

Water End and Welham Green

A historical look at two villages in North Mymms

by John Dean

Schools

From the mid-1800s there were two schools which served Water End, Welham Green and beyond. A boys' school took over the workhouse building in Welham Green in 1835 after the *1834 Poor Law* barred village workhouses. These institutions were made as austere as possible to discourage people from seeking their help; and as there was to be only one in each locality, the inmates were transferred to Hatfield.

Then in 1847, Miss Caroline Casamajor endowed a school in Water End for girls up to the age of fourteen, and infants. She gave the income from £3000 at 3% to maintain the school. This paid the salaries of two teachers as well as other expenses. It is amazing how far £90 a year went in those days!

From 1863 the Government gave grants to schools although fees of a few pence a week, per child, still had to be paid by parents. Then in 1876 attendance was made compulsory, although it was not free until 1891.

In 1887 a new boys' school opened in Welham Green. The building is still there and the date is visible on the side, although it has now been converted to housing.

The girls' school closed in 1960. Nowadays all children up to eleven years are educated together in the village school. The nearest secondary schools are in Hatfield and Brookmans Park.

Water End

This small village is well named. Two streams approach it; an unnamed one from the east and Mimmshall Brook from the south. Both go underground via swallow holes hereabouts. A number of other streams are tributaries of the latter, such as



Mimmshall Brook on its last stretch

the Catherine Bourne which meets it at South Mimms. A bourne or winterbourne is a stream that is dry most of the time, and the reason the Catherine Bourne and some other feeder-streams tend to be dry is because they have swallow holes in their stream-beds. They can take modest amounts of water but cannot cope with heavy rain, so the excess water flows into Mimmshall Brook and goes to Water End where the swallow holes cannot always cope either, causing flooding.

This caused misery for residents for many years but flood defences have eased the situation. The fields still flood and some of the excess water goes into North Mymms Park via a cutting which runs to the head waters of the River Colne.

There are a number of attractive houses

near Abdale Lane which once went to North Mymms Park. Then the Barnet Bypass bisected it and now the motorway has cut it off completely.

There are two public houses. *The Old Maypole* is sixteenth century, according to the date on the building, although the first documentary evidence, as an inn, is from 1756. *The Woodman* was known as a beerhouse in 1838 but probably traded under another name before that. There is also a café.

Welham Green

A famous event in the history of the village was the landing of Vincenzo Lunardi in a balloon, on September 15th 1784. It is commemorated by a stone at the junction of Parsonage Lane and Huggins Lane.

This was the first notable manned balloon flight in this country. Lunardi had set off from London watched by a huge crowd including the Prince of Wales (the future King George IV); ninety minutes later he descended to Welham Green and dropped off a cat which was ill. The inscription on the stone says: 'He handed out a cat and a dog', but although the dog was a passenger, all other accounts say that only the cat ended its journey here. There had originally been a pigeon too, but that had escaped!

Lunardi re-ascended, coming down again at Standon Green End, near Ware. Some of his associates had followed his progress on horseback and arrived to congratulate him and celebrate in a local inn.

There are two public houses in the village. *The Siphthorpe Arms* was known as *The Duke of Leeds Arms* after the Lord of the Manor at North Mymms Park, a descendant of Thomas Osborne, 1st Duke of Danby, who was one of those who invited William of Orange and his wife, Mary, to govern instead of her father, James II. Danby was rewarded by being made Marquess of Caermarthen in 1689. Then in 1694 he was created Duke of Leeds.

Sir Thomas never owned North Mymms Park; it was his son, Peregrine, who acquired it through marriage. He succeeded to the title in 1712. The estate remained with the family until it was sold in 1800.

Around 1850 the name of the pub changed to *The Sibthorp Arms*, (the 'e' in the name is a modern addition), after the owners of Potterells Manor. Later it became *The Black Lion*, but about 1875 Coningsby Charles Sibthorp who had become the owner of North Mymms Park, bought it, renovated it and changed the name back again.



Mimmshall Brook before disappearing in the swallow holes

Sibthorp was much respected for his generosity to the village and his tenants.

He built new houses for the latter and two such buildings can be seen from Station Road, complete with plaques giving his initials and the year they were built.

I should mention that Station Road leads to Brookmans Park Station which was opened in 1926. Welham Green did not get theirs until 1986.

The Hope and Anchor is probably a seventeenth century building but is first recorded as a beerhouse in 1838 when James Hutson was the licensee. It was at this time that the North Mymms Church bellringers were paid here in beer! Probably because Hutson was also the church organist!

This was not a new arrangement, it had been going on for many years at *The Old Maypole*. However the practice ended in 1852 when Hutson retired; no doubt much to the relief of the vicar, who was preaching 'temperance'!



Commemoration of Vincenzo Lunardi on the corner of Huggins Lane at Welham Green