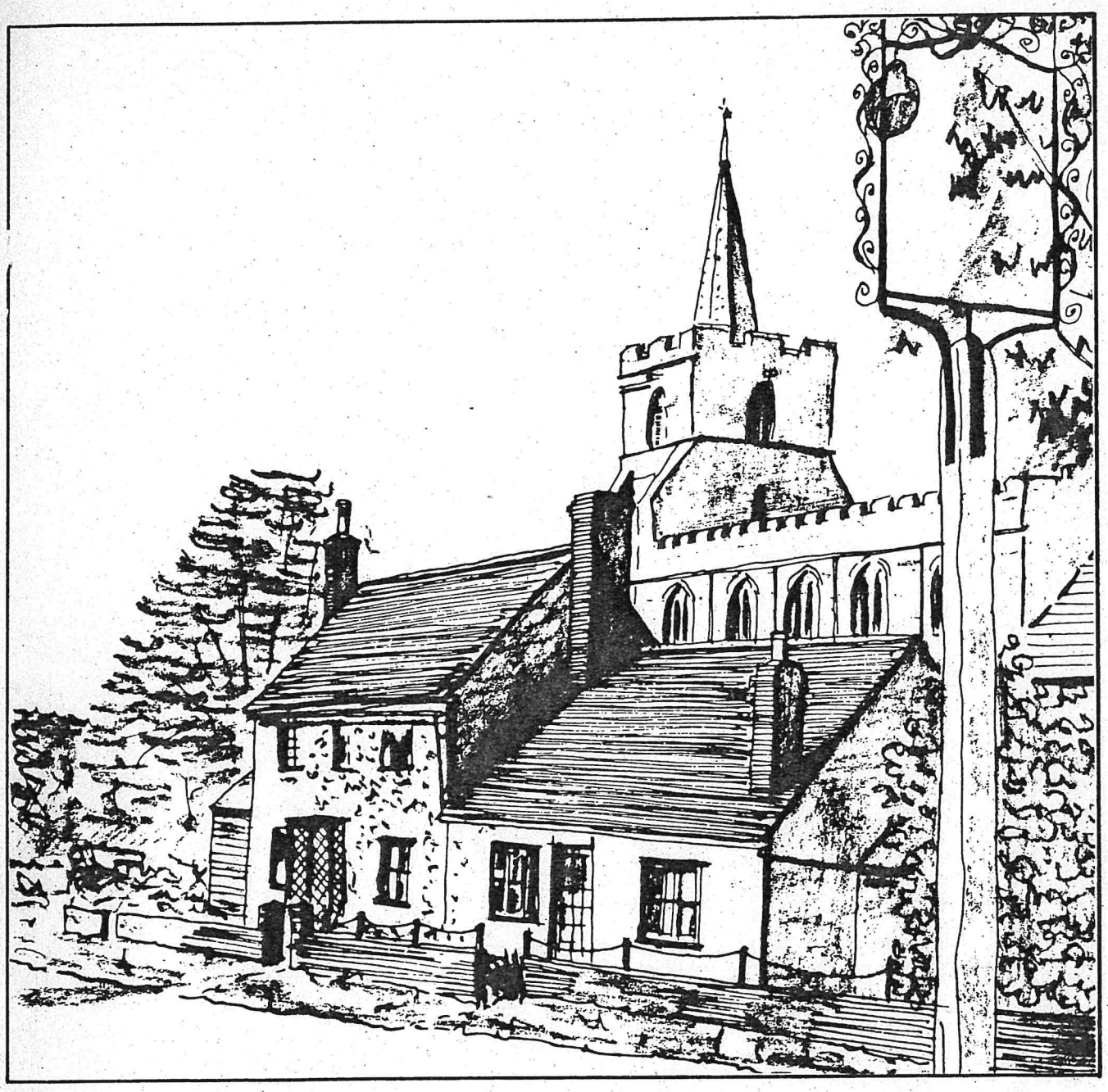


STEBBING—THE PROSPECT FOR SURVIVAL

The Argument For Conservation

A Brief History of Stebbing

Natural History of Stebbing

A Survey of the Architecture of Stebbing

Contributors:
Robert Holles, Kathleen Phillips, Diana Mann,
Michael Kingdom

Published by the Stebbing Society 1975

THE ARGUMENT FOR CONSERVATION

> "It seems that both the beauty of nature and the beauty of cultural surroundings created by man are necessary to keep people mentally healthy. The complete blindness to everything beautiful, so common in these times, is a mental illness that must be taken seriously, for the simple reason that it goes hand in hand with insensitivity to the ethically wrong."
>
> Konrad Lorenz.
> (Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins.)

People tend to get used to the environment in which they live and many come to take it for granted. But nobody with any aesthetic appreciation—or nobody, to put it more plainly, who has eyes to see—would deny that the village of Stebbing is a place of considerable charm and beauty. It is inarguably one of the half dozen most physically attractive and historically significant villages in North-West Essex and like all such villages it is a national asset and one which it is becoming increasingly vital to preserve.

The aesthetic quality of Stebbing is compounded of its ancient buildings, of which there are a considerable number, in harmony with the surrounding countryside—the flat, fertile acres of Essex farmland which encompass it. Not perhaps a dramatic landscape, but one which perfectly complements the essential character of the village... the open, ragged aspect of Stebbing Green, the squat bulk of the medieval church, the jumbled facades of the High Street, which retains most of the characteristics it must have presented three hundred years ago. It is true there are patches of ugliness, many of them relics of the archaic planning situation which prevailed between the wars—and others of much more recent origin.

But a village is not merely a collection of architecture—however inspiring the stud and plaster and the exposed oak beams. It is a collection of people, a community.

Stebbing is a very close community, over a thousand strong. There still remains a considerable element of those over fifty who were bred and born in the village and speak with the native Essex accent. There are many others under twenty who were born in the village—the children of those who have settled there. Between this blend of the indigenous and the immigrant there is no sense of conflict. Stebbing is a place where the newcomer is regarded not as an intruder, but as someone to be assessed on his merits as a human being. Those who come to Stebbing tend to stay there, and take part as a matter of course in the life of the village. A very large proportion of the residents are involved in one or the other of the wide range of social and sporting activities which exist within the village.

There is also the peace of the place, a quality which is fast disappearing from our society, but which is still to be experienced in Stebbing... the freedom from exposure to abarsive noise, from excessive interference from the world outside... the freedom to explore the possibilities of leisure, to establish a personal sense of identity.

Yet this particular quality of life which still exists in Stebbing is in danger of extinction, not perhaps immediately, but by a stealthy process of erosion over a period of ten, twenty... perhaps fifty years. Stebbing is now on the periphery of the wholesale destruction of villages in Essex and the Home Counties which has spread from London throughout the south-eastern rural districts over the last thirty years. This is why we are now urging that the village should be regarded as a major conservation area.

The principle threats to the future survival of the village are as follows;

OVERBUILDING

Stebbing has now reached saturation point with regard to the erection of new building estates. Further extensive developments of this nature would rapidly drown the ancient and historic character of the village architecture, while any further expansion of the population would inexorably advance—if that is the right word—the status of the village towards a dormitory suburb of Braintree or Dunmow.

This possibility applies particularly to the area which includes the Downs and Bran End, where the existing new housing estates are situated. Further substantial development here would eliminate the integrated character of the village and its community. There would be two villages—New Stebbing and Old Stebbing—with Stebbing Green thrown in as an interesting titbit on the road to Braintree.

Any further housing development in Stebbing must be minimal, confined to judicious infilling and the improvement of existing property. Any new housing should be strictly limited to the needs of the people in the immediate locality; service flats for the aged, low-cost accommodation for the young married couples.

GRAVEL EXTRACTION

The development of gravel workings on a major scale is perhaps the most serious threat to Stebbing's future. Some eighty acres of land in the heart of the village have already been acquired for this purpose and gravel extraction on a minor scale is currently taking place on an adjacent site.

The disturbance and nuisance caused by the transport of large quantities of gravel through the village would effectively destroy the peace, and the quality of life. It has been suggested that the lorries might be routed straight on to the A120 and not travel through the village at all. But such routings are sanctioned by the local planning authorities who might easily decide, for economic or other reasons, to send the traffic through Stebbing.

Major gravel extraction would devastate the landscape—and for ever. There is often talk of 'reclamation'. But for effective restoration of the landscape a supply of suitable infilling material of the same quantity as the gravel removed would be required, and the original topsoil then replaced. What frequently happens is that the waterlogged pits are finally abandoned after 'landscaping' i.e. the planting of a few clumps of conifers—and left to become a wilderness of gorse and brambles.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of new industrial sites in the village would serve to hasten its destruction, not only through the obvious damage to the physical environment, but by increasing the volume of heavy traffic to an unacceptable level.

The suggestion that further industrial development in Stebbing would increase the employment prospects in the village hardly bears closer examination. There are already two small industries in the village and their affect on the employment situation within the parish boundaries is minimal. The basic industry is agriculture but such is the level of manpower on farms today that there are probably as many school teachers in the village as farmworkers, and almost certainly more salesmen. The residents of Stebbing, in this highly motorised era, find their employment over a radius of twenty miles or so, which includes the industrial conurbations of Chelmsford and Braintree.

People come to Stebbing to live, not to work there. If further industrial development is needed in this area, then the case for it to be sited in towns like Braintree must be overwhelming.

HIGHWAYS DEVELOPMENT

The road which runs through Stebbing is probably the one the Romans trod, and they weren't in a hurry. But substantial efforts have since been made by successive highways departments to organise it, and straighten it out.

The dogleg nature of Stebbing's road, the narrowness of its leafy lanes, is an essential part of its character. The purpose of road improvements in the village is to open it up to a greater volume of heavier traffic at faster speeds. This policy is diametrically opposed to the real needs of Stebbing—a lesser volume of lighter traffic at slower speeds.

NOISE NUISANCE

Four or five years ago Stansted was selected as the third London airport, a disastrous decision which was subsequently reversed by the weight of local protest. The Maplin site was then substituted but this has now been abandoned—the country cannot afford it. Now the chances are that Stansted will be developed surreptitiously by the insidious back-door route.

Stebbing is very close to the flight path of Stansted airport and the result of a major new development there would bring the village into the orbit of continuous aircraft noise. We should join with the neighbouring towns and villages in total opposition to any substantial expansion of Stansted Airport.

DESTRUCTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

A few months ago in the course of a minor road 'improvement,' council workmen were seen to be preparing to remove a line of five mature willows which were 'interfering with the line of sight.' A last-minute intervention saved them.

A tree which has taken a hundred years to grow can be sawn down in a couple of minutes—and Essex is short of trees, particularly since the recent loss of most of its elms. During the last few years farmers in this area, for economic reasons, have uprooted many miles of hedgerows, depriving much of the indigenous animal life of the necessary cover for survival. The careless burning of stubble has contributed to this process. Hopefully these practises are now on the decline.

Looking at the conservation problem in a wider sense and over a longer period than the immediate future, there are encouraging signs that the pressure for further housing development in sensitive rural areas may eventually relax. The latest figures for the national birth rate show that it is now only marginally above replacement level and is on a declining trend; the population of Britain may have levelled out.

The Sunday Times Business News reported (Oct. 74) that 'the total number of old and new houses and flats for sale throughout the country may be approaching the million mark.' During the last two years of unprecedented inflation the price of housing has remained virtually static. No doubt there will continue to be a high demand for accommodation in some large cities and industrial centres for some time to come. But in other areas there are indications that the level of housing units is approaching saturation point, and might reach it within fifty years—a brief interlude in the life of a village like Stebbing.

There could also be a corresponding decline in the pressures for the construction of major new roads, which could lead to a lessening of demand for the extraction of sand and gravel from new deposits located in areas of outstanding natural beauty, while there are still some left. Hopefully this would include the cancellation of plans for the proposed Bishop's Stortford-Harwich motorway extension which, together with a major extension of Stansted Airport, would effectively devastate the whole of rural North Essex.

At the moment the Council for the Preservation of Rural England is preparing a report on the future development of English villages. The local council is making a similar study of villages in this area. But the professional planners, the experts, the local politicians, tend to see development in terms of bricks and mortar, land availability, sports centres, population drift assessments—and villages in terms of dormitories or museums.

Stebbing is a bit of a dormitory, part museum, with a modicum of industry to give it a sense of purpose. It has had its share of planning in the past few decades. Is it conceivable that the best possible future development might be just to leave it alone—to preserve it in its present form, not only for the benefit of the residents, but for the pleasure of future generations?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STEBBING

When the Saxons invaded this part of England they came by way of the creeks, padded along the Roman roads, and usually established their settlements on hill tops and in clearings away from the main routes. The village is thought to have taken its name from the clan of Stybba which had settled in the 'ing' or meadow on one of the well-drained glacial gravel outlyers which litter the Essex landscape.

They probably found that the Romans had been there before them. Some Roman remains have been found in the fields around Stebbing Green which suggest it was a convenient resting place for legionaries and other travellers en route between London and Colchester.

By the time of the Norman Conquest, some five centuries later, the village was owned by Siward, a Saxon thegn. The great survey of Domesday in 1087 shows that the village was divided into two manors and shared between two Norman lords, Henry de Ferrers at Stebbing Park and Ralph Peverell at what is now known as Parsonage Farm. The manor of the latter amounted to about 400 acres and there were 19 villeins—villanus, Latin for the inhabitants of a vill (age). These were bondsmen holding some 30 acres or more, paying service of three days a week on their Lord's lands. There were 31 bordars—(Borda—L. a cottage) and 11 serfs. His woodland was sufficient to feed 200 pigs and there were 24 acres of meadow with a vineyard—one of nine planted in Essex by Norman Lords who were obviously reluctant to miss out on all their home comforts. He owned 5 horses, 100 sheep, 50 pigs and 5 hives of bees which supplied the basic ingredient for mead as well as wax for candles.

Ralph Peverell married Maude, a concubine to William I, and their son founded the priory at Hatfield Peverell. A later member of the same family poisoned the Earl of Chester and forfeited his estates to Henry II. His lands and manors then passed into the hands of the de Ferrers family in addition to their estates at Woodham.

The Domesday Book was not a census, for although it counts the labourers, cattle, pigs etc. it has nothing to say about women and children. The Conqueror was more interested in the value of his new domain than in its population.

The manor of the de Ferrers contained about 530 acres of arable land, 9 acres of pasture, and woodland sufficient to feed 130 pigs. There were 8 villeins and 33 bordars. The latter owned their cottages and a small plot of land but worked full time on their Lord's lands. There were also 18 cattle, 140 sheep and 80 pigs: the total value being £12.

The de Ferrers were prominent at the court of William I, one member serving on the Domesday Commission. Another was created Earl of Derby by King Stephen after the Battle of the Standard against King David of Scotland in 1138. Yet another served with Richard in the Crusades and died at the Seige of Acre in 1191. The manor then passed to the Willoughby family of Woolaton in Norfolk.

A member of this family was Constable of England during the short reign of the boy King, Edward VI. His son Henry, Duke of Suffolk, married one of the daughters of Henry VII who was the widow of the King of France. They had one daughter, Lady Jane Grey, who was beheaded, as was her father for taking part in the Wyatt Rebellion. The manor then became the property of the Crown, and was later passed to the Capel family in 1555, and was thus in the hands of the Earls of Essex for some years.

It would appear that the church and manor of Frier's or Prior's Hall (i.e. Parsonage Farm) was given by the Earl of Derby, during the reign of Henry II, to the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem. At the Dissolution (of Monasteries) it became the property of the Crown. In 1543, Henry VIII granted the rectory of St. Mary's and advowson to Thomas Cornwall, with 4 messuages, 1 dove house, 4 orchards, 4 gardens, 200 acres of arable land, 30 of it pasture, 10 woodland with tithes of grain and hay. Later it was sold to the Sorell family, and during the 18th century it came into the hands of the Batt family, merchants of Cheapside.

Little can be gleaned from the records on the possibility of Porter's Hall having been a manor included in the medieval visitation of William's constables. Porter's Hall took its name from the de Porter family who rented the land from the de Ferrers family for 8s a year and a pound of pepper. At the Inquisition of 1555 the manor consisted of 20 messuages, 10 tofts, 40 gardens, 1 water mill, 600 acres of arable land, 500 acres of pasture, and 100 acres of woodland. Much of this was in what is now known as Saling and Bardfield Saling and therefore does not pertain fully to the history of Stebbing.

As can be noted from the Domesday records sheep were the major livestock on the two local manors. During the late medieval period and up to the Tudor/Stuart period the great 'industry' of Essex was the manufacture of woollen cloth centred on Colchester. Two types of cloth were made–'Bay' (Badius–L. chestnut coloured, bay) was a thick, loose, coarse woven woollen cloth so called because of its colour but that manufactured in Colchester seems to have been the natural shade of off-white. 'Say' was a lighter material used for shirts and linings.

The greatest social change which took place in the late medieval period was caused by the Black Death. This reached the shores of southern England in 1348 where the plague raged for almost two years and gradually extended northwards to Scotland. So many people succumbed to the disease that there was an acute shortage of labour. For the first time landowners were faced with the problem of attracting workers into their service and were forced to offer wages in return for work. Little wonder that more land was given over to sheep-rearing which required the minimum of supervision for the major part of the year.

While the inhabitants of Stebbing contributed greatly to the woollen industry by rearing sheep there is no hard evidence to support the speculation that weaving, other than for domestic use, took place within the village. The nearest recorded centre for weaving was Dunmow but this was one of the smaller ones and it only came into prominence after the influx of Flemish refugees driven out by the Spanish in the mid-16th century.

From the few records available of the 16th and 17th centuries we find that the manors were divided into smaller farms and the names of the landowners–Jermigan, Batt, Rodes, Barnard and others–crop up frequently, especially in Vestry records. The Vestry was a form of local government which evolved in Tudor times. The officers were the Constable, Churchwarden, Waywarden and Overseer of the Poor. They kept the peace, kept the roads in repair and also kept the poor.

During the 16th century the people of Stebbing were subjected to many religious changes. The Rector and Churchwardens had a harassing time during the period of conflict between state and church. Within the span of eleven years the decorations and ceremonies of the church were changed from Roman Catholic to Protestant; from Protestant to Roman Catholic during Mary's reign, and back to Protestant in Elizabeth's reign. Altars, crosses and rood loft were alternatively set up and pulled down as the authorities of the day directed. Unfortunately, the records are lost but the Churchwarden's accounts for Dunmow are detailed enough to show what was taking place in the neighbourhood.

Records of the Constable's work shows charges of superstition... "we do presente Margaret Haydene of Stebbing upon the common cryme of wychcraft." (1583) Petty crimes... "John Cooke of Stebying who entered Thompson's henne croft and killed two hennes." (1598) and "Richard Handler, victualler dothe suffer dyverse abuses in his house as unlawful games, cards and dyce and extrordynarye drinckinge, provoking dyverse quarrells." (1589)

The Overseers accounts show how relief was dispensed to the poor and needy, on occasions to returning heroes. "Henry Hurrell and Richard Hitchcock that they were at Colchester during the siege there and continued constant to His Majesty's service that they have received hurts and we consider some gratuity to them would do better than a continuance of their pension." (1665)

Restrictions on personal freedom were even greater in the 17th century than we have to tolerate in the 20th century. Religious dissadents and recusants–those who failed to attend church services–could be punished by the courts. The Returns of Recusants 1640-41 at Essex Quarter Sessions bears an entry which lists the guilty in Stebbing. "Ann, wife of Jeremy Clark, and Mrs Jane Clark and her daughters, also the wife of John Hollingsworth, William Porter, and Roberta his wife." There is further evidence of the growth of Non-conformity in Stebbing for in 1665 Richard Chapman of Stebbing was indicted for assembling "with dyverse illdoers and disturbers of the peace to the number of one hundred under the colour of exercising religion."

Stebbing had been visited in 1665 by James Parnell, a convert of James Fox, who was to die imprisoned in Colchester Castle at the age of about nineteen. He may have inspired the meeting referred to above. Several local farmers were resolutely opposed to the state established religion and refused to pay their tithes. In 1658 Andrew Smith was imprisoned in Colchester Castle for seven months, as were John Chopping and Francis Marriage for twelve months some time later.

Charles II ascended the throne in 1660 having given assurances that all persons of various opinions in religion should have freedom to worship in their own way. Such promises vanished when he passed the notorious Act of Ejectment in 1662. Early Non-conformists in Stebbing suffered, none more so than the Reverend Samuel Bantoft B.D., Vicar of Stebbing, who was ejected on 7th August, 1662. Bantoft, who was a noted university preacher and a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, moved to Braintree where he stayed for 10 years until his licence to preach was restored.

During the 17th and 18th centuries Constables all over England were busy taking paupers to their legal places of settlement so that they did not become chargeable to the rates. During these centuries it was difficult to enter a village to look for work unless you were able to show a certificate of settlement given by the Churchwarden of your native parish. For Stebbing we find such entries as:

Expenses for Nash (Constable) conveying Widow Gould to Manchester	£7-3-3d
Coach Hire for Mary Burles' children to Romford and Limehouse	£1-11-0d
Conveying Barnard to Hackney...	
Mr. Lane's (solicitor) advice respecting Nicholl's settlement	£0-3-6d

Relief of the poor went on steadily from year to year. Occasionally contributions of varying amounts were made to the Overseer's account. In 1588 Robert Fuller and John Polly gave two cottages and a garden adjoining the churchyard, now known as Rose Cottage, for the use of two poor families. The Buttolfe family donated the rent which amounted to £3 annually of a field first purchased by them in 1612. William Byatt, gentleman, stated in his will of 1711 "I do give to the poor of Stebbing the sum of two pounds of lawfull money of Great Britaine." A legacy of £150 left by Frances Batt in 1736 provided two cottages which were in turn rented out; the proceeds supplemented the poor relief sum of up to £12 annually. This fund later came to be administered by the Vicar and Churchwarden.

Beyond the fact that mixed farming was followed from the 15th century onwards, little is known of the variety of crops grown in and around the village. It would be fair to assume that these were basic to the needs of the local community. There are several references to corn-millers, flour-millers, malsters, bakers and ale-houses from the mid-16th century onwards. One inhabitant, Garrod Barron, states in his will dated 1691 "... Unto Frances my well-beloved wife all those parcells of pastureland and plowland called Stonecroft, Pulchers, Chandlers, and also those... hopgrounds called Esanbin hills being 12 acres in all..." In 1778 the Land Tax assessments mention the 'hopgrounds'. The Tithe Awards of January 1839 shows an entry referring to 2 Hopgrounds, one of 2 acres, 3 rods, 23 poles at the rear of Martins Hall, Bran End and another of 4 acres, 1 rod at the rear of Hornsea Villas, Bran End. It is interesting to speculate, particularly in times of high taxation and rapid inflation, on the reasons for a change in the annual assessment of Land Tax levied at 4/- in the £. Between 1762 and 1778 it remained rock steady making up a total for the village of £433-13s-0d for each year except 1775 when it dropped to £325-4s-9d. In 1839 it had reached the total of £1,201.

The village population appears to have been a reasonably law-abiding one. The scanty records of the Hinckford Hundred show that at the Quarter Sessions in July 1736 William Joyce the younger of Stebbing was convicted of riot and assault. In July 1738 Deborah, wife of Benjamin Baker, Frances Newman and Ann Corman were likewise charged with assault and riot. It is a pertinent fact that the village held its annual fair in early July. Again it was the midsummer session of the 1776 Quarter Sessions which convicted John Sayer of Stebbing to be kept in hard labour for the space of one month, being a rogue and a vagabond, charged with running away and leaving his wife and family chargeable to the said Parish of Stebbing. The nearest House of Correction for village inhabitants was at Newport. An interesting link with this topic is that in 1836 the Vestry records show that the proceeds from the sale of two cottages given to the poor contributed to the erection of a cage—a place of temporary confinement for offenders.

Stebbing could be described as a typical rural community in the mid-19th century. There were the usual trades allied to agriculture—the cornmillers were Samuel Chopping and Joseph Dixon, the saddler was Abraham Linsell, William Barnard the malster, Charles Metson one of the wheelwrights. There were the usual shops—a general marine store, butchers and several shoemakers. Village pubs and ale-houses dispensed refreshment, Sarah Mumford kept the Post Office, letters being sent to Chelmsford and Dunmow by mail gig. Passengers and goods were transported by James Bavins, carrier to London, and by William Lewis to Braintree.

The last vestiges of Vestry government are to be found in the accounts of 1880. With the risk of fire in mind the Vestry asked the various insurance companies to contribute to the repair and upkeep of the fire engine, hose and engine house. The Captain of the brigade was a Mr. Ruffell (a wheelwright) assisted by Edward Hynds and William Grout. One of the last gestures of the Vestry was to contribute money towards the fare of any pauper willing to emigrate to Australia.

The 1839 Tithe map shows that there were 4301 acres, 0 rods, 27 perches making up the village. This was distributed as follows:

	Acres	Rods	Perches
Arable Land	3459	2	27
Meadow or Pasture	420	3	2
Woodland	131	0	3
Homesteads and Gardens	50	1	8
Glebe belonging to Susan Batt	124	3	35
Glebe belonging to Rev. H. S. Rocklington	2	0	20
Roads, rivers and wastelands	112	1	12

The population figures for the 19th century are provided by the national census returns which were first recorded in 1801 with only a general figure provided for each parish. By 1831 a more detailed account of each household was demanded.

1801	-11	21	-31	-41	-51	-61	-71	-81	-91	1901
1026	1072	1311	1434	1458	1398	1346	1313	1118	994	911

The early part of the 20th century was a time of great hardship for farmers and farm labourers alike. After World War I farming hit an all time low. Since then mechanisation has changed the character of the village, leading to improved farming techniques which have in turn meant less farm workers being employed. Improved transport facilities have given the local population the opportunity to seek employment within a 12-15 mile radius. It has also given others, whose employment has traditionally been associated with urban centres, the opportunity to live in a rural community.

This has provided the village with a healthy social mixture and an acceptable size of population—sufficient young families to make our primary school a viable unit, a healthy balance between professional and technical abilities, and a vigorous over-sixties group. The present population figures

stand at about 1,200. All alike appreciate the historical attractions of the village, while welcoming the changes which have brought about a social system which no longer requires charities for the poor.

SOCIAL AND SPORTING ORGANISATIONS IN STEBBING

Men's Institute
Women's Institute
Over-Sixties Club
Bingo Club
DORCAS Society
Association of Friends of Stebbing School
Guides and Brownies
Stebbing Youth Club
W.V.S. (Meals on Wheels)
Mothers' Union
Bellringers
The Stebbing Society
Stebbing Cricket Club
Stebbing Football Club
Stebbing Bowls Club
Badminton Club

During the past six years the people of Stebbing have raised over £7,000 towards the building of a new village hall.

During the same period they have originated a historical pageant in the village in the form of the Stebbing Elizabethan Fayre, an event which has proved to be the most imaginative and popular in the area.

The Stebbing Society was formed in July 1974 to preserve the environment and the quality of life of Stebbing. The current membership is 150 residents of the village.

A SURVEY OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF STEBBING

Approximately 250 ft. above sea level, the village of Stebbing is surrounded by arable fields, pasture, and low woods, and the land is intersected by small streams of which the largest is the Stebbing brook, a tributary of the Chelmer, the confluence being at the Little Dunmow sugar beet factory. The soil in the vicinity is mainly of London clay, boulder clay and gravel.

At Stebbing Park an ancient mound (mott) is surrounded by a moat, and there are also moats at Holts Farm and Porters Hall. Other features include a wood where the Bardfield oxlip grows, and where, incidentally, a pair of Muntjac deer sheltered for some time; badger setts; and a copse where the winter aconite is naturalised. Both the greater and lesser spotted woodpecker have been resident, a hoopoe has been seen on more than one occasion, and among the more attractive birds to be encountered in the neighbourhood are kingfishers, goldcrests, and longtailed tits.

Visually the parish of Stebbing owes its charm to the balance still maintained between agriculture and the more 'natural' aspects of the countryside, the river banks, marshes and thickets, which remain comparatively undisturbed. The village is still small enough to merge naturally into the environment, the one dominating building being the church. The wide cornfields give an air of spaciousness, surprising in what is a relatively small scale landscape, and the valleys with their copses, meadows and hedgerows add an intimacy not always found in a county so intensively farmed. The atmosphere has remained rural, and perhaps the character of Stebbing and its environs is best summed up in the words of Eileen Power who, in "Medieval People" describes Essex as "the most English of counties... with its little rolling hills, wych elms, and huge clouded skies;" for Stebbing and its neighbourhood have exactly the quality of serene unpretentiousness she had in mind.

Below are listed some of the fauna and flora to be found in the immediate locality. The lists are representative rather than definitive, but we hope will give an idea of the diversity and interest of the wild life.

WILD FLOWERS

Common Red Poppy
Buttercup
Lesser Celandine
Travellers Joy
Bladder Campion
White Campion
Red Campion
Greater Stitchwort
Wild Mignonette
Ragged Robin
Shepherd's Purse
Treacle Mustard
Common Melilot
Broom
Gorse
Wild Pansy or Heartsease
Perforated St. Johns Wort
Dog Violet
Rest Harrow
Meadow Vetchling
Cinquefoil
Dovesfoot
Common Mallow
Meadowsweet
Red Clover
Dog Rose
Silverweed
Birds Foot Trefoil
Agrimony
Lady's Bedstraw
White Briony
Honeysuckle
Dandelion
Cow Parsley
Yarrow
Field Scabious
Teasel
Chicory
Spurge Laurel
Bardfield Oxlip
Biting or Yellow Stonecrop
Ivy
Ploughmans Spikenard
Coltsfoot
Hardheads
Marsh Marigold
Milkmaid
Musk Mallow
Mistletoe
Common Purple Orchis
Common Speedwell
Tansy
Primrose
Cowslip
Pimpernel
Centaury
Yellow Toadflax
Field Bindweed
Wild Hop
Rose Bay Willow Herb
Great Mullein
Bluebell
Cuckoo Pint
Butchers Broom
Selfheal
Himalayan Balsam
Yellow Flag
Marsh Orchis

BUTTERFLIES

Marbled White
Wall Brown
Speckled Wood
Small Tortoiseshell
Red Admiral
Peacock
Orange Tip
Painted Lady
Comma
Large White
Small White
Dingy Skipper
Brimstone
Small Skipper

MOTHS

Poplar Hawk-moth
Privet Hawk-moth
Lime Hawk-moth
Elephant Hawk-moth
Garden Tiger
Puss Moth
Lobster Moth
Pale Prominent
Pale Tussock
Setaceous Hebrew Character
Green Arches
Cabbage Moth
Mottled Umber
Magpie Moth
Large Emerald
Buff Ermine
Oak Eggar
White Ermine
Broom Moth
Merveille du Jour
Sycamore Moth
The Chestnut
Old Lady Moth
Light Arches

Green Carpet
Large White Plume
Goat Moth
Peppered Moth (black form)
Swallowtailed Moth
Lackcy
Common Rustic
The Angle Shades
Flounced Rustic
Red Underwing
Cream bordered Green Pea
Humming Bird Hawk

BIRDS

Jay
Magpie
Green Woodpecker
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Greenfinch
Bullfinch
Goldfinch
Chaffinch
Yellow Hammer
Linnet
Brambling
Hedge Sparrow
Tree Sparrow
House Sparrow
Skylark
Pied Wagtail
Grey Wagtail
Tree Creeper
Spotted Flycatcher
Great Titmouse
Marsh Titmouse
Blue Titmouse
Longtailed Titmouse
Blackcap
Goldcrest
Wren
Chiffchaff
Reed Warbler
Reed Bunting
Willow Warbler
Sedge Warbler
Garden Warbler
Whitethroat
Lesser Whitethroat
Stonechat
Robin
Grasshopper Warbler
Wood Pigeon
French Partridge
Curlew
Nightingale
Jackdaw
Starling
Songthrush
Mistlethrush
Fieldfare
Redwing
Wheatear
Blackbird
House Martin
Swallow
Swift
Cuckoo
Kingfisher
Hoopoe (seen twice, not recently)
Lapwing
Dabchick
Moorhen
Coot
Waterrail
Common Snipe
Mallard Duck
Tufted Duck
Common Scoter
Shoveler Duck
Teal
Wigeon
Canada Goose
Greylag Goose
Little Owl
Barn Owl
Tawny Owl
Kestrel
Sparrow Hawk
Heron
Turtle Dove
Collared Dove
Stock Dove
Pheasant
Rook
Green Sandpiper

ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY OF STEBBING

INTRODUCTION

'Architecture' is a rather stilted word, generally used with reference to churches, castles or places you may visit on holiday. It is rarely used to describe your own house.

A Spanish village has its style of 'architecture'. So does Westminster Abbey. So do the many houses and buildings of Stebbing. One of the main differences between buildings you go out of your way to visit, and those on your doorstep, is that you tend to take the latter for granted.

The main aim of this 'Architectural Survey of Stebbing' will be to draw your attention to the very fine buildings which form part of the every-day scene. Although concerned mainly with buildings, architecture is also a record of social history leading up to the present day.

LOCAL MATERIALS

While the need for houses, and other buildings in Stebbing has changed over many years, and the ability of local craftsmen increased, the basic building materials available in the immediate area have not altered over a period of many centuries. Oak and Elm were the building materials traditional to the village and their use persisted in the construction of timber frame houses, until the 19th century. The tradition has survived until the present day. There are local craftsmen capable of timber frame house building, and extensions to existing houses to a very high standard. Such a form of construction would be unacceptable to occupiers in more urban areas.

The only exception was the Church. Religion was of such importance to Medieval communities that stone was transported for church building. The effort and skill needed to transport the stone and construct Stebbing Church during the 14th century must have been considerable.

Although East Anglia was the main area for brick making in medieval times, this material was used locally until the late 19th century for use mainly in foundations, fireplaces and brick floors. There are a number of 17th, 18th and 19th century brick buildings in the village. Town Mill House is one example, The Friends Meeting House is another. However, timber frame was the dominant form of construction.

Timber frame construction flourished in Stebbing even to the present day. However, this form of construction reached a peak of excellence by the end of the 16th century.

A timber frame building is one in which, if you remove the roof and wall coverings, a free-standing load bearing framework remains. Fig. 1 shows the timber frame of the Chantry, to the immediate East of the Church. This is a late 15th century house, with a projecting timber framework to the upper storey on the South (front) elevation. The framing is exposed to this elevation. The Chantry is a classic example of this type of construction.

Timber framework is prevalent for the following reasons: At the time of the Domesday Book (1085) most of Essex was heavily wooded. Stebbing at this time may have been largely surrounded by woodland. Timber therefore became the natural building material. Oak was prevalent, and until the 16th century, was regarded almost as a disposable material, used not only for house building, but probably fence posts and burning on the fire. Stocks of timber were seriously depleted by the 17th century, but with the increase in arable farming, a ready supply of timber was still available. It was, however, used more frugally in building construction.

Timber frame buildings have qualities different to brick or stone. The Medieval structures had mortice and tenon joints, fixed with oak dowels. This allowed the frame to change shape over a period of years.

The use of unseasoned timber, and the natural tendency of oak to warp has resulted in many unusual house shapes. The backward sloping upper storey of Tudor Cottage in the High Street is a good example. Carpenters attempted to overcome this problem (and to some extent succeeded), by using oversized timbers regardless of economy.

With a minimum of maintenance, a timber frame is virtually indestructible. There is no practical reason why the Medieval buildings of Stebbing should not exist in their present form, and still provide comfortable homes in 300, 400 or 500 years time. Subsoil movements and vibrations would cause a brick or stone building of similar age to settle and fracture.

The roof coverings traditional to the area are straw thatch and tile. Thatch was used for poorer buildings. Tiles have

been prevalent at least since the Roman occupation. Slate is an 'imported' material, and probably not used in the village until the completion of the railway line to Dunmow in 1869. The traditional infill between the timber frame members was wattle and daub, gradually changing to lath and plaster.

Brick is not used in Stebbing as an infill material to timber frames. This appears to be due more to the ease of obtaining materials for plaster, rather than lack of knowledge of brickwork. Weatherboarding was also used. A noticeable use of this material in Stebbing is on one flank wall only. Until it was recently plastered over, the flank wall to the road of Church View in the High Street was a very obvious example. (See Fig. 2).

Damp proof courses are a 20th century innovation, but Medieval building sites were well prepared and drained before construction started. In addition, the sole plate i.e. the horizontal member forming the base of the timber frame, acted as a barrier to rising damp. The early buildings were probably relatively free from damp problems. As a matter of interest, it was fashionable in Elizabethan times to colour the exposed timber framework.

DATING BUILDINGS

Virtually all the Medieval buildings in the village were altered and extended during the 16th, 17th or 18th centuries. Some have been altered and extended four or five times. This makes accurate dating very difficult. Close examination of the size, spacing and jointing of roof and wall timbers gives the best idea of age, but this can still be misleading. Rural architecture cannot be neatly pigeon-holed. Evidence of previous window and door openings give an idea of age, and also enable the change and enlargement of buildings to be traced. The width of floorboards gives some indication.

18"	=	late Medieval
12"	=	Georgian

Fig. 3 shows the evolution of Littles, Church End. For the purposes of the Town and Country Planning Acts, Listed Buildings, this is described as "Grade III, cottage West South West of Red Lion, 18th century gable to road, roof tiled". This is based on an outside inspection. Detailed study of the timber frame shows that there is more to the building than the outside appearance suggests. The top sketch in Fig. 3 shows the building in its original form.

Littles goes back to at least the 16th century. The building is of timber frame construction, with wattle and daub infilling. The original cleft oak and split hazel wattle exists under the recently replastered front elevation. The staircase has been repositioned twice in this part of the building. The windows face North, away from prevailing winds, and there is evidence that smoke from the fire escaped through a hole in the South wall.

The middle sketch shows a ground floor extension at the South end, during the late 18th or early 19th century. By this time, the outside had been rendered over, probably to prevent draught between the wall and timber frame. The bottom sketch shows a first floor extension during the 19th century, the windows replaced in a more elegant style, more 'fashionable' barge boards added to the roof verge at the front, and a front entrance door added. This is as the house is today.

BRIEF SOCIAL HISTORY

The detailed architectural periods, Perpendicular, Decorated, Classical etc. are of little relevance to Stebbing buildings, or rural architecture in general.

Being a rather remote area, the village builder would be relatively unaffected by changes of fashion in building. There was a gentle and attractive flow and overlap between one period and another. However, it is not possible to describe the evolution of the buildings in the village without some reference to the three main periods of English architecture—Medieval (600—1500), Transitional (Renaissance and Classical, 1501—1800), and Industrial (1801—present day). The dates are very approximate.

MEDIEVAL

The Medieval period (A.D. 600—1500, Dark Ages to Reformation) followed by the Elizabethan period, are of considerable interest with regard to Stebbing.

The men who built Stebbing Church in the early 14th century, would have lived in timber and wattle huts, been possessed of considerable religious fervour and lived an insecure life. In the twentieth century, it is very difficult to realise the devotion and energy that must have been required to construct such a building.

At, or soon after, the time of the construction of the Church, Stebbing was prospering with an increasing love of the (relatively) good life. Farming became of increasing importance, and wealthy farmers began to emerge. A result of the Black Death (1348—49) was to change the pattern of farming from arable to stock (mainly sheep) to save labour. The wool trade prospered, and many peasants became self made yeoman farmers, able to build their own houses. By the end of the 15th century there were more than enough churches, and the emphasis in fine building changed from ecclesiastical to domestic. This trend was accelerated by the dissolution of the Monasteries. Rural England continued to prosper, but there was a 'redistribution of wealth'. A 'middle class' began to appear, resulting in further small house building of some quality.

The 16th century was a time of prosperity for Stebbing. By 1500, most of Essex was enclosed i.e. no open fields or common land. It is likely that Stebbing Green was the only common land in the village. During this century, there was considerable inflation. Prices rose by five times, and there was a rapid rise in population. The net result was a great deal of housebuilding, accompanied by an improvement in standards of construction and comfort. Also by this time, the High Street, Church End and Stebbing Green must have looked very much as they appear today. The character and appearance of the village had been clearly established.

There is further evidence of the size and prosperity of the village. At the time of the Norman Conquest, Stebbing was divided into three manors, Stebbing Park, Porters Hall and Friers or Priors Hall (now Parsonage Farm). These were all rebuilt or greatly extended during the 16th century. In addition, there was a magnificent church, a market every Monday and an annual fair lasting four days, at the end of June. (The fair was probably held on the field at the rear of The Red Lion). A document of 1547 i.e. mid-16th century says "...The said town of Stebbing is a very great town and populous..." (Probably about 400 people).

TRANSITIONAL

In the 17th and 18th centuries, there was considerable social and religious upheaval, with established beliefs and standards questioned, and discarded if this suited the 'new' society. One result was a refinement of detail and proportion in house building, coupled with greater appreciation of physical comfort.

The changes did not go unnoticed in Stebbing, and many houses were altered, extended and modernised during

this period. There was a tendency to carry this work out in a modified style of an earlier period. (Many cottages were fitted with sliding sash windows).

Included in the list of modernised buildings at this time are The Red Lion Inn, The White Hart, The Kings Head, Green Farm, The Green Man and Porters Hall. Good examples of new houses of the latter part of this period are Cranford and The Malt House on the road to Duck End, and the Vicarage (Figures 4 and 5).

INDUSTRIAL

The Industrial Revolution started in the last few years of the 18th century and continued through most of the 19th. With regard to Stebbing, it almost certainly drew away some poorer families, to work in Braintree, or further afield.

There was a rural version of the Industrial Revolution, with increased cottage industry, and agricultural 'support' industry. During the 19th and early 20th century it appeared fashionable to conceal or remove features of the old timber frame houses. Open brick fireplaces (possibly additions to the original house) were filled in and reduced in size, exposed timbers to walls and ceilings were covered over. The Post Office, as a particular example, had a red brick front added. Church Cottage, Church End, and a limited number of cottages at Bran End are rural versions of the town house built in large numbers during the Industrial Revolution. (See fig. 6).

20TH CENTURY

Development has continued into the 20th century. There is inter-war ribbon development, of private and council housing. There are post war ribbon developments, infillings and the construction of 3 new housing estates. In spite of this, the population has actually declined in the past 130 years, due to the effects of the agricultural depression, the conversion of cottages in multiple occupation to single dwellings, and demolition or falling down by neglect of smaller cottages. With the construction of new houses and housing estates, the population has steadied and again started to increase. The 20th century development has eroded some of the earlier atmosphere. This is unavoidable unless the village is kept as a museum. However, the character is essentially that of an Elizabethan village.

The following pages give a brief description and illustration of some of the interesting and beautiful buildings, street and village scenes in Stebbing. As a matter of interest, there are 85 listed buildings in the parish. 35 grade II and 50 grade III.

For the purposes of this survey, the village is divided and illustrated under the headings Church End, High Street, Mill Lane, Bran End, Stebbing Green and other areas. This is not meant to be a catalogue of listed buildings. A number of unlisted buildings are illustrated. Also, some listed buildings are omitted.

CHURCH END

Up to 30 or 40 years ago, this was considered the slum area of the village. Fig. 7 the picture used on the front cover of the Stebbing Quarterly News shows Rose Cottage in the foreground, with the Church immediately behind. There is an area of flat grassland, approx. 90' x 21' to the west of Rose Cottage. This was, until the turn of this century, a maltings. The brick foundations are still visible. The green in front of the cottages opposite Rose Cottage was used for the storage of timber and unsawn trees, for use at the carriage-makers (now the Cabinet Makers).

Particularly attractive views across the roofs of the High Street properties can be seen from the footpath which diagonally crosses the churchyard. In the top right hand corner of this sketch the overhanging branches of a large willow tree are visible. The mass of this tree is greater than Rose Cottage. The importance of trees as 'architectural accessories' should not be under estimated.

St. Mary's Church

Fig. 7 shows St. Mary's Church, Stebbing. It is a very good example of the decorated style of the 14th century. The church consists of a nave, with aisles, chancel, north sacristy, south porch and a west tower with a shingle clad spire. The nave was repaired and improved in 1825.

St. Mary's, Stebbing, is famous for its carved stone rood screen. Screens of this age are normally of wood. Old stone screens, common only in Wiltshire and Devon, normally followed wood carvers' designs. There are three stone screens of this period with a unique design. Trondheim, Norway, Gt. Bardfield and Stebbing. The church is on the site of an older church. Some of the stone and rubble from the earlier building would certainly have been used in the construction of the present church.

The Red Lion

Fig. 8 shows the former Red Lion Inn. This is of 16th century construction, with extensive alterations and additions in the 17th and 18th centuries. The roof and part of the first floor were extensively damaged by fire in 1972. The remainder of the structure was partly damaged by water and over enthusiastic salvage operations. (The building has now been repaired.)

Apart from the main section of the roof, the timber frame survived the fire almost unmarked. Also, a section of Medieval coupled roof, complete with crown post was left undamaged to the south cross-wing. Some of the original timbers were found to have been painted a rich green.

New Houses at Church End

Fig. 9 shows a pair of recently built houses on the Chase, at the side of the Red Lion. The site was previously occupied by a 19th century brick and tile cottage and timber frame barn. The cottage had extensive settlement fractures and was demolished, together with the barn. The new cottages are of timber frame construction, with the exception of the party wall. This is in brick and block construction, to comply with building regulations.

I think that these two cottages show that it is possible to build new dwelling houses in a village, without detriment to the character, provided that attractive views in or out of the village are not destroyed, and that sufficient sympathy, time, and trouble are taken with the design.

Church Farm

Fig. 10 shows Church Farm. This building forms an attractive 'stop' to the south end of the High Street.

It is probably of early 16th century construction with a half-H shaped plan, with the wings projecting. The front elevation has an original doorway with moulded frame and four-centred head, and an original gabled dormer with carved bargeboards. There is a jettied upper storey to the east wing.

The Chantry

Details of the timber frame to this building have already been given in Fig. 1. Fig. 11 shows a general view of this house, which is as good and attractive example of this type of building as may be found anywhere.

It is a late 15th century building, with the upper storey projecting to the south elevation. The timber framing to

the front is exposed. The fully hipped roof is unusual in Stebbing. Most houses in the village have gable ends, or gables with a small hip to the top section of roof (half hipped). Hipped roofs like that of The Chantry are common to Sussex, Surrey and Kent, but not Essex.

Parsonage Farm
Fig. 12 shows Parsonage Farm, formerly Priors or Friers Hall, one of the three former manor houses of the village.

The back section of the house (not visible from the road) is part of a 14th century hall. The main three-storey section, visible from the road is a mid or late 16th century extension. This building has been extensively restored and the timbers exposed to the front elevation, since the last war.

The long barn to the road frontage is an interesting building, apart from the house. The entire timber construction, and details of jointing can be seen from the interior.

HIGH STREET
There are fewer buildings of individual interest in the High Street than other parts of the village, but the number of buildings together with open spaces and trees makes this a very interesting and charming area.

Tudor Cottage
Fig. 13 shows Tudor Cottage at the south end of the High Street. This was probably built in the second part of the 15th century, and partly rebuilt in the 17th century. The cross wing with exposed timbers is original. The house has been completely renovated during the past few years. The projecting cross wing where the upper storey projects over the lower, is a good example of the unusual shape an old timber frame house may take after it has been built.

County Library and Men's Institute
Fig. 14 shows this building, built in 1674 as the Friends Meeting House. The front porch and sash windows were added in the 18th century. Its construction contradicts the general rules of Stebbing buildings. The roof is hipped (as The Chantry, Church End) and the brick walls are set out to form a plain rectangle, with the brickwork laid in Flemish bond. Flemish influence on building construction at this time was noticeable throughout East Anglia.

White Hart and King's Head Inns
Figs. 15 and 16 show the two remaining Inns in the village. (In the mid-19th century there were five inns and two beerhouses, or off licences.) The White Hart dates from the 16th or 17th century, but has an 18th century facade. The King's Head dates from the 17th century, and was altered and extended in the 18th century also.

Honeysuckle Cottage
Fig. 17 shows Honeysuckle Cottage, the only thatched property in the High Street. (The only thatched cottage at Church End, Syringa, has the thatch covered with a secondary black painted corrugated iron roof). Honeysuckle Cottage dates from the 17th century, and has a weather-board elevation facing the road. This was particularly common in Stebbing.

Archway Cottage
Archway Cottage, fig. 18, dates from the 16th century. This is one of the more imposing cottages in this part of the High Street, and has recently been extensively renovated. The other cottage in this illustration adjoins the White Hart Garage. This cottage, which is in need of renovation, probably dates from the 18th century, with 19th century bay and dormer windows.

Butlers Cottage
Fig. 19 shows Butlers Cottage, until recently a pair of cottages, but now renovated and converted to form a single house. The illustrations show the building before and after renovation. Although this building was neglected for many years, the timber frame remained almost unmarked. The roof timbers suffered slightly as a result of leaks to the tiles, but even these were sufficiently sound to leave in position.

Butlers Cottage now has pargetted elevations. This is ornamental plasterwork, traditionally combed or pricked patterns, such as crows-feet or scallops, but occasionally leaf, flower or animal patterns. Pargetting was originally a decorative method of carrying out a functional idea. The shaped surface to the plaster was meant to break up the rain falling and running on the wall, saving the soft plaster from disintegrating with the effect of the weather. It was introduced by plasterers from Belgium and Holland, many of whom settled in East Anglia.

MILL LANE
There are very fine individual buildings in Mill Lane, as well as attractive groups of cottages. The Congregational Church, now disused, dates from 1719, but was enlarged and repaired in 1820 and 1842. The congregation dates from 1662, when The Rev. Samuel Bantoft was ejected from the vicarage for non-conformity.

There are attractive and varied open areas in Mill Lane, including the bowling green, cricket field and meadows at the lower end by Stebbing Brook. The Congregational Church burial ground, in spite of its air of decay, has a graceful and elegant appearance. I think that walking down the hill to the brook, on a sunny day, gives the feeling that Mill Lane is the epitome of an English village.

Tan Farm
Fig. 20 shows Tan Farm, one of the most picturesque houses in the village. It dates from the 16th century, with all the timber framing exposed externally. Although built as a single dwelling, it was occupied as several tenements during the first part of this century.

Smallest House?
Fig. 21 shows Mill Cottage, which must be the smallest house in the village. It is set at the end of Mill Lane, on a most picturesque site.

Town Mill
Fig. 22 shows the mill and mill house. The weather boarded mill and painted brick house date from the 18th century. The mill is in regular use, with the machinery driven electrically. The water mill and original grinding machinery are still in working order and occasionally demonstrated.

BRAN END
This is a rather under-rated part of the village with some very attractive cottages and imposing larger houses. There is a further Victorian brick built mill at Bran End, probably built on the site of Brandende Mylle referred to in a document of 1620.

The Green Man
Fig. 23 shows the former Green Man public house, before and after the recent restoration and conversion to a private dwelling.

The Green Man was an inn from the 17th century but closed by the Charrington brewery in 1967. There were 19th century bay windows to the front and side elevations. Those to the front were removed during the recent renovation work. The side bay, constructed to view the

arrival of the stagecoach on the Gt. Dunmow—Finchingfield road was removed before the renovation work.

Martins Hall
Fig. 24 shows Martins Hall, on the B1057 Gt. Dunmow—Gt. Bardfield road. It is at present being extensively repaired, and dates from the 17th century.

This is an exceptionally interesting looking building, with a hiding hole said to be used by Dick Turpin. (Dick Turpin was born at Hempstead, about 10 miles away, and knew this part of Essex well).

Brookfields Estate
Fig. 25 shows a corner of the Brookfields Estate, which has not yet been completed. This development has been designed in accordance with principles laid down by Essex County Council in their Design Guide for Residential Areas. The grouping of the houses and treatment of the elevations is in accordance with the County Council's guide lines for the design of new buildings in villages.

STEBBING GREEN
This is the only large area of common land in the village. The unusually long straight road may have evolved because, being common land, it did not have to take account of land-owners boundaries. Roman remains have been found just beyond the North-West end of the Green. There are many attractive houses and cottages on and near the Green, ranging from the moated Porters Hall to a thatched railway carriage. A few are described and illustrated here.

St. Judes
Formerly one of the beerhouses, recently known as the Elephant (because it sold Fremlins beer) and now a private house. St. Judes is unique to Stebbing, being constructed of brick and flint walls. The recently extended house is shown in Fig. 26.

Tilehouse Farm
Fig. 27 shows Tilehouse Farm. This building dates probably from the 16th century, and has a projecting upper storey at the front.

Canonfylde
Fig. 28 shows Canfield Farmhouse, now Canonfylde. This is an imposing restored timber frame house. The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments dates Canonfylde from the 16th century, but the main hall part of the house could well be a century older than this. Neither Tilehouse nor Canonfylde are now worked as farms.

Porters Hall
Porters Hall is shown in Fig. 29. This is possibly the most imposing building in the village. The house, which is surrounded by a moat, was built, or rebuilt about 1600, then altered and extended in the 17th, 18th and probably 19th centuries.

It has an L shaped plan, with 2 gables to the front. There are two storeys and attics. The windows are 17th and 18th century. There is an original chimney stack, with 5 grouped diagonal shafts. The long, or Great Barn is also a listed building, and dates from the late 16th century. The barn has three hipped gable porches to the road elevation.

STEBBING—OTHER AREAS
The last few pages have given brief descriptions and illustrations of buildings in the most easily defined and heavily populated areas of the village. In a brief document of this type, it is not possible to include every building of interest. However, samples of the main periods and types of buildings in the village, from Medieval to present day have been given.

Stebbing was described 150 years ago as "a large straggling village, with many good houses..." In the 'straggling' areas, such as Lubberhedges, Warehouse Road, The Downs, The Dunmow Road and the areas between the main built up parts, there are a variety of interesting and attractive houses. A small selection are described in the following pages.

Stebbing Park
This is one of the three manor houses of Stebbing, screened from the road by an avenue of lime trees. There are attractive views of the house from parts of Mill Lane. The house, which has an L shaped plan, was built about 1600, of a heavy timber frame under a tiled roof. There is an attractive new house at the gate entrance to the Park, built in a style which blends in well with the older houses of the village. This house was built on the site of a recently demolished thatched cottage, built probably in 1787.

Next to Stebbing Park is Stebbing Mount, a conical earth mound, with a moat, now covered with trees, (and daffodils in the spring). This is said to be the site of a castle or fortification, although I believe there is no firm evidence to support this.

Hill Farm
This is a very imposing 17th century farmhouse, on the road from Stebbing to Great Bardfield. The house has been extensively modernised this century. The thatched barn fronting the road is a particularly attractive feature, and is illustrated in fig. 30.

Downs Farm
Downs Farmhouse, now 'Shepheards' is an attractive 17th century house, almost concealed from view by its high hedge. The house is shown in Fig. 31.

Braeside
This house also from the 17th century, is at the entrance to Bent Marshall's yard. In the first part of this century, it was divided into three or four homes. The building (Fig. 32) is unusual for Stebbing, in that there is vertical tile hanging as an external cladding material.

Collops Farmhouse
Fig. 33 shows Collops Farmhouse, on the outskirts of the village. Collops can be clearly seen across ¾ mile of fields from the A120 road, and looks imposing even from that distance.

The house dates from the 17th century, and has unusual arch shaped windows. Together with the adjacent 18th century weatherboard and tiled buildings, it forms a most attractive 'farmyard' setting.

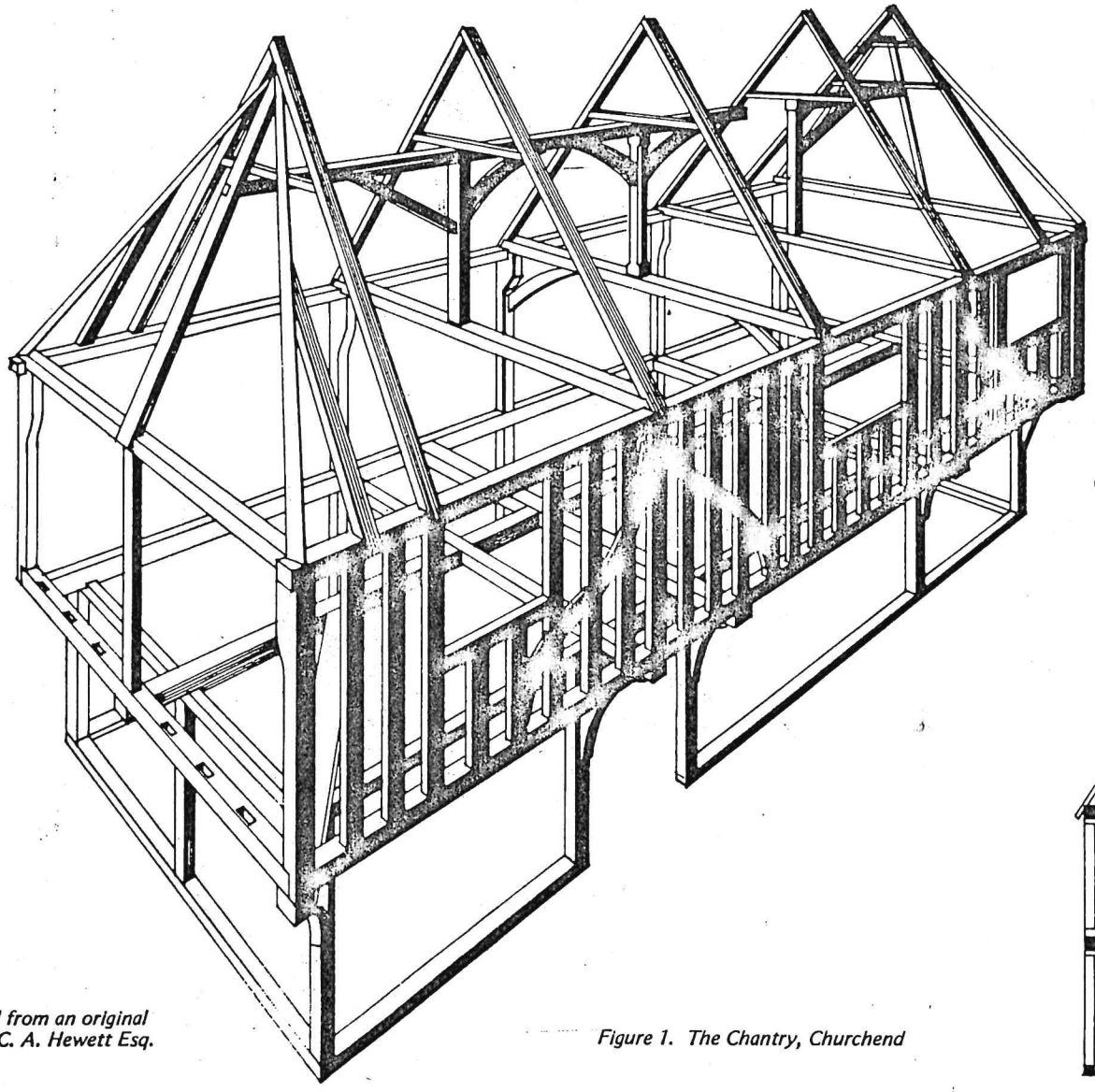
Warehouse
Warehouse (Fig. 34) is screened from the road, and approached through a pair of impressive oak and wrought iron gates. (These go almost unnoticed in the open position.) It dates from the 16th century, has a thatched roof and exposed timbers externally. The house has been extensively repaired after recent fire damage.

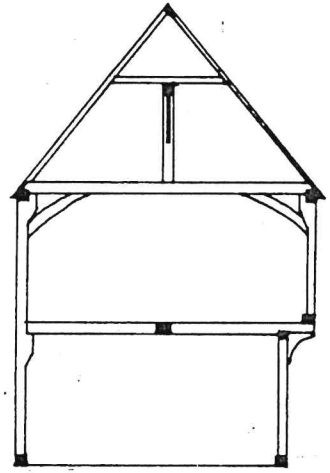
The Old Manse
The last picture, Fig. 35, shows the small front garden to 'The Old Manse', in the High Street. This sketch shows the traditional village materials, tile, plaster and weatherboard, blending perfectly on three separate buildings, in a space 20' x 10'.

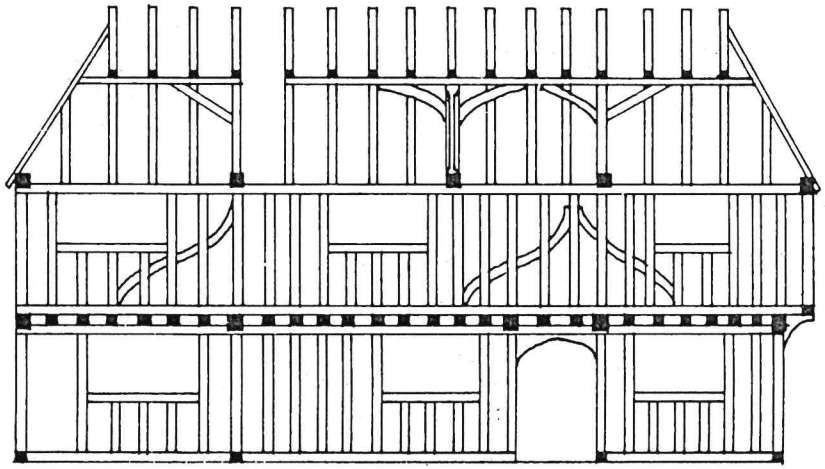
I hope that this 'architectural survey' has drawn, or re-drawn your attention to the very many fine buildings and attractive scenes in Stebbing village.

If you have lived in Stebbing or any other attractive village for more than three or four years, you almost certainly begin to take your surroundings very much for granted.

Stebbing has something very special to offer. It is by any standards a beautiful village. It would take very little effort in the way of unsuitable or excessive development, major alterations to roads and unnecessary tree felling to spoil it. Once spoiled, it would be impossible to restore.

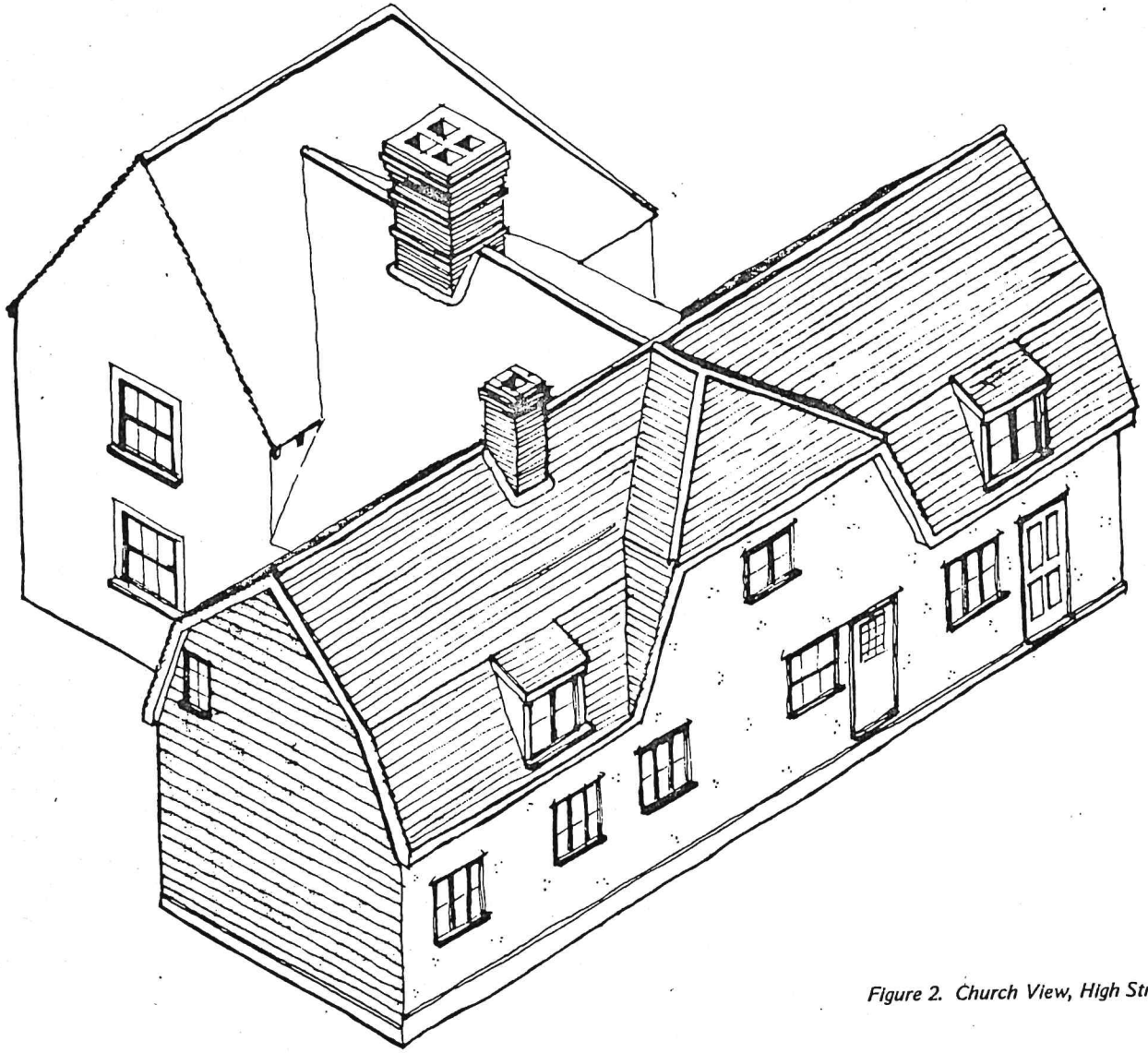






Reproduced from an original drawing by C. A. Hewett Esq.

Figure 1. The Chantry, Churchend



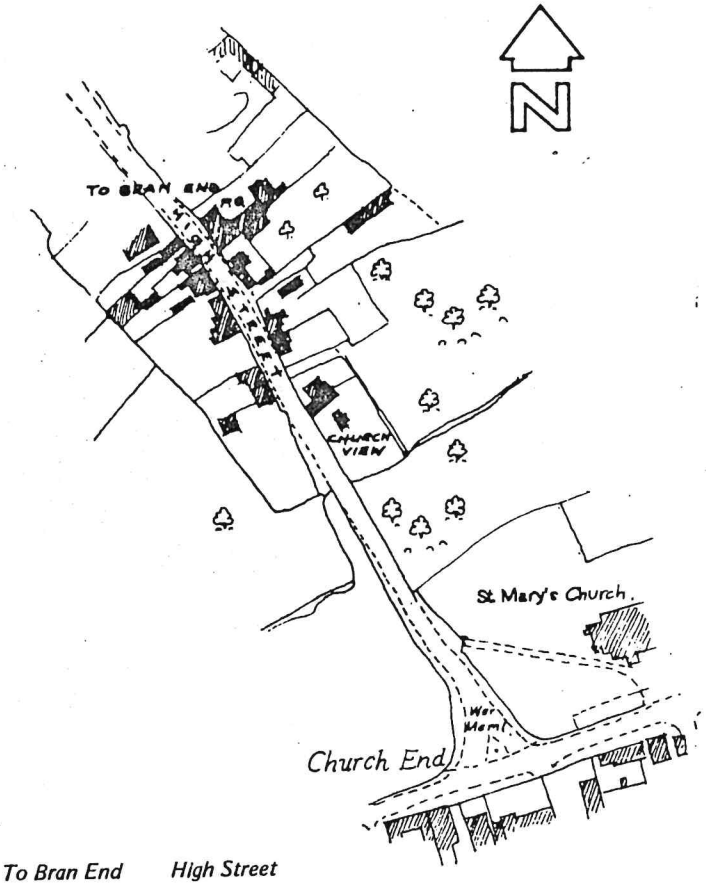
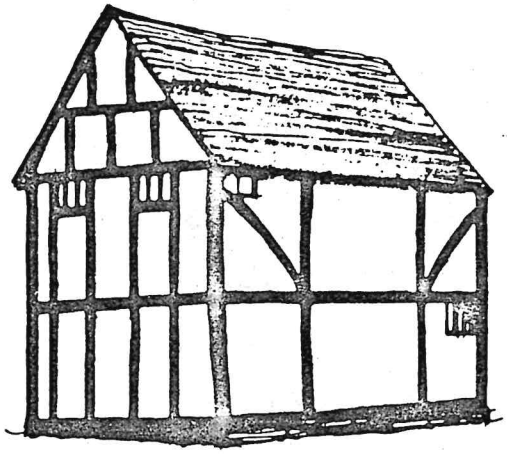


Figure 2. Church View, High Street To Bran End High Street



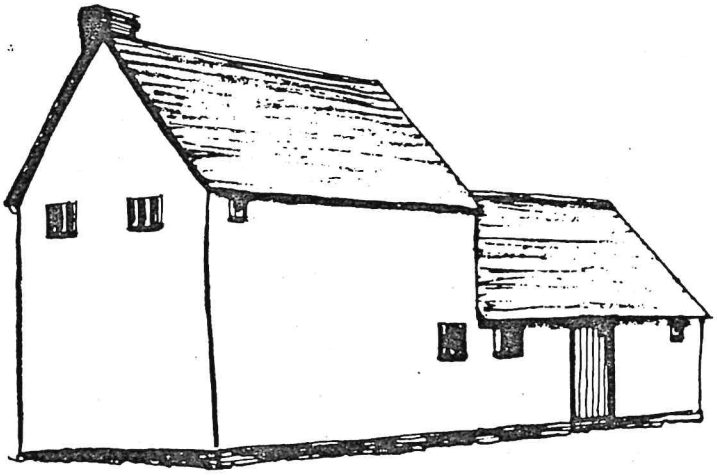


Figure 3. Littles, Churchend
Top illustration shows original 16th century construction
Centre illustration shows 18th century single storey rear extension
Bottom illustration shows house in present form

Figure 4. Cranford, Bran End

Figure 5. The Vicarage, High Street
(The front half of the house only is of 18th century brick construction. The back half is of 17th century timber frame.)

Figure 6. Church Cottage, Churchend

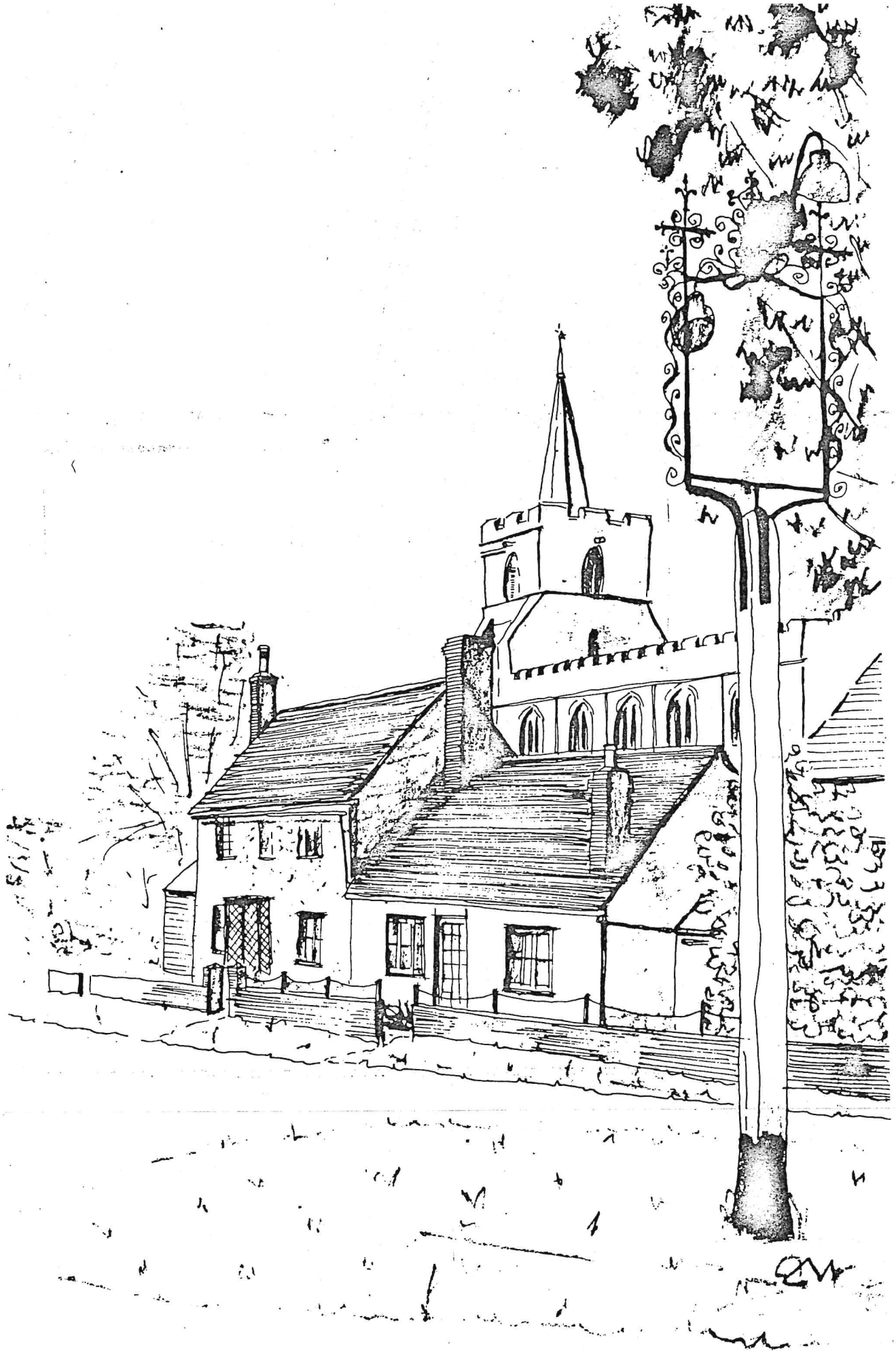


Figure 7. St. Mary's Church

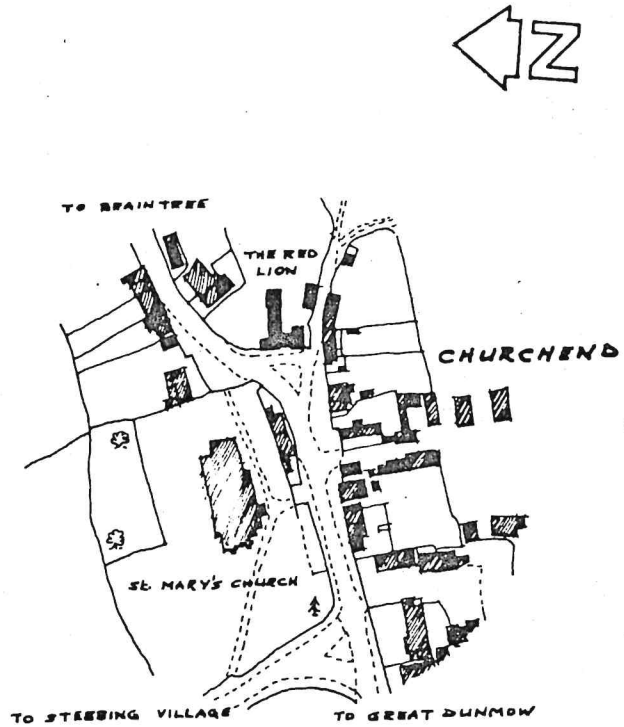


Figure 8. The Red Lion, Churchend

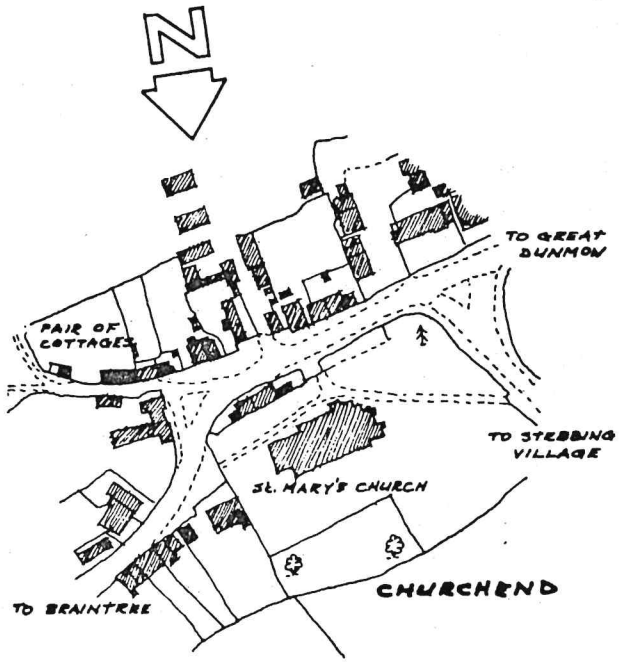


Figure 9. New houses at The Chase, Churchend

Figure 10. Church Farm

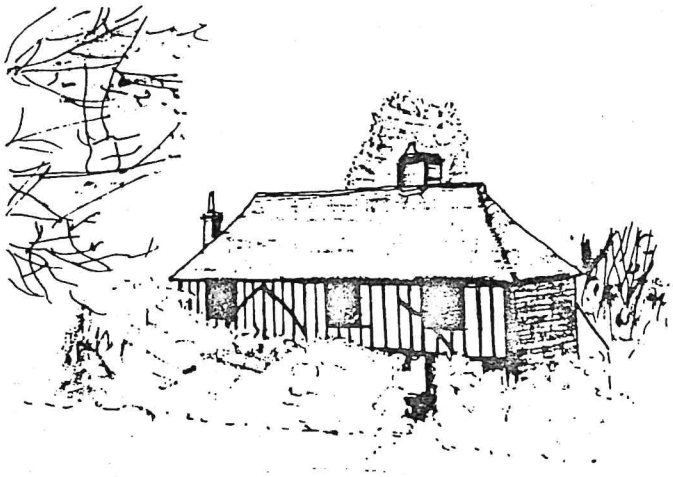


Figure 11. The Chantry

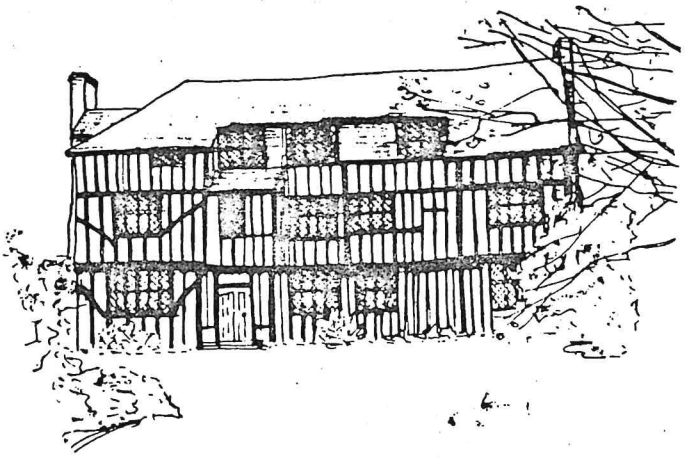


Figure 12. Parsonage Farm

Figure 13. Tudor Cottage

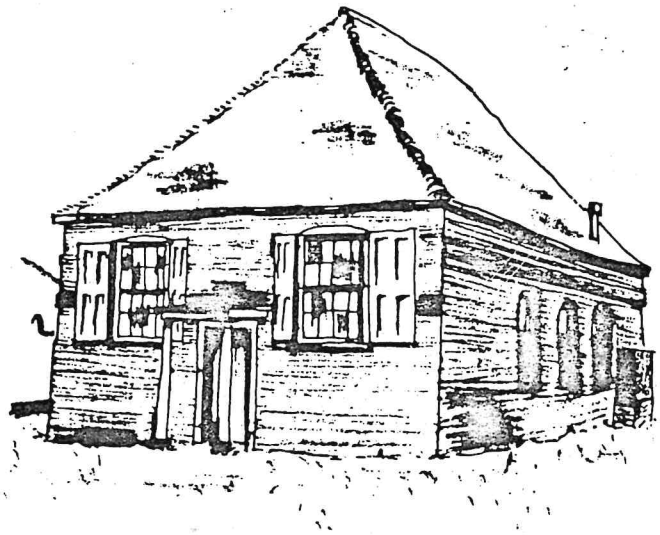


Figure 14. Friends Meeting House

Figure 15. King's Head Inn

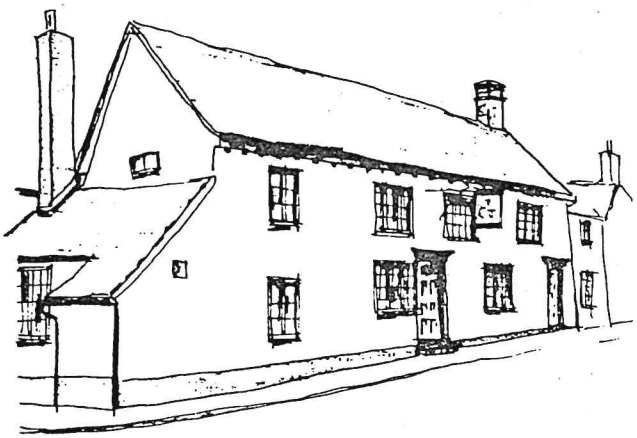


Figure 16. White Hart Inn

Figure 17. Honeysuckle Cottage

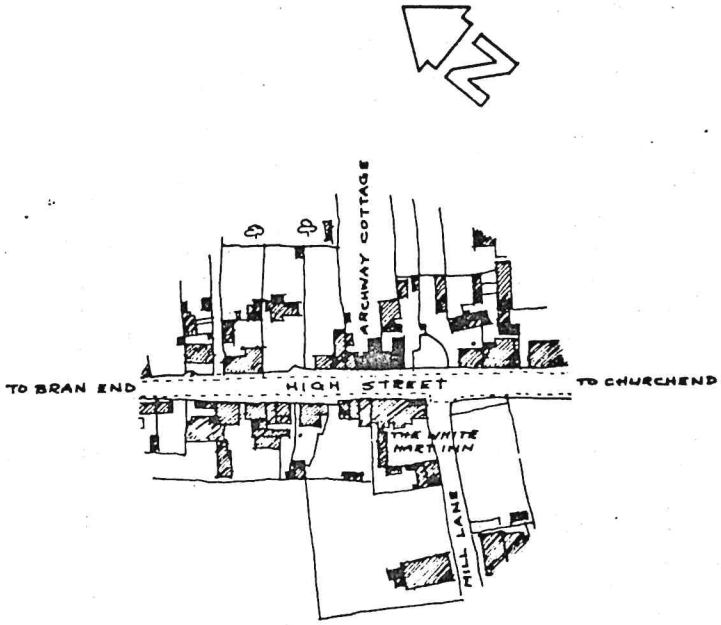


Figure 18. Archway Cottage, High Street

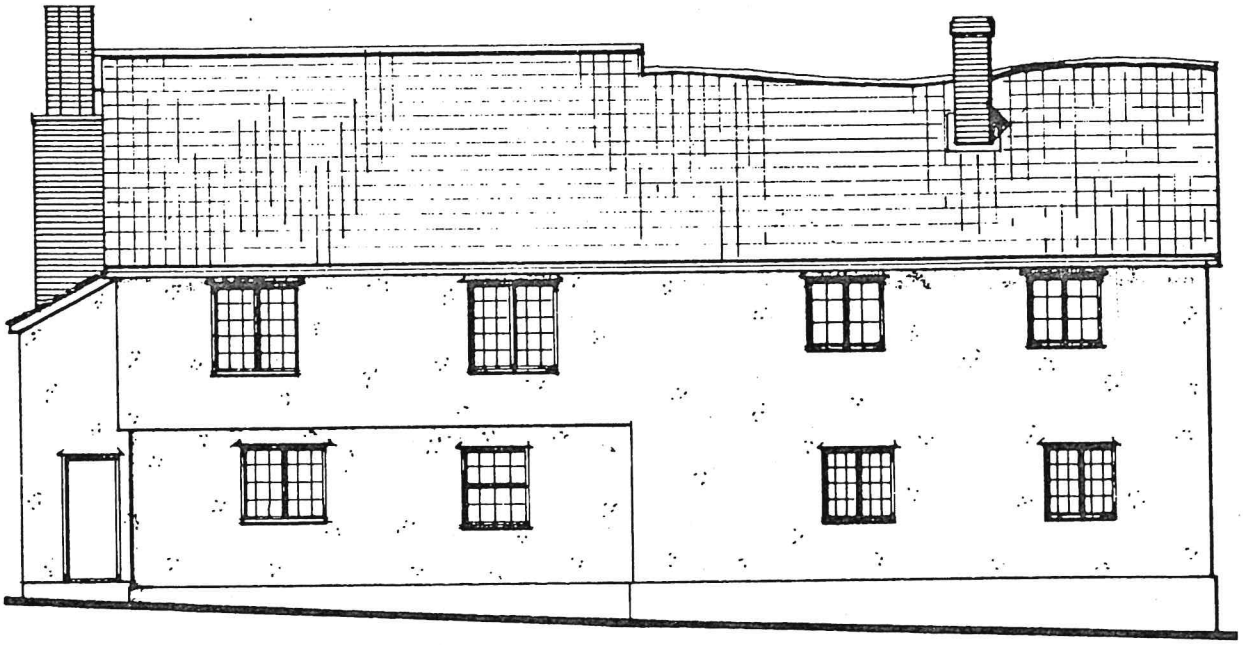


Figure 19. Butlers Cottage, High Street before and after restoration

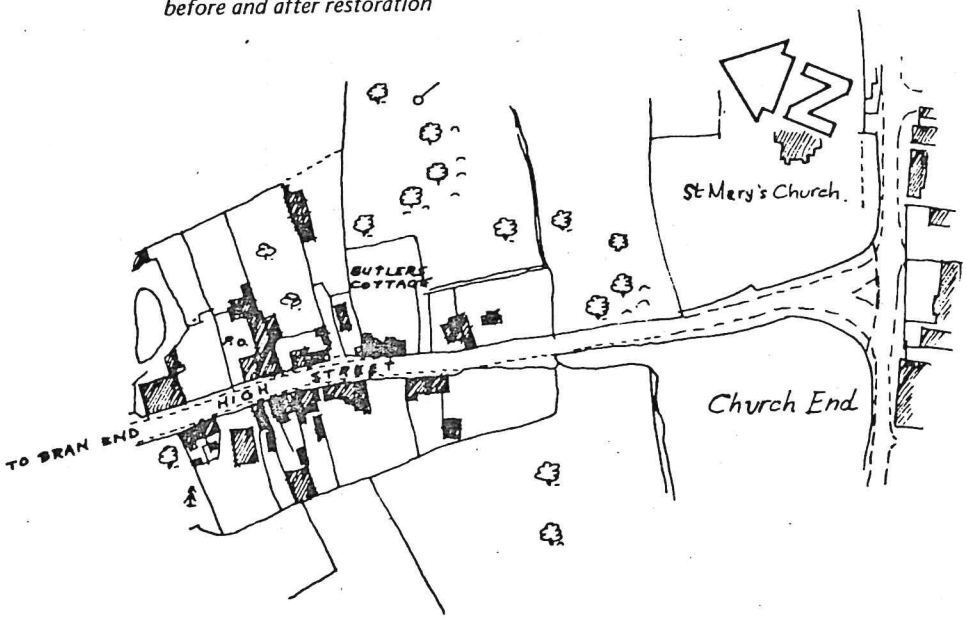


Figure 20. Tan Farm, Mill Lane

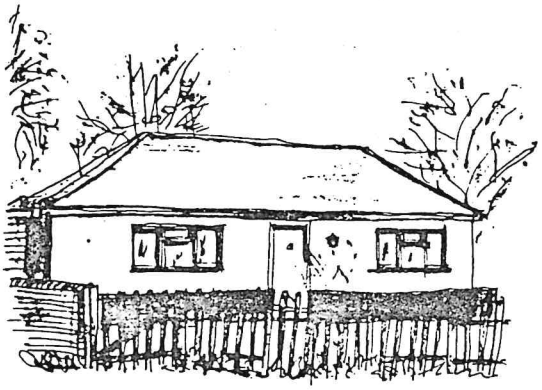
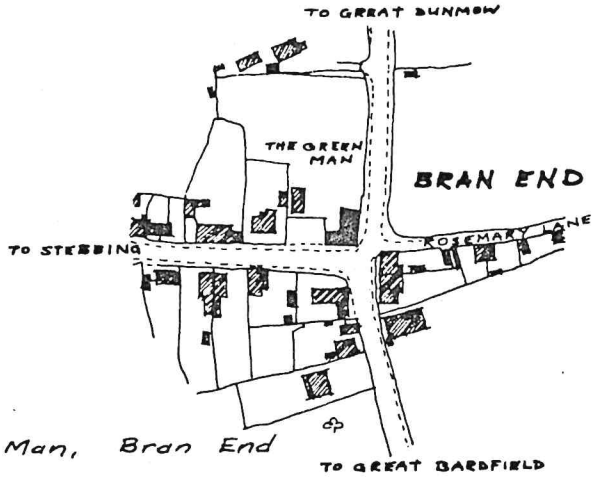


Figure 21. Mill Cottage

Figure 22. Town Mill



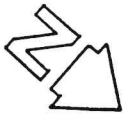


Figure 23. The Green Man, Bran End

FIGURE 23 The Green Man, Bran End before and after restoration

Figure 24. Martins Hall, Bran End

Figure 25. Brookfield Estate
Bran End

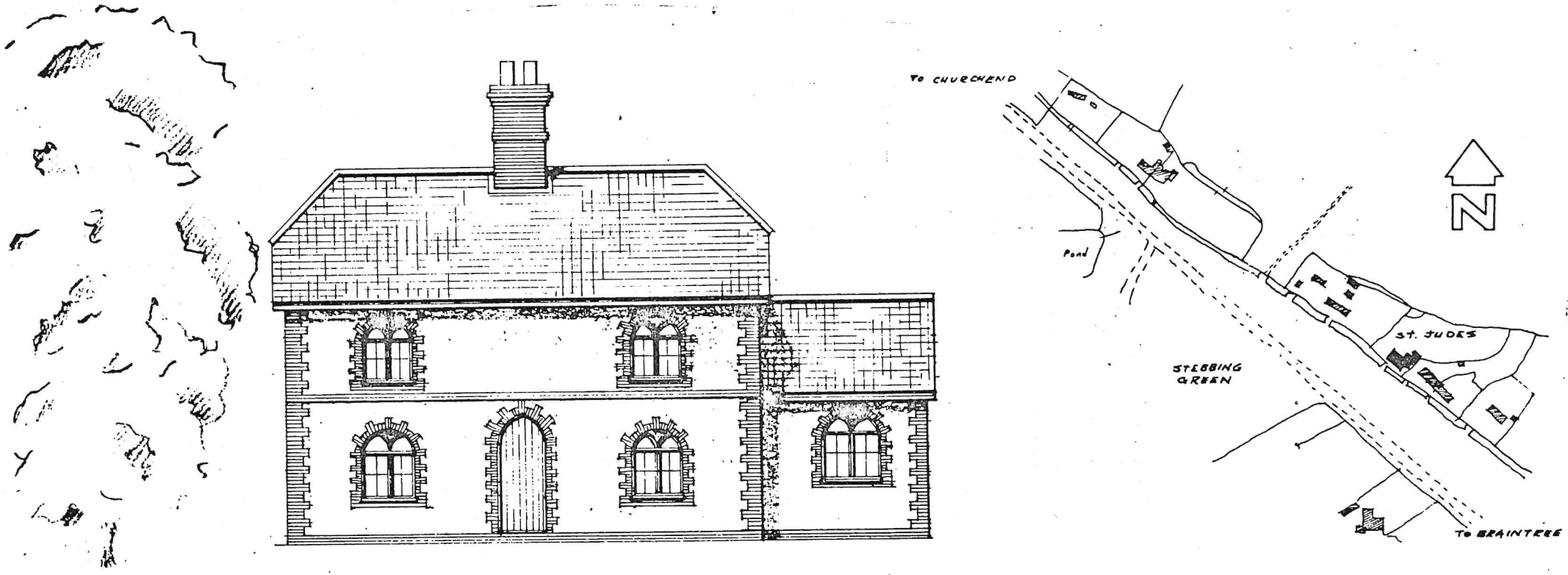


Figure 26. Saint Judes, Stebbing Green

Figure 27. Tilehouse Farm

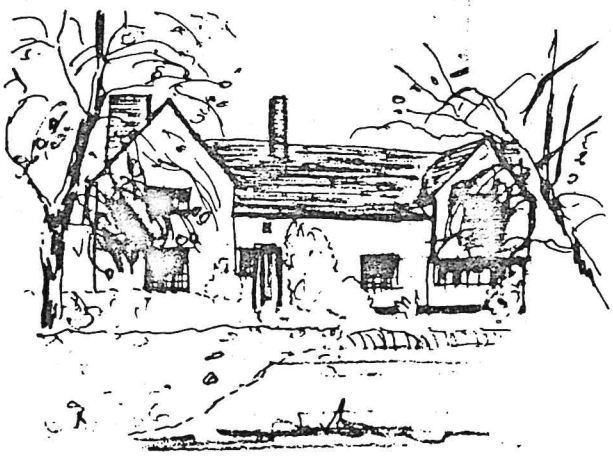


Figure 28. Canonfylde

Figure 29. Porters Hall

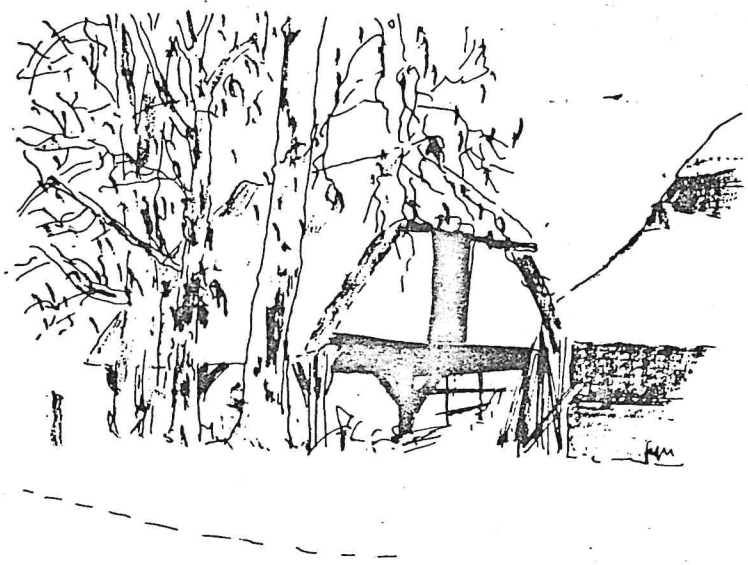
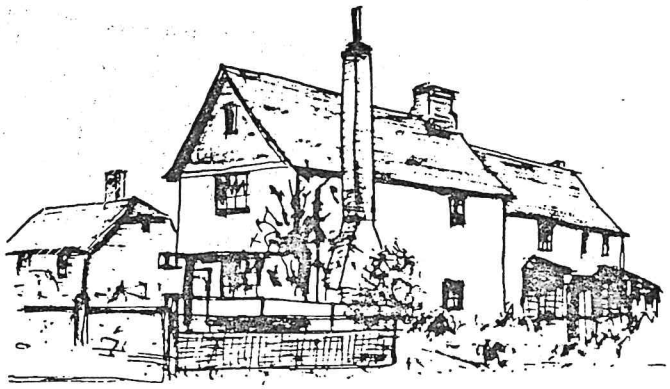


Figure 30. Barn at Hill Farm, Duck End



Figures 31 & 32. Shepherd's & Brae Side, The Downs

Figure 35. The Old Manse, High Street

Figure 33. Collops Farmhouse

Figure 34. Warehouse