

# **Lemsford Village History**

**Some notes about the village pubs,  
past and present**

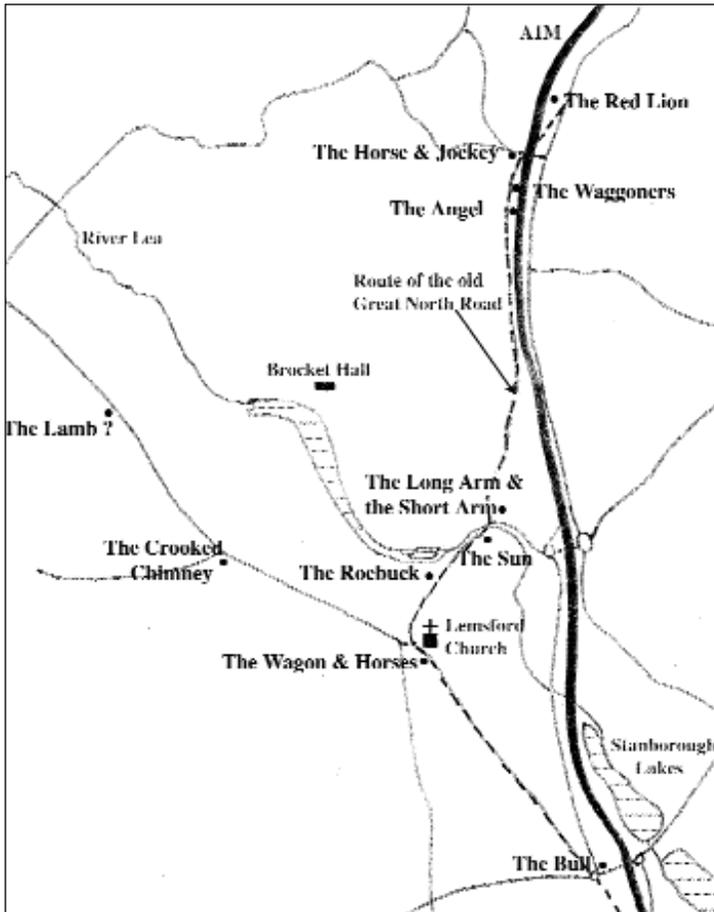
**LEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**

**Publication 3**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Lemsford Local History Group would like to thank  
Ginny Butler, Mary de Soyres, Brian Lawrence, Shirley Knapp,  
Jeremy Summers, Barbara Taylor, Mill Green Museum,  
The Welwyn Local History Society  
for allowing us to use their photographs.

# The Pubs in and around Lemsford



When the Great North Road went through Lemsford it has been said that as many as 150 coaches, carriages and wagons would pass through the village daily. All the inns would have offered food and drink for the travellers. Accommodation would be provided if required. Wheelwrights and blacksmiths were available to service the wagons and the horses. Stabling for the horses would also have been provided.

## **‘The Crooked Chimney’ formerly ‘The Chequers’**

The building was formerly Hornbeam Hall farmhouse and through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was owned by the Bassil family who farmed at Cromer Hyde. It is thought to have become a pub in 1756 whilst still being used as a farmhouse. Circa 1780 it was owned by the Searancke family of brewers (who had been brewing in Hertfordshire since the 16th century) and became known as ‘The Chequers’. From 1815 it was taken over by the Hatfield Brewery. Before 1830 there was a draper’s shop attached to the house and many of the old farm buildings remained. Circa 1860 Thomas Woodward was the publican (and also the local wheelwright). In 1882 Pryor Reed, an off-shoot of the Hatfield Brewery, were the owners. Thomas Palmer was the publican. Edward Neave, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Tabitha Neave were also resident. In 1901 James Strater was the licensee. Regine Amelia Hiscock, a widow, was employed as a servant and lived there with her young daughter.



*‘The Chequers’ in the early 1900s*

In 1920 Hatfield Brewery’s ninety-eight pubs were sold to Benskins Watford Brewery. The pub has changed a lot even since the 1950’s but the wistaria and the distinctive chimney remain. The pub was frequently referred to as ‘the pub with the crooked chimney’ and the name ‘The Crooked Chimney’ was formally adopted in 1968.

It was a popular venue for the de Havilland pilots from Hatfield during the late 1930s through to the 1960s. (Geoffrey de Havilland junior and John Cunningham met up there after parachuting into fields nearby following baling

out from a Moth Minor aircraft which refused to recover from a spinning test!) Photographs of many of the pilots adorned the walls of a large room to the left of the main entrance to the pub. This room eventually became the first dining room when restaurant facilities were introduced.

A huge log fire had always been a feature of the lounge bar. Lou Smith, whose father had been the publican at 'The Long Arm and the Short Arm', became the publican here in 1953. He was an electrician by trade and was instrumental in getting electric power introduced into the pub in the mid 1950s and the old gas lamps were replaced by electric lighting. Later a former Arsenal footballer, McCormack, and his wife Dorothy were the tenants. He was later killed in a car crash whilst holidaying in Spain but his wife had the licence transferred to her name.

This pub featured in one of the 'Inspector Morse' series on television some years ago. The particular episode was repeated in February 2002 following the death of John Thaw, the actor who played the part of the Inspector.

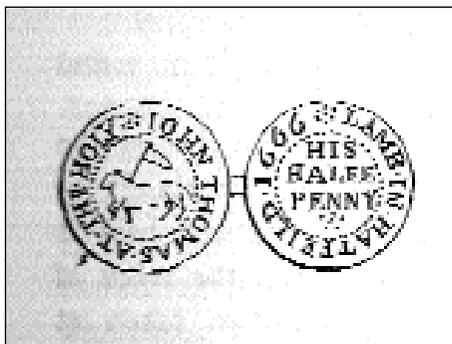


*The 'Crooked Chimney' today*

## ‘The Lamb’

‘The Lamb’ or ‘The Holy Lamb’ was at Cromer Hyde. John Thomas, a ‘trader’ had issued tokens to customers as long ago as 1666 but there are no records as to where this ale house was located. However, from study of a current O.S. map of the area it was noted that there was a small copse known as Lamb’s Grove just to the north of Cromer Hyde Lane. Jeremy Summers, chairman of the Lemsford Local History Group who lives at Cromer Hyde, did some further investigation. He studied an older map and noted the letters P.H. at the intersection of the Rowallan Lane with Marford Road. It is concluded that this could well be the site of the Lamb public house, i.e. one kilometre north of ‘The Crooked Chimney’, formerly the ‘Chequers’, on the west side of the Marford Road (Lemsford to Wheathampstead road) and immediately to the south of the point where it intersected (now crosses over) the Rowallan Lane which runs from Coleman Green to Ayot Green. This location is about half a kilometre to the north-east of the Lamb’s Grove copse. Unfortunately the date of this older map is not known. It should be noted that there is no building located in this position on the 1838 Tithing Map nor any record in the associated Land Registry, nor for example on the 1891 O.S. map of the area. Further research of the archives pre 1838 is required!

The Victuallers Billeting Returns dated 1756 state that there was accommodation available for four travellers and up to three horses at the ‘The Lamb’. This compares with that provided at the nearby ‘Checkers’ (sic) for seven travellers and six horses. Thomas Buckthorpe was named as the victualler. Both the ‘Checkers’ (sic) and ‘Lamb’ are listed as being at Hornbeam Hall (see ‘The Crooked Chimney’ on page 2).



*Token issued by John Thomas of ‘The Holy Lamb’ of Hatfield, in 1666*

## ‘The Long Arm and the Short Arm’

‘The Long Arm and the Short Arm’ was originally a cottage and blacksmith’s shop and dates from 1734. In 1853 the buildings were described in an auction catalogue as ‘a brick-built and tiled beer-house, baker’s and grocer’s shop, bakehouse and premises’.



*View of ‘The Long Arm & Short Arm’ corner circa 1900  
The building with the three windows in the centre is the beerhouse*

In 1859 the beer house was apparently owned by George Tims (who had acquired the Cress Cottages in 1854 from Emily Clark). The 1861 census gives Amos Young as the beer retailer, he had a wife, Sarah, a son and three daughters. In 1871 James Lawrence was the beer retailer. He had a wife, Mary, and five sons. Other occupants of the buildings at that time were the Draper family.

It is thought that ‘the unobtrusive little beer house’ was first licensed as a public house in 1875 by Elizabeth Lattimore of Wheathampstead. In 1881 Lattimore’s were the landlords and James Lawrence is now described in the Census as the publican. His wife, Mary, was also resident now with three sons, the two eldest presumably having moved on. The household now includes Henry Lawrence with his wife, Elizabeth, and a son. Also present in the “two cottages about the Public House” at the time of this Census were the Hornett family, Mr. and Mrs. Spriggs, and a lodger. The cottages were owned by the Hon. H. Cowper M.P. of Brocket Hall. By 1891 Thomas Lawrence, the fourth son of James, and now age 26, had taken over as the beer retailer. He is also described as a shoemaker, his wife Eleanor was also present. McMullens Brewery, the present owners, acquired the property before 1900. In 1901 Charles Dawes was the beer retailer and lived there with his wife, daughter, and an adopted boy of 5.

In 1906 'The Long Arm and the Short Arm' was still a cottage, beer house, and bakery. James W. Smith, known as 'Will', was the publican from 1906 for 32 years. In 1920 it was still referred to as a beer house and in 1926 James Smith was described as a beer retailer.



*James 'Will' Smith and his family outside the beerhouse in the early 1920s*

In 1928 the 'Long Arm and the Short Arm' was one of several pubs in the Hatfield area which had its licence renewal temporarily refused. Although two in Hatfield were closed for good at this time 'The Long Arm and the Short Arm' licence was afterwards regained. About this time the old building was pulled down and a new public house was built and opened in 1929.



*'The Long Arm & the Short Arm' corner in 1934. The old Chapel on the right was demolished together with the adjacent houses in the 1960s*

1937/38 saw the end of James ‘Will’ Smith’s occupancy and Percy, his younger brother, took over helped by his wife Lilian (née Hatton). Their son Lew and his wife also lived at the pub and in 1942 their son Brian was born there. In 1950 Joe Wackett became landlord. Lew Smith, his wife and family moved to what is now known as No. 7 Lemsford Village. In 1953 they moved to ‘The Chequers’ (now ‘The Crooked Chimney’) where Lew became the landlord.

Joe Wackett remained as landlord until his retirement in 1962. Further significant changes were made to the building in 1960 and again in 1984. A succession of managers have run the business for McMullens since Joe Wackett retired. A series of photographs are displayed in the (Public) bar showing how the building looked during the period 1734-1929, 1929-1960, and 1960-1984. Two separate bars are retained to this day. Activities include darts in the Public Bar and, twice a month, a Jazz Night is held on Thursdays in the Saloon Bar. The resident band is Bob Thomas and the Thomcats.

The name ‘The Long Arm and the Short Arm’ would seem to refer to the different lengths of the two roads leading out of the village either side of the pub up to the Great North Road i.e. Brickwall Hill and Lemsford Mill Lane. The name has been attributed also to a signal board that was there before the bridge was built in 1775 that denoted the depth of water in the ford - long arm of the signal for deep water and a short arm for shallow water. Another suggestion put forward recently by Mr. Jeremy Summers is that a coach and four horses as depicted on the pub sign has to be driven by the coachman with the reins of one pair of horses (in his left hand) on a ‘long arm’ and the other pair on a ‘short arm’ . (It should be noted here that the artist who painted the original sign for the pub, John Frederick Herring, was a noted ‘whip’ and an excellent coachman who regularly drove coaches through Lemsford from London to York and return). However, other suggestions have been put forward over the years and the reason for the name remains a riddle to this day.



*‘The Long Arm & Short Arm’ corner today*

## ‘The Sun’

1717 is the first mention of this house as an ale-house. The licensee was the Widow Ann Gilbert, her husband John Gilbert had died in 1716. However, trouble was brought about by disorderly customers and in 1718 she and her son, also John Gilbert, were forbidden to use the house ‘the Signe of the Sun’ as an ale house as apparently they were not licenced to do so. From about the mid 1700s ‘The Sun’ or ‘The Rising Sun’ as it was sometimes known, was a hostelry and for some time was also the village butcher’s shop.

From about 1780 to 1850 it was the family home of the Clark and then the Allen families (1838). In 1824 the actual owner was a Mr Crabb and in 1838 John Marshall. By 1855 it had been acquired by the Hatfield Brewery. At this time the landlord was John Males who was also the village wheelwright. He had a wife and son living at the pub. Later it became the home of the Halseys. In 1882 Pryor Reed, an offshoot of the Hatfield Brewery, were the owners. Thomas Halsey was the publican and lived there with his wife Hannah and three children. Noah Wallis, a farm labourer, and his wife Emily (née Halsey) with two children also lived there at this time. They kept cows in the adjoining field and milk could be purchased at the back door of the pub from Emily Wallis.



*‘The Sun’ with its barns, early 1900s*

In 1901 George Halsey was the publican and lived there with his sister Sophia. Noah and Emily Wallis were still present and now had four children living with them, ages 21, 20, 17, and 14. It remained the home of the Halseys until the late 1940’s when Arthur Moyses became the landlord. He was followed by Arnold Schofield in about 1956. Arnold had a wife, Marjorie, and a young daughter. During his tenancy the wall between the public bar and saloon bar was removed and a single bar set up. Food was also now being offered. At one

time a small dining area was made but was discontinued and preference given to bar snacks and meals rather than offering a restaurant service. Occasionally a leopard/puma from the kennels in Green Lanes was brought into the pub by its handler, and a baby elephant parked outside!



*'The Sun Inn' in the 1950s*

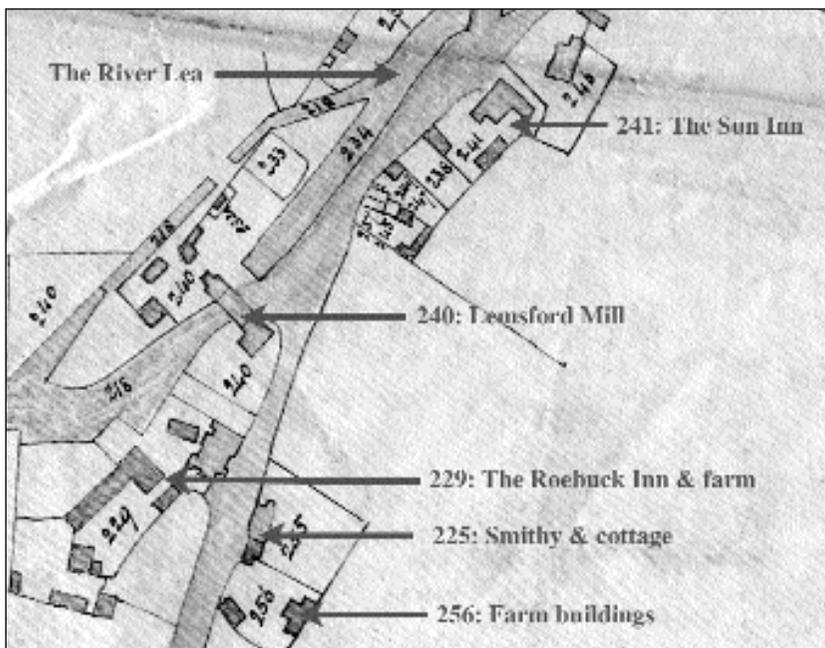
The pub had been sold to the Benskins Brewery in 1920. Later in the 1970's the Office of Fair Trading decreed that no one brewery should have a monopoly of trade in any one area. Benskins had a monopoly at this time in the Hatfield area and they were obliged to release 'The Sun' to Ind Coope.



*January 2003. 'The Sun Inn' snowed in!*

## ‘The Roebuck’

‘The Roebuck’ stood on the opposite side of the road to the present Roebuck Farm house (No. 57). It was situated just down the hill from where the pair of cottages, Nos. 40 and 42, now stand and in the grounds of what is now Mill House (No. 38). It is first mentioned in 1756. The 1838 Land Registry lists James Cheshire (or Cheshier?) as the tenant of several fields, a cottage, and of the ‘Roebuck Inn’ which was owned by Lord Melbourne. Circa 1860 it was being run by John Cheshier until it was closed down in about 1880.



*Detail from the Ecclesiastical Map of Lemsford 1855  
showing the location of ‘The Roebuck Inn’*

## ‘The Wagon & Horses’

‘The Wagon & Horses’ (or ‘Waggoners’) was located opposite St John’s Church at the site now occupied by Gosmore House. It was owned by a member of the Slight family who was a waggoner by trade. When he decided to open his house to the public for the sale of ale the choice of name was obvious! In 1842 it was owned by a Mr Mills and later by a Mr Cox. In 1882 the owner was Charles Higby Lattimore. The occupants were George and Lydia Hill with six children and Charles and Emma Smith (née Hill) with one child. George was a watercress man. Eventually however, Lord Mount-Stephen and the vicar, the Rev. F. Coggin, prevailed upon the brewers to close the pub down because of its proximity to the church. It was closed circa 1890 and demolished. It was replaced in 1900 by a house for a resident nurse to serve the Lemsford and Ayot Green/Ayot St Peter areas, and was later described as a Nursing Home.

One source has called this inn ‘The Star’ and another ‘The Church Gate’. It is thought that the latter name, however, may have been used merely as a description of the inn’s location. In the same way ‘The Chequers’ was often referred to as ‘The Crooked Chimney’ long before that name was officially adopted.



*Early 20th Century postcard showing The Mount Stephen Nursing Home, which was built on the site of ‘The Wagon & Horses’*

## ‘The Bull’

For many years the property was owned by the Battell family. The main building stood a little to the north of the present building, roughly where the petrol service station was located until recent years. In 1724 it came to William Tomkin and was known as ‘The Seven Stars’. Later it was owned by William Thorpe, farmer of Stanborough Farm. In 1756 it was called ‘The Horse and Groom’ or ‘Horse and Jockey’ and was owned by James Hetherington who was married to William Thorpe’s daughter Mary. Later their son Thomas Hetherington took over. In 1773 it was in the hands of William Whitty from whom it was purchased in 1789 by William Whittingstall of the Hoddesdon Brewery.

In the early 1800s the North Road at Stanborough was re-aligned and a new public house was erected in 1822 on the tongue of land between the present day Brocket Road and the Great North Road. It was called ‘The Bull’. Christie’s Brewery of Hoddesdon were the owners and Joseph Langton the licensee. The Langtons were millers and farmers and retained the licence until about 1860. Matthew Blacknell and his family then went to live there. In 1882 the publican was William Ablett and in 1901 it was William Marr. He lived there with his wife Katherine and their two infant sons.



*Photograph of the old ‘Bull’ Public House taken in the early 1900s at the junction of Brocket Road and The Great North Road*

In 1928 the pub was acquired by Cannon Breweries, later a subsidiary company of Taylor Walker and Co. However the pub was demolished in the early 1930s when a further re-alignment of the North Road was made and a new pub was erected and opened in 1938 at its present site. It was again called 'The Bull'. Between 1981 and 1988 it was called 'The Cavalier' and then, sensibly, 'The Bull' again. Meanwhile the owners changed from Ind Coope to Allied Breweries.



*'The Bull' today*

## The Waggoners'

'The Waggoners' at Ayot Green was smaller than 'The Angel'. The first licensee is believed to have been Joseph Howard. In 1851 the licensee was James Aldridge. In 1881 it was owned by J.W. Kent, brewers, of St Albans. It was held on lease from a Mrs Batchelor of Croxley Green in 1904. It later became a Whitbread house. It is now a listed building; it is thought that parts of it date back to the 16th century.



*'The Waggoners' in the early 1900s*

Mrs Eleanor Cliffe was the licensee in 1937. By the 1950s the volume and speed of traffic using the Great North Road made it too dangerous to use the front door of the pub. Entry was therefore by a rear door, which also provided easy access for those customers coming straight in off the golf course. (Truly the nineteenth hole!) At this time there was still no bar as such within the pub. Drinks were purchased at a hatchway in a corridor just inside the rear entry door. Drinks would then be taken into a small 'snug' to the left of the now sealed-off front door or into a larger room on the right - there dominoes and cribbage were popular pastimes for the regulars. There was a large open fireplace there. The licensee was Jack Cliffe and later the licence passed to his daughter Clara Cliffe. When Clara had to go into hospital in the late 1960s the pub was run for about eighteen months (1970/71) on a rota basis by the customers, including Ferd and Ann Fitt, Clara still being the licensee.

With the opening of the Motorway in 1973 'The Waggoners' was by-passed and isolated on a short length of the Great North Road which now became a cul-de-sac and was re-named Brickwall Close. In the old days when a pub was by-passed by the re-routing of a main road this would have meant loss of trade and possible closure but here the pub was rejuvenated, a proper bar was built, the front door at the road side was re-opened and the road itself effectively



*1934. Water being delivered to 'The Waggoners' during a drought*

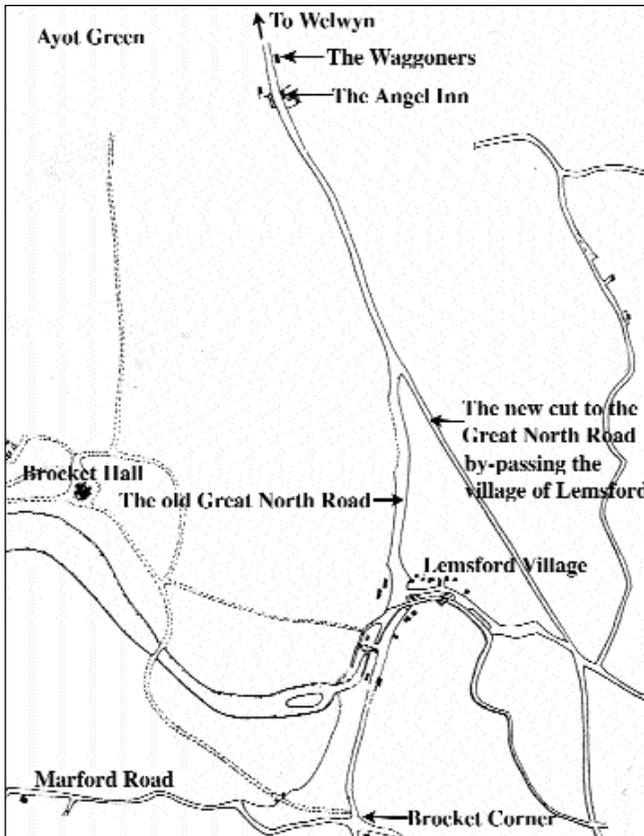
became the car park. Kathy Blacker was the publican at this time (circa 1986 - 1998) and managed the house with her family. Also at about this time the 'drink/drive' laws were coming into force and more and more pubs were increasingly offering food as a means of continuing to trade. This was so at 'The Waggoners' where, in addition to offering food at the bar, a restaurant was added. After briefly being in the hands of the Red Rooster organisation it again became a family-managed pub in 1999 with Joe and Dawn McCulloch in charge. The licensees are now Roberto Agresta and Virginie Fauque and it is again a very popular place for diners who appreciate good food, with the ambience, and charm, of a very old building and friendly staff,



*'The Waggoners' today*

## ‘The Angel’

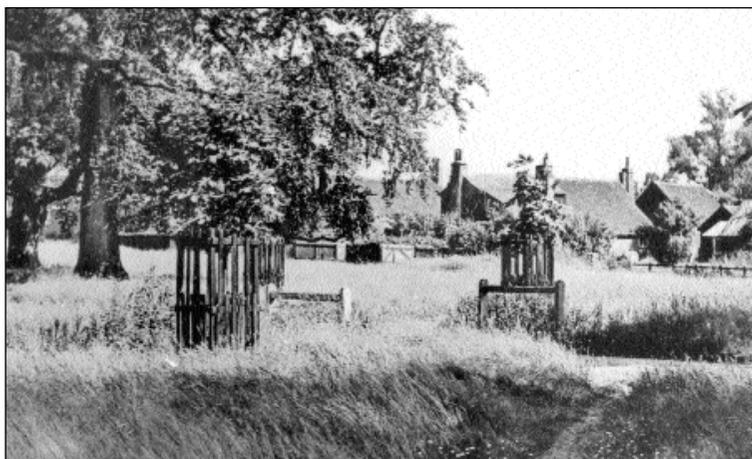
‘The Angel’ originates from about 1720. It was situated in the extreme north-east corner of the parish about 100 yards south of the present ‘Waggoners’ at Ayot Green and approximately opposite the entrance to the existing Brickwall Cottage in Brickwall Close (the Great North Road prior to the building of the motorway). In 1733 the ‘inn-holder’ Ambrose Bone left it to his wife, and three years later it passed to her nephew Lawrence Currell. In 1773 it was owned by Lord Melbourne and later by his descendants. In the 1838 Land Registry the occupant of the Inn and premises is given as John Nightingale. ‘The Angel’ was demolished in 1850 on the orders of Lady Palmerston of Brocket Hall. It is said that there is a depression in the ground marked by a group of poplars that identifies where the building was located but this is no longer apparent. The licence passed to ‘The Waggoners’ - see pages 14 and 15.



*Map showing the position of ‘The Angel Inn’  
on the eastern side of the Great North Road at Ayot Green*

## **‘The Horse and Jockey’ (Ayot Green)**

The Horse and Jockey was a public house that formed part of what is now known as No.5 Ayot Green which is set back from the left side of the road as one approaches from the Great North Road. In 1838 the present building was two cottages and seems to have remained so throughout the 19th century. In the 1838 register both were owned by John Messer. One of the cottages was let but he occupied the other and this was the public house. It was established about 1820 and its name was connected with the racecourse in Brocket Park. In 1871 John Messer’s son Albert held the licence. In the 1891 census Ernest Jaques was the publican but it is suggested in “Ayot St Peter - A Parish History” that this was perhaps an erroneous rendering of ‘Jeakings’ but there is no evidence given to substantiate this. Later, however, a William Jeakings became the last licensee before it closed shortly after the end of World War 1. William died in December 1922 at the age of 56. His wife died in January 1947 at the age of 74. They had a son Ernest who was still living at the family home, No. 8 Ayot Green, in 1965.



*Detail from a 1930s postcard showing No. 5 Ayot Green,  
formerly ‘The Horse & Jockey’*

## ‘The Red Lion’

This inn was established in 1715 as the ‘Shoulder of Mutton’ but was renamed ‘The Red Lion’ in 1746. In 1838 ‘Jeeves Cottage’ alongside ‘The Red Lion’ was occupied by John Chesher and he was probably the licensee. In 1860 he was running the ‘Roebuck Inn’ at Lemsford. Lord Melbourne was the owner of Jeeves Cottage and of the ‘Roebuck Inn’.



*‘The Red Lion’ on the west side of the Great North Road’, Digswell Hill  
in the early 1900s*

The Great North Road, which passed in front of ‘The Red Lion’, had been a turnpike road since 1725 when the Welwyn Turnpike Trust was set up. There were three toll gates, at Brickwall, Ayot Green and Welwyn, where toll charges were collected from road users. The charges, generally paid with great reluctance, were intended to pay for the maintenance and improvement of the road. On the night of the 1st November 1877 the duties of the Welwyn Turnpike Trust were taken over by the Highway Board and the toll gates were removed allowing the traffic to pass along the road free of charge. The licensee of ‘The Red Lion’, Benjamin Easterbee, celebrated this popular event by setting up a barrel of beer on Ayot Green and serving free beer to all.

In the 1940s there was a single petrol pump located in the forecourt of the pub, convenient for the students living at the nearby de Havilland Technical School hostel at Sherrards House. On one occasion a student who was getting petrol there (at 2s/2d a gallon!) was told by the attendant that “an aeroplane has just crashed round the back”. The student ran round to the back of the pub and discovered a Tiger Moth from the D H Club at Panshanger upside down and looking very damaged. There was no sign of the pilot - he was in the pub with a beer in one hand and the phone in the other, calling the Club to collect the

remains of the aircraft! Apparently its engine had stopped when ‘looping the loop’ and he had no option but to attempt an immediate crash landing.

Also located outside the pub, but long before there was a petrol pump, was a wooden trough where horses and cattle could slake their thirst.



*‘The Red Lion’ in the early 2000s*

Situated on the Great North Road ‘The Red Lion’ is still thriving to this day.

## References

Hertfordshire Inns and Public Houses by Joliffe and Jones  
Hertfordshire Inns, Part 1, East Herts  
Hatfield and its People, Part 3, Pubs and Publicans  
Pubs of Welwyn by Tony Rook  
St John's Church Parish News - various articles on Lemsford history  
Hertford Record Office D/EX. 43.Z1.  
Hertfordshire Countryside  
Ayot St Peter - A Parish History

## Compiled

by MdeS with the assistance of V.M.B.

S. F. BORRIE  
LEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY GROUP  
November, 2003



## **Lemsford Local History Group Publications**

**No.1: Rex's Walk through Lemsford Village.**

**No.2: Jeremy's Walk through Cromer Hyde.**

**No.3: Lemsford Village History. Some notes about the village pubs, past and present.**

Printed by KallKwik, Welwyn Garden City Tel: 01707 393991

**kallkwik**<sup>®</sup>  
business design + print