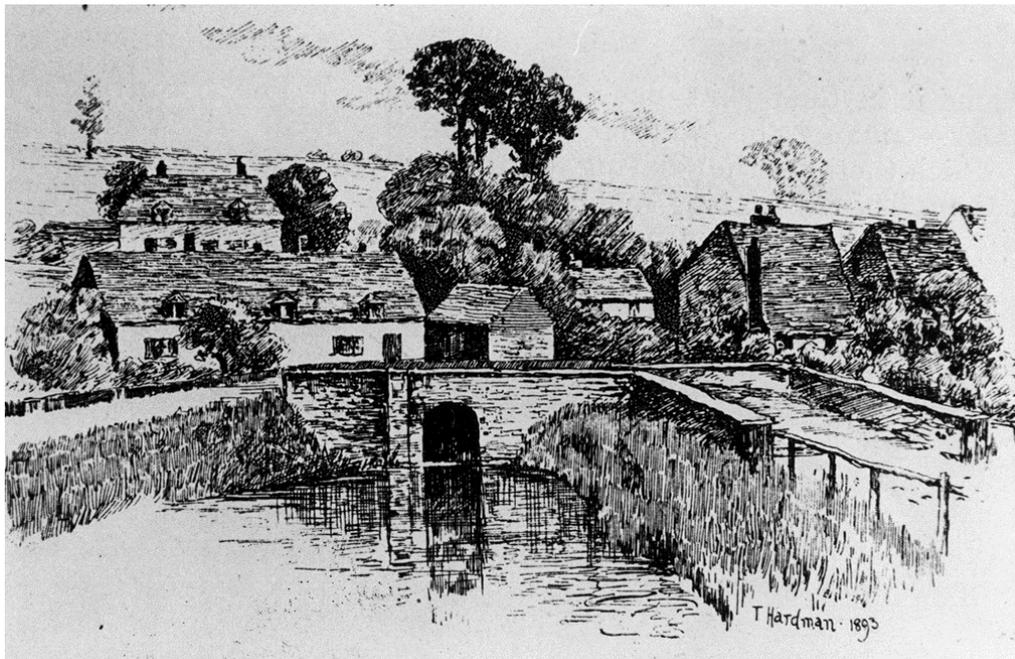


# Lemsford Village

*from Valley Road Corner  
to Brocket Corner*



**LEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**

**Publication 7**

# Acknowledgment

*to the*

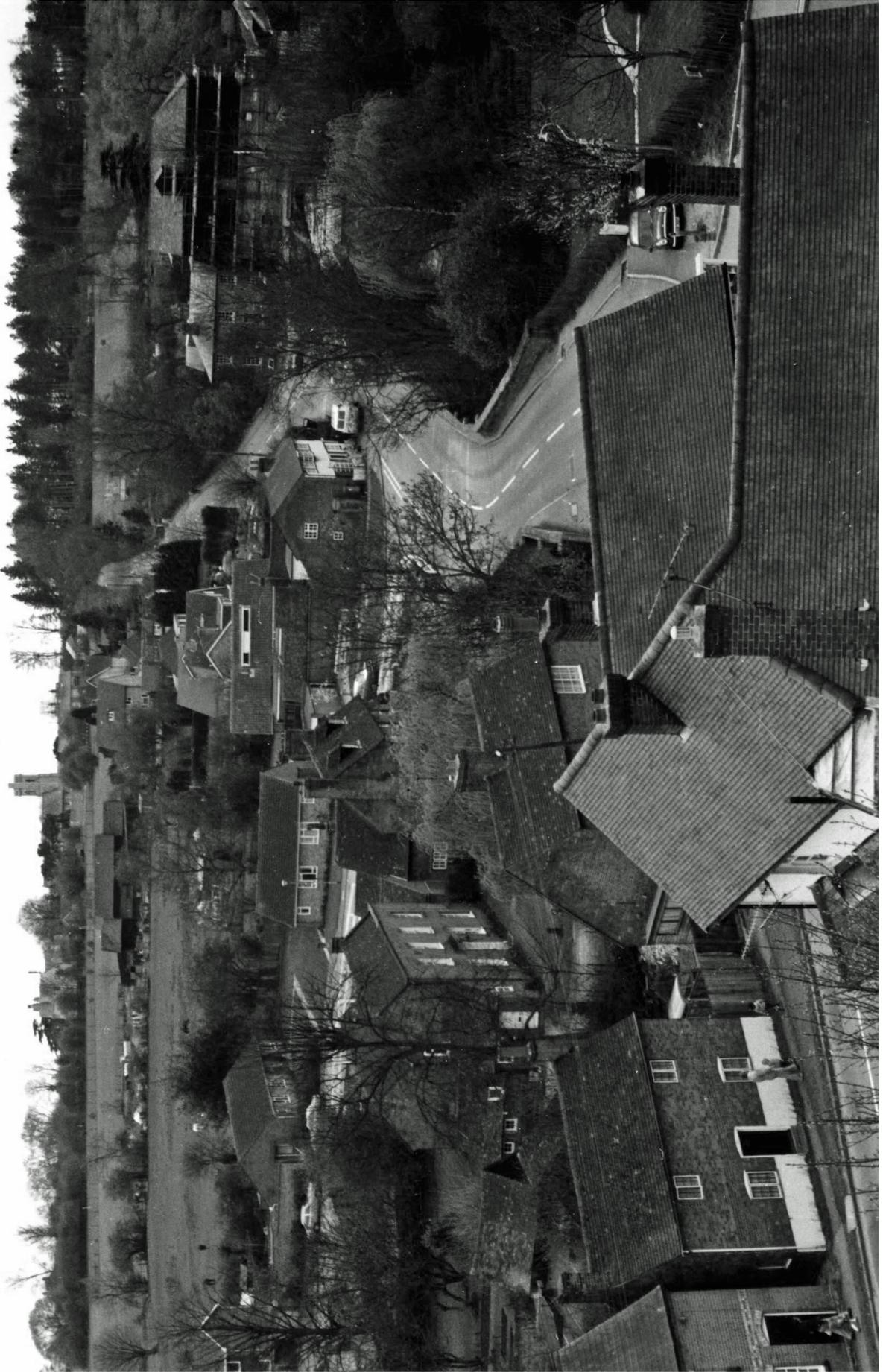
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# Lemsford Village

## From Valley Road Corner to Brocket Corner

Lemsford Village.....	2
Valley Road Corner .....	4
Nos. 1 - 15 Lemsford Village .....	6
Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve and the old Watercress Beds.....	8
Valley Road Corner to the Old Chapel.....	10
Bridge Cottages.....	12
The Long Arm & Short Arm PH.....	14
Lemsford and The Great North Road.....	16
The River Lea and Lemsford bridge.....	18
The Sun Inn.....	20
Bridge House.....	22
Lemsford Mill.....	24
Riverside Cottages.....	26
Church Hill.....	28
The Old Reading Room.....	30
Brocket Corner.....	32
Lemsford Village History.....	33
Lemsford Map.....	34



**Lemsford Village 1982**

## Lemsford Village

In 1957 the road running from Valley Road Corner to Brocket Corner was renamed Lemsford Village and the houses were given numbers. The road used to be known as Lemsford Mill Lane and the village as Lemsford Mills. The Mill, the most important building in the village, had been grinding corn certainly since the 12th century and possibly even before the Norman Conquest.

The River Lea enters the village above the Mill and was crossed by a ford a short distance downstream until the first bridge was built in 1775. Lemsford takes its name from the 'ford over the Lea'. The oldest part of the village is clustered around the old ford.

From the 17th century to 1833 the Great North Road passed through the village on its way from London to York. Lemsford bustled with two large coaching inns and all the trades needed to service the traffic. However the condition of the section from Lemsford bridge to Ayot became near impassable in wet weather so that a new road, the 'New Cut', from Stanborough to Ayot was made in 1833 and Lemsford was by-passed.

Before the mid 19th Century the villagers of Lemsford were mainly occupied as agricultural labourers working on the Brocket, Panshanger or Salisbury estates or in trades servicing the needs of travellers and their horses. Their wives and children supplemented the family income by plaiting straw for the Luton hat industry. With the coming of the railways many found the pay and working conditions more attractive and left the land.

Lemsford was the northernmost part of the Parish of Bishops Hatfield until 1859 when the church of St. John the Evangelist was consecrated and the Parish of Lemsford created. The connection with Hatfield continues today as the church forms part of the Bishop's Hatfield Team Ministry and the village comes under the Hatfield Town Council.



**The Great North Road at Valley Road Corner 1926**

## Valley Road Corner

In 1833 a new road, The New Cut, was made from Stanborough to Ayot Green to enable coaches and wagons travelling along the Great North Road to bypass the notoriously treacherous section from the bridge at Lemsford to the Waggoners PH. By 1925 this new road was in a poor state. The photograph shows the A1 at Valley Road Corner in 1926 after the road had been widened, resurfaced, pavements with kerbs and drainage installed, and generally tidied up as befitted a major trunk road.

In the photograph -one arm of the signpost points to the left to the road leading to the village of Lemsford and the other to the right to Lemsford Lane. It can be no surprise that with a crossroads on such a sharp bend that this was an accident blackspot. On the far side of the pair of cottages is the entrance to Valley Road, the main entrance into the new established Welwyn Garden City until the early 1930s when improvements were made to Stanborough Lane.

The 'Cowper' cottages on the left were built of a distinctive yellowish brick for workers on the Panshanger Estate and bear a crest with a C above a coronet (for Earl Cowper) and the date 1891. There are similar Cowper Cottages on Church Hill. The pair of Cowper cottages on the other side of the road were demolished in the 1960s during construction of the A1(M).

By the 1960s the traffic on this stretch of the A1 between Hatfield and Stevenage, for much of the way only two lanes, had become so heavy that plans were made for a six-lane motorway to ease the congestion. At Valley Road Corner two large roundabouts were constructed on either side of the bridge carrying the motorway. From the roundabout on the Lemsford side a slip road allowed traffic to join the north bound lane of the motorway, a new road led into Lemsford. and another road joined up with the old A1 to Stanborough. This cut off a small section of the old road into Lemsford which was reached by an access road off the roundabout.



**Numbers 1 to 11 Lemsford Village 1950s**

## Nos. 1 - 15 Lemsford Village

These houses lie on the stretch of the old road into the village which was cut off when the A1(M) roundabout was constructed.

**No. 5 'Kirkuk' & No. 7** were built in 1929/30 by two brothers. They were both builders and, for a period, also the village undertakers. Behind the houses was their large builder's yard. One of the brothers, whilst serving in Iraq during WW1, became lost in the desert. Happily he was rescued and much relieved was taken to Kirkuk a town north of Baghdad. He named his house after the town.

The wooden building at the side of No. 7 housed at various times a hairdresser who also made children's wooden toys, a sweet shop, a bicycle shop and a shop which charged radio batteries.

**No. 11** in the 1930s was a 'house' made of corrugated asbestos and raised on bricks in which lived a family with eight children and no mod cons. We are told that in winter the house was so cold that the coverings on beds next to the walls froze. It was demolished in the early 1960s and replaced by a warm and comfortable brick bungalow.

In 1988 the bungalow was extended and an upper floor added - four years hard work and much of it done by the owners.

'**Cress Cottages**' **Nos. 13 - 15** were built in the 1830s on land granted by Lord Salisbury to a William Clarke. Like most of the old cottages in the village they were typical two up two down buildings with a single storey kitchen extension at the back. The front door opened directly into the parlour and the back door to the garden and to a lean-to housing the privy. The upper floor was reached by a staircase behind a door in the back room. The bathroom was a tin bath in front of the kitchen fire. Drinking water was drawn from a well in the garden of No.13 until 1945 when the Water Board installed a single outside cold tap at the front of each cottage.

From 1859 to 1948 the Tims family were watercress growers in what is now Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve. The family first rented then owned the cottages - hence the name 'Cress Cottages'.



Cutting cross late 1950's

## **Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve and the old Watercress Beds**

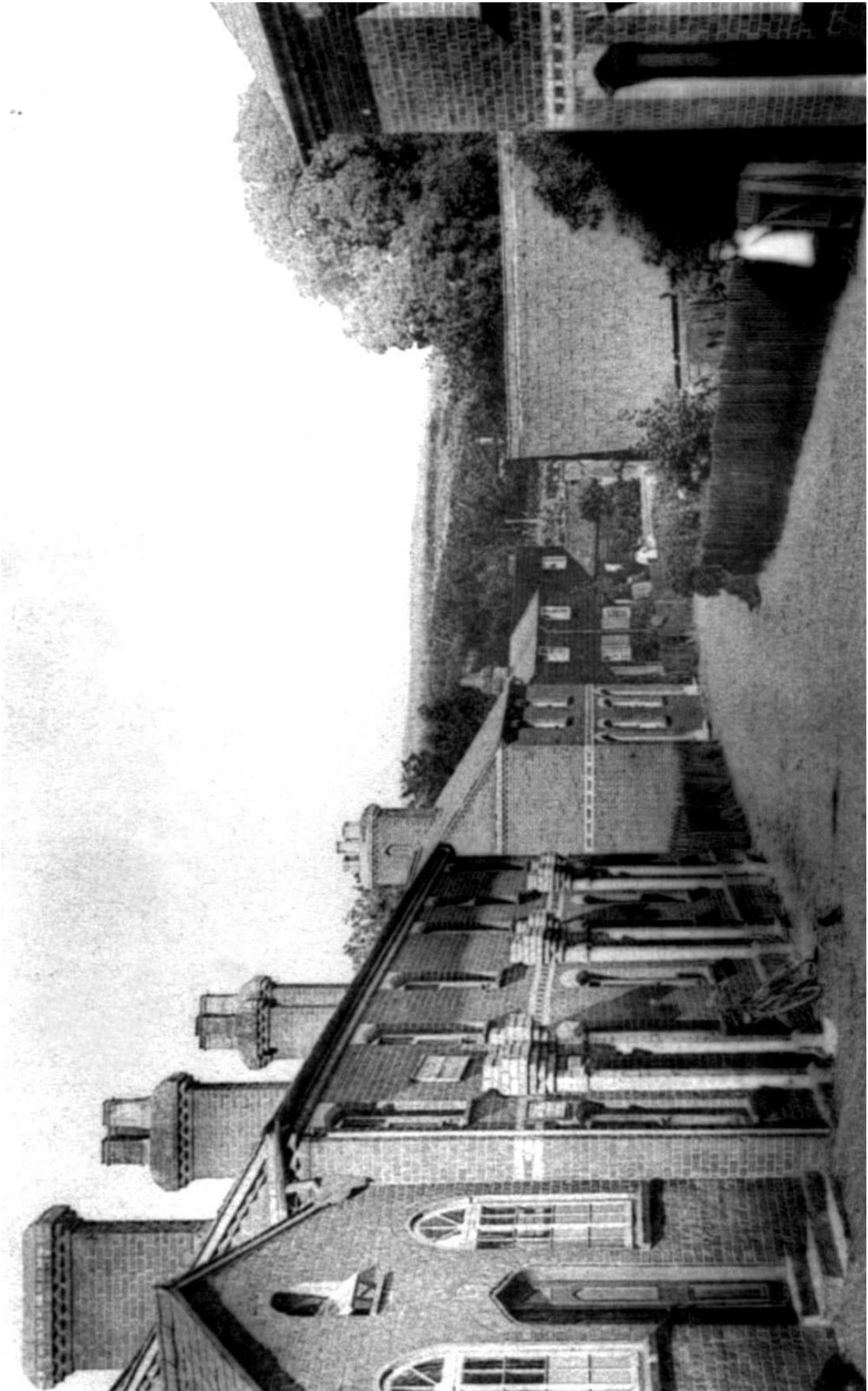
Watercress was much prized in the 19th and 20th centuries as a valuable source of green vegetable for the late winter months before the import of out of season and exotic vegetables from warmer climates reduced its popularity. The lagoons in what is now Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve provided the ideal conditions for its growth. They never froze in winter and they were filled with exceptionally clean water from several underground chalk fed springs.

The first mention of commercial watercress growing in Lemsford is in the 1859 rent ledgers of Hatfield House where George Tims is recorded as renting watercress beds in Lemsford. The Tims family first rented and then owned the watercress business sending the cut watercress to market in London. When George Tims died in 1948 the Ashby family took over the business. The watercress beds by then had been somewhat neglected but the Ashby's brought them back into commercial use and sent the produce to another branch of the family in Luton who prepared it for market. However dirty water seeped into the beds during the installation of mains sewerage to Lemsford Village in 1962 and production had to cease. The land was sold to the Welwyn Garden Council who needed an independent source of water for the newly created Stanborough Lakes as The Lea Valley Water Board refused to let them take water from the River Lea.

In May 1970 the Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust bought the land from the Council for £2,500, the money being raised by public subscription, and established the Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve. The water is rich in freshwater shrimps which attract a variety of water birds and the various habitats support a number of small mammals including the water shrew, our only venomous mammal. In Spring and Autumn it is a welcome stop for migrating species.

For access and further details see the web-site:-

<http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/lemsford-spring>



**Lemsford Village from the Old Chapel  
to Valley Road Corner 1900s**

## Valley Road Corner to the Old Chapel

The wooded right hand side of the road into Lemsford is steeply banked and pretty with primroses in the Spring. Above were allotments and at the top the pitch where the Lemsford Football Club played before they moved to the field behind the Village Hall.

**Three black painted wooden houses**, the first of the houses on this side of the road, were condemned as unfit for human habitation in the 1950s and demolished. Bicycles used to be repaired in a shed behind one of them.

**Bankside Cottages**, Nos. 2 to 10 Lemsford Village, were built in the 1880s by the Horn family for their workers on the Handside Farms. Until mains water was installed in 1945 drinking water was drawn from a pump in the yard between Nos. 4 and 6 by both the residents of Bankside Cottages and also, written into their Deeds, the residents of the houses on the other side of the road.

**No. 10** was the village post office and shoe makers. The post came by bicycle from Hatfield and was delivered on foot to the village, Brocket Hall and the surrounding areas.

**The Old Chapel.** The Wesleyan/Methodist chapel was built in 1846 and by 1851 it was reported to have a congregation of 40 at both the morning and evening services. In the centre of one wall was a raised dais for the preacher to deliver his sermons, a round fireplace was at the far end and a board with long hooks by the entrance upon which the men hung their top hats. However it fell into disuse, was deconsecrated and in the late 1920s the boot & shoemaker from No. 10 moved in. His leather came in rolls from London which were taken down the narrow path between Nos. 23 and 25, tied to stakes in the river and left to soften.

In 1964 The old chapel, the three cottages, 6, 8 & 10 Lemsford Village, and the cottages behind them were demolished to make the Long & Short Arm car park.



**The Wilmot's shop, No. 27 Lemsford Village. Early 1930s  
The bread oven chimney can be seen on the extreme right**



**The Chapel & Nos. 21,23 and 25 Lemsford Village, 1936**

## Bridge Cottages

### **Nos. 17 & 19 Lemsford Village**

Before mains water came to the village in 1945 drinking water for the neighbouring houses was collected from the spring between Cress Cottage and No. 17. The spring was housed in a waist high brick box with an outlet spigot that drained onto a concrete culvert and from there into the river. Until mains sewage came to the village in 1962 the house, like all the other cottages in the village, had an outside privy - two holes, two buckets underneath and squares of newspaper on a spike for toilet paper. Every Tuesday the 'Lavender Lorry' visited the village to take away the contents.

**No. 21 & 23 Lemsford Village** was built by the Horn family of Handside Farms for their workers at about the same time as Nos. 2 to 10 on the opposite side of the road. They are similar in style with a distinctive band of brickwork at the first floor level. The long narrow garden at No. 21 was shared by both houses.

**No. 25 Lemsford Village** dates from the 1600s but all that remains of the original single storey cottage is the chimney stack. The ground floor brickwork dates from around 1750, a second floor was added in the 1780s. Heavy black wooden shutters protected the ground floor windows, the marks of the fittings can still be seen on the brickwork.

**No. 27 Lemsford Village** was, for many years, the village shop - a veritable Aladdin's Cave selling everything from groceries, bread, haberdashery, sides of bacon, sweets for the children and more. The shop entrance was on the right and the door on the left, now bricked up, opened into the 'front room'. At the back was the shop storeroom which contained a beehive shaped brick bread oven where villagers could have their meat roasted for one penny. Outside was the tall chimney for the oven. There was a wooden shed between Nos 27 and 25 where the horse and cart used for deliveries was kept. This has now been converted into a garage.



**The Old Long Arm & Short Arm Beer House 1905**



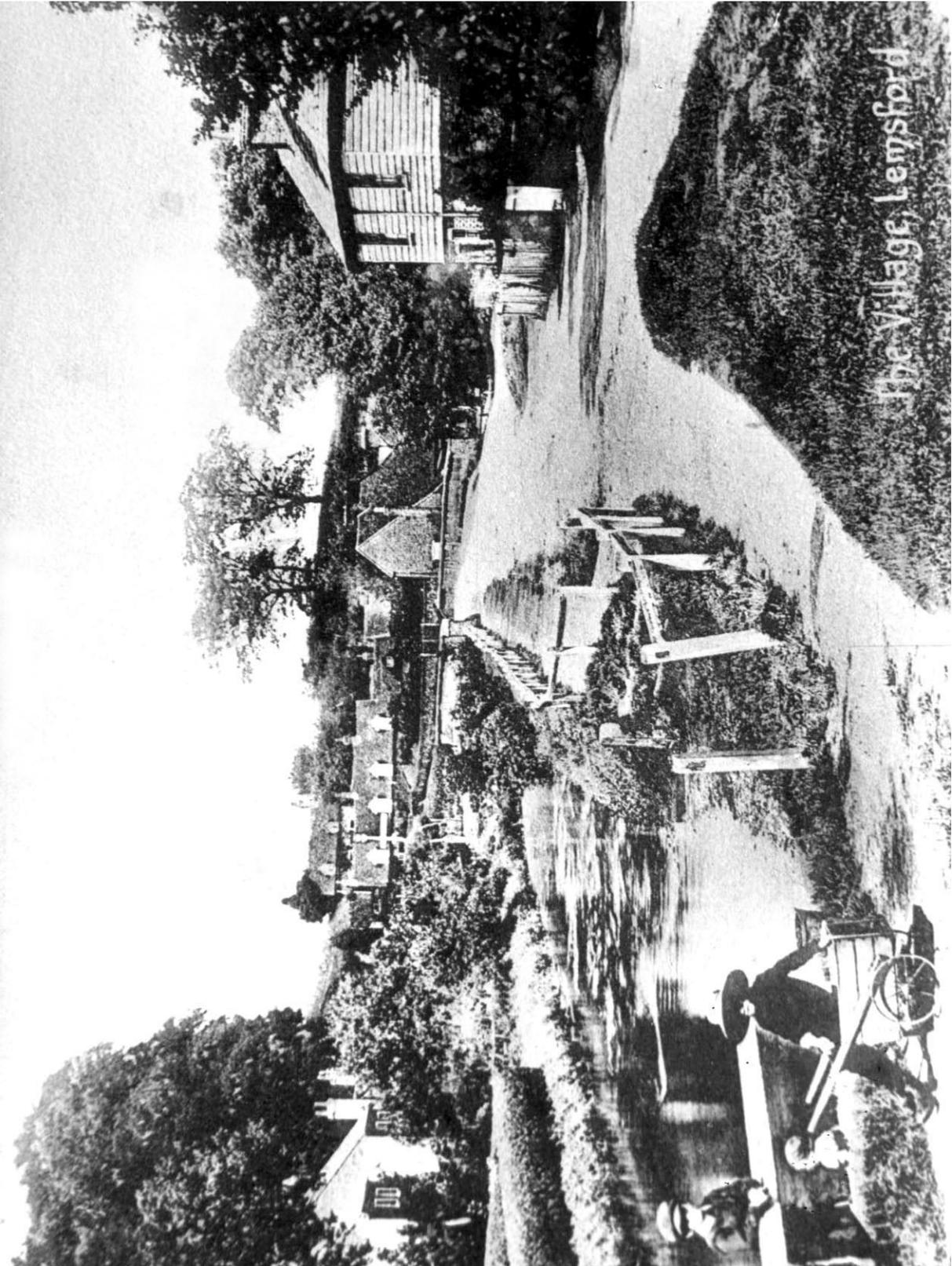
**The Long & Arm & Short Arm PH, 1958**

## The Long Arm & Short Arm PH

This 1905 photograph shows the old Beer House, later to be known as the Long Arm & Short Arm PH, with 4 dormer windows set behind a high brick wall.

The earliest record of the old Beer House was as a blacksmith's shop in 1734. By 1854 it had become a beer house, baker's and grocer's shop. In 1875 it was licensed as a Public House by Lattimores of Wheathampstead and in 1887 it was acquired by McMullens of Hertford who still hold the licence. In the early 1920s it became very popular with the workers and residents of the newly established, but pub free, Welwyn Garden City. As there was only one tap-room, a Tin Hut described as "*dreadful from the outside but warm and comfortable inside*", was erected in the yard to accommodate the increased clientele. In 1928 the authorities refused to renew the licence unless the Tin Hut was replaced by a more substantial building. The licence was renewed in September 1929 after McMullens demolished the old Beer House and replaced it with the two storey building we see today. The building was modernised in 1960 and again in 1984 when an extension was built at the rear. In 1964 the neighbouring houses and the old chapel were demolished to make the large car park.

There are several theories as to how the pub got its name. For many years a sign painted by the Victorian artist John Frederick Herring hung outside the pub. On one side it showed the driver of a horse drawn wagon with his arm stretched out for a tankard of beer. The landlord however holds the tankard back with one hand while the other reaches out for the money. Underneath were the words 'PAY BEFORE YOU SIP'. On the other side above the words 'HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY' the driver is seen happily enjoying his beer. Sadly the sign was stolen. Another suggestion was that before the bridge was built the landlord put out a sign to show the depth of the water in the ford. A 'long arm' indicated that the water was deep, a 'short arm' that it was shallow and safe to cross.



**The old Great North Road in the distance  
between the trees and the Beer House 1900s**

## Lemsford and The Great North Road

The steep road at the side of the Long & Short Arm PH was, until 1833, part of the Great North Road. It was still possible to drive up it to Ayot Green until it was carved into during the construction of the A1(M) in the 1960s. A locked gate now bars entry, even for walkers.

The Great North Road from London to York and beyond was cobbled together from various road and lanes as an alternative to the older route via Ware. The section from Hatfield to Welwyn went from Stanborough, up Brocket Road, down Church Hill, crossed the river Lea by a ford, later a bridge, then up following the brick wall bounding Brocket Park to Ayot and on down Digswell Hill to Welwyn. It was the responsibility of The Welwyn Turnpike Trust (1726 to 1877 with a Toll gate on Ayot Green) to keep this section of the road in good repair. The steep stretch from Lemsford to Ayot was a great problem as it could become near impassable in wet weather with carriages up to their axels in mud. An attempt was made to lessen the gradient in the mid 18th century and the excavated material dumped in the field behind the Sun Inn. It was macadamised in 1820. Despite these improvements its condition became unacceptable so that in 1833 'The New Cut' was constructed from Stanborough to Ayot Green and Lemsford was bypassed.

Lemsford, in its heyday as a coaching stop on the Great North Road, would have been noisy and very busy. It was said that around 150 coaches and wagons passed through the village daily. Two large coaching inns provided services for the travellers and extra horses to help the coaches up to Ayot. In 1756 the Angel Inn, situated just south of the Waggoners PH at Ayot Green, had 12 beds for travellers and 32 stables for horses. It was closed by Lady Melbourne in 1850 and the licence passed to the Waggoners. The Roebuck Inn on Church Hill with 4 beds and 26 stables for horses was demolished in 1880. The Sun Inn had only 1 bed and no stabling. In the village there were blacksmiths, farriers, wheelwrights, carpenters, carriers, cordwainers, bakers, plus the many people needed to run the inns and look after the horses.



**The River Lea at Lemsford 1930s**

## The River Lea and Lemsford bridge

The River Lea rises near Luton and winds its way through Brocket Park via Hatfield and Hertford to join the River Thames at Bow. Until the late 18th century it was crossed at Lemsford by a ford.

In 1777 a brick bridge was built over the Lea at a cost of £222-16s-0d. In February 1795 the bridge was washed away when the river flooded after a sudden thaw. This graphic account of the event is given in the Welwyn Parish Register where the River Mimram also flooded.

*“The river Lea also overflowed in Brocket Hall Park, drove down the pales into the mill orchard, carried away a part of a Hay-stack and the yard gate and forced up the gate post, undermined the foundation wall, took away corner of the mill room, and damaged the wheat sacks standing in the room: blew up the arch at the park-gate, washed away the gravel from under the groundsell, and left it quite clear, and forced down the Park-wall several yards in length; carried away the miller's yard, gate and hay to the bridge, stopped the arch, and blew up the Bridge, so that nothing could pass over it. The waggons went by-way along the side of the river to Hatfield; and the coaches, chaises, and horses were permitted two days to pass thro' the park, till a temporary bridge was made of wood. A man from the turnpike gate was placed at the Lodge near the Park gate to take the tolls of those, who passed through. A Higler had his Cart-hovel, cart and Hog-stye carried away into the meadows; and the lower rooms of the houses near the river were filled with water. The bridge was oblig'd to be entirely pulled down and rebuilt, and even the very foundation was made new again.”*

The new stone bridge was a sturdier construction and is still in use today.

At one time the bridge was known locally as 'Battle Bridge'. Both the Sun Inn and Long & Short Arm PH served an ale so strong that customers were supposed to be rationed to three pints. Not surprisingly fights between the rival clientele were not uncommon after closing time.



**The Sun Inn, its barn and Lemsford Mill 1930s**



**The Entrance to Mill Close c.1960**

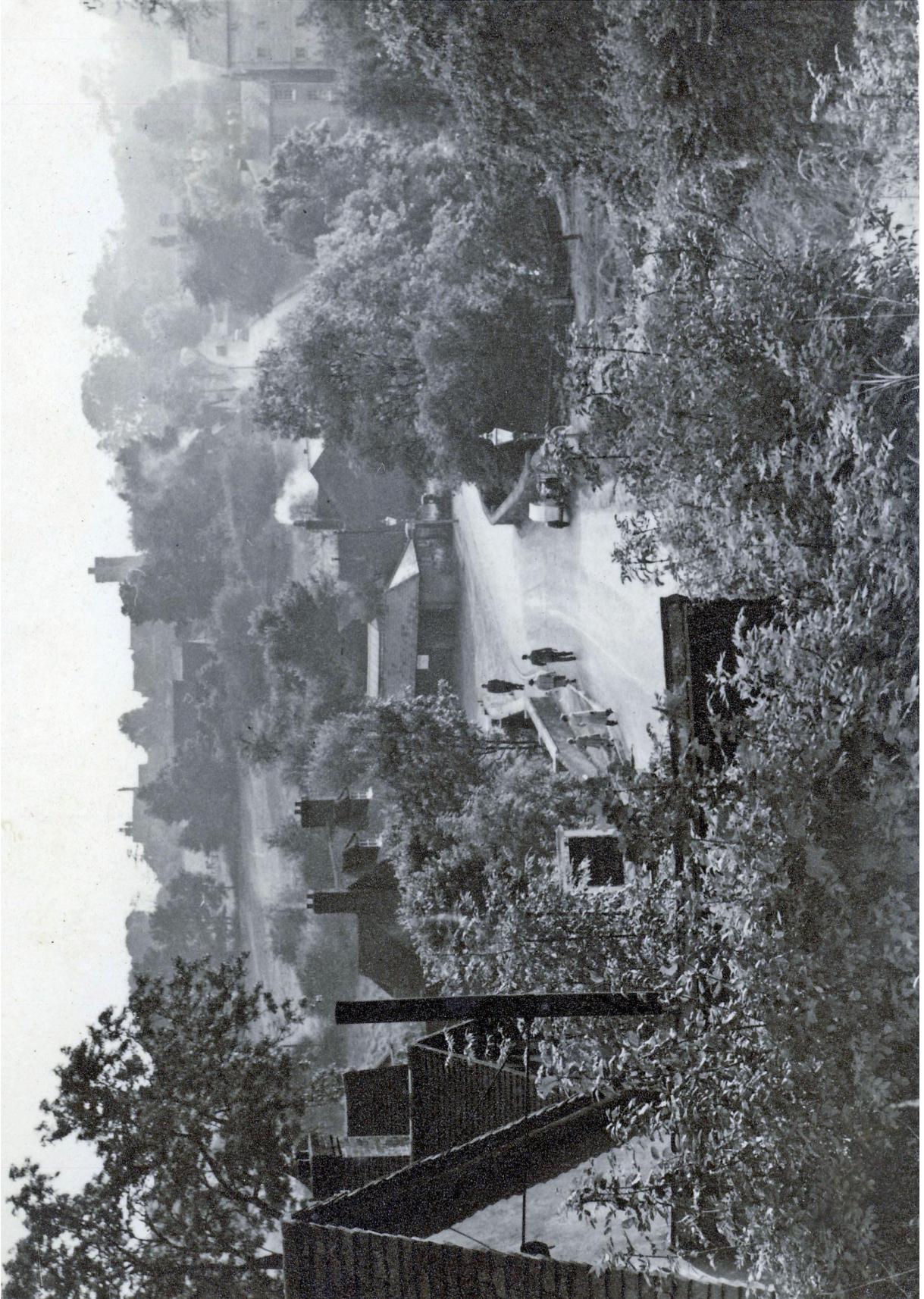
## The Sun Inn

**The Sun Inn**, a Grade II Listed building has been selling beer since the early 18th century. In 1717 the widow Anne Gilbert was up before the magistrates for housing ferrets '*for the catching of coneys although she has no warren or ground*'. She and her son were up again the following year because they did not have the necessary licence to be an alehouse. In 1756, when the Great North Road went through Lemsford, the Sun had one bed for travellers but no stabling for horses - but it was licensed.

A considerable amount of earth was removed from the stretch of the Old Great North Road between Lemsford and Ayot in an attempt to to make it less treacherous. This was deposited on the field behind the inn now occupied by Mill Close. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the landlord kept cows in this field and in their large barn in the winter. At one time they were the village butcher and for many years they sold milk fresh from the cow at the back door.



**Arthur Moyse was the landlord of the Sun, 1940s to 1956**



**Lemsford looking down over Lemsford Bridge to St John's church 1950s**

## **Bridge House**

Bridge House, a Grade II Listed house, was built in the late 18th century on Salisbury Estate land. It has been suggested that it was used by a stage coach consortium to house the local manager and accommodate passing gentry. Originally the house was double fronted with the entrance at what is now the back of the house. A brick in the front wall carrying the date 1807 and the initials W T-B probably relates to the time when the main door was moved to the front and the floor area doubled. In 1990 a new wing was added at the back of the house and the old wooden garage replaced by a brick structure with an artist's studio above. The foundations for the Old Reading Room were discovered during the excavations for the new wing.

## **Mill Close.**

There were so few children in the village in the 1950s that it was feared that Lemsford School would close. More houses were needed for young families. After considerable pressure from the local Councillor permission was given in May 1953 for an estate on the land behind the Sun Inn. The Sun's barn was knocked down in 1965 to make an entrance to the estate and in 1967 the first family moved in. The rent for a house with an integral garage was £3-17s-6d per week.

## **No. 33 Lemsford Village**

From the early 19th century until the mid 1920s this was a blacksmiths home and premises. Horses were led through an 8 ft. passageway to the right of the front door to the smithy at the back of the house. The entrance has now been bricked up. In the mid 1920s it was converted into a general store and post office, the owners of the old shop and post office on the other side of the bridge having retired. A few years later the first floor was converted into a tearoom, the roof was raised and extra windows installed. The roof alterations can be clearly seen in the brickwork on the side wall of the house. In the 1960s bicycles were sold as well as groceries.



**Lemsford Mill, 1905**



**Brocket Gate Lodge and the old entrance to Brocket Park**

## Lemsford Mill

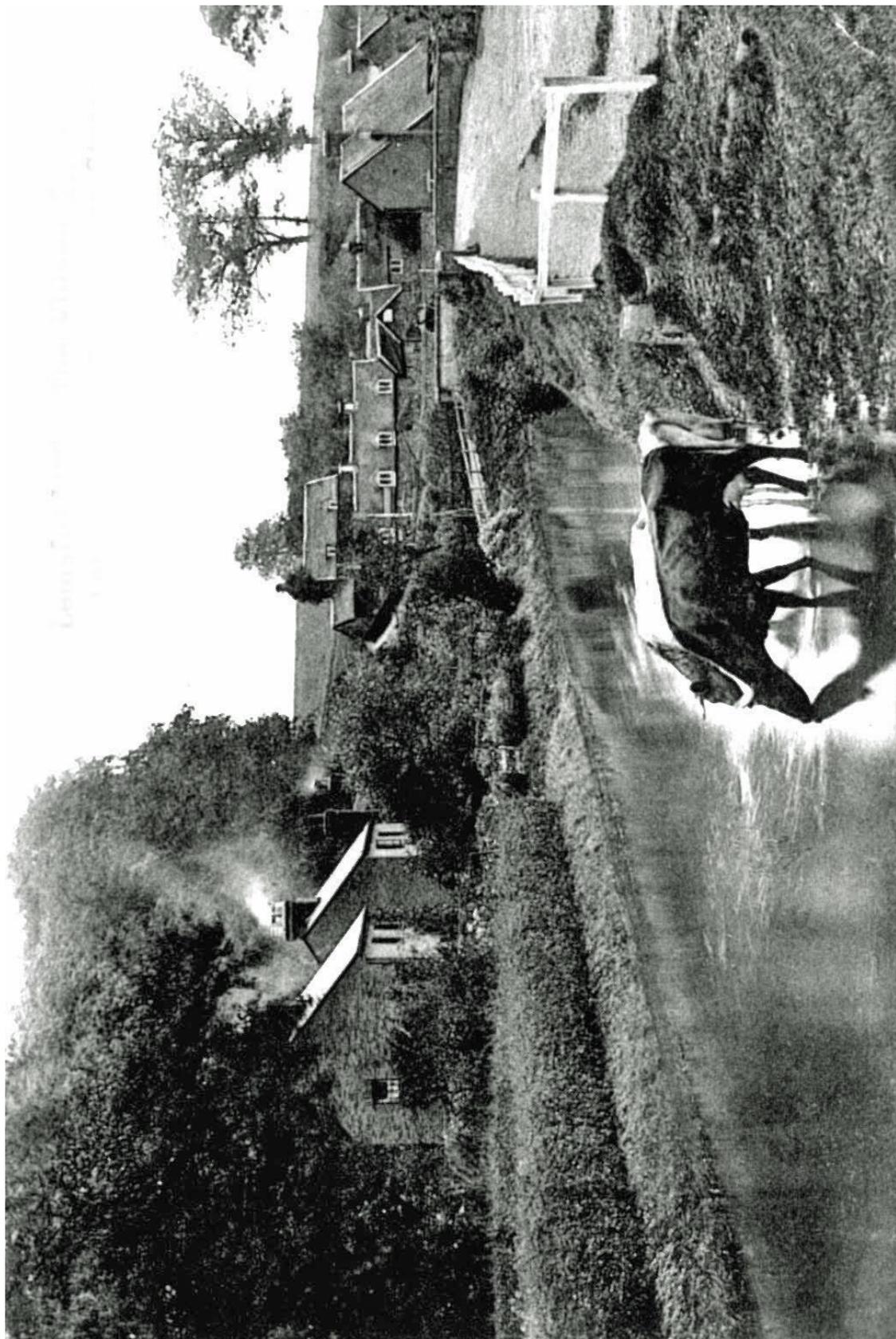
There has been a corn mill on the River Lea at Lemsford since the 12th century and maybe even earlier as it is probably one of the four mills in Hatfield recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. In 1788 the mill must have been very profitable as, according to estate accounts in the Panshanger Papers, the miller paid £50 in rent. It was powered by a wooden water wheel. After the mill stopped grinding corn in 1911 the wheel was adapted to provide electricity to the Mill House. Eventually the wheel was removed and the wheel-pit stood empty until Ramblers Holidays bought the property in 2004 and installed a metal wheel with wooden paddles to generate electricity. The old wooden clad mill collapsed in the mid 1800s, it is said due to an over energetic young miller working it too hard. A stone plaque showing a lion holding a star and beneath the word 'Rebuilt 1863' is set in the wall behind the Mill.

Lemsford Mill claims to be the inspiration for "*the old mill by the stream*" in the ballad 'Nellie Dean'.

The Mill, Mill House, adjacent outbuilding and Brocket Gate Lodge (since demolished) are Grade II Listed.

Until the 1760s when the architect James Paine and the landscape designer Richard Woods created the magnificent new entrance to Brocket Hall at Brocket Corner, the main entrance to the Hall was by Lemsford Mill. There is a wide gap in the high Park Wall where the gate once hung, and beside it are steps over the wall which allowed pedestrians to enter the Park. Brocket Gate Lodge, a single storey cottage beside the wall nearest to the Mill was demolished around 2005. It was damp, had no mains services and the spring for drinking water became contaminated when the water level rose.

In the past cattle on their way to market would stop to drink from the river near the Mill. The remains of the swing gate used to prevent them wandering into Brocket Park can still be seen in a gap in the park wall where the mill-race enters the river.



**The River Lea 1905**

## Riverside Cottages

**Nos. 22-24 Lemsford Village** was built in 1734 as three cottages - the date is on the gable. In 1979, after years of neglect, they were bought at auction from the Brocket Estate for £36,000. A report in the local paper reads:

*"A pair of tumbledown cottages are to be preserved for posterity – despite the fact that they have sagging roof, damp rooms and rotten woodwork. Owned by Lord Brocket who said 'The cottages are literally falling down. Both the roof and the dormer windows are in danger of collapsing at any time and they haven't so much got rising damp as galloping damp.'"*

The purchaser was not deterred, restored the property and the result is a beautiful house.

### **Riverside Cottages, Nos. 26 to 32 Lemsford Village.**

These Victorian cottages were built by the Brocket Estate for their workers. Nos. 30 & 32, sometimes known as the 'Gamekeepers Cottage', has been for many years one house.

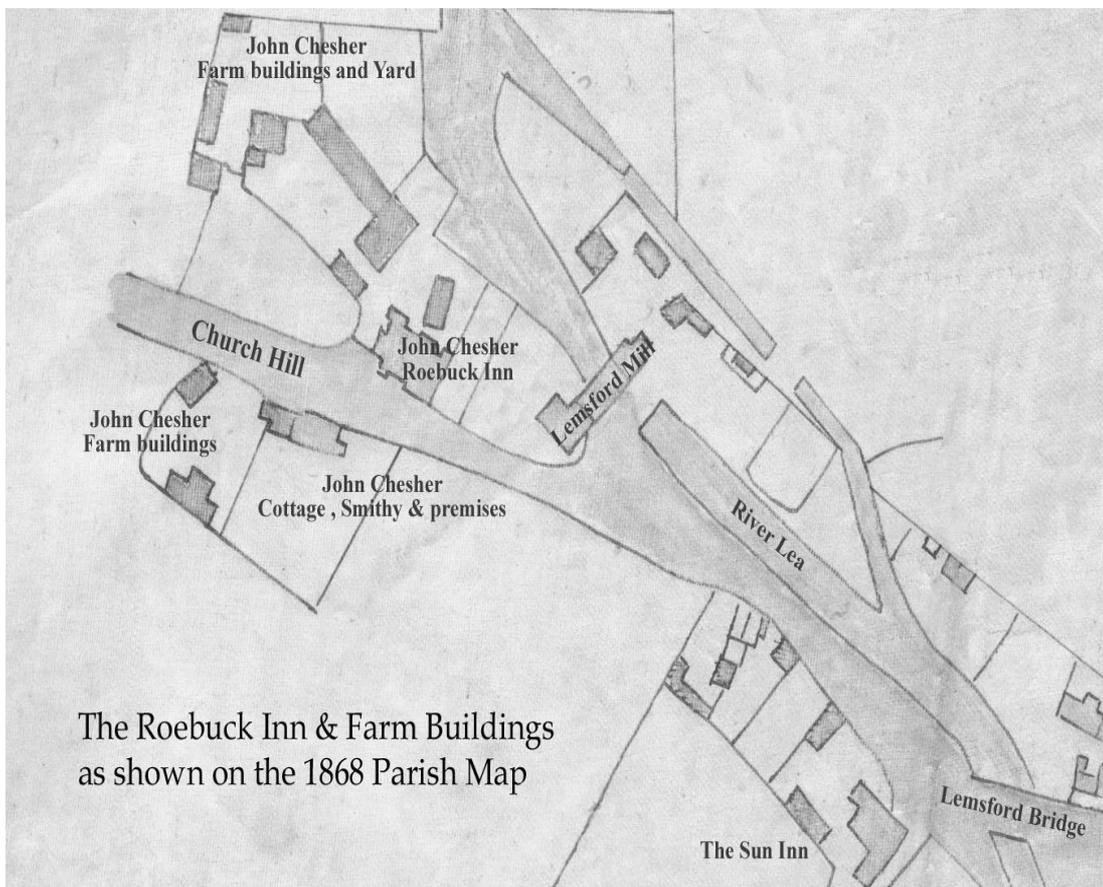
**The high brick wall around Brocket Park** from Lemsford Mill to the Waggoners PH was probably built to protect the estate from undesirables when the Great North Road went through Lemsford. The Deeds to the Riverside Cottages allow the Brocket Estate right of access, with due notice, to inspect and repair the wall. There is a Heronry in the tall trees behind the wall. Pond owners beware.

**No. 20 Lemsford Village**, one of the oldest houses in the village lies above the Long & Short Arm beside the old Great North Road out of the village to Welwyn. Originally two cottages, an ostler lived in the first ready to help with the extra horses needed to negotiate the steep muddy climb to Ayot. The second had an external chimney with a circular bread oven at its base. In the heyday of the Brocket Park racecourse at the turn of the 19th century, bare knuckle fighters were trained at the cottage. Among them was Tom Cribb, the most famous boxer of his day.



## Church Hill

Nos. 53, 55 and 57 Lemsford Village on one side of the road  
Nos. 40 & 42 Lemsford Village & the Reading Room on the other



The Roebuck Inn & Farm Buildings  
as shown on the 1868 Parish Map

## Church Hill

**The Roebuck Inn**, a busy coaching inn when the Great North Road passed through Lemsford, was situated on Church Hill above Lemsford Mill. Apart from the farmhouse and inn and several cottages it had stabling for 24 horses, a yard, outhouses and a smithy and more farm buildings across the road. However trade quickly declined after the 'New Cut' by-passed Lemsford, the farmer retired and it was demolished in 1880.

The present **Roebuck Farm, No. 57 Lemsford Village**, was built on the other side of the road by the Panshanger Estate in 1880 as the 'Cowper' plaque confirms. In 1944 it was purchased by the Hertfordshire Cattle Breeders Association for an artificial insemination centre. In the 1950s the house, with approximately 20 acres of farmland and various buildings including a bull yard and a large barn was bought by the owner of the Lemsford Poultry Farm on Brocket Road. He rented out the house and used the outbuildings for his business until he retired in 1964 when he moved in.

**'The Old Cottage', No. 49 Lemsford Village**, a grade II Listed timber framed building was built in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

**'The Old Orchard', No. 39 Lemsford Village**, erected in 1961 after various planning applications had been turned down, was the first of the post WW2 houses on Church Hill. A stipulation in the Deeds is that it should never be a garage selling petrol.

## Lemsford School

On the 4th of March 1872 Lemsford School opened its doors to 77 new pupils between the age of 3 to 13. Younger children were admitted provided they were not a nuisance. Before that the only education on offer to the children of Lemsford was a Dame School at Cromer Hyde. Francis, 7th Earl Cowper provided the building and supported the school financially until 1903. There were two classrooms plus accommodation for the head teacher. Lady Mount Stephen was a great supporter of the school and amongst other kindnesses presented the boys with a warm sweater and the girls with a length of dress material each Christmas. The school has since expanded to become the excellent St. John's School of today.



**Gamekeepers outside the Old Reading Room**



**The London Road Gates to Bocket Park , c.1913**

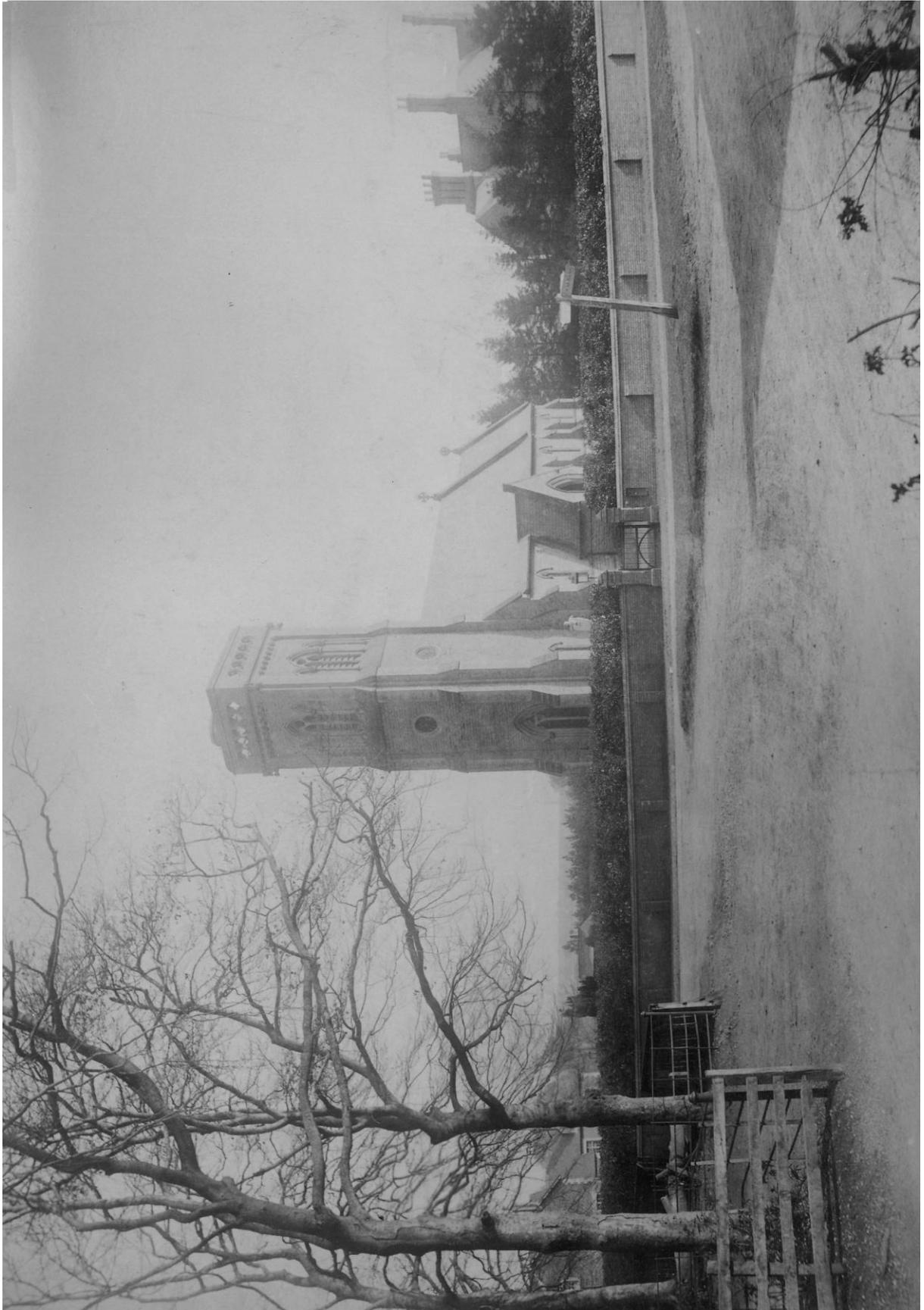
## **The Old Reading Room,**

The corrugated iron building resting on bricks and now sitting in the archery field, was once the hub of village life. Everything happened in the Reading Room - library, meeting rooms, youth club, whist drives, jumble sales, dances, concerts, billiards, etc etc. It was originally erected by the Revd. Frank Coggin, vicar of Lemsford 1892-1905, in the grounds of Bridge House which he had rented and was run privately by him. He presented it to the village when he left in 1905. The new tenant of Bridge House did not want it in his back garden but happily Lady Cowper gave permission for it to be moved to the entrance of Roebuck farm. However when Roebuck Farm was sold in 1919 the new owner did not want it blocking his entrance. This time Lord Kerr came to the rescue and provided the current site on a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent of one shilling per year. It served as the village hall until the present one in Brocket Road was built in the early 1970s. It is now the clubroom for an archery club.

## **The Grade II\* Listed London Gates to Brocket Hall**

These were designed by James Paine, the architect commissioned by Sir Matthew Lamb to rebuild Brocket Hall in the mid 18th century, as a more imposing entrance to the Hall. The original entrance was by Lemsford Mill. The gates, set in a decorated screen between two red brick lodges, open to a gently curving road which winds down crossing over Paine's beautiful Palladian bridge to the main entrance to the Hall.

Lord and Lady Mount Stephen, tenants of the Hall from 1893 to 1921, were close friends of King George V and Queen Mary. King George was a keen shot and came down at least once every season for the shooting. The Brocket carriage (Lord Mount Stephen refused to buy a limousine) collected the royal couple at Hatfield Station and the children from the school were lined up on either side of the drive to greet them as they slowly entered the Par



**Brocket Corner, St John's Church and Vicarage 1891**

## **Brocket Corner**

**The Church of St. John the Evangelist** was built in memory of George Augustus, the 6th Earl Cowper by his widow and children. Earl Cowper, concerned at the distance the Lemsford villagers had to walk to attend church services in Hatfield, had intended to build the church but sadly died before he could do so. The architect David Brandon designed both the church and the adjoining vicarage in the Perpendicular style. It was consecrated on the 27th May 1859.

**The Brocket Chapel**, the last private chapel within a parish church to be built in England, was erected by Charles, the first Lord Brocket in 1930 in memory of Florence, his beloved first wife. He commissioned the architect F.E. Howard who designed everything - the building, the contents from the plaster work on the ceiling, to the alabaster tomb, the paving and even to the key to the outside door.

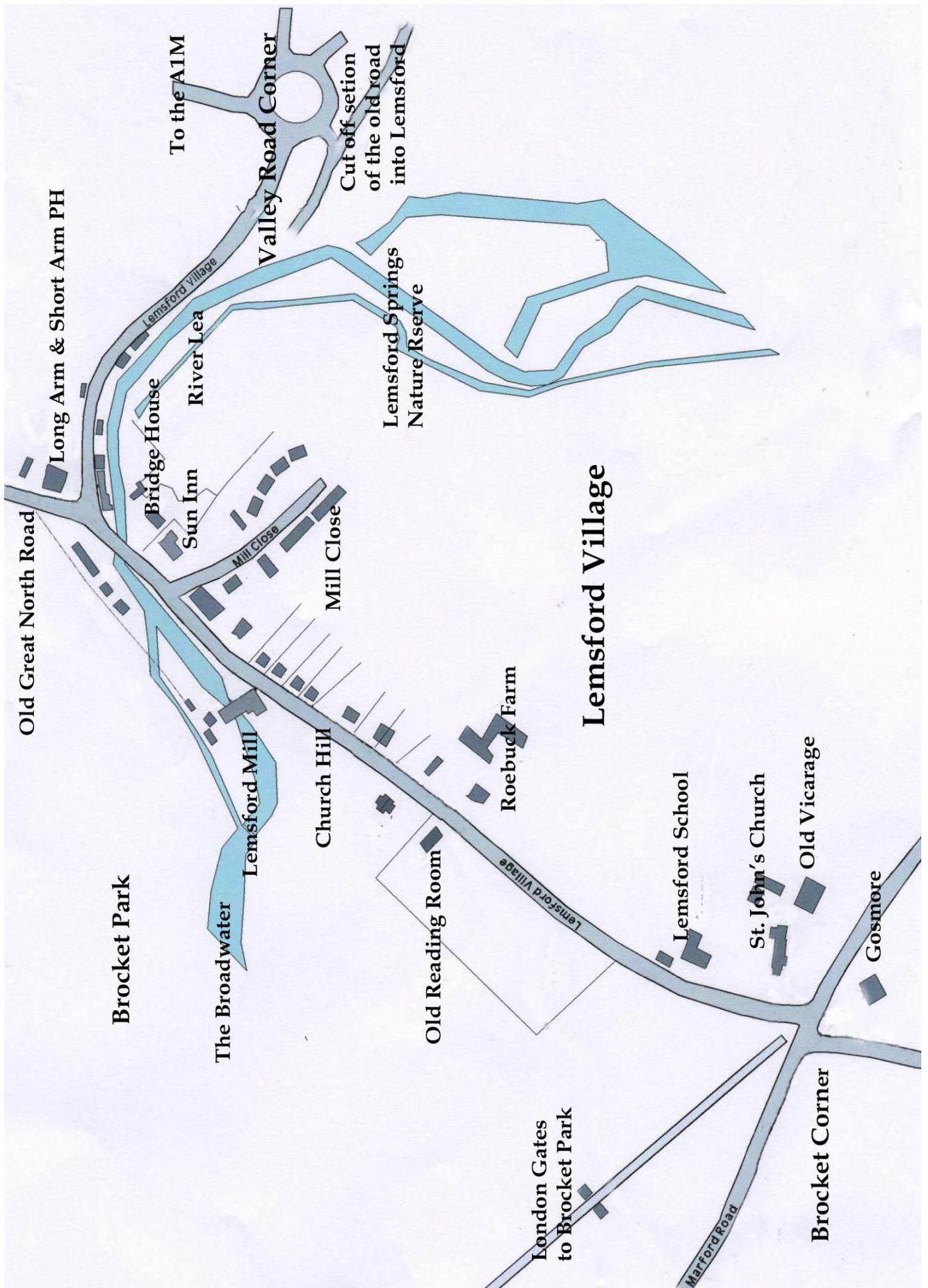
**The first Vicarage** at the side of the church was built at the same time. The Revd. Frank Coggin (1892 to 1905) found it too small so had it enlarged. His successor, the Revd. A. E. Ward (1905-1920) found it too large and expensive to run. A new vicarage was built further down Brocket Road, now known as Church End and the old vicarage renamed Lemsford House was rented out and the income used to increase the vicar's somewhat meagre stipend. In the 1940s, when Brocket Hall became a Maternity hospital, Lemsford House became a home for unmarried mothers while they waited for their babies to be adopted.

**Gosmore**, now a private house, was originally built as a Nursing Home. An inn, The Wagon & Horses, had previously occupied the site opposite the church porch. Lord Mount Stephen and the vicar, not happy about seeing men drinking when they thought they should be in church praying, persuaded the brewer to close the inn and it was demolished. Lord Mount Stephen then paid for the erection of the present building and it was opened in 1900 to serve as a Nursing Home for the parishioners of Lemsford and Ayot St. Peter. He also gave an endowment to pay for a resident nurse.

## Lemsford Village History

- 1068 Lemsford Mill was probably one of the four mills in Hatfield mentioned in the Domesday Book.
- 17th C The Great North Road routed through Lemsford.
- 17th C The Old Cottage was built
- 1734 The Riverside cottages, now one house, were built.
- 1777 The bridge over the river was built replacing the ford.
- 1795 River Lea floods, part of the mill and the bridge washed away  
Bridge completely rebuilt.
- 1806 Bridge House was extended
- 1833 The Great North Road was re-routed and by-passed Lemsford.
- 1846 Wesleyan Chapel built.
- 1859 The newly completed St. John's church was consecrated and the Parish of Lemsford came into being.
- 1863 The ancient wooden-clad mill collapsed circa 1850 and re-built.
- 1872 St. John's School was completed and the first pupils admitted
- 1880 Nos 2-4 Lemsford Village cottages built by the Horns for the workers on Handside Farms.
- 1895 Rev. Coggin installs the Reading Room at Bridge House.
- 1919 Reading Room moved to its present location.
- 1925/6 Road improvements to the Great North Road.
- 1928 Long Arm & Short Arm PH rebuilt.
- 1930 Brocket Chapel consecrated.
- 1945 Mains water – one outside cold tap to each property in the village.
- 1950s Three wooden cottages at the entrance to Lemsford condemned & demolished
- 1957 Lemsford Mill Lane renamed Lemsford Village & the houses given numbers.
- 1962/3 The main drainage and sewerage system completed.
- 1964 Several cottages & the Chapel were demolished to make room for a car park for the Long Arm & Short Arm PH.
- 1965 Mill Close was opened.
- 1966/7A1((M) completed and fully open.
- 2004 Introduction of 'humps' on the village road surface as a traffic calming measure.

**Significant Dates compiled by the late Stan Borrie**





## **Lemsford Village Web-sites**

**Lemsford History Group: [www.lemsfordhistory.co.uk](http://www.lemsfordhistory.co.uk)**

**Lemsford Village Web Site: [www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk](http://www.lemsfordvillage.co.uk)**

**St. John's Church, Lemsford: [www.lemsfordchurch.org.uk](http://www.lemsfordchurch.org.uk)**

**St. John's School, Lemsford: [www.stjohns561.herts.sch.uk](http://www.stjohns561.herts.sch.uk)**

**Lemsford Village Hall: [www.hatfield-herts.gov.uk/lemsford-hall](http://www.hatfield-herts.gov.uk/lemsford-hall)**

**Lemsford Football Club [www.clubwebsite.com/lemsford](http://www.clubwebsite.com/lemsford)**

**Lemsford Springs Nature Reserve:**

**[www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/lemsford-springs](http://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/lemsford-springs)**

**Rambler's Walking Holidays: [www.ramblersholidays.co.uk](http://www.ramblersholidays.co.uk)**

**Brocket Hall: [www.brocket-hall.co.uk](http://www.brocket-hall.co.uk)**

**The Crooked Chimney PH:**

**[www.vintageinn.co.uk/restaurants/east/thecrookedchimneywelwyngarden](http://www.vintageinn.co.uk/restaurants/east/thecrookedchimneywelwyngarden)**

**Long Arm & Short Arm PH: [www.mcmullens.co.uk/longarmshortarm](http://www.mcmullens.co.uk/longarmshortarm)**

**The Sun Inn: [www.suninnlemsford.co.uk](http://www.suninnlemsford.co.uk)**

**The Waggoners PH, Ayot Green: [www.thewaggoners.co.uk](http://www.thewaggoners.co.uk)**

## **Lemsford Local History Group Publications**

*No. 1: Rex's Walk through Lemsford Village (out of print)*

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

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

*No. 4: St. John the Evangelist Lemsford*

*Memorial Inscriptions*

*No.5: Lemsford Village History  
Brocket Hall & Park*

*No.6: Historical Map of the Parish of Lemsford*

*No. 7: Lemsford Village  
from Valley Road Corner to Brocket Corner*