

CHURCHGATE FARM.

*Archaeological evidence dates the site at least from the early 12th century but there is also evidence of Roman and late Saxon activity.

**Suffolk Heritage Explorer. Heritage.suffolk.gov.uk*

'John atte Churchgate.'

The Rev. John Munday found documentary evidence that this farm was a copyhold tenancy of the manor in the 14th century (after the Black Death). The tenant would have been an important 'commoner' of the manor and the closeness of the farm to the site of the manorial hall and barn 'just over the road' is a significant sign of its importance in the village. It is likely that there was at least one earlier cottage on the site before the 17th century Churchgate cottage whose remains can be seen on the south gable end but we are not aware of any archaeological evidence for this. A rebuild and upward extension probably from the 1800's is an indicator of the status of the tenant in the village.

**An early tenant in the 14th century, well before the present building, was identified as 'John atte Churchgate' and a later tenant was the manor bailiff, Anthony Childerston, or Cheston, who had a cottage on the site of the much later Bell Hotel, which in the 17th century was known as Mr. Harding's Cottage. In the early 20th century Mr. Robert Bilsland JP, tenant of Churchgate Farm was a notable figure in county and local politics. At some point in the mid20th century the farm house was divided first into three, then two separate dwellings, as now.

***Rev John Munday. Lakenheath Records.*

The House.

Tom Rought, present owner and renovator, says:



"I believe the house dates to the 17thC. You can see evidence of this on the gable end before the house was extended upwards in the 1800's".

"The original cottage would have been thatched, during renovations I found thatching reed in the loft. The lounge still has the original flagstone floor and Inglenook fireplace. The fireplace had been altered to incorporate a bread oven to the right and a copper water boiler to the left. The flag on the floor next to the copper had been worn into a concave where the cook spent so much time? Later on, the fireplace had been altered to incorporate a coal range, added to modernize the kitchen, the range was then replaced in the 1960's with an open fire place. It has now been restored to its original Inglenook fireplace.

The ceiling is constructed with a central oak beam with lateral oak timbers as the floor construction, this harks back to ship construction. Upstairs, the rear elevation was timber frame with wattle and daub. The front elevation of the house is built of two-inch brick which again dates to the 1700's, it now has two bay windows and a sash window, but these might have been added when the house was extended upwards".

Note: Recently discovered photographs show the house from 1905. Interestingly, until at least 1922 only the north end of the house had bay windows. The sash windows date from the 19th century building work.



Post card dated 1905.

1914. The date is verified by the lack of an upper storey on 'The Tap' public house further up High Street.



1922. The date is verified by the presence of the Peace Memorial Hall. (Village Hall).

Tom continues:

"The windows of the original (17th century) cottage would have been much smaller and a much simpler design as glass was expensive and would have made the original cottage easier to heat. Just adjacent to the rear of the house stands a single-story building that houses the bread oven and the well, I believe that it not only provided bread for the house but also for the villagers I also have four large pottery bread mixing bowls that are over two foot in diameter"! There is some evidence that the house was doubled in length as well as increased in height"

Bread oven circa late 18th/19th century).



Well.

Ceiling beams and restored Inglenook.



The Heritage Group thanks Tom for his interest and help.