

ALDERBURY & WHADDON: A GLIMPSE ACROSS THE CENTURIES

Aldbury and Whaddon did not exist as villages, as we know them today, until sometime in the Saxon Period (450AD – 1066AD) although there have been earlier finds from the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as Roman artefacts. The Saxons built a Christian church where the Victorian Parish Church of St Mary stands today. It is possible that the old yew tree that still overlooks the porch may have been planted then. What tales it could tell!

The Saxons divided their lands into Shires, Hundreds and Manors, administrative units that lasted for many centuries. In the Domesday Survey of 1086, in Norman times, both manors were independent of each other. Whaddon or Watedene, as it was then called, was held by Waleran the Hunter, an absentee landlord with many other estates: Aldbury, then known as Alwarberie was held by Alward the priest, both manors for the King. Subsequently, Aldbury Manor was divided in two and the church, with its dependent chapels at Ivychurch, Whaddon and Farley, was gifted to the Bishop of Salisbury, becoming Rectory Manor. Soon afterwards King Stephen founded the Augustinian Priory of Ivychurch, thus creating a fourth manor. The Prior and his canons served the Royal Households in residence at the magnificent Clarendon Palace which was surrounded by the largest medieval deer park in England. Tile kilns were established at Aldbury and in 1379 there were 17 people employed there, making Aldbury the centre of tile making in SE Wiltshire - it could be said that they were forerunners of the handmade brick works in Whaddon established early in the 20th century. In 1348 the Prior and all the canons, save one, succumbed to the Black Death – but there is no record of how many villagers died too. The Priory was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536 leaving only the manor house and the ruins. In the 1880s the house was destroyed by fire and a farm stands on the site today. Some of the stones from the old priory were used to make the drinking fountain opposite the top of Silver Street. It marks the Coronation of Edward VII and the introduction of water standpipes to the village in 1902, courtesy of the Earl of Radnor.

Nearby, stands the picturesque 15th century Green Dragon Inn, the only working inn of the two still in existence in the parish - the other being the former Three Crowns Inn at Whaddon, built in the 18th-19th century. Both have interesting stories in their past.

Gradually feudalism and the manorial system disappeared as land became enclosed. In the late 16th century Longford Castle was built in the river valley on the south side of the parish bringing a source of employment to local people, not only as agricultural labourers but as skilled craftsmen. By 1801 all the manors had been acquired by the 2nd Earl of Radnor. In 1839 the first Aldbury School was founded by the 3rd Earl on the site of a medieval hall house, decades before education was made compulsory throughout the country. The lovely Aldbury & West Grimstead Primary School in Firs Road, which opened in 1993 is a fine successor.

In 1753, the Sarum and Eling Turnpike Trust was allowed to construct a toll road from Salisbury to the outskirts of Southampton. Passing through a tollgate at Petersfinger, its route went via Shute End, along the lower road parallel with the river, and then turned sharply uphill eventually passing close to the Green Dragon. From there the road went to the Clarendon Road crossroads, across the Common (now Southampton Road), to Whaddon, passing in front of the Three Crowns Inn before continuing onwards. Some 40 stagecoaches a week used this turnpike including the regular Royal Mail coach and passengers. It would have created quite a spectacle as with post horns blowing it announced its arrival at the Green Dragon Inn. The maroon, scarlet and gold coaches were mounted

by black-hatted guards in similar livery, each carrying a brace of pistols to deter highwaymen. In 1842 a realignment of the road cut out the steep curved hill section and replaced it with a smooth mile- long road from St Marie's Grange to the crossroads. Although the rapid development of railways put an end to coach-borne and freight travel, the road saw an increase in use by local carriers. Turnpike Trusts were wound up in 1878 and the costs of road maintenance fell on the counties. As motorised traffic increased significantly during and after the war years, Southampton Road became busier and busier. An Alderbury by-pass was opened in 1978 much to the relief of everyone, leaving our two villages relatively peaceful and free from noise and pollution again.

The 20th century heralded those essentials of modern living that are now taken for granted: telephones , piped water supplies , electricity, gas, and sewage disposal . With the advent of mobile phones, telephone kiosks have largely become redundant in the parish (except as mini libraries) and in the relatively recent era of the computer, broadband has been made available.

Census Returns for 1911 show that fewer than 700 people lived in Alderbury and Whaddon. Today the population has more than trebled. With easy access to main roads, railways and airports, families from many parts of the United Kingdom have settled here to enjoy rural village life. There is a wide range of facilities available to tempt them: a modern primary school and adjacent nursery school, a large recreation ground, tennis courts, bowling green, football pitches, village hall, social club, two shops- one with post office, a pub, plus many groups, clubs, and societies to suit all ages, talents and interests. Although two Methodist chapels moved to a new location in Salisbury, there is a warm welcome at the ecumenical Parish Church of St Mary's in Alderbury, and St Mary's Hall and the Roman Catholic Chapel in Whaddon. In 1989 the building of Whaddon Business Park and later, of the Oakridge Office Park, has provided new opportunities for local employment.

Through the centuries Alderbury and Whaddon , once two separate communities, have joined borders and ventured out into the world, going from dependence on agriculture to independence in this new technological age, welcoming all who come to live in this vibrant, friendly and scenic environment.