

3 ESSEX VILLAGES.

The Lavers.

HIGH LAVER

High Laver is a parish about 4 miles north-west of Chipping Ongar and 5 miles south-east of Harlow. It has an area of 1,895 acres. From the 18th century or earlier much of the population has been concentrated in the village of Matching Green and in the two hamlets of Thrushesbush, alias Threshers Bush, and Tilegate Green, all of which are situated on the borders of the parish. There were 74 inhabited houses in 1801, 77 in 1811, and 80 in 1821. In 1801 the population was 346. By 1851 it had grown to 534. It was a little below this level until the last decade of the century when there was a sharp decline to 386. In the first half of the 20th century it rose gradually to 463 in 1951.

The land is nearly 300 ft. above sea-level in the south-west, about 250 ft. in the north and 230 ft. in the east. The Cripsey Brook runs eastward across the northern part of the parish and then southward near the eastern boundary of the parish towards Moreton. The road from Ongar to Harlow enters the parish at High Laver Bridge. The former rectory is on the north side of the road about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the bridge. The road then turns northward for about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to its junction with the roads leading eastward to Little Laver and northward to Matching Green. Along the road to Little Laver is the church and to the north of the church on the east side of the road to Matching Green is High Laver Hall.

Behind church and hall is a windpump. About $\frac{1}{2}$ mile north of High Laver Hall on the west side of the road to Matching Green is High Laver Grange. This has a fine barn, in one bay of which are two grotesque carved brackets of the 16th or early 17th century. About 1 mile north of High Laver Grange is Newhouse Farm, formerly Chalkpits, a timber-framed house which has been much restored but of which part may date from the 17th century. On the east side of the road north of Newhouse Farm there are thirteen council houses in two groups known as Culvers Cottages and Chalkpit Cottages. Beyond these is the village of Matching Green, the south side of which is just inside the parish boundary. Here there are several 19th-century brick houses, including the Chequers Inn.

From the east side of Matching Green a road runs south-east to Waterman's End, Little Laver, and the Rodings. On the west side of this road, immediately to the south of the parish boundary, is the chapel of ease and, next to it, High Laver school.

Immediately to the south of the school the road is joined by another road leading south to Ongar. Near this junction on the north side of the road to Little Laver there are four pairs of council houses known as Hull Green Cottages.

From High Laver church the Harlow road runs west past Church Farm, formerly Whites, and Travellers Joy, formerly Herberts. Both these houses are timber-framed and may date from the 16th century; they have been much restored. A little beyond Travellers Joy the Harlow road is joined by Faggoters Lane which runs northward to Loyters Green. About ½ mile along Faggoters Lane is Faggoters Farm, a timberframed and roughcast house probably built in the 18th century. By the east side of Faggoters Farm is a footpath leading to the site of Otes.

On the Harlow road to the west of Faggoters Lane is Mashams, a timberframed house which may date from the 16th century. Beyond Mashams the road runs past Great Wilmores and Spinneys, formerly Little Wilmores, to Tilegate Green. At Spinneys, which stands on the north side of the road about ½ mile beyond Mashams, there are indications of a former moat. Tilegate Farm, on the north side of the road at Tilegate Green, may be of the 16th century but has a later farm-house built in front of it, the whole being much modernized; the restored barn has 16th-century timbers. Opposite Tilegate Farm a road leads southward to Magdalen Laver. There are two pairs of council houses on the west side of this road, which forms part of the southern boundary of the parish. Also on the west side of the road and just within the boundary are Magdalen Laver school, built in 1862, and, next to it, a row of timber-framed cottages called Melanese Cottages, of which part may date from the 17th century or earlier.

West of Tilegate Farm the Harlow road turns northwest to Thrushesbush, alias Threshers Bush, on the western boundary of the parish. At Herds Farm, on the north side of the road ¾ mile north-west of Tilegate Green, there are indications of a former moat. The farm-house is probably of the 17th century and has an original brick chimney. West of Herds Farm is the John Barleycorn Inn, formerly the 'King's Arms', a timber-framed house of which part dates from the 17th century or earlier. The former Methodist chapel is on the north side of the Harlow road at Thrushesbush, just outside the parish boundary.

High Laver Bridge was accepted as a county charge by 1800. In 1858 it was described in detail by the county surveyor.

The inhabitants of High Laver were several times indicted for the bad condition of their roads. In 1644 it was said that High Laver and Little Laver were to share the responsibility for the highway from Matching Green to Sheepcroft Bridge. In 1776 the parishes of High Laver and Magdalen Laver agreed that 'the roads which these two parishes are obliged in conjunction to mend shall be equally divided and that the part

which lies nearest to each parish shall be appropriated to it, by a post set up at the expense of both parishes, and marked on one side "M.L. mends thus far" and on the opposite side "H.L. mends thus far" .

High Laver was one of the villages served from Moreton when a postal receiving house was set up there in 1846. A sub-post-office was opened at High Laver in November 1936, following a petition from the inhabitants.

Water was supplied by the Herts. and Essex Waterworks Co. in 1912. There is no sewerage system. Electricity was laid on in part of the village in 1950. A sports ground is used by the football club.

High Laver has always been a rural parish devoted almost exclusively to agriculture. The owners of the capital manor never lived in the parish after the first decade of the 16th century. The owners of Otes lived in the parish during most of the period 1614- 1767. They were not resident from 1767 until shortly before 1841. For a few years after 1841 they did live in the parish but ceased to do so before 1863 and were never resident again.

In 1848 the parish consisted of 1,894 acres. William St. Quintin owned 475 acres but farmed none of it himself. George Starkins Wallis owned, but did not occupy, High Laver Farm (340 acres). John and Thomas Inkersole owned 223 acres of which Thomas farmed 74 acres.

There were two other substantial farms in the parish: Holts Farm (118 acres) and Tilegate Farm (100 acres). The respective owners, Joseph Davies and J. M. Gilbertson, did not occupy them. There were five other farms of over 40 acres.

High Laver has always been a parish of mixed farming with a heavy predominance of arable. In 1086 there were 10½ ploughs in the manor of High Laver; there was woodland for 200 swine and 37½ acres of meadow. In 1847 there were estimated to be 1,428 acres of arable, 368 acres of pasture, and 12 acres of woodland.

In the 17th and 18th centuries Otes manor house, the residence of the Mashams, was a large and wellknown dwelling which must have employed a considerable amount of domestic labour. In 1691 John Locke the philosopher (1632-1704) went to live there as a paying guest of Sir Francis Masham and his wife Damaris, who had been Locke's friend for some years. He paid £1 a week for himself and his manservant and 1s. a week for his horse. He was given two of the best rooms in the house and he remained until his death. While he lived there Otes was 'one of the really important addresses in the world of European letters'. Locke assembled there a library of nearly 4,000 volumes. He also had 'his desk and his specially constructed chair, his meteorological instruments set up "in the Drawing Room", his telescope, his botanical specimens, and a great porous stone through which all the water he drank-and he drank nothing else-had to be carefully filtered'.

From 1723 Otes was occupied by Samuel, 1st Baron Masham, and his wife Abigail who from 1707 until 1714 had been Queen Anne's friend and one of the most powerful persons in the country. Abigail died in 1734.

LITTLE LAVER

Little Laver is a small parish about 5 miles to the north of Chipping Ongar, with an area of 964 acres. In 1428 it contained fewer than 10 households. There were 15 inhabited houses in 1801, 20 in 1811, and 16 in 1821. In 1801 the population was 90. By 1841 it had grown to 128. It declined in the next 30 years to 104, then rose to 124 in 1891. At the end of the century it fell just below 100 and has since remained about this level. In 1951 it was 96.

The land is about 280 ft. above sea-level in the east and 230 ft. in the west. Three streams run across the northern half of the parish. There is a small area of woodland on the north-east boundary. The road from High Laver to Abbess Roding crosses the western boundary of the parish and runs eastward. On the south side of the road, about ½ mile from the boundary, is Church Farm, where there is part of a large moat. Farther east are Little Laver Mill and the Mill House.

Beyond the mill the road is joined by a road which runs southward to Moreton. On the east side of the road junction is the Red House, a timber-framed farmhouse of the 18th century or earlier. To the south of the Red House, on the west side of the Moreton road, is the former rectory. East of the Red House on the road to Abbess Roding is the village hall. To the south of the road on the eastern boundary of the parish is Envilles.

Nearly opposite the village hall a road runs northwest to Matching Green. On the west side of this road is Gosling Hall, a two-story timber-framed building probably of the 15th century. It originally consisted of an open hall of two bays with a two-story cross-wing at its north end. The south end of the hall block may be a later addition. In the 16th or early 17th century a chimney was built in the south bay of the hall, a ceiling was inserted and the roof was renewed and possibly raised. The lower part of the arched braces to the tiebeam of the original hall roof-truss can still be seen in the ground floor room of this block. A cambered tiebeam, originally having arched braces, is also partly visible above the first floor room of the cross-wing. The gabled east end of this wing oversails and has curved supporting brackets. An external chimney on the north side, partly rebuilt recently, has diagonal shafts and is probably of the 16th or early 17th century. Beyond Gosling Hall to the north are the church and the old manor house, now called the Grange.

Farther north there is a windpump on the west side of the road. Opposite this is a long drive north-east to Little Laver Hall. To the north of the drive on the road to Matching Green are Stone Cottages, formerly the parish poorhouse.

About ¼ mile farther north is Hull Green farm-house, which is probably of 18th-century date. From Hull Green the road turns westward and forms the parish boundary for a short distance before joining the road from Matching Green to Ongar. South of the junction the Ongar road, called at this point Water Lane, forms the western boundary of the parish for about a mile. On the east side of this road is Waterman's End House, a timber-framed building of the 18th century or earlier. North of the house is a pair of 18th-century cottages. South of Waterman's End House, on the same side of the road, is a brick house which until 1886-90 was the Leather Bottle Inn.

Postal facilities were extended to Little Laver when a receiving office was set up at Moreton in 1846. Water was supplied by the Herts. and Essex Waterworks Co. in 1912. Electricity was supplied to one end of the parish in 1950. There is a village hall, erected in 1891.

Little Laver has always been a rural parish devoted mainly to agriculture. The Collins family, owners of the manors of Little Laver Hall and Envilles for a century or more after 1559, lived in the parish at least during the period 1599-1671. It is not clear whether the owners were resident in the period immediately after the Collineses disposed of the estates. The owners of Little Laver Hall certainly did not live in the parish from 1714 until after the Meyers acquired the estate in 1804-5.

Christian P. Meyer, who succeeded to the estate in 1828-9, was resident by 1848 and since his time the owners of this estate have always lived in the parish. Whether the owners of Envilles did so in the first three quarters of the 18th century is not clear; certainly they were not resident between 1780 and 1897.

In 1848 the parish consisted of 968 acres. C. P. Meyer owned 270 acres of which he occupied only 15 acres. John Maryon Wilson owned 249 acres but farmed none of it himself. The only other substantial owner in the parish was Thomas Poynder who owned, but did not occupy, Hull Green Farm (119 acres). There were two other farms of over 40 acres. Then, as now, there was mixed farming in the parish, with a marked predominance of arable. In 1847 it was estimated that there were 716 acres of arable, 150 acres of pasture, and 23 acres of woodland.

There has been a windmill on the site of the present mill since the first half of the 17th century. From the late 18th century until the First World War the mill descended from father to son, four consecutive millers being named Stephen Roast. The first of these, who died in 1797, is said to have left money for his son to build the present mill. This was originally a weatherboarded post mill of the usual local pattern. The tall brick base, about 20 ft. high, is an improvement said to date from about 1860. The wooden superstructure was raised on jacks and props and a second story was added to the round house giving extra height and storage space. It thus became a combination of smock and post mill and appears to be the only example known of this type. The fantail was also added about 1860. A miller named Hart succeeded the last of the Roasts but the mill ceased working soon after 1930. It is now the property of J. Brace & Sons of High Ongar

and is used for storage purposes by their tenant. The Mill House, which stands west of the mill, is a timberframed building probably dating from the 17th century.

MAGDALEN LAVER

Magdalen Laver is a small parish about 5 miles to the north-west of Chipping Ongar and 4 miles to the south-east of Harlow. A very small detached part (5.6 acres) lies on the boundary between Moreton and High Laver, to the east of the main part of the parish. The area of the ancient parish was 1,229 acres. It was increased by the incorporation of two detached portions of North Weald Bassett. One portion of North Weald (10 acres), lying to the north-west of Weald Lodge, was transferred to Magdalen Laver in 1883; the larger portion, lying to the north of the middle of Cripsey Brook, near Weald Bridge and including Weald Bridge Farm, Weald Lodge, and Bowlers Green, was transferred to Magdalen Laver in 1946. Magdalen Laver now has an area of 1,443 acres. The parish has an unusual number of ancient timber-framed farm-houses, the oldest of which probably dates from the 14th century. Several of these, as well as the manor house and the old rectory, stand on or near moated sites. There were 28 inhabited houses in 1801, 33 in 1811, and 38 in 1821. In 1801 the population was 228; it reached 236 in 1821 and again in 1851. Then it declined irregularly to 134 in 1931. By 1951 it had risen to 242, this being partly due to the incorporation of part of North Weald Bassett in 1946.

The land rises in the west of the parish to just over 300 ft. above sea-level. It slopes eastward and southward to less than 200 ft. along the streams that separate the parish from Moreton on the east and Bobbingworth on the south. Another stream rises in the north-west and flows south-eastward across the middle of the parish, joining one of the other streams on the southern boundary. A small area of woodland lies on the northern boundary.

The road from Epping crosses the southern boundary at Weald Bridge and runs northward for about ½ mile until it is joined by a road from Bobbingworth. To the north of this junction the road meets another road which runs from east to west across the parish. About ½ mile to the west, on the south side of this last road, is the 'Green Man', which was probably built early in the 18th century. Almost opposite the 'Green Man' is a single pair of council houses built during the Second World War. Immediately to the west, on the south side of the road, is the new rectory.

On the north side of the road, by a drive leading north-eastward to Spencers, is Humphreys which probably derives its name from the family of John Humphrey, living in the 13th century. This has a pedimented door-hood and appears to be an early-18th-century timber-framed house, although the back wing may be older. Immediately west of Humphreys is Mollmans, where another road leads north-eastward to Tilegate Green in High Laver. At Mollmans a fragment of a moat remains. The south end of the house and the back wing were probably built in the late 16th or early 17th century. On the north side of the road leading westward from Mollmans is Rolls, a timber-framed farm-house standing on a moated site. The moat, more than half of which remains, is curved in shape

and of considerable size. The main axis of the house runs north and south and there is a cross-wing at the north end. This north wing has two stories and an attic and dates from the late 16th or early 17th century. It has a chimney with octagonal clustered shafts, now covered with cement. The upper flight of the staircase is original and has turned balusters and moulded newel caps. The main block also has two stories and an attic, but there are indications that it is an adaptation of an earlier structure. The chimney, now cement-covered, has diagonal shafts. The doors and windows of the house mostly date from the 18th and early 19th centuries. From Rolls the road turns northward and then sharply westward past Wynters Armourie to the western boundary of the parish.

Wynters Armourie, formerly Winters, which probably derives its name from the family of Alice Winter, living in about 1248, stands on a moated site. The moat encloses a long narrow rectangle from north to south. There is part of a transverse arm in the centre but the south end has been obliterated by the farmyard. The house is timber-framed and consists of a central block with cross-wings to the east and west. On the north side there is a single-story addition and a small staircase wing. The central block originally consisted of a partially aisled hall of two bays, probably dating from the 14th century. Ceilings, fireplaces, and partitions have been inserted later and the west bay has been raised in height and rebuilt. Most of the main roof truss dividing the bays is still in position and at the east end of the hall are the remains of a 'spere truss', suggesting that the hall is of the transitional type where the aisles are retained in the screens bay only.

The central truss has a steeply cambered collar below which are deep curved braces, moulded at their lower edge. The collar purlin and some of the original rafters are in position and there are indications of a former kingpost. All the timbers are blackened with smoke from an open hearth. Rising obliquely from near the base of one of the principal rafters and reaching to the underside of the plate is a wind-brace or strut. The others are missing. In the east bay the north doorway of the screens passage is in position and there is one jamb of an opposite doorway on the south side. A post dividing the 'nave' from the north aisle still exists and the corresponding post of the south aisle has only recently been removed. On this side a large curved brace, springing from the east wall and rising to the underside of the plate, forms part of the 'nave arcade'. Below the main truss a later tie-beam spans the whole width of the hall. The detail here is similar to that of the open trusses on the upper floors of the two cross-wings and it is suggested that all these features represent additions, possibly dating from the late 15th or early 16th century. The rebuilding of the west bay probably took place later in the 16th century when the roof was raised to give higher rooms and an attic. The gable ends have unglazed windows with diagonal mullions and the roof has small curved wind-braces. The central chimney was probably inserted at this time and the single-story addition at the back of the house, which has an open queen-post truss and a large end chimney, may be a kitchen of the same period. The present owner restored the house, which was in poor condition, in about 1935.

On the north-west side of the road from Mollmans to Tilegate Green is the village hall. On the other side of the road is the former rectory, on a moated site. North of this, on the west side of the road, there are three pairs of white plastered council houses. Almost

opposite these houses one drive leads south-eastward to Spencers and another, newly made, leads northeastward to Magdalen Laver Hall. Spencers, which probably derives its name from the family of John le Spenser, living in 1339, is a large timber-framed farmhouse with considerable remains of a moat. It has an irregular three-gabled front and additions on the other three sides. The stop-moulded ceiling beams on the ground floor indicate an early-17th-century date but it is possible that parts of the structure are older. The new drive to Magdalen Laver Hall is extended in a north-easterly direction to form an approach to the church. Previously the approaches to the church had been by the footpaths which run from the road to Spencers on the south and through the farm-yard of Magdalen Laver Hall on the north. Immediately north-west of the churchyard are traces of a large moated site, where the first manor house probably stood. To the south-east of the church, in a field known as Redmill Shot, a stone coffin containing a skeleton was discovered in about 1757 and human bones were found in other parts of the same field at different times.

There was a tradition in the 18th century that the church originally stood in this field but no trace of a church or of any other building has ever been found. It may be, however, that the field was once a burial ground belonging to the parish.

Immediately north of Magdalen Laver Hall the road to Tilegate Green becomes part of the northern boundary of the parish. On the north side of the road, within the parish of High Laver, is Magdalen Laver school. At Tilegate Green the road is joined by Pole Lane, now only a footpath, which leads eastward to the Ongar-Harlow road. On the south side of Pole Lane, north-east of the church, is a moated mound, about 80 ft. in diameter. At the junction of Pole Lane and the Ongar-Harlow road is Start Farm, a small timberframed farmhouse, part of which may date from the 16th century.

To the south of Start Farm the Ongar-Harlow road is joined by the road which runs right across the parish to Mollmans and Wynters Armourie on the west. On the south side of this road, close to the eastern boundary of the parish, is Bushes, an L-shaped timber-framed farm-house with wings extending to the north and east. The north wing, now of four bays but formerly longer, was built as a two-story structure and probably dates from the late 15th century. On the west side the upper floor overhangs on curved brackets. In 1933 the plaster was stripped away revealing a fine timbered front with close studding and curved braces. The roof is original except at its south end and there are two king-posts with two-way struts in position. The chimney is a later insertion. The east wing, lying at right angles to the two-story wing, may represent the medieval hall, much altered. A large chimney and ceilings have been inserted. The roof is not ancient but two of the rafters are formed from old moulded timbers. Also incorporated is a cambered and moulded tie-beam of medieval origin. The south porch and the brick chimney appear to be of the 16th century. There is a considerable amount of 16th- or early-17th-century panelling internally. In the angle between the wings there is a later timber structure. The house was restored and the staircase altered in 1933.

The north and part of the east sides of a large moat are still in existence. To the west of Bushes is Ashlings, where traces of a moat remain. About ½ mile south-west of Ashlings

is Lunds, a timber-framed farm-house probably of the late 17th or early 18th century; it has been faced with yellow brick. To the west of Lunds, on the north side of the road, is Whites, a timber-framed farm-house probably dating from the late 17th or early 18th century. Almost opposite Whites is the junction with the road leading south to Epping.

In 1776 the parishes of High Laver and Magdalen Laver came to an agreement about repairs to roads for which they were jointly responsible. These roads were to be equally divided by a white post and each parish was to repair the part lying nearest to it.

Water was supplied by the Herts. and Essex Waterworks Co. in 1912. Electricity was laid on in part of the parish in 1950. A branch of the county library was opened in June 1939.

Magdalen Laver has always been a rural parish engaged almost entirely in agriculture. The lords of the manor lived in the parish during most of the period from 1622 until 1832. After John Cozens sold the estate in 1832 the owners were not resident until Matthew Torrance purchased the estate shortly after 1922.

In 1848 James Ewing owned, but did not occupy, Magdalen Laver Hall Farm (191 acres). There were only two other substantial owners in the parish; John Archer Houblon owned but did not occupy Spencer's Farm (126 acres) and Christian P. Meyer owned Mollmans Farm (111 acres) but did not farm it himself. There were seven other farms of over 60 acres; of these three were more than 90 acres.

Magdalen Laver, like neighbouring parishes, has always been a parish of mixed farming with a marked predominance of arable. In 1331 the manor contained 331 acres arable, 30 acres pasture, 6 acres meadow, and 80 acres wood. In 1847 it was estimated that there were 835 acres arable, 150 acres meadow and pasture, and 15 acres woodland.

From 1680, if not before, until 1731 a regular item of income in the churchwarden's annual account was 6s. 8d. 'faire money'. This suggests that until the second quarter of the 18th century a fair was held annually in the parish, although it is not clear why it should have been a source of income for the churchwardens. No reference to 'faire money' has been found after 1731.