

# A HISTORY OF CHESHAM BOIS

by

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## C H E S H A M   B O I S

Chesham Bois is a small place by comparison with the neighbouring towns of Amersham and Chesham. Yet it has always managed to retain its individuality and character although it was for many years a manorial attachment to Great Chesham. Residents refer to Annes Corner and the few shops there as the "village" but strictly there is no actual village centre, and never has been.

The parish church, which is normally the focal point of a village, occupies an almost isolated location off the lower part of Bois Lane; and but for the fact that the 13th century chancel of this church was the private chapel of the former manor house, Chesham Bois would never have become a separate place at all.

Chesham Bois occupies a relatively high situation on the Chiltern Hills which are now scheduled for preservation as an area of outstanding natural beauty. The maximum elevation in the parish is on the verge of the common, near Heatherton House School, which is 544 feet above sea level. From here it slopes fairly steeply down to the Chess valley.

Although the Chilterns are chalk hills, the geological upheavals which raised them out of the sea have resulted in deep undulations, the chalk reaching the surface in Chesham Bois at only a few places. The sub-soil consists mainly of clay-with-flints as local gardeners know only too well.

Chesham Bois was, and still is, a very well wooded district; but the second part of the place name is not derived from the French word descriptive of this natural characteristic but from the family of du Bois who were early lords of the manor.

The civil parish, forming one of the sixteen which constitute the Chiltern District, covers some 659 acres, or just over one square mile. It used to extend down the main road as far as the now demolished Amy Mill and included Bois Moor and a stretch of the Chess valley towards Latimer; but most of this was transferred to what was the Chesham urban district under the Bucks Review Order of 1934.

### The Common

Some 38 acres of the original open common which, in fact, extended from well along Copperkins Lane, through what is now Amersham-on-the-Hill (but previously called Amersham Common) and past Blackhorse Bridge to Bell Lane, still remain to form a distinctive natural feature of Chesham Bois.

In addition to this common bounded by South Road, Chesham Road, North Road and Bois Lane, there are outlying parts between Heatherton House School and Bois Avenue, also from North Road down to Bois Wood and Great Hods Wood, and for a short distance along the north side of Chestnut Lane; also further remnants are the wide verges in Copperkins Lane, now defined as manorial waste.

Until well into the present century, as those who were born here can still remember, Chesham Bois Common was an open expanse of close turf with clumps of gorse and bracken, and only one group of trees which had been planted to screen the Rectory garden.



Now, due to some planting which took place in 1919, and much natural seeding, there is hardly any open common left except where the village cricket matches are played. An effort has, however, been made recently by the Parish Council to open up glades and to clear some of the undergrowth. As a result of this work, long dormant seeds of gorse have sprung into life.

Unlike the extensive local woodlands where the characteristic Chiltern beech is predominant, the principal trees on the common are oaks, with some hornbeams, a few wild cherries and crabs, holly and numerous hawthorns the trunks of which have twisted into fantastic shapes as they have grown old in such cramped conditions. Unfortunately ash and sycamore, which seed all too vigorously, are now tending to spoil the character of this stretch of mixed woodland.

The detached triangle of common on which the War Memorial stands used to have some fine elms with a rookery, but these trees have all succumbed to the prevalent Dutch elm disease which is an under-bark fungus carried by a species of beetle. The felling here has disclosed two or three young sweet chestnut trees which can now grow to maturity.

A cross glade on the main part of the common has been opened up by some felling of oak and cherry, and here amongst the ground cover of trailing brambles, the invasive Canadian fireweed (Willow-Herb) is already starting to spread. The common has a sprinkling of wild ferns, a few clumps of bluebells and various other woodland plants.

#### Wild Life

The most noticeable wild life on the common is the all too prevalent grey squirrel; but there are also voles, field mice, hedgehogs, shrews and the occasional weasel.

This common forms an admirable habitat for numerous birds which supplement their feeding by frequent forays to the neighbouring gardens and bird tables. In addition to blackbirds, thrushes, hedge accentors, robins and wrens, there are jays, magpies, collared doves, spotted woodpeckers, tree creepers and nuthatches, various finches, goldcrests, tits and others, with the added interest of summer and winter migrants. The margins of the pond provide food for wagtails and mud for house martins, and occasionally wild duck and even a heron may be seen there.

This pond is also a breeding place for frogs although frequently it dries up completely before the tadpoles have matured. Newts, too, breed there including the uncommon palmate newt.

In view of public criticism regarding the state of the pond, the Parish Council took advice and some clearance has been made. But as the pond is fed entirely by surface water, it tends to dry up in summer time. Also, as much of the water comes from the tarred road adjoining it, there is pollution and poisoning of the flora and fauna. Formerly this pond was much larger, and older residents remember how they used to paddle about on it in small boats and skate over it during hard winters.

#### Common Rights

The lord of the manor still owns the common; but in 1953 it was handed over to the Chesham Bois Parish Council for a term of 99 years at a peppercorn rent.

The lease stipulates that it shall be maintained in its present rural condition, with permission to cut out brushwood and to fell saplings and deformed or dead trees; but not without the owner's consent to fell any trees of over 4 inches quarter girth. Also, no commercial or other buildings are to be allowed on the common, nor roundabouts, children's swings etc., to be set up there.

The last person to hold common rights was Mr. Harry Aris who lived at Fern Villa, just off North Road, where he died in 1973 aged 88. These rights to graze cattle and to cut bracken and fodder had been granted to his father by the then lord of the manor, the Duke of Bedford, in the 19th century.

#### The Woods

Excluding the much wooded common, this parish has a considerable area of woodland. Bois Wood and Great Hods Wood together cover now over 85 acres, extending right down from the main road at The Dip to the lower part of Bois Lane and Woodley Hill. The long boundary between them is defined by the public footpath (incorrectly often called the Roman road) down from The Dell to the railway bridge at the end of Bois Moor Road.

This area of woodland is almost entirely of beech with fine stands of well matured trees interspersed by naturally grown saplings. Here and there are wild cherries whose burnished trunks rise so high into the beeches that their foam of white blossom in springtime cannot be admired from below.

The lower end of these fine woods can be reached from the public footpath linking Long Park with Bois Lane by a steep descent of concrete steps and railway sleepers through trees on a chalk escarpment which is called Granny's Steps or Jacob's Ladder.

Between Chiltern Road and Fullers Hill is Beech Wood of some 13 acres; but its extension of Howletts Wood of 4 acres up to Maggoty Croft Dell has been felled and is now mainly coppice with a few young trees growing up through it. Penn Grove (3 acres) lies further to the west.

The largest local wood used to be Blackwell Stubbs, covering nearly 54 acres and reaching right across from Bois Lane, over Hollow Way Lane to the sloping meadows above Ivy House Farm. But much of this has been lost by the residential developments along these roads, and by the later development of St. Leonards Road.

Even so, a mixed wood, which is vivid with bluebells in springtime, is still conserved behind Stubbs Wood and down as far as the branch railway line. From its lower end, by the public footpath tunnel under the railway, a distinctive feature is the old sunken track up towards St. Leonards Road between pollarded hornbeams.

#### IN EARLY TIMES

The earliest that is known about Chesham Bois is that a prehistoric trade route came down over Ley Hill, across the River Chess and up the significantly named Hollow Way Lane and Bois Lane, to carry on across the then extensive commons to Amersham, up to Penn and on towards the South Coast.

These ancient tracks were through largely uninhabited and often wild country. To guide those who used them, they were marked at frequent intervals by stone boulders of a distinctive type. These are known as conglomerates. In Hertfordshire and southwards as far as Chesham Bois they were of pebbles in a stone-like matrix, popularly called pudding stones.

In the Amersham area and further south they were sarsens, or unhewn blocks of sandstone. Chesham Church is built on pudding stones, part of Windsor Castle has sandstone sarsens as its foundations, and these also form the outer circle of Stonehenge.

Large pudding stones can still be seen embedded in the deep banks up both sides of Fullers Hill from Chesham towards Hyde Heath; but none are now left in Hollow Way Lane. They can often be found, usually broken up, in rockeries in local gardens; many of them line the sides of the drive up from Bois Lane to The Warren and Chesham Bois House.

Relics of the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages have been found at Chesham, Hyde Heath, Amersham and other surrounding places; but not, so far, in Chesham Bois.

Although there are sites of two Romano-British farming communities in Amersham, another at Latimer, and at least one in Chesham, no evidence of Roman times has come to light in Chesham Bois except for the odd coin or so found in Stubbs Wood, Hollow Way Lane and elsewhere. The nearest known Roman road came up from the Chess valley, past Raans manor house and over Stanley Hill to Amersham.

#### MANORIAL HISTORY

Chesham Bois was a Saxon manor which was given in 1073 by William the Conqueror to his half-brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. It is so recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 when the manor, with its water mill, was valued at sixty shillings.

This was its worth in good old English money. For even after the Conquest, the national coinage was still the Saxon silver penny which had been in use for the past three hundred years. The Normans adapted this on the basis that the weight of silver required to mint 240 of these pennies was a pound. The pound was divided into 20 shillings of 12 pence each to equate with their own Roman coins of libre, solidus and denarius. Long familiar in Britain by the initials (£.s.d.), this coinage survived until the change to decimalisation.

The manor of Chesham Bois was later held by the Honour of Leicester and then by the Duchy of Lancaster which retained the over-lordship until the 17th century. But in the reign of King John the ownership in fee was acquired by the Norman du Bois family. William du Bois occupied a manor house which he either rebuilt or erected about 1213, and close by he built a family chapel.

The manor house was not finally demolished until 1812 when some of the materials and various of the interior fittings were acquired by the Wellers, the wealthy Amersham brewing family, for their new residence, called The Plantation, which they were then building near Blackhorse Bridge. The foundations of the medieval Chesham Bois manor house can still be traced behind the two residences which stand close to the parish church.

In 1281 this manor passed to Sir Bartholomew Briangon who was granted free warren five years later. By 1340, after three generations of this family, Sir John Moleyns was in possession; but a decade later it was conveyed to William de Hanampstead, grocer and citizen of London.

After being alienated to Peter de Braose, it came into the possession of the Winslow family, also of London, and in 1446 John Winslow sold it to Sir Thomas Cheyne whose descendants held it for the next three centuries.

#### The Cheynes

This family owned the manor of Isenhamsted Cheyne (now Chenies) in the 12th century. It passed through the female line to the Sapcoates and thence by marriage to the Russells who became Dukes of Bedford.

It is of interest that the Cheynes had also been the holders of a rural manor near the City of London called Chelsea where their lordship is still commemorated by the well known street of Cheyne Walk.

Thomas Cheyne was shield bearer to Edward III who in 1368 granted him the manor of Drayton Beauchamp, between Aylesbury and Tring, as a reward for his faithful service.

His grandson, Sir Thomas Cheyne, who purchased the Chesham Bois manor, was a Lollard. He undoubtedly attended the procession in St. Giles Field, London, in 1414 which included a number of men from Amersham who were subsequently sentenced and burnt at the stake, for in this same year he was imprisoned in the Tower for his heretical beliefs.

His son, John, is recorded as Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and Knight of the Shire on several occasions, so he had obviously not supported his father's "heresy". On his death in 1466 he was succeeded by his own son, John, who by his well arranged marriage to a local girl, the heiress Elizabeth Brudenell, obtained the important manors of Raans and Shardeloes at Amersham, and Grove at Chesham.

Religious troubles cropped up again in this family when, in 1521, the orthodoxy of Robert Cheyne was questioned. His wife had died in 1516 but he lived on until 1552. Their grave and their brasses are in the chancel at Chesham Bois.

His son John, who had two wives, the first being Winifred, daughter of Lord Mordaunt, and the second Joyce Lee, daughter of Sir Anthony Lee of Quarrendon, is buried in an ornate tomb in the church chancel with a Latin inscription above stating that "he did not die but departed on November 1st 1585". Amongst other bequests he left annually for a term of 99 years "to this little parish 20 shillings".

Once again this family had religious troubles, for his elder son by his second marriage was disinherited through having become a Roman Catholic.

#### Last of the Cheynes

Moving on to the 17th century, Charles Cheyne, who was one of the two M.P.'s for the pocket borough of Amersham, married the daughter of the Duke of Newcastle. In 1618 he was created Viscount Newhaven. His son, William, second and last to hold the title, married the sister of the Duke of Kingston. On his death in 1728 the estate passed, with the advowson of the church, to his widow.

VCH  
1681

The Dowager Viscountess gained more than local celebrity when she successfully established the family rights over the parish church against the Archdeacon of Buckingham, so that Chesham Bois was acknowledged to be a donative and a "Peculiar" and therefore not subject to the authority of the bishop or other diocesan jurisdiction.

Some of the Cheynes are buried in the church at their other family manor of Drayton Beauchamp. These include Thomas, the faithful shield bearer to Edward III and his son, William (1375), who are commemorated in fine medieval brasses; also William, the second and last Viscount Newhaven, whose tomb is surmounted by a most impressive monument. But numerous members of the family, some without any visible memorial, are "buried in ye chancell of Boys".

On the death of the Viscountess the manor of Chesham Bois passed to a relative, Lord Gower who in 1738 disposed of it to the Duke of Bedford. With their former palace-like manor house at Chenies, the Russells were already important local land owners.

This notable family held Chesham Bois until 1903 when they sold it to Mr. J. W. Garrett-Pegge. Chesham Bois Manor, the home of the Garrett-Pegges, is the 19th century residence at the bottom of the main road into Chesham.

#### THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS

From Saxon times local administration was based on districts called Hundreds, the court of each hundred meeting quarterly to settle disputes and to try criminal cases in its area. Chesham Bois was in the Hundred of Burnham which, with those of Stoke and Desborough, constituted the Chiltern Hundreds.

During the middle ages the Chilterns were a heavily forested and sparsely populated district which became a notorious hide-out for fugitives from justice and law breakers who combined into bands of armed robbers. In consequence, those who had to travel this way to or from London were in constant danger of losing their money and often their lives.

A Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds was therefore appointed by the Crown to maintain a well armed posse whose duty it was to safeguard travellers and, whenever possible, to capture or kill the lurking criminals. In due course the Chilterns were cleared and made safe. The appointment almost lapsed; but with the passing of the Place Act in 1742, it assumed a political significance and usage.

For although a Member cannot resign during the life of a Parliament, he forfeits his seat if he holds or accepts any paid office under the Crown. So a Member wishing to resign usually applies for this Stewardship, the State payment for which used to be one shilling but is now one pound per year. Actually an Act of Parliament waived this debarment some while ago, but the ancient custom is still maintained.

#### DEVELOPMENT FROM TUDOR DAYS

Two farms were recorded at Chesham Bois in the 16th century; Manor Farm and Bois Farm. The latter is now part of the Beacon School on the main road to Chesham where a massive and splendidly timbered Elizabethan

barn (partly converted into a farm dwelling) can still be seen. For some while during the 1930's, this was used as a repertory theatre.

Manor Farm (now incorrectly named Manor House) stands on North Road, which was then only a cart track. The double-fronted farmhouse had a west wing added in the 19th century, largely to provide a studio for the well known artist who came to live there. She converted the fine old adjoining barn into another residence, now called Manor Barn.

Next door stands Manor Lodge which was originally farm workers' cottages. Further down the road towards Annes Corner are two other 16th century cottages of this farm (now called Rectory Cottages); but the larger one attached to them on the right is not so old.

Two more farms were recorded in the 17th century. These were Mayhall, which is situated between Copperkins Lane and Chesham Road, and Ivy House, a half-timbered farmstead in the Chess valley along the road towards Latimer.

Beyond Ivy House, on the opposite of the road, stands Bois Mill. It occupies the site of the original water mill recorded in the Domesday Survey when it was worth three shillings.

The cost of building a good-sized house in the 16th century was about £30. and a cottage could be built for £5. At that time much building and rebuilding was taking place although an Act of Parliament in the reign of Elizabeth I restricted this by the issue of licences unless the building occupied a site of four or more acres of land. So the issue of building licences in Britain after the 1939/45 war was not, after all, anything new. Also in Tudor times windows were being glazed instead of only shuttered.

#### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Even right up to the middle of the 19th century very little further development occurred in the parish, as may be confirmed from the tithe map of 1838.

The population of Chesham Bois in 1806 was 135, consisting of 29 families in 23 dwellings. By the time of the 1821 census there had been an increase of only 20 persons and 4 more dwellings.

Fifty years later it had risen to 258, increasing to 552 in 1891. Then there were 130 dwellings, 4 unoccupied and 6 in course of erection. The proportionate population was 263 males and 289 females. The census of 1901 gave the figure of 767 and by 1921 it had reached 1,790.

Even in 1843 the Rector of that time stated that his parish consisted "entirely of agricultural labourers excepting four farmers and two other families of respectability".

The tithe map shows the general agricultural situation in Chesham Bois during the first half of the 19th century :-

Bois Farm was then owned by John Garrett and farmed by George Ware. The fields included Hilbury, Great and Little Melands, Horsecroft, Elvidge, Green Headland, Anthony, Little Wattage and Great Hods Wood which was at that time some 38 acres of fairly steep grazing land.



Manor Farm was in the ownership of Elizabeth Kingston and farmed by John Pope; its fields being Long Park, Great and Little Upper Back, Pond Close, Coach Meadow, Long Sextons, Holly Bush, Further Sextons and Brick Kiln Field.

Mayhall Farm comprised part of the extensive estate of the Fuller family. Benjamin Fuller lived at Germains, and Fullers Hill, from Chesham towards Hyde Heath, was named after him. This farm was partly worked by Thomas Gomm and partly by Robert Oldfield; the latter rented Stoney Germans, Howletts, Chalk Ley and Spring Field; whilst the former had Long Field, The Pightle, Maggoty Croft and House Field, together with the Mayhall farmhouse.

We may well be pleased to see that various of these old field names have been remembered in the naming of certain local houses and roads.

Ivy House was part of the Latimer estate of the Hon. Charles Cavendish whose land in Chesham Bois was farmed between William Scott and Richard Ball. The former rented Upper, Lower and Further High Fields; and the latter lived in the farmhouse and had Five Acres, Starveacre, Fully Field and Blands. Both these tenants also farmed land which was beyond the Chesham Bois parish boundary.

#### Other Dwellings

Dutton Allen's Directory of 1863 gives under Chesham Bois :-

Gentry: Rev. Chas. Blackman, Rectory; Mr. Edward Carver, Bois House; Mrs. Charlotte Fox; Mrs. Anne Gilbert.

Commercial: James Bennett, cattle dealer; John Clare, farmer; Miss M. Cox, school mistress; John Elliott, paper manufacturer; George Rose, Miller, corn dealer and saw mills; Mrs. Catherine Ware, farmer.

In addition to the farmhouses and cottages already mentioned, the 1838 tithe map shows a few small dwellings along Bois Moor Road, two cottages on the site of Heatherton House School, and a pair of cottages on the corner of North Road and what is now Long Park. These last two were demolished when the How family built their new residence here which is now Ken House Hotel.

Also shown on this tithe map is Chesham Bois House, off Bois Lane, which is believed to have been the dower house for the manor. Where The Warren now stands, between this residence and the church, was a dairy farm which, until the Reformation, had belonged to the monks of Missenden Abbey. In the 1830's it was run by Matthew Priest and Samuel Coles.

The only other house was the Parsonage on the common which was little more than a large country cottage. When the Hon. Lowther Barrington was appointed Rector by his relation, the Duke of Bedford, it was considered necessary to provide a more suitable residence.

#### The Rectory

Looking rather like a small Tudor manor house, for it was designed and built in the characteristic Russell style similar to their properties at Chenies and Woburn, the present Rectory has a two-storeyed porch bearing the date 1833 and displaying the ducal coronet. An eastern wing was

later added in the same style of construction.

The adjoining stable block, although now partly converted for use as a garage, still preserves its original brick floor with the stalls and mangers. Above is a tack room, also three former staff bedrooms.

The foundations of the old parsonage are in the garden to the south-east of the present Rectory.

The Church Hall, on a short road linking Bois Lane with North Road behind the War Memorial, and which is un-named, was not built until 1937. But previously there was a small wooden building to serve this purpose beside the Rectory drive. It was given in 1910 by Mrs. Fitzpatrick, mother of the Rector at that time.

#### Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee

The fiftieth anniversary of the accession of Queen Victoria was duly celebrated at Chesham Bois on Tuesday 21st June, 1887. Subscriptions were collected from parishioners and ratepayers to provide a meat tea for everyone over the age of 21, with tea and cakes for those younger.

It is recorded that the church was nearly filled for the service at 2 p.m. "the bells being rung frequently". Afterwards everyone went up to the rectory garden where they were "plentifully regaled" with cold roast and boiled beef, mutton and ham, also tea, ginger beer and lemonade.

They were then at liberty to stroll about the garden (and no doubt had need of such exercise) whilst cricket and football matches were arranged on the adjoining common.

The day is said to have been perfect, "very fine and yet cool", and "it was a pleasant sight to witness old and young enjoying the holiday, many remarking that they had never spent a happier day in all their lives".

At dusk a harmonium was brought into the garden and many gathered round Miss Matthews as she played it for them to sing their favourite hymns. A little before ten o'clock a large bonfire was lit on the common for a grand finale. As it burnt out, the people began to return to their homes, spontaneously breaking out into the National Anthem.

It would certainly seem that a good time was had by all; for in those days such a holiday - or a holiday of any kind for most people - was exceptional.

#### MORE RECENT DEVELOPMENT

Towards the end of the 19th century the village around Annes Corner began to develop although most of the population was centred on Bois Moor. All the older type properties down Bois Lane date from about 1890 to around 1912 including the Tudor reproduction of Annes Corner.

Leazefield House, opposite the War Memorial, displays the slightly earlier date of 1885 above its front door. A pair of corrugated iron cottages opposite the shop below the present Post Office which were demolished for redevelopment in 1975, were the original post office of Chesham Bois.

At the beginning of the present century when William Gomm, with George Pearce, built Mapledene, Mowbraydene and Copperkins Cottage (also Drayton



House and Cherry Trees in Amersham), most of their doors, fireplaces, balustrading and window frames came from late period houses which had been demolished to provide the site for Marylebone station.

North Road, Long Park, Green Lane and Woodside Avenue began to be developed over the former farmland, and a few houses were also being built along the main road towards Chesham, whilst a start was made in Chiltern Road and Copperkins Lane.

The oldest houses in North Road, excluding the original farm buildings, were Orchard House, Mapledene, and the two pairs of semi-detached villas beyond the present Ken House Hotel.

The first in Long Park were Nos: 11, 37, 39 and 43. Some trees and hedging from the original Long Park meadow boundary remain outside Nos: 8, 18, 30, 38, 48 to 56 and beyond Green Lane corner along the public footpath as far as No. 66.

Already the dairy farm beside the church had been replaced by The Warren, and Bois Place (now called Tenterden) had been built beyond Chesham Bois House.

The only public house in the ecclesiastical parish is the Unicorn in Bois Moor Road. Although now in the civil parish of Chesham, it was formerly half in Chesham and half in Chesham Bois.

#### THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Kelly's Directory of 1907 shows the result of residential and other developments which had increased the census population figures from 218 in 1861 to 767 in 1901. Private residents, listed with their addresses were :-

Bates, Mrs. Rose Cottage.	Garrett-Pegge R.W., Chesham House.
Bentley, G.W., Bracken Cottage	Garrett-Pegge W.G., Chesham House.
Bisgood, Wm., The Barn.	Goddard, C.F., The Old Manor.
Bracebridge-Miles F., Pixton.	How, J.G., Kensworth.
Brook, Arthur. Netrom.	How, William.
Browne, A., M.A., Chiltern Cottage.	Jackson, J., Glenview.
Brunning, Walter. Oaklyn.	Jones, T.R., Penbryn.
Butcher, F.J., J.P., The Warren.	Kemp, B.S., Little Gable.
Carver, Misses. Bois House.	Luff, A.P., High Bois.
Charlwood, Mrs. Chess Tor.	Mott, Frederick, Downash.
Chomette, P., Hetherset.	Nunnerley, H., Ellerslie.
Colenso, F.E.	Page, E., Myrtle View.
Crane, C.E., Tamenis.	Pryor, W.A., Mowbray Dene.
Crofton, Miss. Waycroft.	Ross, W.J., Ashlyn.
Cross, John, Mapledene.	Rouquett, P.J.G., Saxtons.
Evans, A., Bois Farmhouse.	Souper, Mrs., Oak Cottage.
Fitzpatrick, Rev. T.H. Rectory.	Till, Walter, Heathfield.
Forbes, J.E., Chad Cottage.	Watson, A.M., Red House.
Ford, Miss, Orchard House.	Wells, W.E., Draycott.
Garrett-Pegge, J.W., J.P.	Whiting, H.S., The Beeches.
Chesham House.	

The commercial entries were :-

Aris, Wm. Henry. Baker.  
 Batchelor, Thos. Timber Carter.  
 Bates, Thos. & Sons, Wood Turners, New Road and  
 Bois Saw Mills.  
 Beckley & Holliman. Watercress Growers.  
 Birch, John. Boot & Shoe Maker & Parish Clerk.  
 Carter, P.N. Stationer, Post Office.  
 Darvell, Alfred. Farmer.  
 Ford, Miss A., Registrar births & deaths, Chesham  
 sub-district Amersham union, Orchard House.  
 Gomm, Wm. Wheelwright.  
 Jacobs, Wm., Shop keeper.  
 Keen, John & Son. Builders.  
 Keen, Fred. Plumber.  
 Marten, Frank A., Builder, Bois Lane.  
 Payne, John. Apartments.  
 Puddephatt, Wm., Farmer, Bois Farm.  
 Saunders, Richard. Farmer, Mayhall Farm.  
 Slade, Edward. Shop keeper.  
 Watson, Ralph. Unicorn P.H.

According to the Chesham Examiner in 1911 there was the usual grumble about rates. For that year the Union rate in the £. was 2½d., the special County rate 1d., elementary education rate 2¾d. and higher education ¼d. When this rate was announced at the local Council meeting, one member bitterly complained at it being almost four times what it had been when he first sat on the Council !

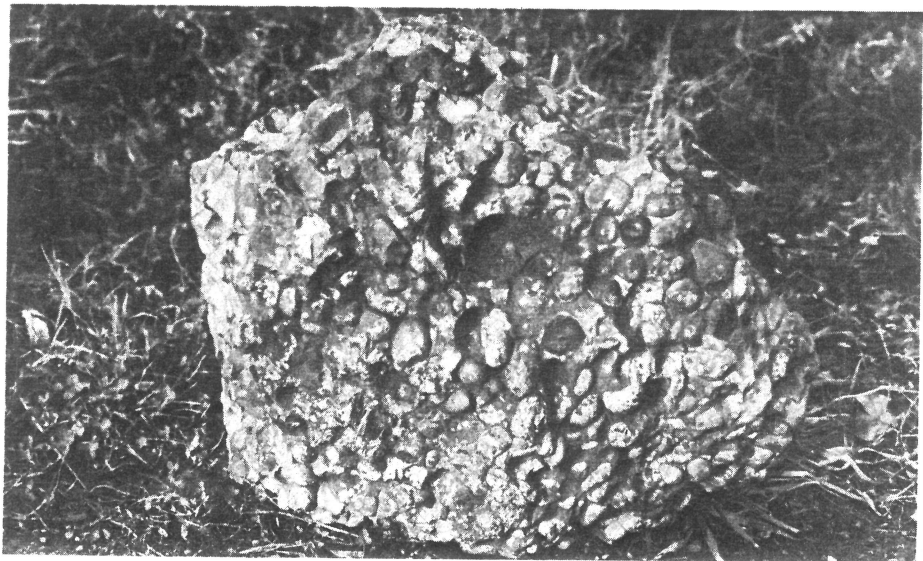
#### THE OLD ROADS

In the bushes about 20 yards down the Chesham main road from North Road corner stands a now mutilated 18th century milestone. One other similar has been found and is now preserved in the garden of Rexview, Bois Lane.

These are relics of the former road between Chesham and Amersham which was a stretch of the turnpike constructed by the Cecil family, Marquesses of Salisbury, from their seat at Hatfield to join the London to Bath road between Marlow and Reading. All this family were greatly afflicted by gout and needed to make frequent visits to Bath to take the waters and other treatment provided at this famous spa.

Their road through Chesham Bois can still be traced. It left Chesham by Amy Lane and may be seen as a wide, green ride going up between the two cottages near the entry to Chesham Bois Manor. It curves on around the woodlands of this estate to continue (as a public footpath) behind the gardens of Chiltern Road and Oakway, and it comes out down what is now called Mayhall Lane, just before Bois Avenue.

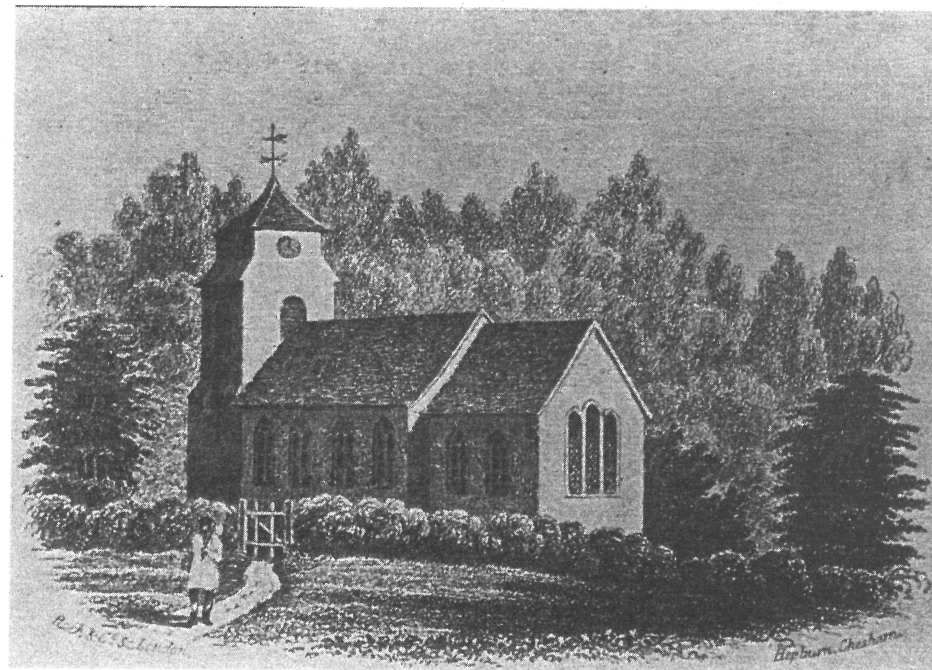
Some old residents still call the present main road from this point down to Chesham "New Road" although it replaced the old turnpike long before they themselves were born. This is an example of how tradition dies hard; at the same time it can be useful to historians by providing a significant clue to something of the past, as in this instance. In the 1838 tithe map the disused turnpike route is called Old Beech Lane.



Conglomerate or Pudding Stone



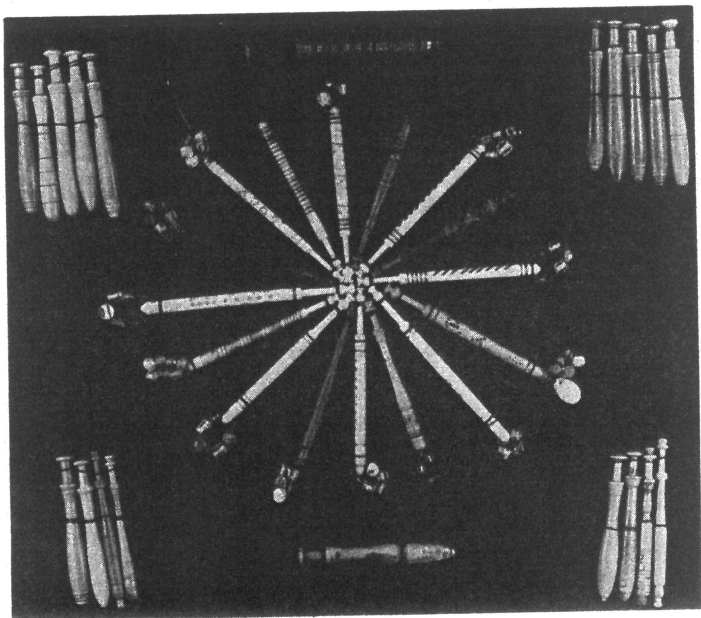
The Reading Turnpike



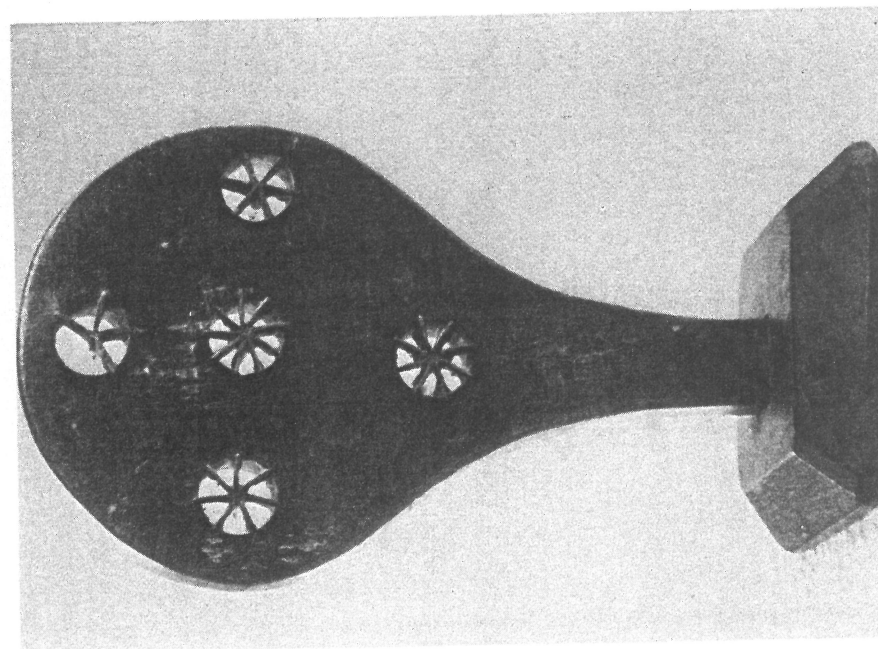
Church, prior to 1881



Old Parsonage



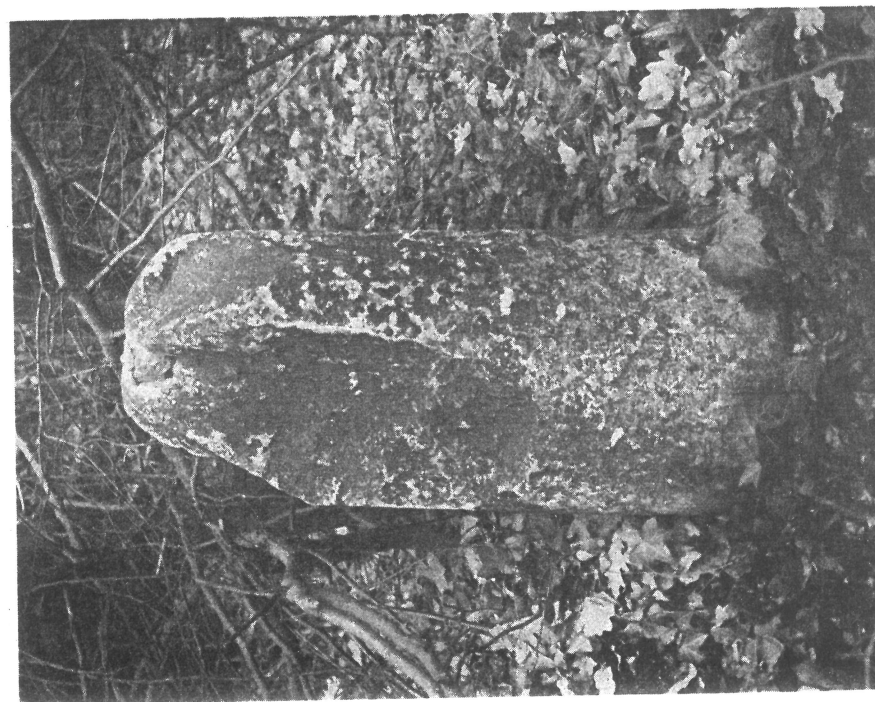
Pillow Lace Bobbins



Straw Splitter, circa 1820



This was Bois Lane



18th century Milestone



The alternative way up from Chesham was Bois Lane, once a real lane which, even in the late 19th century was "grassed over" according to what a local resident wrote at that time. When the Chesham branch line was constructed in 1890, the lower course of Bois Lane was somewhat altered. Its original deep-cut track can be seen below the present roadway on the left-hand side going down from opposite the Pioneer Hall to the railway bridge.

One other old road, which for many years was no more than a trackway linking the commons of Amersham and Chesham Bois to that of Hyde Heath, is Copperkins Lane. No satisfactory derivation for this name has yet been put forward.

Interesting but unsubstantiated suggestions have been "Copperskins", referring to the gipsies who used to camp along it; and "Capuchin" on the theory that Capuchin monks (Franciscan Order) had a grange at Great Hundred, between Chesham and Hyde Heath, and used this way to reach it - but where from, and why?

#### EDUCATION

The first schooling in Chesham Bois was provided in the old parsonage by the Revd. Thomas Clarke, rector from 1767 until his death in 1793. He also trained here candidates for the Ministry; various of these became well known in the later Evangelical Revival.

It was not until the 19th century that a proper village school became established. For this purpose the Duke of Bedford gave an acre of common land on the corner of Chestnut Lane (then called Red Lion Road) and Bois Lane, and generously also headed the subscription list with a donation of £60.

A dwelling for the mistress with an attached schoolroom was built of local flint and brick with a Bangor slated roof. Its cost was £150. The school opened in 1846 and soon further accommodation was needed for all the pupils.

An addition, in the same style of construction, 24 feet in length and 12 feet wide, was made. The estimate for this work, submitted by Thomas Gomm, which is still a local firm, was £29. By 1873 there were 62 scholars.

#### School Expenses

The upkeep costs in those days would appear, by present day standards, to have been most modest, as was the mistress's remuneration. This can be seen by the following extracts from the school expenses book dated 1869 to 1874.

The salary of the mistress was £1. per quarter, in addition to which she had the rent free living accommodation. The remuneration for the monitress was 2s. 6d. quarterly.

Papering and painting the school house cost £1. 3s. and white-washing the school room 10s. 9d. Some repairs were later carried out for £1. 4s. 4½d. A supply of tar for the palings was purchased for 6d. School cleaning per quarter cost 6s. 3d. and the chimney sweep's charge was 1s. Coal was then £1. 12s. per ton.

## CHESHAM BOIS, BUCKS.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale

VALUABLE FREEHOLD  
Building Site,

COFFAGE & BUILDING

(NOW THIS IS A PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT)

SITUATE AT CHESHAM BOIS.

CONTAINING NEARLY ONE ACRE

AND BUILT UP

GOOD FRONTAGES

To the Banks leading through Chesham Bois to Amersham and Amersham Common.

For Sale by Auction, by

MR. WALTER BATES

At the Crown Hotel, Chesham.

On WEDNESDAY, 18th JUNE, 1894, at 3 for 4 o'clock.

IN ONE LOT.

The Auctioneer has pleasure in drawing the attention to this property of being a thoroughly healthy and suitable site for a Country Residence, and of some freedom of purchase and the very best of building purposes.

Particulars and Conditions of Sale may be obtained at the office of the Auctioneer, Messrs. ALBIN HUNT & TOLBERT, 10, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4.

CHESHAM BOIS, BUCKS.





School equipment included a supply of slate pencils at 6d. and a file "for sharpening same" 1s. Slates were purchased at eight for 3s. 4d. Soon more up-to-date methods required a supply of steel pens at 1s. 6d. per gross, and a large bottle of ink at 1s. A packet of lead pencils cost 2d. and copy books were bought at 2s. 6d. per dozen. A bell "for calling attention" was purchased for 3s.

All books required were apparently obtained in London, the carriage to Chesham Bois being usually 6d. A time-table in accordance with the Education Act of 1870 was 2½d. but the cost of a school register came out rather surprisingly at as much as 5s. 1½d.

#### Financial Maintenance

An expenditure recorded in 1870 is entitled "making up deficit in school pence" which was debited against the establishment at 9s. 3d. Beyond the payment made by parents (with defaulters apparently) of one penny a week for each child, the school was entirely maintained by the Church and local subscribers, together with a small State grant. This financial arrangement continued (although with increasing grants) right up to 1951 when the present school was handed over to the County to become a Church of England Controlled School.

It is of interest to see a list of subscribers for the year 1871 which includes well known and still local names :-

	£. s. d.		£. s. d.
Rev. J. Matthews	1. 0. 0.	C. Statham Esq.	10. 0.
Mrs. Matthews	1. 0. 0.	Miss Blackman	1. 0. 0.
Mrs. Weller	2. 0. 0.	Mr. G. Rose	1. 0. 0.
Mrs. Pegg	2. 0. 0.	Mrs. Beckley	5. 0.
E. Weller Esq.	1. 0. 0.	Mr. G. H. Warner	10. 6.
Mr. H. Glenister	1. 0. 0.	Mr. W. Ford	1. 1. 0.
Mrs. Ware	1. 0. 0.	Mr. J. Pontin	5. 0.
Rev. Lord Wriothesley Russell	1. 1. 0.	Mr. J. Bennett	1. 0. 0.
B. Fuller Esq.	2. 2. 0.	Mrs. Gee	3. 0.
Capt. & Mrs. John Fuller	1.10. 0.		

Additional income for the school during this year was :-

	£. s. d.
Part rent of watercress beds	6. 5. 0.
Rent of school land allotments	1. 6. 6.
Sale of chalk from ditto	3. 0.
Collections after sermons	1.18. 7½.

#### Adverse Report

On February 2nd 1872 the school was examined by Her Majesty's Inspector who made the following report :-

"The mistress' house opens into the schoolroom. This should be altered. The desks are very old fashioned; parallel rows of desks should be provided. The school is very small. The instruction is very elementary; there were no children presented above the first standard. This school ought to have been inspected last October, but in consequence of prevalence of fever, the inspection was postponed".

He, however, recommended a grant should be made to the school of £7.12.0d.

#### Plans for New School

With the erection of a number of terraces of artisan dwellings along Bois Moor Road - and possibly because of the criticism in the Report - the managers considered that a new and larger school was needed; and they rightly decided it should be on Bois Moor where most of the children lived.

Mr. William Lowndes, of The Bury in Chesham, was approached, and he kindly gave a piece of land called Ball's Shrubbery on the corner of Bois Moor Road and what is now Cresswell Road.

By 1889 a corrugated iron building had been provided and erected by a Manchester firm at a total cost of £137. 8s. But when the Education Authority had inspected it they considered it unsuitable for a school and would not approve it. In consequence it was used as a week-night club, which became very popular, and the Church held services there on Sundays.

So another site had to be found, and in 1893 when Lord Chesham had been approached he gave a piece of land in Bois Lane. Plans were drawn up and subscription lists opened. The appeal for funds, made by the Rector, the Revd. George Roworth, resulted in generous donations from the Duchess of Bedford, the Earl Howe, the Bishop of Reading, Lord Rothschild and others.

The full list included such well known local names as Aris, Beckley, Carver, Catlin, Climpson, Darvell, Faithorn, Fryer, Fuller, Gee, Gomm, Howard, Joiner, Keen, Larking, Liberty, Lowndes, Matthews, Mead, Nash, Patterson, Garrett-Pegge, Pontin, Puddephatt, Reading, Smith, Statham, Stratton and Weller.

A year later, against a public financial response of £1,202. 2s. 7d. the original part of the present school was completed at a cost of £1,092. 1s. 6d.

#### Old School Auction

The old school premises at Chestnut Lane corner were then offered for sale by public auction. This was held at the Crown Hotel, Chesham, "at 3 for 4 o'clock". The auctioneer was Mr. Walter Bates, of Bois Steam Saw Mills, New Road, Chesham; and the solicitors were Messrs. Albin Hunt & Fourmy, of Chesham and Great Missenden.

On the auction display notices it was stated that "the auctioneer has pleasure in drawing the attention to this property of those seeking a thoroughly healthy and suitable site for a country residence, or of those desirous of purchasing land in every way suitable for building purposes".

Offered in one lot, this freehold dwelling and schoolroom realised £385. Fortunately it was not demolished for redevelopment of the site but became a private residence named Downash from the large ash tree which stood on the corner. One is pleased to see that the name has now been changed to the Old School House.

#### CHARITIES

The Duke of Bedford's Charity, established during the time the Hon. Lowther Barrington was Rector of Chesham Bois (1830 to 1839) comprised a stretch of Bois Moor of over 7 acres with the Chess flowing through it.

The annual income derived from the rental of the watercress beds, leased until a few years ago to Beckley and Holliman, and from the allotments, is divided equally between the poor of Chesham Bois parish and the local authority (formerly the Amersham Rural District Council) towards the relief of the rates.

There is also a very small charity from a Cheyne bequest. The interest on this, amounting currently to only £2. per annum, is divided equally between the poor of Chesham Bois and Cholesbury.

#### LOCAL COTTAGE CRAFTS

The traditional cottage crafts of straw plaiting and lace making were carried on in Chesham Bois during the 18th and 19th centuries. Pillow lace work has been revived in recent years, mainly through the craft section of some of the Women's Institutes.

##### Straw Plait

Plait was made to supply what was then the thriving ladies' straw hat trade centred at Luton and Hitchin. Middlemen bought the wheat or barley straw from the farmers. They combed it, stripping and bleaching or dyeing it in popular colours, and bundled it in one or half cwt. bales.

It was then distributed by them amongst the cottage workers who made it up in different patterns, such as long-and-short, brilliant, rustic, whipcord, and piping or pearl which was a local speciality.

All that the workers required beyond their own skill were a straw-splitter and a plait mill. The latter was like a tiny wooden mangle which was generally attached by a bracket to the wall and was used to flatten the completed plait. This was made up in "scores". Even working from early morning until late at night, the most a good worker could produce in a day was three of these 20 yds. lengths.

It was collected weekly by the middlemen who sold it to the trade. The average price paid by them to the workers was 1s. 6d. a score. Some of the local women, in order to obtain a few pence more per score, would walk all the way to Luton and back at the week-end to sell it direct to the hat makers, a return journey of over 40 miles.

##### Pillow Lace

This lace was worked and sold on a similar basis through dealers, or middlemen. Evidence of the activity in this craft at Chesham Bois is that the parish registers show the description of "laceman".

Contrary to what is often stated, this craft was not brought to England by Catherine of Aragon but by Huguenot refugees who had been lace workers in Flanders and France. The first introduction appears to have been Mechlin lace, from Malines in what is now Belgium; then Lille lace from France, followed by Maltese (actually Genoese), Chantilly, Torchon and Arras laces. All these became blended into a characteristic English lace of which the finest was known as Bucks Point.

The design, prepared on parchment, was set on the pillow and the pattern marked out with pins. Then the white, ecru or black thread was twisted around the pins from bobbins. These bobbins, originally of boxwood, were later turned in yew, cherry, maple, apple or any other close-grained wood;

they were also of bone and sometimes of ivory. Some were inlaid and others were banded with pewter. Usually they had coloured beads, shells or spangles attached to them by a loop of copper wire to give them weight and keep them in place.

Many were inscribed with names, texts or love messages, and some commemorated national events. The lettering was punched, either in straight lines along the shank or spirally up it. Very small plain bobbins were used for the dainty Bucks Point. Large plain ones were for the gimp which outlined the pattern.

The traditional patterns used for Bucks lace were mainly from nature. They included the acorn, barley ear, thistle, shamrock, tulip, rose, cornflower and water lily; but also such motifs as the crown, bell, beehive, lover's knot and diamond. Learners started with a tiny "pillow" and four bobbins, making the basic stitch called "foot and purl" until they were adept.

#### OTHER CRAFTS AND TRADES

Bois Mill was originally used for the fulling and dyeing of locally made cloth, as evidence of which the name of the meadow opposite the mill is shown on the tithe map as Fully (or Fulling) Field.

In 1792 this mill was acquired by Joseph Elliott who converted it for paper making. The same change had already been made at Amy Mill and the neighbouring mills of Sarratt, Blackwell Hall and Weir House. This last, described in 1775 as having "two good engines and two water wheels with good drying houses", was also purchased by the Elliott family.

In 1807 Joseph Elliott's son, who had married a local girl, Sarah Boughton (still a well known Amersham name), installed at Bois Mill two of the first continuous sheet-paper making machines in England. By 1830 he had replaced the water wheel by steam power.

Amy Mill, now most unfortunately demolished, was in Chesham Bois parish until transferred to Chesham under the boundary adjustments. It was owned by the Fuller family and shown in the 1838 tithe map as being occupied by William Rose. In 1845 he was fatally injured by the steam-driven machinery he had installed to replace the old water wheel.

##### The Brickworks

Another traditional local industry from the early 17th century was brick making, the kilns often being fired by the furze which grew over the extensive commons.

Old residents still call the pool on the common "Bricky Pond". This, and the numerous far deeper hollows among the trees on the common alongside North Road, were where the brick earth was dug out.

Reference once again to the tithe map gives the clue to the location of these brickworks. For a meadow behind Ken House Hotel is named Brick Kiln Field. So it would seem that the two cottages shown on the map on what is now the North Road - Long Park corner which were demolished when the How family residence was built there, were the homes of the Chesham Bois brick kiln workers.

### The Cressbeds

Until recent times (and still to a small extent) watercress growing has been a local undertaking. The finest water for growing cress is said to be that of chalk streams, like the Chess.

When the old Great Central Railway was extended to London and Marylebone station was being built in 1899, much of the gravel for this work was excavated from the Chess valley at the bottom of Hollow Way Lane. This area with the stream flowing through it (for this is the true River Chess, not the waterway along Waterside which was the leet to serve the mills) was converted into additional cressbeds, the river water being augmented by boreholes into the chalk. At one time there were over two dozen workers engaged here in cultivating, picking and packing. For some time derelict, this area has now been in-filled.

### Wood Working

Various wood working crafts were actively carried on in such a well wooded district. Although chairs (called Windsors because they were taken to Windsor market for sale) were made in Amersham, there is no evidence of this craft in Chesham Bois.

There was wood turning and carving. The former is still maintained in Chesham, but carving, originally for butter pats and shortbread moulds, has virtually died out as no young men are attracted nowadays when better wages can be gained in far easier work.

### The Bakery

One other local trade of the latter part of the 19th century is worth recording, for Chesham Bois then had its own village bakery. This was run by the Aris family. The brick and tiled bakehouse still stands behind their former home, now called Fern Cottage, just off North Road. When the first shop was built at Annes Corner, they took it to retail their bread, also to sell confectionery.

### THE PARISH CHURCH

This church is in a very pleasant and secluded position just off Bois Lane. Developing through more than three quarters of a millennium from a small family chapel to a parish church seating some 200 people, it enshrines the history of this parish from as far back as the time of Magna Carta, for it was founded in the year 1215.

Preserved from that date is the chancel of Early English architecture which was the original du Bois chapel. In the 14th century a small nave was added which extended as far as the present south doorway, although without the removal of what had been the exterior end wall of the chapel. This rather awkwardly remained, with two small archways through it, until 1884.

The chapel and its extension were constructed of locally gathered flints, knapped, or split, in the traditional manner, with dressings (corner stones, window framing etc.) of clunch which is hard chalk. This same style of construction has been maintained for all subsequent additions to the church; although, owing to the deterioration of such a soft stone as clunch by weather action, a harder type of stone has since had to be substituted.

In the 15th century the building was re-roofed and peg-tiled; the interior wooden braces and trusses (with traces of their original decorative painting) are still displayed with the supporting corbels; but the matchboard lining was a 19th century addition.

A rather insubstantial timbered belfry was then built up against the west wall of the nave to carry one or more bells. Also a gallery was installed. Until then there had been no pews, the congregation having to stand or kneel throughout what were often very long services.

In 1833 the gallery was extended, covering almost the whole of the little nave. Two years later a seraphine, subscribed for by surviving ordination students of the Revd. Thomas Clarke, was presented to the church. A dumb organ with three barrels was later added.

In 1839 the ancient glass was collected from various windows and re-set to fill the triple lancets forming the east window of the chancel. In 1886 an old marble font was presented to the church by the Revd. Edward Tyrwitt Drake of Amersham, as presumably the original font had been either lost or broken.

### Alterations and Extensions

By the 1881 census there were over 350 inhabitants of the parish and it was necessary to enlarge the church, also to undertake very necessary repairs.

The foundationless belfry was demolished and the gallery removed, so revealing the west window which had been plastered over. The north aisle was added, the 14th century windows on that side of the nave being re-set in the new wall. The south porch and tower were erected. At the same time the old wall between the nave and chancel was taken down. The original chapel doorway in this was saved and erected as a lych-gate at the entry to the churchyard where part of it still remains.

In 1911 the nave and north aisle were considerably lengthened and the present clergy vestry built so that the original vestry could become the organ chamber. Also gas lighting was installed. A subsequently added choir vestry was removed in 1969 and replaced by the much larger Birkett Room and its ancillary accommodation. This commemorates the notable ministry at Chesham Bois of the Revd. Alvan Birkett from 1945 to 1964, as stated on a wall tablet of stone from his native Yorkshire.

### The Window Glass

As a result of bomb damage in 1940, the glass in the east window had to be re-set with additions to complete the glazing. It is almost entirely of 14th and 15th century dating, comprising what had been saved from this window together with some medieval glass donated and three 15th century Flemish panels supplied by the designer.

A few fragments of 15th century glass still survive in the west window of the nave which was renewed as a family memorial in 1947. The completely modern glazing in the north aisle window opposite the south doorway, installed in 1970 in memory of a chorister, depicts the story of Caedmon whose songs of praise for God's creation became the first English poetry. Also of contemporary glass is the window next to the vestry doorway in memory of a generous benefactor of the church. Installed in 1975, this

shows Mary at the feet of Jesus and Martha in the kitchen in the background.

#### The Bells

The tower carries three bells. The new tenor bell was given in remembrance of two children killed during the 1939-45 war, one in Chesham Bois and the other in Germany. The second bell is dated 1705 and inscribed "Chandler made me". The Chandler brothers had a bell foundry at Drayton Parslow. The third bell, also old, is undated.

In the porch stands the original tenor bell, cast some five hundred years ago and now cracked beyond repair. It is stamped with shields displaying fleurs-de-lys and carries the inscription: Sancte Andrea Ora Pro Nobis" although the church is not dedicated to St. Andrew but to St. Leonard. This is one of only three bells known to exist from the London foundry of John Keyll, the other two being at Little Linford in north Bucks. Hanging in the ringing chamber is a much deteriorated painting of the royal arms of George IV.

#### Church Fittings

This church has some interesting period fittings. The early Jacobean hexagonal oak pulpit stands upon its inverted former canopy. The carved panel which supported the canopy now forms the back of the priest's stall. Still fixed to the wall beside the pulpit may be seen the iron Cromwellian hourglass holder.

The communion table dates from the reign of Queen Anne, and the communion rails are Jacobean, having been part of the old gallery. The two oaken 15th century priests' seats in the chancel, remade in 1881 by the husband of the school mistress, had poppyhead ends which were cut off in the days of religious intolerance as being idolatrous.

The oak eagle lectern is comparatively modern, as is the font which replaced the marble one which cracked. The handsome, studded leather chair is believed to have come from Shardeloes. Some medieval encaustic tiles, now in the sanctuary, were found under the flooring beneath the chancel arch

#### The Organ

The original dumb organ was replaced by an American organ until the present one was installed in 1920 as a war memorial. This was originally a two-manual chamber organ built for Sir Henry Oakley, general manager of the old Great Northern Railway Company, for his country seat of Oakleigh Park which is now only remembered by a station named after it on the main line from Kings Cross. Purchased secondhand from the builders, Gray and Davison, for about £300 it has since been modernised in its action and enlarged.

#### Incumbents

A board on the south wall of the nave displays the following long list of serving priests and rectors of Chesham Bois. There is a break of about a century between 1418 and 1521 for which no records have been found.

1216	William de Risemberghe	1638	Hollard Brandreth
1225	William de Londinio	1650	Mr. Whitby
1245	Alan de .....	1661	John Howes
....	Hugh .....	1662	Richard Chase
1295	Thomas de Parva Linford	1677	John Hughes
....	Thomas de Hanvill	1704	William Jones
1330	John de Parva Linford	1740	John Ball
1365	John de Waterfell	1767	Edward Emily
1367	Walter de Weston	1767	Thomas Clarke
1392	William Gerveys	1793	Robert Hall Butcher
1393	John Martyn	1822	William Morris
1393	John Lach	1824	John Wing
1395	Thomas Aldeburgh	1830	Hon. Lowther Barrington
1417	John Neel	1839	James Stevens
1417	Richard Wapounde	1843	Charles Blackman
1418	William Harvey	1868	Joseph Matthews
....	.....	1892	George Gurnell Roworth
1521	Robert Sclatter	1906	Thomas Henry Fitzpatrick
1534	William Salisbury	1923	George Henry Lawrence
1570	Thomas Thomas	1945	Alvan Birkett
1598	Robert Heron (Herne)	1964	Leonard Hickin
1608	Philip Edmunds	1973	John Maurice Stanton

#### Tombs and Memorials

On the north side of the sanctuary stands the handsome tomb chest of clunch and Verona marble of John Cheyne, already mentioned, with the Latin inscription on the wall above it.

Set in the chancel floor are the brasses of Robert and Elizabeth Cheyne, he shown in armour and she in period attire. There is a space for a third brass which is missing. Their inscriptions show the difference between pre- and post- Reformation styles, for she died in 1516 and he in 1552.

Of unique interest is the tiny brass of Benedict Lee (1542) who died in infancy. Babies were wrapped in a special robe when they were anointed with chrysm oil after baptism. This robe was given to the priest when the mother had been churched unless (as often happened) the child died before then. In such cases it was buried in this robe. Not only is the baby here shown wrapped in the robe, but it is the only brass in England actually inscribed with the word "chrysm" :-

"Of Rogr. Lee gentilma here  
lyeth the son Benedict Lee  
Crysom whos. soule ihu pdo" (Jesu pardon)

Of the four black marble inscribed slabs in the sanctuary floor, three mark Cheyne graves; but others of this family are also buried in "ye chancell of Boys". The grave slab of Francis Cheyne (1644) states that he died in about the tenth climacteric. This refers to the belief that a critical period occurred in life every seven years.

A marble tablet on the south wall of the chancel commemorating the Revd. Thomas Clarke, Rector from 1766 until his death in 1793, was given by a number of those he had trained at Chesham Bois for the Ministry.



The Fullers were notable landowners in the district. On the south wall of the nave hang the hatchments of Benjamin Fuller (1882) and his son, John Stratton Fuller (1892). One of their family tombs may be seen in the churchyard near the gateway. Also on the church walls hang restored old boards inscribed with the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed.

#### Plate and Registers

The church plate includes an engraved Elizabethan silver chalice, a silver flagon of 1689, and a silver chalice and paten of the mid 18th century, also a pewter almsdish dated 1737.

In 1538, it was decreed by Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General to Henry VIII, that parish priests should keep registers of all births, marriages and deaths. This edict was complied with so improperly that during the reign of Elizabeth I the Convocation in 1597 made an order that all the past records should be transcribed into parchment books.

Actually Chesham Bois is one of the limited number of parishes with its records preserved from as far back as the 16th century; although, as laid down, the earliest entries were transcribed on to vellum in a register entitled :-

"The Boke of Regester for all Chresteninges -  
Marriages - and burialls ffor Chessham-boies"

The title page bears the names "James Gosham, Churchman and Roberte Finche, Churche Man", a rarely found description for churchwardens.

The first marriage entry is: "Maister John Cheyne Esquire and Mistres Joice Lee the daughter of Sr. Anthony Lee Knight were married the xxix th day of November Ao. Dni. 1562".

Descriptions in the registers (with their actual spelling) include :- glazier, travellor, servant, victualler, attorney-at-law, sojourner, husbandman, haber-dasher, day labourer, yeoman, laceman, ostler, beggar, lether dresser, baker, farmer, paper maker, meal man, shoe maker, exciseman, bricklayer, footman, gardner, rope maker, butcher, in keeper, cook and smugler !

The following are some of the very varied entries in the 16th and 17th century registers of "boyce Chappell" :-

- 1592 Ales Anby a lame mayd was buried.
- 1592 John Carter of the fullynge myll was buried.
- 1597 Before the burrall of Sisby Bachelor was buried at Boyes a Nurse Childe which she kepte.
- 1601 Susanna hoddessedon the daughter of John hoddessedon was baptised at eavening prayer.
- 1606 Robte. Hearon parson of Chesh'm Boys was buried.
- 1615 James Moore of Yorksher vagarant buried.
- 1616 John Dell of Amee Mill buried.
- 1630 John the 4 sonn of ffrancis Chenie Esqur. baptized.
- 1697 Richard Hog-trough Bucket maker of Amersham and Susanna Webb married.

From about 1670 to 1740, entries have the certifying footnote "burid in woollen", a regulation which was for some while in force to subsidise the declining English woollen industry. Far more unusual is a burial entry of 1732 :- "Mrs. Elizabeth Monckton, Daughter to Lord Gallway of the Kingdom of Ireland, was burid in Linnen and the Law satisfied".

The many interesting 18th century entries include :-

- 1710 Samuel the son of Elizabeth Darbyshire a travelling woman, was Baptised.
- 1729 The Right Hono'ble Frederick Manners son of his grace John Duke of Rutland of this Paris was Buried.
- 1741 Thomas Richardson burid of the small pox.
- 1742 David Stone (a Beggars child dropt) baptiz'd.
- 1742 David Buttersfield and Anne Johnson (Quakers) married.
- 1743 Thomas Channer an Adult Person baptised.
- 1744 Thomas son of James and Sarah Worrell, of ye mill in this parish bapt.
- 1744 Wm. Bevan of Watford (Smugler) Co. Hertford and Mary Ware from Chesham married.
- 1744 Married William Ball of Lothbury parish, London, son of ye Revd. Mr. Ball, vicar of Chesham, Batchelour and Apothecary, and Elizabeth Hills of St Olave, Old Jewry, London.
- 1747 Thomas Allen (Farmer) of St Peters Chalfont and Scholastica Crawley of Tring parish married pr. licence.
- 1748 Marriage of Joseph Lane, a solider lodging in Chesham, to Susanne Gilbert from Hempstead.
- 1784 Joseph Williams, a Black Poor, was baried.

Further interesting items may be found in the 18th century Parish Accounts, Vestry Books and the 19th century Overseers' Books.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1889 the Revd. C. H. W. White, Vicar of Christ Church, Waterside, Chesham, published a history of Chesham Bois, a copy of which I have read; and in 1923 Mr. William Lempriere compiled a booklet on Chesham Bois Church which I have also seen. But I have produced this short history of the parish almost entirely from personal research into church records, for access to which I express my thanks to the Revd. John Stanton, the present Rector. Nothing similar, as far as I know, has been published before.

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L. ELGAR PIKE

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