door to The Greyhound, there used to be a row of cottages and the Rose and Crown, then some more cottages and shops.

A footpath, known as Mill Alley, led from the road to Mill Farm and the river. Although the water mill was previously used for grinding corn, in the 19th century it was used in the manufacture of blankets. The mill-pond and waterfall were altered and partly filled-in by the use of chalk and rubble from road maintenance. The meadows, now the playing fields, used to be regularly flooded, and there was a fine water-cress bed which was filled in with dust and ashes, and part of the football ground was constructed in its place.

A footpath leads up from the part of the playing fields known as Dewlands, and where it meets the road there stood one of the posts of a tollgate, the other one being just outside Peewit Castle, now a block of flats.

A little further along the river, there used to be a public swimming pool - however, the springs underneath were too strong and burst through the concrete bottom.

The fields between the river and the road stretching towards Chalfont St. Giles are known as Old Mead. The land was let to people from Chalfont St. Peter and Chalfont St. Giles in plots of all shapes and sizes, some yielding only a bale of hay. Cattle were grazed, but had to be in charge of a cowman.

On the opposite side of the road The Wheatleys was a small farm. Cycling clubs used this as a resting place. When the farm was sold the land was built on and named Misbourne Avenue.

Water Hall, standing in  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres with gardens running down to the river, was built in 1570. It was used as a shooting box by the late Captain Ford and his wife who were both well known in the operatic world of Gilbert and Sullivan. It was then turned into a hotel and the adjacent barn made into a dining room.

The neighbouring disused and flooded Gravel Pits have now been filled in.

Chalfont St. Peter Parish ends at Turners Wood.

A footpath nearby leads to Ashwells Farm, first mentioned in the 14th century, and Chesham Lane. Returning along Chesham Lane is Skippings Farm, now owned by the Chalfont Centre for Epilepsy, and established in 1893. At the entrance to the Colony stands Gotts Monument - built of flints it was 50 feet high and is said to mark the spot where George the Third was found after having lost his way whilst hunting. The monument has been struck by lightning several times and is now somewhat shorter.

Horn Hill lane leads to The Church of St. Paul with its one bell, and on to The Dumb Bell and the Buckinghamshire/Hertfordshire boundary. Shire Lane is one of the oldest highways in Buckinghamshire. Horn Hill was cut off by snow in the very bad winter of 1927.

At the foot of Rickmansworth Lane near Copthall Lane there was a row of stone and brick cottages, and in one of the small front gardens, very often an old lady would sit making willow-lace. These old cottages were pulled down when Copthall Lane was widened.

The Wagon and Horses is at the bottom of the lane, and the road continues down past the new Community Centre towards the Church, and the Church Room.

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