

# A Short Anecdotal History of Cerne Abbas



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The house histories contained in this document are a 'snapshot in time' They are dated and references to ownership relate to that date and not necessarily to the present day occupiers.

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in due course.

## THE VICARAGE 4 BACK LANE CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The present Victorian façade of the vicarage conceals a much earlier building. An Act of Parliament dated 12 Jan 1705 called the Pile's Estate Act included a provision for 'augmenting the vicarage of Cern Abbas, in the county of Dorset '. In 1705 Cerne Abbas, plus much other land in Dorset, came into the ownership of the Pitt family, which was to last until the sale of the village at auction in 1919. The use of the word 'augmenting' in the Act is instructive, as it suggests an increase in what then constituted the local arrangements for the incumbent. The west gable end of the Vicarage has bricks set into it with the date 1711, a possible pointer to it having been built by the Pitt family in accordance with the provisions of the 1705 Act. Where the incumbent lived before this is unknown, but may have been in the adjacent house in Back Lane (now known as 'Norman's House'). The Victorian appearance of the present vicarage is the result of a major reconstruction undertaken by the Revd James Hay Waugh (ancestor of the literary Waugh family) in about 1843 at his own expense.

However, it could have been a very different story, as a railway line was proposed in 1837 to run from Bath to Weymouth, passing through Cerne Abbas. The projected route of the railway would have passed over Back Lane by a bridge very close to the vicarage. Happily for the vicarage, the railway never arrived, but the loss of this modern transport link contributed to the general decline of the village in the 19th century. The house remains as a vicarage to this day and its large garden and the field beyond is the venue for many community events, including the annual Church Fete.

**UNIQUE AND FASCINATING STORY** The Revd James Waugh made his fortune from 'Waugh's Family Antibilious Pills'. Made from soluble cayenne pepper in crystals, this 'wonder drug' was reportedly singlehandedly responsible for curing Queen Victoria's wind! A letter from Her Majesty's Purveyor at Windsor on 8 October 1849 congratulated 'Messrs Waugh' for 'so valuable a discovery' and ordered a further 'one dozen bottles for Her Majesty's Use'. From curing Her Majesty's flatus, amongst others so fortunate, he 'built himself a magnificent rectory at Cerne Abbas and, when he left a few years later, he generously donated it with all its land to the parish'.



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## 18 and 20 BACK LANE CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** This pair of semi-detached cob cottages was probably built around 1800 as homes for farm labourers on Chescombe Farm. It is thought that they originally comprised two rooms up and one down with thatched roofs and a single-storey lean-to at each end. Evidence of fire and thatch was found during recent alterations. A photograph from 1905 shows that the lean-tos had been built up to the full height of the cottages and the roofs slated. Another lean-to with a corrugated iron roof had also been added, possibly in the mid 1850s, along the backs of both cottages. This housed a sink, a copper to heat water and a coal store. Before mains water arrived, there was a pump on the opposite side of the lane, the stone trough of which still stands in front of the two cottages. There were privies with earth closets in both gardens, with scented lilac trees planted alongside! Small the cottages may have been, but the Census of 1881 records a family with five children in No 18.

In 1919 these and six adjacent cottages were sold at auction for about £290. In 1936 Olive and Wilfred Dunn moved into No 20 and had two sons. Olive was an excellent seamstress and Wilfred a keen gardener. His flower beds were surrounded by walls covered with broken domestic china mostly supplied by friends in the village and the garden appeared on a television programme.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** During recent alterations to the cob walls, the remains of a pair of small leather shoes were discovered. These were possibly inserted during construction as a 'peculiar' to ward off evil spirits or perhaps they were just discarded into the mud mix. They have been re-inserted! Some of the original roof timbers, which are basically tree branches, are still in place in both cottages.

**UNIQUE STORY** One night during WWII, a ship exploded in Portland Harbour. That same night, the small window of the tiny cubby-hole bedroom in No 18 where a five year old girl was sleeping fell out, presumably blown out by the force of the explosion twenty plus miles away.

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## THE OLD SADDLER DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The house was already on this site by the mid-1700s. At the auction of the village in 1919, the house was bought by Henry Paulley who had previously been the tenant running a business as Saddler and Harness Maker. He also bought 5 Long Street and 3 Duck Street, together with a derelict cottage between the Old Saddler and 3 Duck Street, since demolished; all for £250. The junction of Long Street and Duck Street was known as Paulley's Corner. The sale prospectus described the property as being 'a large Shop and Room adjoining with two large Windows, Sitting Room, Kitchen, Wash and old Fuel House and 5 bedrooms.

After Henry's death in 1937, the house was left to a relative, Percy Burge, who was then a tenant. He continued running the business until it closed in the early 1950s. When mains electricity came to the village in the late 1930s each house was fitted with two lights and a five-amp socket. Additional sockets had to be paid for. Not wanting to pay the extra cost, Percy Burge used to trail a lamp with him around the house on a long lead.

Percy Burge lived in the house until his death in the late 1960s. It was then bought by Mr Heington who ran it as an antique and furniture restoration shop. A door opening which gave access to an additional house in Long Street was bricked in and the house absorbed into the Old Saddler.

The next owner was Olga Pigeon, who ran it as a gift shop and it was she who named it 'The Old Saddler'. It was bought by the present owners in October 1980. It continues to be run as a gift shop and as an outlet for women's clothes made on the premises.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** Situated on three floors, the house offers good views of the village streets from the upstairs windows. There is plenty of wall space for the present owner to display her extensive collection of pottery and plates. Being an old house the main rooms are of a good size and provide plenty of accommodation for a three-generation family.

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## 2 DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The house appears on the 1768 map of Cerne Abbas and is Grade II listed. However, there may have been a house on the site from medieval times, given its proximity to the New Inn whose history dates back to the 13th century. The house was probably rebuilt to its present design in the late 18th century. It is not known when the downstairs became a shop, but a photograph of 1921 shows the house looking much as it does today, in use by then as a drapers. In 1985 the downstairs was flooded when the River Cerne burst its banks after a heavy storm and water swept across the school playing field and down Duck Street. It was therefore an enormous relief to the owners when the River Cerne Flood Prevention Scheme was completed in 1986.

The house changed hands just after the 1985 flood and extensive work was needed to make the downstairs inhabitable. The new owners had been working in the antiques business from a shop in Dorchester and, seeking a change, it was the potential of the shop on the corner of Duck Street and Long Street which brought them to the village. After being widowed it was the owner's love of antiques, combined with the opportunity it gave to meet people, which kept the shop open until her 90th birthday in 2008. A regular customer was a notable local artist who bought snuffboxes on which he painted his miniatures. Following her recent retirement, the house was sold and has been converted back to the home it probably always was originally.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** Owners of the house say the downstairs room is the best one in the village as you can see everything that is going on, strategically placed as it is on the corner of the two main village streets.

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## 6 DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The front of the house was probably built in the early 1600s and the thickness of the cob walls can be appreciated today. From 1790 John Abbot ran a school here, described as two cottages with gardens. Today there are two large back-to-back fireplaces in the centre of the house which would have served each cottage. Some years later a brew house and yard was added, faced in flint, and a plaque in Mill Lane dated 1793 probably records this addition.

John Abbot died in 1802, but by 1825 the house was once more a school, run by William Beach. William lived in the village until his death in 1880 as both schoolmaster and Clerk to the Board of Guardians at the Union Workhouse and for much of that time also as registrar of marriages. In the house today, an upper floor has been removed leaving an isolated door high up on an inside wall. This door leads to an attic which may have been used as a dormitory for boarders. In 1858 he moved his academy, described as 'boarding with some day boys' to 'The Lodge' in Long Street (see page 26).

By 1861 the house was lived in by Charles Curtis, a Blacksmith, who ran a forge next door in Mill Lane. His son, Thomas, continued to run the business until his death in 1939 at the age of 91. Thomas' youngest son, George, was killed in 1918 and is commemorated on the Roll Of Honour kept in St Mary's Church, Cerne Abbas. For a couple of years in the 1990s it was run as a bed and breakfast until bought by the current owners in 1996. They had been renting a property in Cerne while looking for a house in the area, but quickly settled into the village and decided to stay. For several years they also owned the forge until it closed in 2000, when it was sold for demolition and re-building as a house. The current owners have retained what used to be the forge showroom as additional storage space.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The large fireplace, which provides a focal point in winter, and the location of the cottage in the centre of the village only a few yards from the main street and shop.

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## 9 DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** No 9 Duck Street, originally one of a terrace of three cottages, was built prior to 1768. It was sold in 1919 by the Pitt-Rivers Estate to Mr Green the butcher for £220 and two of the cottages in the terrace were combined to become No 9 Duck Street. In 1982, No 9 was sold to a Mr and Mrs Worthington. The roofs of No 7 and No 9 had just been re-thatched when, on 3rd May 1984, the thatch on No 7 caught fire and the fire quickly spread to No 9. Villagers and the fire brigade managed to rescue much of the furniture before the fire almost completely destroyed both houses. Carol-Ann, the daughter of the Worthington's, had just converted part of No 9 to selling bread and cakes. Amongst the debris and jumble of furniture in the street was a small table with a bottle of sherry and glasses, used to celebrate the shop opening that very morning.

Although not grade-listed, Mr Worthington had a tussle with the planners who wanted the houses to be re-thatched. Eventually the planners relented and the terrace was re-built under a tiled roof. In the interim, Carol-Ann ran the business from the conservatory of a neighbour's house. After the business closed, the premises became a holiday let until the Worthington's retired to New Zealand in 1987. The present owners have been there ever since and have carried out major changes, including creating a beautiful rear garden.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The present owners had never heard of Cerne Abbas and No 9 was the last property viewed on a visit to the area. The estate agent was sure they wouldn't like it, but straight away they could see the potential and it turned out to be the right move for them. A favoured part of the house is the upstairs sitting room which affords views to their rear garden.



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## 14 DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The origins of this house and the adjacent house of which it is a part (No 16 Duck Street) are unknown, but they were there in 1768. In 1798 No 14 and No 16 Duck Street were shown as one property and occupied by a 'Maltster' called John Dominy. It may have been this beer making provenance, with the River Cerne flowing by the property, which created the public house called the 'Elephant and Castle' at No 16. At some time in the 19th century No 14 became a separate house to the Elephant and Castle and may have been used by the manager as a private house. By 1897 the property was owned by the Pope family, having been bought from the Pitt-Rivers Estate sometime in the 19th century, and was then sold to Eldridge Pope Co. In August 1976, a couple of years before the pub closed down, the house was sold to Lt. Col Barlow for £14,250. It was sold again in February 1981 to Jack de Carteret for £33,500 (an interesting indication of house price inflation in those five years!). In June 1995 the current owners bought it.

The house is a Grade 2 listed building. The attraction to the current owner at the time was its location next to the river, and the fact that the house could be lived in without major work needing to be done, or money spent, thus enabling the owners to concentrate their efforts on running their business in Dorchester. It also had the potential to develop the third floor as additional living space. The house has been named Leda Cottage from the Greek Myths. Zeus seduced Leda in the guise of a swan, with the future Helen of Troy resulting from their union.

**FAVOURITE FEATURE** The garden, with the adjacent river, has been extensively re-modelled to provide a cottage garden effect. It is regularly opened for the annual village charity event 'Open Gardens'.

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in due course.

## BEAUVOIR COURT CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** This Saxon building, originally called North Barn, reputedly dates from the 8th century and was therefore in existence well before the building of the Benedictine Cerne Abbey, established in AD987. Its original purpose is unknown. The abbey was built in an adjacent field, now called Beauvoir Field, and North Barn was incorporated into the abbey complex. The main road through Cerne Abbey was via Abbey Street to the south and over Kettle Bridge to the north. North Barn is situated close to Kettle Bridge and there is archaeological evidence that an archway was linked to North Barn, which would have made a dramatic approach to the abbey. The barn was constructed of very large blocks, roughly faced, but obviously completed to considerable masonry standards. The stone used is the local greensand stone and the largest blocks are on average 40 inches wide by 24 high and 36 inches deep; their weight each being at least 2 tons; certainly a challenge for the builders of the time. By comparison, the Abbey used smaller, finely-dressed, imported hamstone blocks.

With the Dissolution in 1539, North Barn was spared the demolition of the abbey which followed. The barn then became part of the Abbey Farm Estate and passed through the hands of many tenant farmers. In 1937 the estate was bought by Lord Digby of Minterne Magna who converted the Abbey House and adjacent buildings to a private dwelling for his personal use. The barn was described in the sale as 'The Fine Old Stone Tithe Barn' (it may have been used as a tithe barn by the abbey) and was being used as a store.

In 1987 the barn was sold for conversion to an equine and mixed animal veterinary practice. The subsequent extensive rebuilding work exposed, under the battered corrugated-iron roof, the original thatch and beautiful oak trusses. These were preserved in the rebuilding, but supplemented by a modern weight-bearing structure to support the new plain clay tile roof. In 1989 the work was completed and North Barn was re-named Beauvoir Court Veterinary Surgery, named after the adjacent field on which the abbey once stood. It closed as a veterinary surgery in 1998, but has remained as Beauvoir Court ever since. It is now a private residence.

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## CERNE ABBAS VILLAGE HALL DUCK STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The present imposing modern village hall situated in Kettle Bridge Lane off the northern end of Duck Street was completed only on 2006. There was an earlier village hall in Wills Lane, demolished in 2004 to build houses as part of the Barton Lodge development. This earlier hall was built in 1938 on land donated by a Major Colville for the princely sum of £35. This hall, built of timber and very much in the one main room design of many village and community halls of that time, served the village well until time inevitably took its toll. The search for its replacement started in the 1990s.

After intensive consultation with the community a patch of relative wasteland called Mill Mead to the north of the village was bought as the site for the new hall. Mill Mead had been in the flood plain of the River Cerne until the flood relief scheme was completed in 1986 and had been a water meadow in living memory, where cattle were kept before going to slaughter at the butchers in Duck Street. The funds needed to build the new hall received a significant boost when the old village hall site was sold to the Barton Lodge development for £400,000; a magnificent return on the original investment. This contributed to over half the eventual building and infrastructure costs of the new hall, the remainder being made up from fund raising activities and generous contributions from individuals in the village and Dorset County, West Dorset District and Cerne Valley Parish Councils.

However, none of this would have been possible except with the determination of successive village hall committees and others from the community, despite the many obstacles put in their way, to ensure the project succeeded. Present and future generations in the village will remain ever grateful to them for their foresight and fortitude.

## BROOK COTTAGE 1 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** The house has travelled through 400 years. Originally it was a traditional Dorset farmhouse with 2 rooms up stairs and down, built around 1650. As farming remained the main activity in the village, so the house reflected a gentle increase in prosperity. It was enlarged in two phases during the first half of the 18th century, expanding back as far as the river. Probably at the same time, farm buildings were built along the river bank. Cerne itself was becoming more important as it moved into the 19th century with a population well over 1000 - much larger than today.

Sometime in the 1790s the house was acquired by Sarah Eveleigh. It is hypothesised that Sarah, who was a woman of some substance, added the final upgrade by building the Georgian front on the south side. We believe this to be so from a lead well head found in 2000 in the garden with the initials SE 1791. Checking the records we find she died in 1796 and lived in the house. This ties in with the poor quality of the roof timbers – during the Napoleonic wars all the good timbers were used in naval ship building.

After this the house reflected the declining fortunes of Cerne in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. Finally, the early 21st century saw a major internal refurbishment and the added garage to the footprint. A well was discovered in the current study during these renovations, which suggests the kitchen (or the scullery area) was located there for centuries. The flagstones were possibly laid over an earth floor in the last half of the 17th century.

The name, Brook Cottage, can be traced to recorded papers in 1949. Water is really closer than one thinks; the water table is about 18" below the floor.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** Living in the house is a bit like living in a time machine. It is a delight to move through the centuries as one goes from room to room. The low ceilings of the 17th century for the vertically challenged in the old part contrast with the high ceilings and large windows with a sense of space and light as one moves into Georgian times. And then all the gizmos of the 21st century to make life relaxed today.

**PREVIOUS OWNERS** The house was part of the Pitt-Rivers estate until they were forced to sell, to cover death duties and running costs, in 1919. It was sold for £285 to a motor engineer. From then on it changed hands quite often to owners ranging from a vicar to retired service officers and the headmaster of the Windsor choir school reflecting the village's changing population over the last 100 years.

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in due course.

## THIMBLE COTTAGE 3 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The cottage was built in the early 1700s and made of cob and brick. The building served two purposes on the ground floor. The residence on the right side had a finished interior with fine hardware features on the doors and windows, ceiling beam, enclosed window mouldings and open cupboards to display china. On the left was a saddler's shop with a commercial interior of lap board walls and exposed beams. This room was filled with leather saddles, harnesses and other tack items of the day. An inglenook fireplace was well used in the shop. Further evidence of this dual purpose property can be seen in the variety of windows once facing the street. A larger ground floor window on the left was surely used as a shop display and also to provide more light to the room.

The centre hallway with a blue lime stone floor divides the house. It is 4" lower than the surrounding rooms. This was a functional feature, as demonstrated during the frequent floods along Long Street. Water would enter the front door, flow down the hall and pass the open back door into the garden.

The years have not been kind to this cottage. Any building is always trying to adapt to its environment and Thimble Cottage needed some help. When the present owners purchased the property, West Dorset District Council declared it an 'unsound structure'. A funding grant was approved to restore the cottage. It had so much that was required that their three year old son raised an excellent question, 'why is our house broken?' It has been a labour of great determination that this cottage continues a journey of restoration.

**UNIQUE FEATURES** The cast iron seal of the Sun Fire Policy dates to 1773. Such seals were proof that the owner had paid his house insurance and a sign to the fire brigades to battle any blaze on the property. Through research of the seal, it is known that the cottage was then owned by a John Hodden who listed his occupation as 'cordwainer' (a shoemaker)

**ABOUT THE COTTAGE NAME** 'With patience, the cottage will name itself.' The owner was quite right. In 1992, they moved into a cottage with no name. During the renovation, they found stuck between the wide plank floors a common Victorian thimble. Thus the name: 'Thimble Cottage'.



## HOLLY LODGE 4 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** Holly Lodge was built in 1724 and has always been used as accommodation. It is built of stone and brick with exterior walls two feet thick.

The cottage next door, 2 Long Street has much in common, as they were built in the same year in a mirror floor plan design. Over the years improvements have added to the charm of the cottage.

Originally, a flag stone floor was laid over the dirt foundation. To improve warmth during the winter months, wooden floors were laid instead. A proper kitchen was expanded over looking the garden. An upstairs bedroom was added in the dormer area.

Current owners have happily lived at Holly Lodge since 1982. During the winter months the fireplace in the front lounge is the centre of family activity. In the warmer summer time the three-tiered garden reaches to Back Lane and offers a pleasant retreat.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** When purchasing this cottage, the garden was the main attraction. However, at that time the garden was best described as a 'wilderness' comments the current owner. The optimistic estate agent stated that to put the garden right it might take a few months. Taming the garden actually took years of hard work to accomplish. Today, the garden is one of the favourite stops during the annual 'Open Gardens' village event.

**ABOUT THE COTTAGE NAME** In the back garden, there is a wonderful holly tree that owners and guests have enjoyed for decades. Thus the name, Holly Lodge, was born.

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in due course.

## 5 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The house is older than it looks, was at one time thatched, and may be 16th century in origin. There are timbers in the wall that have been built over during later alterations. A doorway and window, now blocked in, faced on to The Old Saddler next door and a 1768 map shows that this side of the house looked out onto an open yard between it and The Old Saddler. There was a major up-grade during the Georgian period and panelling in the downstairs rooms dates from this period. Most of the rooms have their original ceiling timbers.

The 1919 auction of the village by the Pitt-Rivers Estate was attended by the current owner's grandfather, in which the house was described as having a 'Parlour, Living Room, Back House, Wood House and 3 Bedrooms'. It was bought by Henry Paulley who also bought The Old Saddler and 3 Duck Street; all for £250. The current owner's father initially rented the house from Mr Paulley and subsequently bought the house in 1958 for £300. The present owner has lived in the house all his life.

The owners can recall several occasions, prior to the 1986 building of the Flood Relief Scheme, when their part of the village flooded. The highest flood level in their house was to the second stair riser. One year there was a flood at Christmas and they can recall the Christmas Crackers floating in the water and eels writhing in the flood water outside the New Inn opposite. In the 1940s clinker from a bake house across the road was put down to raise the floor level above the River Cerne that runs in drains under the house to the a culvert in Long Street. The current wood block floor was laid by the present owner who amongst other jobs has worked as a carpenter.

**AN INTERESTING FEATURE** On one occasion when the walls were being stripped prior to decorating, two hidden cupboards were found in the wall space. Alas, no treasure was found; in fact, nothing at all except dust!

## RALEIGH'S 6 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** In the late 1500s, Cerne Abbas supported two bakeries, one located in the Market House on Abbey Street and the other at 6 Long Street. Built for an English family, this property was their home and ground floor place of business. To keep the store warm, the baked goods were passed through the front window to customer waiting outside.

The cottage has eventually converted to accommodation and in the 1970s the street front got a new Tudor style rendering.

In 1981, the current owners learned of this property for sale in the London Times. The ad stated, 'Lovely old house, good shape accepting offers straight away.' After visiting Cerne Abbas, there was a quick offer. The cottage was located in a most peaceful setting that really appealed to the new owners. This couple were married during WWII and honeymooned in London during the Blitz. One can understand the attraction of the peacefulness of Cerne Abbas as a motivator to move to this village.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The current owners consider the massive flint stone inglenook fireplace as the centrepiece of the home. Many happy evenings are spent there with family and friends around the fireplace. Having a fire 'brings life to the home' said the owners. They can also imagine the original baker working long hours producing breads and cakes to sell.

**MOST INTERESTING VISITOR** The cottage name of Raleigh's Rest highlights a most interesting part of this property's history. In the early 1600s, Sir Walter Raleigh was summoned to Saint Mary's parish church on a minor ecclesiastical offence. It has been told that before the meeting, the family invited Sir Raleigh to rest in their home from his journey to Cerne Abbas. Thus the name remains to celebrate their famous visitor.

'Cerne Abbas is the friendliest of villages. For over a decade, they have lived here keeping up the tradition of making visitors feel welcome, just as Sir Walter Raleigh was all those years ago'.

## SERGEANTS QUARTERS 8 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** Sergeants Quarters, formerly known as Flint House, were originally part of the village police station and attached courtroom. Built under the auspices of the Constabulary Act of 1858, the building was officially known as Cerne Abbas Police Station No.1, Headquarters of the Cerne Division of the Dorset Police.

The front elevation of the property is constructed in chequerboard flint and Portland limestone, with Ham stone mullioned windows. This shows an unexpected officially sanctioned subtlety, attempting to blend in with adjacent properties, notably the C16th New Inn. The unseen rear elevations are constructed in red brick.

Internally, the floorboards, staircase, doors and other wooden elements are pitch pine, a cheap and plentiful type of timber, exported from Canada and the USA in large quantities in the C19th. The yard at the rear of the house has two brick built sheds, which may predate the rest of the property, appearing on a survey of the plot of land purchased from the Pitt-Rivers estate for the purpose of building the police station. Above the yard is a walled garden with a path connecting the station with the police stables and coach house on Back Lane.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** One interesting feature is the presence of a bell-pull in the downstairs sitting room, which surviving wiring suggests was connected to an indicator board above the larder door. Evidently a Victorian police sergeant was expected to employ servants or, at the very least, a maid.

**UNIQUE STORY** Village tradition has it that local lads would climb up on packing cases, at the side of the bakery, next door to catch a glimpse of the birching which was carried out in the station yard. The prisoner's walk still remains behind the police station and connects to the yard a few feet away. Easy access to carryout the entertaining punishment.



## CERNE ABBAS STORES 9 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** The building has taken on many configurations and varied purposes over the past centuries: stable, barn, chemist who provided a variety of health healing potions, and its present garden was once the site of a large store which also housed the Salvation Army. With 13 pubs in the village, the Army must have been quite busy helping with the alcoholism issues of the day.

The store front dates from the mid 1700s and may have been divided into two stores before being enlarged to its current size after extensive rebuilding following a major fire in the late 1830s at Pitt House next door.

Currently, there is a general store with six-bedroom family accommodation above. There is a contrast in the pace of life just a few steps away. The store is quite busy; however, the home above is a place of peace, just like No 10 Downing Street according to the owner. For years there has been a bell system that would ring upstairs as customers entered the store so to keep in touch with activities downstairs.

The shop is open seven days a week, now has the village post office and is certainly the hub of village life.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** 'I only meant to come here for a short time – and I ended up staying for 25 years.' The main attraction for the current owner was the opportunity to improve both the business and provide a comfortable home for his family. It was the quality of village life that attracted him to Cerne Abbas. He thought it would be 'good fun' to take on such a life journey which started in 1984.

**UNIQUE STORY** This amazing story was published by Rhodri Marsden in the Independent....

'You quickly find that community is what you value in life – to live in a place where people look out for each other, and where your children are safe.' Farrow has felt the benefit of that support more than most; when his wife died shortly after they moved to Cerne Abbas in 1984, the village paid for him to take a much-needed holiday, and when Cerne Stores was nearly facing bankruptcy in 1992, £12,000 was raised by local residents in two days to help him out. 'I paid everyone back in two years,' he recalls, 'and these days – although the hours are long – things are much better.'



## OLD GAOL COTTAGE 10 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** In 1859, this Grade II, Victorian building, made of knapped flint and chalk-block with 14" thick walls was built for use as the village Police Station. To the left at 10 Long Street was the Courthouse and at 8, the Sergeant's quarters. The Court, previously held at the New Inn, remained active with Petty Sessions being held once a week until the Police Station closed in 1954. It was then sold to a Mr. E. Curtis for £1,200 to be converted to accommodation.

The ground floor was the constables' office where the current lounge is today. Over the fireplace, the famous cattails and birch limbs were displayed that were used to punish the prisoners. The three cells were located where the kitchen and dining room are now. The individual cells had a wooden stool, bed and pillow and a chamber pot. The cell door was a solid wooden door with a small sliding window to allow the meals to pass through. Each cell had a high window with bars that are still visible today. The only fresh air was from a small air passage located beneath the cell window. The cells were quite dark. Oil lighting was used until 1936 when electricity was first brought to the village. The courtyard behind the station was the prisoner's walk and birching area. The first floor was used for constables' living quarters. The front room was the lounge with two bedrooms in the back of the building.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The current owners like the two lovely mullioned windows facing Long Street framing everyday village life. 'We feel a sense of deep contentment as we lookout to see villagers on their way to the shop, mums walking children to school and horses coming down the street.'

**MOST INTERESTING VISITOR** John England tells the story about, as a child, he played in the Police House often when visiting his grandfather who was the Sergeant. One day during WWII, a German pilot crashed his plane over Sydling hill. John's father, a member of the Home Guard, rushed with John to the site and found the pilot alive. Not knowing what to do with a prisoner of war, they brought the pilot, at gun point, to the cells for safe keeping until transferring him to Dorchester the next day. The most interesting part of the story is that during all the excitement, they forgot to put a bullet into the rifle.

A Photograph  
will appear here  
in due course.

**PITT HOUSE  
11 LONG STREET  
CERNE ABBAS**

**HISTORY** On 20th November 1828, unforgettable history was made when a fire broke out at 4.00am. This 18th century home, then owned by Mr Palmer, a surgeon, was quickly ablaze after the out-buildings behind Pitt House and the village store that faced Mill Lane started this disaster. The Dorset County Chronicle reported: 'the flames almost immediately obtained a force which defied the efforts made to quell them and raged with great rapidity in two different directions....flames towered to an almost incredible height, and exhibited a mass of burning buildings covering and enclosing upwards of a acre of land.' The report also mentions how the villagers worked to combat the flames as 'females were seen running through the streets, almost in a state of nudity, shrieking and supplicating aid.' Two engines belonging to the parish of Cerne were on the spot with additional help coming from Sydling. By the time it was finished, the fire had gutted all the houses from the present village stores along as far as the Old Manse. As reported: 'nothing being left but the bare walls containing a mass of ruins and ashes.' This home came back to life in 1835 when James Crane spent £800 rebuilding the house.

The name, Pitt House, came from the Pitt-Rivers family, who then owned the village.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** What attracted the previous owners, Patrick Mann and his sister Margaret, to Pitt House was the beautiful South facing front onto Long Street and the large garden behind. For years, they enquired about purchasing the house. Their patience finally paid off in 1979, when they moved to Cerne from Dorchester to enjoy the peaceful village life. They continued to live in the house for the next 25 years.

## BILLEY'S HOUSE 16 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** This flint and stone home is believed to date from the 17th century. In 1822, the front was 'georgianised' to provide this new look over Long Street. A stone in the rear garden wall records the date of the renovation.

Mr Billey, a master baker, purchased the home in 1919 when it was sold by the Pitt-Rivers estate. It is believed that this property had always been used as a private home. A more recent owner was the then Bishop of London, Gerald Ellison, who bought the house in the 1970s, first as a rural retreat and later for his retirement. The Bishop died here in 1992.

The home was purchased in 1993 by the current owners who were born in Dorchester. After a working lifetime in other parts of the country, they decided to retire to the area.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The current owners decided on Cerne Abbas, partly because they knew it from their youth and partly because they had close relatives farming in the village. They were attracted to Billey's House by the clean lines of the Georgian facade.

**STORY OF INTEREST** A family who lived in the village had a nine-year-old daughter. Her father offered to build a doll house for her and wanted to know the type of house she liked. She quickly requested the doll house to look just like Billey's house. The fine architecture of the Georgian period had a new admirer.

## THE OLD MANSE 19 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** A manse is defined as a house provided for the minister in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. This brick and flint house, built in the Queen Anne style, provided a convenient home for the minister of the Congregational church on Abbey Street. A path through the garden from what is now called the Old Manse, provided a direct route to the chapel.

Parts of the house date back to the early 1700s, about the time when the first chapel was believed to have been erected (the present chapel, now a private house, was built in 1878).

Sunday school for 20 – 30 children was held in the Old Manse as well as social gatherings. At some time the Manse Cottage was built onto the east side of the Old Manse, perhaps for the use of servants to the minister. The house was owned by the Dorset Congregational Association from 1929 until 1958 when it became a private residence again. Until 1959, the home was a single room in depth with large windows providing a lot of light to the interior.

Sir Arthur and Lady Jane Gossling enlarged the home, adding a number of rooms in the back over-looking the garden. When the back-facing windows were installed, they were much higher than was the custom for those days. Sir Arthur was quite tall so it must have seemed fine to him.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** The house has a large front garden, which is most unusual in Cerne. It is assumed that the cottages that once lined Long Street were pulled down when the house was built. Sir Arthur was an enthusiastic gardener and especially liked raising roses. The present owners say that gardening really takes a long time with so many friends and tourist wanting to talk over the front fence. When they first moved into the Old Manse in 1983, they were welcomed to the village with an invitation to supper that very evening. For them, this is what makes living in Cerne Abbas so special. They moved away in 1987, only to return in 2001.

**UNIQUE STORY** Crinkly Fox, known for her striking hairstyle, worked in the home for Sir Arthur. Some time after his death, she revealed that she saw him again wandering through the house. He must have missed his old home and the garden where he grew his favourite roses.



## MIDDLE HOUSE 22 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** When the black plague came to Dorset in 1348, fearful residents believed the disease came from the south coast through Weymouth.

To limit exposure, homes were built with solid south facing walls. Almost 300 years later, that practice continued and Middle House was thus constructed without windows on the south wall. Parts of the property likely dates from before 1617, when it was then two cob cottages. In the 1700s, it was combined to create the elegant Georgian front to the house we see today.

Mr Frank Thorne, a village carrier, once owned the cottage. Running the local transportation service, he would buy goods in Dorchester for the villagers. The purchases were distributed through the side door of the cottage. This beneficial delivery service was essential for those who did not have access to transportation.

The current owners had enjoyed a holiday home in The Court House at 12 Long Street when they decided to live permanently in Cerne Abbas. In 1974, they moved their family to larger accommodation in Middle House.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** What initially attracted the current owners to Middle House was the welcoming front door. However, on their first visit to consider the purchase, they were introduced to a stark reality. The condition of the property did not live up to the dream. The lounge had a rotten wooden wall, a leaky roof, poor wiring, questionable foundations and water running in the middle of the floor with a fine growth of mushrooms by the fireplace. Even with the hard work that lay ahead, they visualised that this could be a special home with their favourite black piano by the front window. In the end, 'It was the ideal home for them' they say.

**THE COTTAGE NAME** The Middle House name has to do with its location on Long Street. The house was exactly in the centre of Long Street with numbers starting at 2 and ended 44. Therefore, 22 is in the centre or middle of the Long Street properties.



A Photograph  
will appear here  
in due course.

## THE MARKET HOUSE LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS

**HISTORY** The Market House is built on the site of the medieval guildhall in the Market Place. Market rights had been granted by King John in 1214. A survey in 1617 by John Norden records that the guildhall was an 'ancient and spacious townhouse wherein the Courts of the Manor were usually kept, but had fallen into such a ruinous state as none dare to sit in it'. Another survey of 1798 records that the Market Place was 'Freehold' and owned by a Philip White, a Yeoman and candle maker, who had rebuilt the property sometime in the 18th century. It was rented in 1764 to a William Willmott and used for spinning silk. By 1820 the Market House was being rented to a Mr Thomas Johns, a clockmaker. In 1838 William Henry Clark purchased the Market House. He had taken over the woollen and drapery business from his father who continued elsewhere in Cerne as a clockmaker. William Clark carried out major renovations to the house and shop, to give the early 19th century features one sees today. It stayed in Clark hands as linen drapers until 1901.

In 1921 the Market House was bought by Mr Everett, a jeweller, and he remained there until his death in 1938. There followed a succession of owners, a prominent one being Walter Lake from 1951 to 1962. Walter Lake was an enthusiastic amateur photographer and left a legacy of photographs of the village and the countryside around. By now the Market House had become tearooms and so it has remained, but is currently closed under the present owner.

**AN ARTISTIC CONNECTION** A son of William Henry Clark was Joseph Benwell Clark. He was born in 1857 in Cerne Abbas and went on to be a noted artist, specialising in animal paintings and rural subjects. He helped found the School for Animal Painting and taught at the Royal Academy School of Art. Many of his paintings record local scenes and people and some may be seen in the Dorset County Museum. He retired to 'Barnwells' in Abbey Street in 1921 and died there in 1938. The distinctive front door of 'Barnwells' was made to his own design.

## 36 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** The best description of this mid 18th century, property is a 'simple gentleman's cottage'. A small space, where every room is used and where the simplicity provides a lasting impression for visitors and guests. This house does not have many architecture features of later periods. However, it is the simplicity that gives this home a special charm and is deserving of the attachment of its owners, over the years.

During a 124 year period, only two families are known to have lived here. From 1880 to 1929 the Pidden family called this home followed by the Fox family from 1930 to 2004. The devotion to this special cottage has continued with the present owners. When they first saw the cottage, it was in a derelict state. They were successful in the purchase, before it went to auction, with the belief that it was their mission to bring it back to life. Over a two year period, this cottage was reduced to nothing but bare walls and original timbers before using a combination of new and recycled materials, it was rejuvenated. It took great dedication for the owners to live through this restoration journey, supported by villagers offering encouragement and support as they monitored each step of this building's restoration.

**UNIQUE FEATURES** During the 1850s, the cottage was expanded to include some of the out buildings which now formed a scullery. This extension was built by a carpenter who lived and worked in the cottage. The ground floor had a living area on the left with a flat stone floor and a work area on the right with quarry tiles laid on bare earth. It is these different floor designs and materials that suggest how these rooms were possibly used. The ground floor rooms share a rather over sized timber beam that is believed to have been salvaged from the abbey. The inglenook fireplace that today dominates the lounge was a great discovery. During the renovations of 2004 - 2006, a rather small fireplace was opened to reveal a larger one behind. A series of 5 fireplaces were exposed and each one increased in size. It is believed that over the centuries, the fireplace was made smaller to retain the cottage warmth.

**COTTAGE NAME** It is quite fitting that this simple Dorset cottage has never been given a name. So, without a name, how can this property be identified? This 19th Century Shaker song certainly describe this home as no name really could.

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free, 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be, And when we find ourselves in the place just right, 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

## THE LODGE 50 LONG STREET CERNE ABBAS



**HISTORY** The Lodge is believed to be so named because it was originally a hunting lodge for the Pitt-Rivers estate. The present house dates from 1842 when it was rebuilt following a fire. In 1858 it became an academy, comprising both boarding and dayboys, run by a local schoolmaster, William Beach. However, in 1865 he was declared bankrupt and the premises were reportedly by then in a wretched state.

By the time of the 1881 Census, the house had become the local surgery and home for the village general practitioner. The longest serving GP was Dr Dalton who took over the practice in 1893. He continued as GP for the next 48 years, but continued to live in the house until his death in 1949. Dr. Dalton is still remembered with affection by many of the older villagers who, having brought them into the world, saw to their medical needs thereafter. He was also active in the local community, forming the cricket club, rifle club and billiards team.

On his death, Dr. Dalton's widow sold the house and it became a nursing home called White Knights. In 1963 The Lodge was bought by John Gumbrell, a psychiatrist. He later built a new house next door (now Rum Cottage) for the occupation of himself and his wife. The Lodge was bought by Michael and Arabella Williamson in 1998.

**FAVOURITE FEATURES** Michael and Arabella are particularly attracted by the large, well-proportioned rooms and the fine views to the front and rear. Coming from London, they are also attracted by the village, the lovely walks, the church and the pubs. To enhance the rear view they have replaced a substantial hedge with parkland style iron railings. In 2008 the vast copper beech tree in front of the house, a local landmark, had to be felled. It was said to be some 400 years old, but the trunk had hollowed out and the tree had become a danger.