



Hartley Wintney
Preservation Society

50 Years Ago

**A sketch of our village when Elizabeth came to the
throne**

JUBILEE ISSUE MAY 2002

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A sketch of ourvillage when Elizabeth came to the throne

Reflecting on the recent death of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, news coverage of what England was like when she first became Queen, and also the imminent celebrations to mark her daughter's Golden Jubilee, I thought this might be an appropriate time to take a look at what Hartley Wintney was like when our present Queen began her reign in 1952. Perhaps it will stir up memories for some of our older residents and also, I hope, be of interest to those who have come to our village more recently.

Hartley Wintney really was a village in those days, still predominantly a farming community. According to the 1951 Census the population was 2521. A small additional number for Elvetham should also be allowed for. Nearly everyone worked locally. It certainly wasn't a dormitory town for commuters then, and relatively few people had cars. Apart from the farms and the Elvetham Estate, Pools the builder was a major local employer. They were also timber merchants with a large sawmill at the back of the yard and at one time more than 200 people worked for the company. There was no subcontracting then; all craftsmen were directly employed.

Agriculture was still to the fore however, with many working farms – the Hazells at Grange and Causeway Farms, the Hewitts at Church House Farm, Taplins Farm a little further along the lane, the Broomfields at James Farm in West Green Road, Hares Farm (Hunts Common), Mitchell's Dairy at Clarke's Farm just behind the High Street, the Hathaways at Diple, and Arlots was still a working farm at Elvetham. All had arable and (with the possible exception of Hares Farm) livestock. One was far more likely to see cows in the fields than the horses of today.

According to the 1993 Village Appraisal, at the time of the 1991 Census Parish numbers had risen to 5485, more than double. Interestingly, I recently contacted the Planning Office in Winchester for the latest figures and was very surprised to be told that the most recent Parish figure (for 2001) is **5041** – a decrease over the past ten years. If these figures are accurate, one wonders why extra homes are needed! It must be our changing life-styles.

When the Queen came to the throne there were no large housing estates in Hartley Wintney. There were still open fields at Clarke's Farm (the large area above and behind the car park, later to be known as Astley Park and The Northern Slopes) as there were on the other side of Bracknell Lane, apart from one or two large individual properties. According to Philip Hatt, development of the lower section of this area (known as Brackley Fields) began around 1910 when Harry Pool, a local builder, started by planting trees and putting in roads (Brackley Avenue), building one house at a time on individual plots. A few houses were still being built in the early 1950s. (See granting of housing

licenses below.) This was followed by development in Meadow Lane, where houses were not built until the mid to late 50s - after the Queen's accession. The war had stopped house building and there were restrictions and shortages of materials for some years afterwards. There was no footpath or pavement up the Reading Road in 1952 until in July/August the Parish Council asked the County to provide one "at least as far as the last house" for the benefit of villagers who went up the road to walk on Hazeley Heath. Anyone attempting to walk in the road today would be taking their life in their hands! Allotments were being busily cultivated at Kiln Corner (now Kiln Gardens) and the village war memorial stood outside the Victoria Hall at the junction of West Green Road and the A30. Hartford House, an imposing property owned by the Lloyd family and previously a private school, was still standing where Weatherby Gardens and Hartford Road are now and Hill Nurseries, (subsequently Deacon's) flourished at the other end of the village – now Haywarden Place.

On the other side of the A30 there were small signs of expansion. In about 1950 The Grey House had been converted to a private school and a couple of years later a few new houses – e.g. Mymwood, Cherry Hinton, Oakengates and High Hedges were being built in Mount Pleasant. I was very surprised to discover that this road did not acquire its name until December 1952. Some years ago I was shown an old postcard of the village entitled "New Road, Hartley Wintney" which puzzled me. It looked nothing like "New Road" as we know it, but I recognised "The Turrets", a very distinctive older property in what is now Mount Pleasant. Was it called "New Road", or did it have no name for many years?

There was no Southern Haye estate – just a very large private house of the same name in its own grounds. By 1952 a few Council houses had recently been built in Sandy Lane, with more to follow. Those in Priory Lane were somewhat older. Not all had electricity however. Some tenants had already had the service connected but others had to wait until 1953 for the Council to oblige. Plans for 100 houses at Weir Road were under consideration as Queen Elizabeth commenced her reign and construction started later that year, finishing in 1954 - the first major development in Hartley Wintney. The name was chosen as a tribute to Robert Weir Schultz, an Arts & Crafts architect who had designed several large houses in the village and who lived in Phoenix Green and served on the Rural District Council.

Then, as now, there was pressure for housing development in the village. The Ministry of Housing was calling for more dwellings, many of which were to be Council homes. Private development was only to be permitted on a one-for-one basis. Members of Hartley Wintney Rural District Council were most concerned that their 34 proposed private building licenses should not be granted to speculators or those involved with the construction of Council housing to the detriment of the latter. Building materials were in very short supply. They were not prepared to grant the full 50% of building licenses to the private sector although there were 80 or 90 builders anxious to start work in the area. Those who already had a supply of land and a stock of appropriate materials had the advantage.

According to a Hampshire County Council Report concerning development in N.E. Hampshire, it was stated that increasing populations in Aldershot, Farnborough and Fleet would result in a shortfall in residential accommodation due to an insufficient supply of readily available land. The finger was pointed towards Hartley Wintney. It was noted that "Hartley Wintney is a large village of 2000 people with 13 food shops and 22 non-food shops in 1950". By October 1952 the Ministry of Housing was stating that in most areas considerably more houses than were currently under construction would be needed to meet targets.

Although the population then was so much smaller than today, Hartley Wintney still enjoyed a great variety of shops. Philip Hatt, who ran our fishmongers at Parsons for so many years, told me that in 1951 (when he had just come out of National Service) Hartley Wintney had nine Grocers, four Post Offices, and one could still get harness hand made by Bill White, the village saddler, who had his premises in the left-hand portion of Webbs. The grocers in 1952 were The Post Office in Thackhams Lane, which also sold groceries, Baldwin's Corner Stores at the corner of Dilly Lane, where the antique shop is now, Tom Thorne, grocer, at Just the Thing, Mercer Harris (also bakery) where Martyn Russell's premises are today, Mitchell's Dairy (Kittens), The International Stores (One Stop), the Co-op (l/h side of Andwells Antiques), Henry J. Pratt, Grocer & Provision Merchant (opposite the Lamb on the r/h side of passage-way by the Baptist Chapel), Haywards Stores (Monsoon Indian Restaurant) and Charlton's Bakery and Provision Merchants at Hartford Bridge (recently converted to residential).

The four Post Offices were The Post House in Thackhams Lane, Post Cottage in West Green, the premises now used by Hartley Barbers which still bears the old sign, and a Post Office run from the front room of an old cottage where Calthorpe Houses at Hartford Bridge now stand.

In those days one could buy virtually anything in the village, including clothing and shoes. There were two ironmongers – Frank Brown (Acorn Property Agency) and Parnells hardware and shoe shop (Lazarus Antiques). Mrs. Cole had her drapery store - also selling Ladies & Infants Wear - in the premises now occupied by Carsons Estate Agents and Coles menswear was to be found in what is now the Odiham Hospital Charity Shop. Mrs. Cole sold her business to Mr. Coles (very confusing!) during 1952.

This small rural community also supported two butchers, Graves and Parsons – there had been three until 1945, when Mr. Rutter retired – and Dewhurst delivered from Fleet. Parsons had both meat and fish counters.

Porters is probably the only business still owned by the same family and trading from the same premises, though there is still a butcher at Graves and One Stop remains a grocery store. All the other shops seem to have undergone change since 1952.

Far from the late-night, seven-days-a-week shopping we experience today, shops closed at 5.30 pm, had a Wednesday half-day closing as well as all day Sunday, and were shut for at least two days over Christmas. We paid, of course, in old money – pounds, shillings

and pence - for goods measured in pounds and ounces, not kilos, and still bought many items such as groceries and meat unpackaged. Refrigerators were not in every home, yet people didn't seem to suffer as many tummy upsets as they do to day.

The Doctors' Surgery was still in Park Corner, the elegant property on the corner opposite the Golf Club, when Elizabeth came to the throne. It moved to Bracknell Lane (what is now Burden House) a couple of years later. Patients of the three-doctor practice – Drs. Sharkey, Trust and Morrison - had to wait in a tiny little room at the side of the house in full view of people walking along the road, standing outside if the waiting room were full. As far as I can ascertain there were only two reception staff at that time – Mrs. Greening and Miss Betty Harper, who no doubt is remembered with great affection by many of today's older residents.

Further from the village, Winchfield Hospital (site of Winchfield Court) was still in use and undergoing modernization and refurbishment. By 1953 this had been done and there were 134 beds for general hospital patients and 32 for the mentally ill. I believe one or two Amenity beds had also been added. The authorities were looking very much to the future. Even in those days they were hampered by a severe shortage of nursing staff and a 1953 report suggests more beds could have been opened had this not been the case.

As far as the churches are concerned, all were going strong and in their present locations with the exception of the Catholic Church. This was not built until the early 1960s, when Lord Calthorpe provided a site in Mount Pleasant. In 1952 the local Catholic community held their services in a small wooden hut on the corner of Vicarage Hill, near to the pond. This was pulled down when the new Church Hall was built next to St. John's. Very frequently there was insufficient room to accommodate everyone and worshippers were often to be seen gathered outside at service time.

At the time of Elizabeth's accession, Hartley Wintney still had its own water supply from Warren Heath and the water tower in Bracknell Lane was used for its original purpose rather than as a mobile telephone mast. The growing population and its expectations and increased house building in the area meant this supply was coming under strain. The lovely soft water was deemed to be of exceptional quality and responsible, at least in part, for the good health and longevity enjoyed by local residents. There was great resistance in Hartley Wintney to the waterworks being taken over by another water company. Emergency measures were put in place to temporarily increase the supply in times of shortage, but a storm was brewing which was to culminate in a Public Enquiry and Appeal the following year.

Many newer residents may not be aware that in those days the village had its own senior school – The Hartley Wintney County Secondary School. This was housed in what is now Oakwood, our present infants school building. (Greenfields was not built until much later.) For many years pupils came from Yateley, swelling the numbers, until Yateley too had developed to such an extent a senior school was built there. School dinners were prepared and served in the nearby W.I. Hut and it wasn't until the end of 1952 that the County Council approved a scheme to provide a proper kitchen and equipment for the

school. Infants and Juniors had their classrooms on the site of Old School Close. Until 1973 (when it was burnt down by vandals) an old thatched cottage stood at the junction of Cricket Green Lane and the Fleet Road, and this was part of the Infants School.

Not only was there no Greenfields School – there were no playing fields either. There were allotments there as well as at Vicarage Hill and Kiln Corner. The Parish Council was very aware of the lack of recreational facilities for the community and negotiations were taking place concerning the acquisition of land close to the new housing estate (Weir Road). This took a long time to come to fruition.

However, lack of a playing field did not mean a lack of recreational opportunities! In 1952 hardly anyone had a TV – many were bought specially to view the Queen's Coronation Ceremony the following year. Even then very few people had one. The early sets were exceedingly small, the tiny picture in black and white only. The “wireless”, as radio was known, was at the heart of every home. Perhaps the lack of TV, Hi-fis and computers at least partially explains the great variety of recreational activity in the village. It could be that an almost car-less society was happy to enjoy the local amenities, or maybe people just needed to forget the austerity of the previous years. Rationing was still a part of everyday life and when Winston Churchill insisted that sugar had to come off ration before the Coronation so that the children could enjoy sweets his advisers were very strongly against it, foreseeing a sugar shortage, which in fact did not arise. Perhaps the fact that so many farmers had responded to an appeal by the Ministry of Agriculture to grow sugar beet had something to do with it.

Hartley Wintney had a thriving Football Club that ran several teams. No doubt the fact that the club had won the Hampshire County Cup at Fratton Park in 1947 (cheered on by no less than 10 coach-loads of supporters!) had helped to boost its popularity. The club also organized a “Tradesmen's Cup”. Many of the local pubs and businesses fielded sides for this popular annual knock-out competition. According to the Hants. & Berks. Gazette, the main objective was to raise funds for the local Derby & Joan Club and the event attracted very good crowds of spectators. The games took place on an excellent pitch provided by the Elvetham Estate just behind Causeway Farm. Access was via the footpath onto the Golf Club and through a little gate in the hedge to the right. I believe the gate is still there. A small wooden hut afforded changing facilities.

The Golf Club too was flourishing and going through something of a Golden Era. In 1951 the Club had managed to lease more land and improvements were made to the last three holes between then and 1953. Stan Fox, a Hartley Wintney member, was sweeping all before him, becoming one of England's leading amateur golfers and winning many prestigious trophies.

The Cricket Club had taken a little while to get its pitch back to condition after its use as a parking area for military vehicles during the war - pieces of the mesh put down to protect it were still being extricated years later. The Club itself, in spite of operating out of a tiny wooden pavilion, was in extremely good heart and possibly had a somewhat higher profile than today. I understand a match against Hampshire County Cricket Club

has been arranged for later this summer as a special event, but in the early 1950s this was a regular fixture that drew large crowds of spectators, even coach parties. In 1952 the Hartley Wintney captain was one of the local G.Ps, Dr. Morrison, and the event was followed by a “flannel dance”. (“Whites” or informal attire I assume!)

Another very popular local attraction was watching motor-bike scrambling on Hazeley Heath. No doubt many people will be horrified to learn about this, but there wasn't the same awareness then as there is today of the possible damage to wildlife habitats; few people were aware how vulnerable our native flora and fauna are. I suppose, too, that residents had got used to the idea of tank training on the heath during the war. One must also remember that the Commons weren't mown closely as they are today; the grass verges weren't trimmed in such a suburban manner – the village had an altogether more rural appearance and wildlife was perhaps not so endangered. Nor was there an excessive use of herbicides and pesticides. The competitions, run by the North Hants. Motor Cycle Club, were well supported and local riders participated with some success. Many a young man found it hard to choose between scrambling and church, for the events were held on Sundays. They seem to have been well tolerated by the local community in spite of the inevitable noise. The only criticism seems to have been that occasionally some riders would use the footpath from the Nursery (Haywarden Place) to access the heath. When events were to take place the organizers were asked to put up notices forbidding it.

In 1952 Toc H was thriving, holding regular dances with live bands and orchestras to provide the music as well as organizing bonfires and fireworks and helping with general fundraising for good causes. Dances generally were a feature of village life as well as musical and other entertainments. The Chamber of Trade was very active and the W.I. remained central to the Hartley Wintney scene. There was a Girls Choir, many Church affiliated societies and youth organizations (including an Army Cadet Force), all of which seem to have been very dynamic. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, the Home Guard was also still in existence. There was a flourishing Horticultural Society that held a very extensive annual Show with an unbelievable number of competition classes. There were fetes (organized by Toc H) where a pig was still the coveted prize – a true reminder of the rural way of life we've left behind. (N.B. The above list of organizations is by no means comprehensive.)

In their spare time, villagers could always go for a drink in one of the many local hostelrys. When Queen Elizabeth came to the throne we had more pubs than today; there was the Phoenix, the Swan was still open, the Little Crown (Century Gallery) as well as the Waggon and Horses. The Cricketers did a good trade, as did the Lamb and also The Crown Hotel. Formerly a pub, the latter was in the building now known as Crown House at Hunts Common. The White Lyon had just been sold and was being completely modernised and refurbished but the Gardeners Arms in West Green was still operating as a pub as was the tiny Old Mill Inn at Diple.

The most striking difference over the past 50 years that I have become aware of whilst doing my research has nothing to do with development, with village growth or change of

recreational habits – it is about crime. Serious crime was virtually non-existent in this area when Queen Elizabeth began her reign. I have scanned two years' of local newspapers and I should think the number of serious or violent crimes can be counted on one hand. Our local Police Station was fully manned, and in the smaller communities most people would have known one another or been aware of anything unusual taking place.

There were a few instances of burglary or theft, but by far the most common “crimes” were poaching and vehicle or cycling offences. One local resident was an habitual offender, being fined £1 for trespassing on the Elvetham Estate in daytime looking for “conies” (rabbits), £1 for another similar offence and £1 for carrying a gun without a license. That might sound extremely serious today, but in a rural community many countrymen would have had a shot-gun – one certainly wouldn't have assumed they were about to carry out a bank robbery! To put the fines in context, minimum Agricultural wages had just gone up to 113s. (£5.13s.0p) per week for men, and 86s (£4.6s.0d) for women. This was for experienced full time adult workers. Lower rates of pay applied to other grades.

On the same day a fellow carrying a passenger on the crossbar of his cycle was fined 50s, as was his passenger. Both were also fined £1 for cycling without lights. Motorists caught speeding in 30mph areas could expect an endorsement as well as a £1 penalty. Those who had no Commoners' Rights on a particular area of Common were fined if caught grazing their animals there. This offence attracted a fine of 10s (50p). No doubt our policemen today would envy such a simple life. Steep fines were also meted out to parents whose children failed to attend school regularly.

So far I have been pointing out the differences between Hartley Wintney 50 years ago and today. But some problems have remained the same, though sometimes with a different slant. In 1952 local people and the Parish Council were very concerned at the way traffic was speeding down into the village from Star Hill and also at the other end of the village near the Police Station. A satisfactory solution has obviously not been found since we experience the same problems today.

Lack of parking in the village was another difficulty exercising the minds of the local authorities then as now, though relatively few local people owned cars. The Parish Council strongly opposed the Rural District Council's suggestion that a car park be made on Hunts Common, as they didn't feel it would address the problems of parking in the village centre. The R.D.C was of the opinion that proper, official, parking facilities were required to cope with passing trade and to provide for the many visitors who broke their journey at Hartley Wintney. The A30 was the main road from London to the West Country at that time. Because of its strategic location the village had also become a major staging point for Royal Blue Coaches. Motor coaches had replaced the horse-drawn vehicles of earlier years and Hartley Wintney continued to respond to the needs of travellers. Many people in the village will remember the famous blue coaches and seeing the Swan car park packed with vehicles. According to L.C. Culver, writing in 1950, it was common to see anything up to a dozen or fifteen coaches parked in the village with

up to two or three times that number on gala days. The Swan car park was extended to cope with the increased demand when the Friary brewery acquired part of the garden of The Limes, but this in itself was controversial. Many local people were unhappy with the proposed extension, designed to cater for a maximum of 20 coaches. However, it finally went ahead early in 1953 and now houses the attractive Swan Court.

Military vehicles, in spite of a ban, continued to be parked occasionally in the village, as Hartley Wintney was en route to a testing station at Frimley. Irritation too, was being caused by low and night flying over the village from Blackbushe Airport – the village had a few problems in those days too - it was not always the perfect rural idyll we imagine. The airport was being used for pilot training on the new De Havilland Comet aircraft and it was necessary to practice night flying. The Ministry of Civil Aviation responded to complaints by explaining there were a limited number of aerodromes suitable for the training flights, but a more remote aerodrome was being sought for future programmes. Not only were residents disturbed by noise, there was a persistent rumour that the U.S. Air Force was going to take over the operation of the airport and its status generally was under question.

Another matter worrying our local Councils was the proposed Trunk Road 8 to the West Country, though it was not expected to be completed for another 20 years. These were early days as far as consultation was concerned, but it was realized that much land would be needed and that almost inevitably farms would be split, making them difficult to manage.

It was not all gloom and doom however. Sadness at the death of George VI was tempered by thoughts of the coronation of the beautiful young Queen Elizabeth and ideas were soon being put forward as to ways her accession might be celebrated in Hartley Wintney the following year. On a more domestic level, many housewives were bowled over by the introduction of “Surf”, the new miracle washing powder – Goodbye to bars of washing soap that had to be cut up with a carving knife! When most households had so few of the domestic appliances we take for granted today it’s amazing what an impact such a little thing could have.

It has been my intention to give a broad impression of the village in 1952. Perhaps I’ve made a few errors. If so, I apologize, and would be grateful for any corrections. I hope I’ve stirred a few memories – I’d love to hear from anyone with tales to tell about this period – it will help to complete the record. I’m very grateful to both Hartley Wintney Parish Councillor Philip Hatt and David Hazell of Causeway Farm for their help. Much information has been gleaned from other sources, especially the Hants. & Berks. Gazette for that year, planning information from Hart District Council Offices and articles written by various local people.

Barbara Broadway
Hartley Wintney Preservation Society
April 2002



The Hartley Wintney Preservation Society

The Hartley Wintney Preservation Society was founded in 1966 as a local amenity society with the broad aim of preserving the best of the past for the future. It is affiliated to the Open Spaces Society and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). Its primary concerns are the protection and enhancement of the beauty and amenities of Hartley Wintney and its surrounding countryside, and the encouragement of interest in the history and natural history of the area.

The Society takes a keen interest in local planning matters and also maintains an archive of old photographs, copies of which may be purchased.

Current Subscription Rates

Long Term Membership (5 Years) = £12

Annual Membership = £3

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