

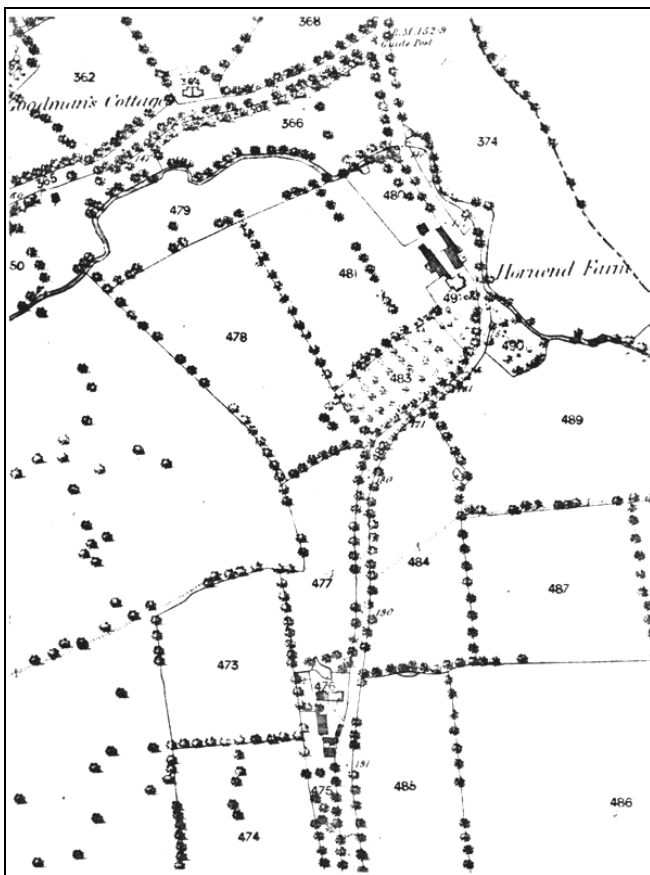
A look back at Cheney Street (1890s-1940s)

by Karen Spink

'In the 1920s and '30s our house was surrounded by fields. The farms were grazed by small herds of cows, milked by hand. My sister and I would go across the lane with cans to collect our daily milk. We would wait in the cool kitchen of the brick and timber farmhouse while Mrs Collins went to the dairy to fill our cans. There was a pond in the farmyard where ducks paddled and the horses were watered. Chickens scratched in the straw in and around the big wooden barn. A loaded hay cart could drive right through the middle of this barn and out the other side. It was built of wooden beams like a ship, clad in blackened timber and roofed in old red, clay tiles. There were big dangerous water-filled holes in the brickfields behind our house where the clay had been dug out to bake the bricks for the local houses. The biggest blackberries grew round these pits.'

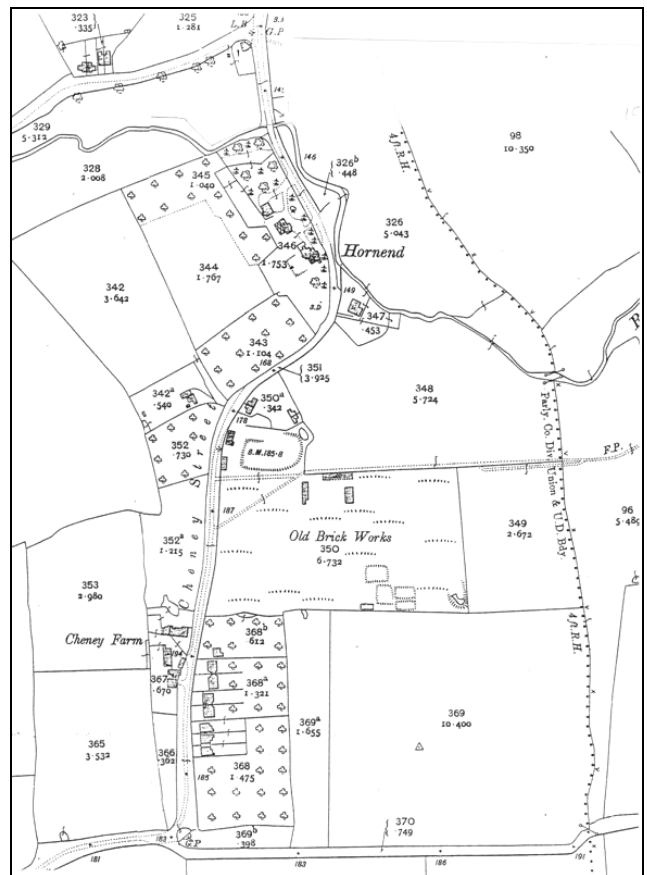
Cross). The farm she refers to is Cheney Street Farm. She continues: *'To get to the village we went down the hill and turned left over the stile and along the path by the Pinn river. We passed the big hidden house where the neighbours had put on "Midsummer Night's Dream" in the orchard. It was strange to see grown men we knew playing elves. The house [Horn End, sometimes known as Hornend] belonged to Philips, the map makers, and it had an indoor badminton court.'*

This muddy lane, between fields, is one of the oldest streets in Eastcote, and changed little over the centuries. The earliest known reference is in 1365 when it was known as Chayhamstreet¹. In 1565 it was known as Chayne Street² and then subsequently Chenies or Cheney Street.



Map 1 - Section of 1865 OS map showing Cheney Street with Horn End Farm to the north and Cheney Street Farm (476) in the south

The author of this recollection, Mrs Amy Monahan (née Sydney), lived at 26 Cheney Street from the time of her birth in 1919 till 1947 (with the exception of a couple of years during the Second World War spent in the Canadian Red



Map 2 - 1913 OS map showing Thomas Elkington's brickfield and cottages. His house, 'Homestead', lies south-east of Horn End (347)

In 1685³ there were just two dwellings, those same two referred to by Amy. These were also the only two dwellings at the end of the nineteenth century, as can be seen from the OS maps of 1865 and 1897. However things were soon to change.

In 1898 a builder from Pinner, Thomas Elkington, leased 18 acres from Maximilian Maurice Samuel on the east side of Cheney Street⁴, south of the River Pinn, between Horn End and Cheney Street Farm, where he planned to produce bricks.

Cheney Street Brickfield (see Map 2)

The brickfield opened sometime in the late 1890s. A worker there recalled how in 1896 he was the first to ask Elkington for a job⁵. In exchange for finding him four men, he was allowed to work as a tea boy for five weeks. The workers referred to Cheney Street as 'Mr Long Lane' (after William Long, at this time the tenant farmer of Cheney Street Farm). Elkington was described as a 'ruddy-faced man with a ruffle beard'⁶.

What they produced here were red facing bricks, moulded bricks and tiles. Elkington also had a brickfield in Northwood, which produced stock bricks, and one in Pinner Road, Pinner. Thomas Ellement, another Pinner builder, used Cheney Street bricks in 1904 for a couple of houses in Pinner, while Thomas Elkington built red-brick houses in Marsh Road, Eastcote Road and Cannon Lane in the area from the old telephone exchange to the Whittington Hotel (now the Pinner Arms)⁷.

Two houses in Eastcote are known to have been built from Cheney Street bricks. One was 'Ruislip House' for William Murch in 1903. Now demolished, it stood in Field End Road where the junction with The Sigers is now. The second, significantly, was for Mr Elkington himself in Cheney Street (see below).

In 1902 Elkington received complaints about huts he had built on the brickfield. It was common for builders to put up temporary (and unauthorised) buildings prior to construction, so it would seem it was already Elkington's intention to build on part of the brickfield. Perhaps it was coming to the end of its usefulness, and indeed by 1904 Elkington was stopped from extracting any more clay. Regarding the complaints, in October the RNUDC served notice on him to remove the huts. However, he requested a stay of execution, and by mid-November 1902 had received planning permission to build four cottages, followed shortly by one additional cottage.

It was said that spoil from the excavation for the extension of the Harrow to Uxbridge Metropolitan Line was used to fill up the hole at the brickworks. If this is true it cannot have been easy transporting it to Cheney Street.

By 1905 all five cottages had been built on the former brickfield, but by 1914 one had already been pulled down⁸. By 1924 they had all gone⁹.

Homestead

In 1904 Thomas Elkington built for himself and his wife a fine red-brick detached house on a plot next to the brickfield, adjacent to the River Pinn and opposite Horn End (see Map 2). Approval was granted by the RNUDC subject to drainage being carried out according to council regulations and with floor levels being raised as required – no doubt in respect of the proximity of the river. Called 'Homestead' the house comprised a drawing room, dining room, kitchen and scullery, two pantries and WC on the ground floor, and upstairs four bedrooms and a bathroom complete with a 'lavatory basin', WC and hot and cold water. There was cesspool drainage, and water and gas was supplied¹⁰. Unfortunately for Thomas his wife did not want to live here, so the Elkingtons returned to live in Pinner. The house underwent several name changes with consecutive new owners: 1909 'Hosey', 1916 'Makora', and then in 1919, when George Ernest Hinman of Pinner bought the property, it became known as 'Fyvie' (said to be after Fyvie Castle, near Inverness) (see Fig. 1).

The Hinmans were to become notable Eastcote residents (see page 53 *RNELHS Journal* 2012). Both Mr Philip Hinman and his wife Margaret were independent councillors in the 1920s and 1930s. It was during this period that Mrs Hinman, together with other local residents and councillors (see later), helped save the Long Meadow from development by Comben and Wakeling who built the Eastcote Park Estate. The Hinman Shield, set up in her memory, is awarded annually to Eastcote children for conservation projects. The Hinmans stayed in 'Fyvie' until 1945. After its sale it became known as 'High Trees'.

Mrs Elkington may not have been keen to settle in Eastcote, but other changes locally were encouraging more people to come to Eastcote. Already referred to above, the most significant of these changes was the extension of the Metropolitan line, with a new Halt at Eastcote in 1906. Easier access to London led to the sale of farmland for development, with architects and builders being influenced by the new garden suburbs with their fashionable arts and crafts style houses and tree-lined streets.



Fig. 1 - The muddy lane in the 1920s between Horn End Farm (on the left) and 'Fyvie' (off to the right). Under the oak tree in the centre is a little thatched playhouse built for the Hinmans' daughter, Margaret, by Mr Collins, farmer of Cheney Street Farm (Postcard, RNELHS)

Southern end of Cheney Street

By the time of the 1913 OS map, eight houses had been built in the southern part of Cheney Street, opposite Cheney Street Farm: two pairs of matching semis and four detached.

By 1935 a further six had been built in this row. These were substantial residences of individual design (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - 1911 postcard showing the new arts and crafts houses on the right. Cheney Street Farm is in the distance on the far left (Postcard, Bernice Bath)

The first buildings, described as three villas (now nos 8, 10 and 12), were for C. Perrin, Esq. (Fig. 3). These were 4-bedroom houses, designed by Sidney Whitehead, architect of Harrow, which were completed and connected to the new Cheney Street sewer in July 1910. The earliest occupants of the central villa, 'The Nook', were the Trehwitt family, members of whom can be seen in the postcard (Fig. 4). Note the slight difference in the decorative detailing in the plan and the photo.

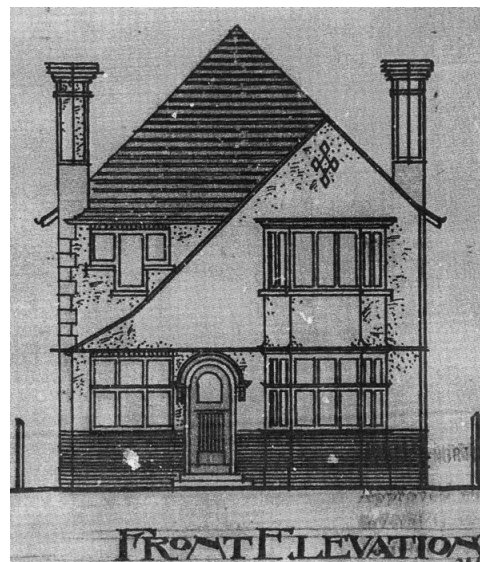


Fig. 3 - Front elevation of no. 10, 'The Nook', 1909 (LBH Planning Dept)



Fig. 4 - Postcard, c. 1912, of 'The Nook', showing Ellen Trehwitt with her daughter, Nora, and son, Philip (Postcard, Bernice Bath)

These were followed in the same year by two pairs of semi-detached 4-bedroom houses (nos 14, 16, 18 and 20). The architect, W.G. Fuller, was also from Harrow. These were built for Messrs Norton Bros (Fig. 5).

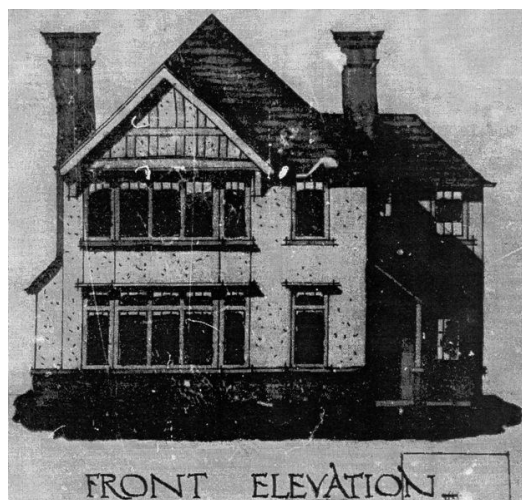


Fig. 5 - Design for nos. 14, 16, 18 and 20
(LBH Planning Dept)

'Hillands' (no. 22), a detached 4-bedroom house, designed by G.L. Morris, architect, of Finsbury Square, London, for E.L. Ware, followed shortly afterwards.

These eight houses appear on the 1911 Census and show an interesting array of occupants, including an antique furniture dealer, a furnishing redecoration advisor, a civil servant in the post office savings bank, and a printer.

The Gables

At the bottom of the street, close to one of the many local ponds, was 'The Gables'. This aptly named house with its steep-pitched roof and tall chimneys was built to the 1912 designs of Harvey & Potter, architects of Baker Street, London, for A.W. McClellan, Esq. (see Fig. 6). This was probably the largest detached house and would also include a detached garage.



Fig. 6 - Front elevation of no. 2, 'The Gables', 1912 (LBH Planning Dept)

Runton and St Mary's

Amy Sydney lived at 'St Mary's', now known as 'White Lodge'. This was a large red-brick house, now part-rendered white, and was one of two identical houses (Fig. 7). Designed by T. Walter Moss, architect and surveyor of Gray's Inn, London, they were built sometime after their 1913 approval. 'Runton', to the north, was first occupied at the end of 1914. They must have made an imposing pair, but sadly 'Runton' was damaged during the Second World War and had to be demolished. There are now bungalows where it stood.

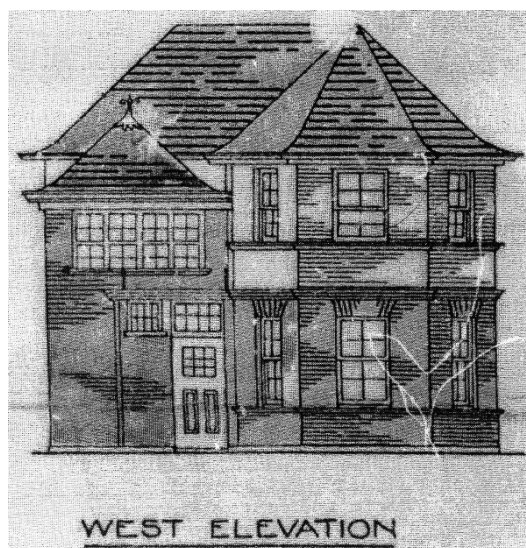


Fig. 7 - Front elevation of no. 28, 'St Mary's', which was home to Amy Sydney
(LBH Planning Dept)

Amy's parents, George Sydney and his wife, came to Cheney Street in about 1916, the year of their marriage. Their first daughter, Mary, was born in September 1917, followed by Amy exactly two years later. George Sydney worked in the city and was an elected councillor on the RNUDC from 1934 till the end of the war. He served on the Highways Committee from 1939 to 1940. Together with Cllrs Hinman and Cllr Philip of Horn End he was involved in the protection of Long Meadow from development during the 1930s, as mentioned above.

Highmead

Amy writes about watching cricket in Haydon Hall grounds. *'Our next door neighbour played cricket there. He also exhibited his prize marrows and choice fruit in the marquee at the Annual Horticultural Show. His garden was very large and well tended by a gardener and every summer they held a large garden party with musical entertainment* (Fig. 8).

Our own fairly large garden was very well looked after by my father who dug the fallen elm leaves into the hard Middlesex clay until it produced enough to keep us and all our friends in fruit and vegetables.'



Fig. 8 - Garden party at 'Highmead'
(Hilda Cross)

The neighbour's house was 'Highmead', home of Howard Crane and family. Designed by Martin Skinner, ARIBA of Walton on Thames for D.B. Crane, Howard's father, the plans of 1920 suggest a wooden structure. It is not clear what this meant as the structure is not timber-framed, although today the house has a mock-Tudor appearance. A workshop was also built.

As mentioned by Amy, Howard Crane was well-known locally for his horticultural expertise and was a founding member of the Eastcote Horticultural Society. The Crane Cup was named after him, and is still awarded annually at the Autumn Show for the best apple exhibit. The name of the house is remembered in the Highmead Cup which is awarded for the highest number of points gained at an exhibition for showing apples. Howard's daughter, Doreen, married Ron Edwards, known to many as a local historian and author of *Eastcote, from Village to Suburb* (published in 1987 by Hillingdon Borough Libraries). Mr and Mrs Edwards were instrumental in the formation of the Ruislip, Northwood and Eastcote Local History Society in 1964.

West side of Cheney Street

On the west side of Cheney Street, near the farm, Mr A. Simpson had two houses built. The first for himself was 'Weetwood' in 1920 (Fig. 9). A substantial house that was subsequently owned by the Managing Director of Glaxo, Sir Harry Jephcott, it was demolished to make way for Nightingale Close in 1985.



Fig. 9 - 'Weetwood' (Jim Golland, RNELHS)

Next to his house, nearer to Cheney Street Farm was no. 5, 'Hurstead' (Fig. 10) which was described on the plans as being in the 'Interloc' construction. This modern-style house with an internal open staircase was first occupied in 1923 by Arthur Ellis. Today it has a side extension to the north.

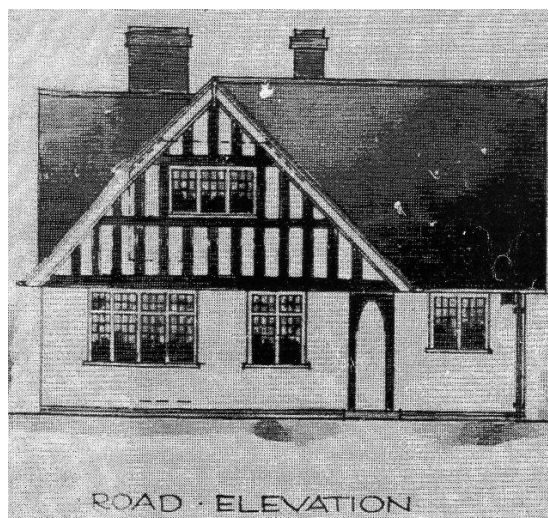
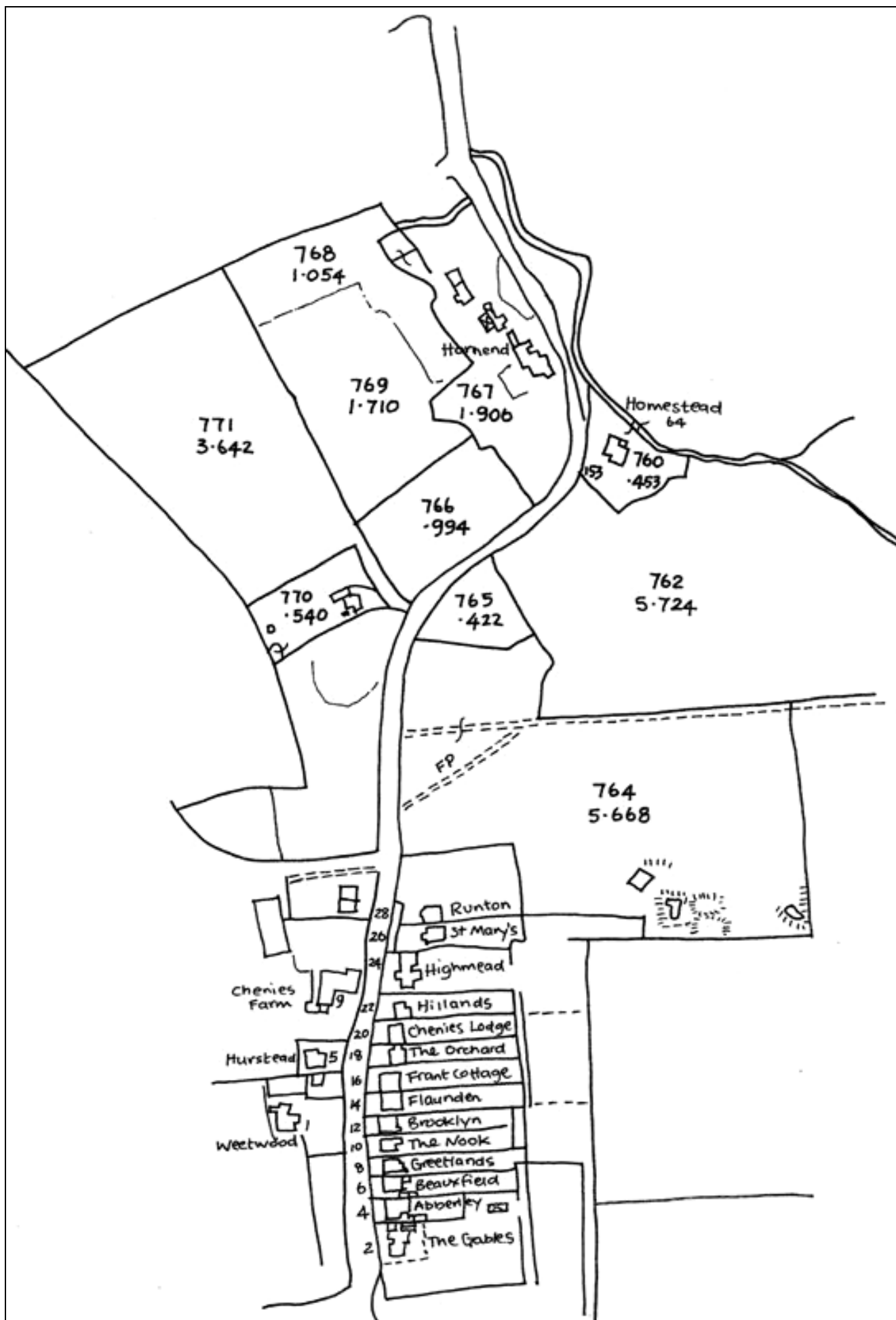


Fig. 10 - Front elevation of 'Hurstead', 1922 (LBH Planning Dept)



Fig. 11 - Amy Sydney stands outside her house in Cheney Street looking towards Bridle Road on VE Day, 1945 (Amy Monahan)



Map 3 - Cheney Street, based on 1935 OS map with house names and later numbers added

CHENEY STREET DEVELOPMENT CHART

House No.	Original House Name	Architect (Builder)	Designed for	Date Plans Approved	Date and Name of First Known Occupier
2	The Gables	Harvey & Potter 17 York Place Baker Street, W	A.W. McClellan Esq.	10 June 1912	1914 Albert William McClellan
4	Abberley (+ Motor Garage & House Additions)	Evans & Evans Station House Pinner	Mr H. Snelling Bridge Street, Pinner	30 Sept 1912 11 Aug 1913	1914 Francis Comfort
6	Beauxfield	?	?	?	1913 Rev. Edward W. Mowl
8 10 12	Greetlands} The Nook } Brooklyn }	Sydney A. Whitehead 38 Roxborough Road Harrow	C. Perrin Esq. 11 Dorset Road Harrow (builder)	22 Nov 1909	1911 Leonard T. Hutchings 1911 Ellen Trewwhitt 1911 Percy Whaley
14 16 18 20	Flaunden } Frant Cottage } The Orchard } Chenies Lodge}	W.G. Fuller Harrow	Messrs Norton Bros	9 Aug 1909	1911 Alfred Ernest Lawrence 1911 Edward R. Browne-Cooper 1911 Arthur James Bayley 1911 John Pratt Page
22	Hillands	G.L.C. Morris 40 Finsbury Square, EC	E.L. Ware Esq.	27 Sept 1909	1911 Edmund Labdon Ware
24	Highmead (+ Workshop)	Martin Skinner Laleham Cottage Walton-on-Thames (J.H. Eyden Lowlands Road, Harrow)	D.B. Crane Esq.	10 Jan 1921 10 Oct 1921	1923 Howard H. Crane
26 28	St Mary's} Runton }	T. Walter Moss 7 Gray's Inn Place Gray's Inn, WC	Messrs Hillyer & Cripps	16 May 1913	1919 Michael George Sydney 1914 Theodore Meredith Jones
64	Homestead (+ Alterations & Additions)	T.W. Moss J.E. Henderson The Lodge, West End Avenue, Pinner	Thomas Elkington G.E. Hinman	May 1904 Feb 1922	1904 Thomas Elkington
1	Weetwood (+ Motor Garage)	G.E. Clare (J.H. Eyden Harrow) T.W. Moore	A.E. Simpson Esq.	13 Feb 1922 18 Feb 1924	1923 A.E. Simpson
5	Hurstead	George E. Clare Harrow-on-the Hill	A.E. Simpson Esq.	Feb 1922	1923 Arthur Ellis

Today

By the time Amy left in 1947, many changes had taken place. Rodney Gardens had been built as part of the Eastcote Park Estate with three typical Comben and Wakeling houses in Cheney Street where the two roads intersect. C.V. Galley completed the estate with bungalows on either side of the long green central reserve which had originally been planted with elm trees.

The old brickfield disappeared under Barnhill and Chiltern Road. Yet today Cheney Street still has a rural feel, with its grass verges and stretches without pavements, and with most of the houses mentioned above surviving, albeit some with modern extensions. The street was included in the Eastcote Village Conservation Area in 2011 which it is hoped will protect it for the future.

Acknowledgements

Back in 2003, Pinner Local History Society contacted me regarding an interesting letter they had received from a former resident of Cheney Street. I consequently corresponded with Amy Monahan who was then living in Carlow, Ireland. She sent me a chapter from the memoirs she was writing and kindly gave me permission to use extracts. However, communication from her ceased and I came to the sad conclusion that she had died. Did she, I wonder, ever complete her memoirs?

When Cheney Street was being considered by Hillingdon Borough for designation as an area of special character, and subsequently for inclusion in the Eastcote Village Conservation Area, I was

prompted to research the early twentieth century buildings. This I did by looking at the planning applications in the RNUDC Minute Books in Uxbridge Library Local Studies Centre, and with the relevant reference numbers was able to look at the drawings and plans at LBH Planning Department. My thanks to Richard Buxton for his assistance with this.

Finally, for the use of some of the photographs I would like to thank Bernice Bath and the late Hilda Cross, and for other information and assistance: Carolyn Derecki, Gerry Edwards, Diana and Peter Freake, Catherine and Ray Staff, Michael Treisman, Anita Weston and Melanie Winterbotham.

References

1. *The Place-names of Middlesex*, Gover, Mawer and Stenton, Cambridge University Press, 1942
2. *ibid*
3. Court Book, British Library, Add MS 9367
4. Valuation Office records: The Finance (1909-10) Act, TNA
5. Letter, RNELHS
6. *Pinner in the Vale*, Edwin Ware, Harrow Library
7. Letter from Thomas Ellement to L.E. Morris, RNELHS
8. 1914 Rate Book, Uxbridge Library
9. 1924 Kelly's Directory, Uxbridge Library
10. Valuation Office records: The Finance (1909-10) Act, TNA

Electoral Rolls, various Street Directories and the 1911 Census were also consulted