

BUTTS YARD, CHADDSDEN LANE

Thought to have been named after the communal archery butts [Note 1] used for target practice in medieval times, Butts Yard (Fig. 1) was a short length of drive at right-angles to the eastern side of Chaddesden Lane exactly opposite the village school, which today functions as the Community Centre. Two ancient half-timbered cottages stood on the north side of Butts Yard, whilst on its south side lay the farm's granary and some other agricultural outbuildings. As may be seen from Fig. 1, the two old south-facing cottages of Butts Yard were joined on to the west-facing Schoolmaster's House on Chaddesden Lane.

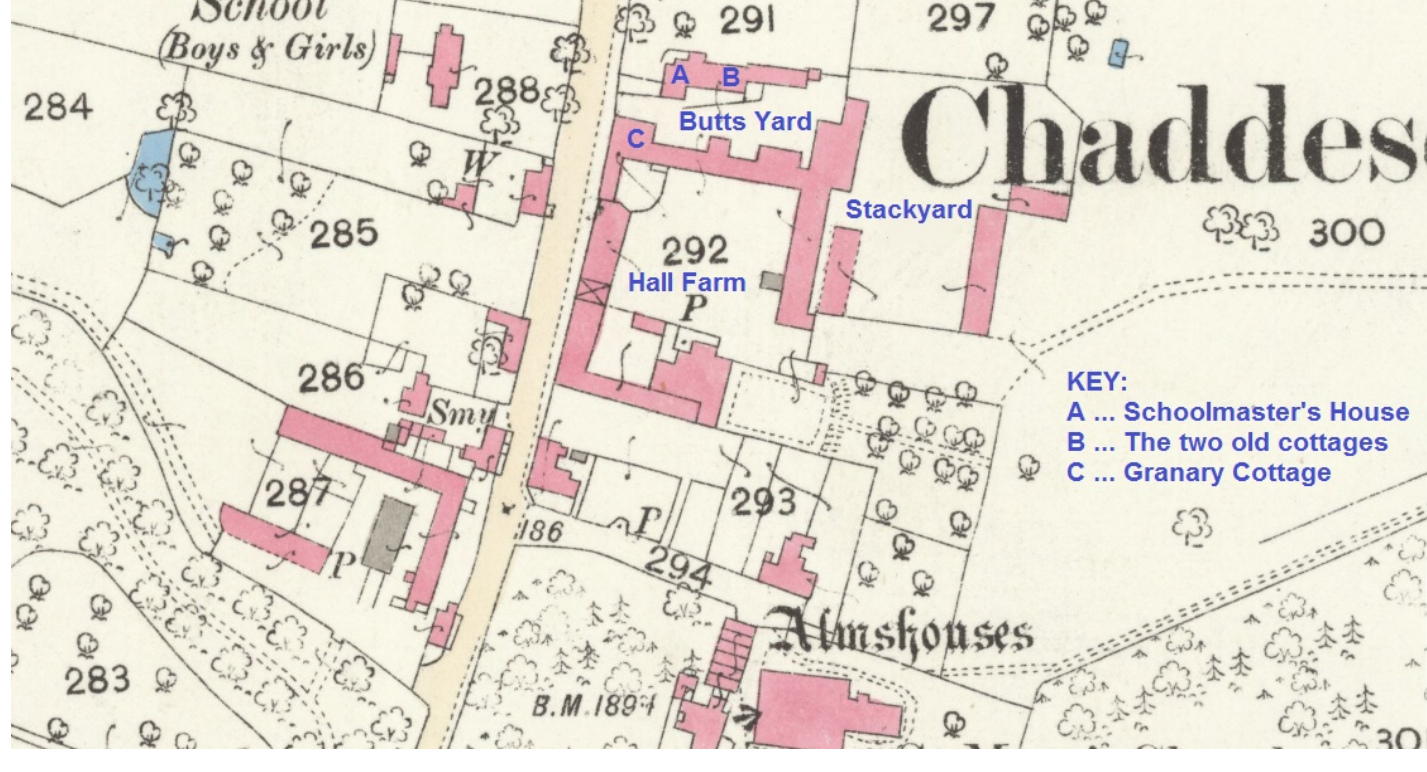


Fig. 1: Butts Yard location plan. 1883 Ordnance Survey map reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>)

It seems that Butts Yard once contained more properties than the two cottages mentioned above, for in the will of Henry Holland, a Chaddesden yeoman, dated 1 July 1765, he left 'seven Houses and one Croft with all Hereditaments and Appurtenances thereto belonging ... lying in a place called Butt Yard in Chaddesden' to his son, Henry junr. Some years later the yard also featured in the 1820 will of another member of the family, Richard Holland, who noted that he had lately sold to Sir Robert Wilmot 'certain houses and premises in Chaddesden aforesaid called the Butt Yard property'.

Access into Butts Yard from Chaddesden Lane was through a wooden gate, which can just be seen over to the right of the Schoolmaster's House pictured here (Fig. 2), as can the blurred figure of a woman walking along the yard. Incidentally, the section of wall the two girls are sitting on, together with its two brick pillars, has survived to the present day as the front wall of 136 Chaddesden Lane. The principal function of Butts Yard was to provide a means of access to the stackyard of Hall Farm (see Fig. 1) and at various times in the farming year there must have been a considerable number of waggons and animals moving to and fro.



Fig. 2: The west face of the Schoolmaster's House, Chaddesden Lane, c.1905.

In Victorian times, the two cottages in Butts Yard together with the neighbouring 155-acre Hall Farm formed part of the Wilmot family's extensive Chaddesden estate, and it seems that whoever held the tenancy of Hall Farm also took the cottages as well, possibly so they could be used by the farm's labourers. In 1892 Mr. Joseph Painter moved from Roe Farm to Hall Farm and for a few years until he left the farm in 1910, the two cottages were also known as Painter's Cottages or Painter's Yard. The name change evidently bewildered some residents, which no doubt explains the Vicar's comment alongside a burial register entry of 1900 in which he noted the deceased's address as Painter's Cottages and then added, 'Original name in Parish, Butts Yard.' Just to add to the general confusion, the two cottages were also occasionally referred to as School House Cottages, simply because they were joined to the Schoolmaster's House! Various scattered entries in St. Mary's parish registers around this time enable us to identify the names of some of the families who lived in the two cottages, e.g. Gregory, Houlton, Mills, and Seale. Other sources list later residents in the 1930s as Entwistle, Herbert, Smith, Taylor and Whyman.

The Wilmot estate was broken up and sold off around the time of the First World War and by the early 1920s Major (later Colonel) John David Kerr [Note 2] was living at Hall Farm, which he renamed Rettemoy Farm, and had the granary building on the south side of Butts Yard converted into a new cottage for a farm-worker (Fig. 3). Although I have referred to this property as 'Granary Cottage', it does not appear to have had a consistent formal name, often being simply called 'Farm Cottage, Hall Farm'. However, when it was the home of Mr. John Child, Col. Kerr's farm manager, a 1935 directory listed it as 'Windy Corner'. Four years later, when the Government's 1939 National Register was compiled, it was 'Hall Farm Cottage, Chaddesden Lane' and occupied by Mr. Basil Wade, one of Mr. Burnett's farm-workers.

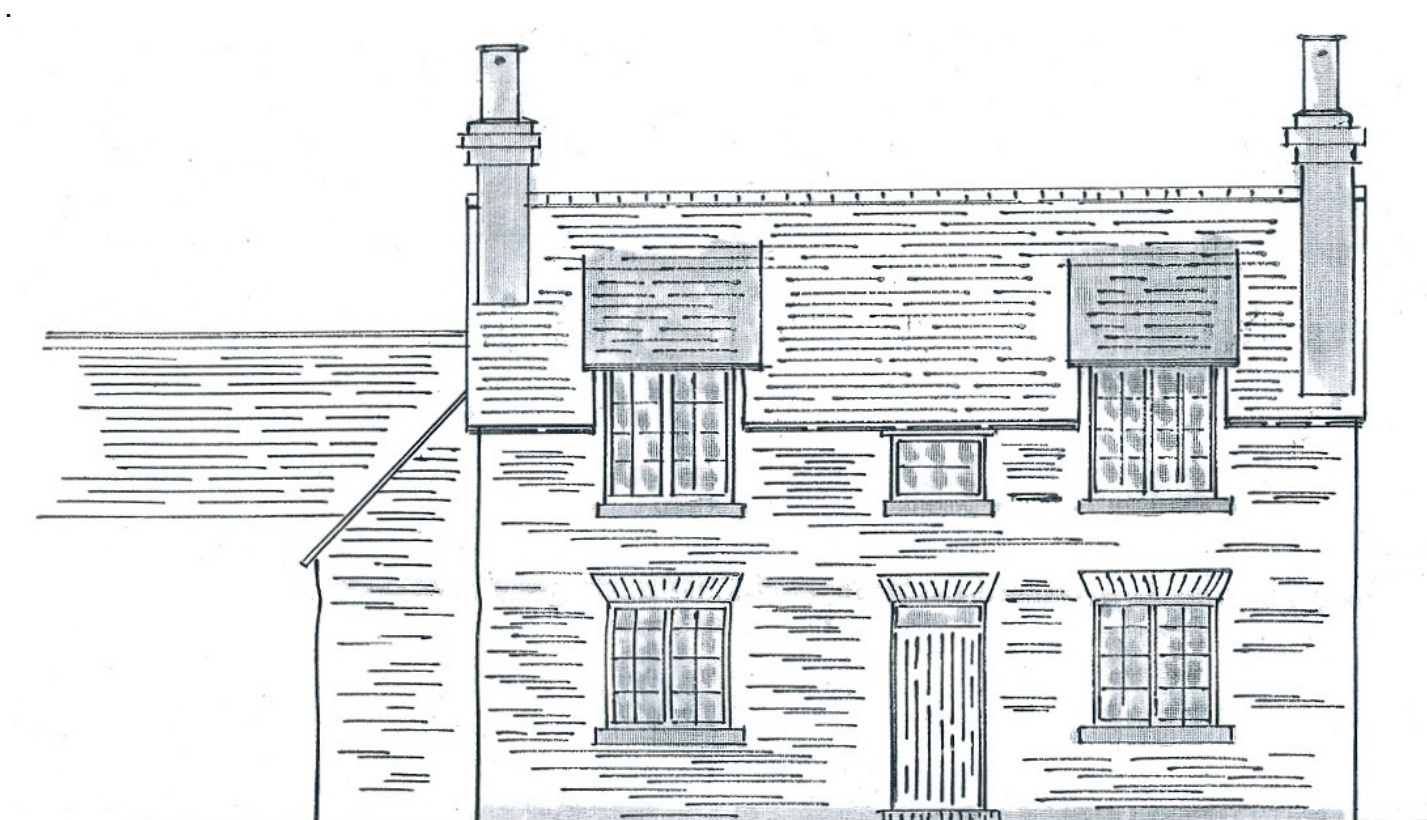


Fig. 3: The northern aspect of Granary Cottage in Butts Yard

Colonel Kerr left the farm around 1937 and it reverted back to its original name of Hall Farm when it was acquired by Mr. J. W. Burnett, who proved to be its last farmer, for at a dispersal sale of live and dead farming stock held in the spring of 1946 it was announced he had sold the farm, which stretched eastwards from Chaddesden Lane over the fields and across the parish boundary into Spondon. The purchaser was seemingly Derby Corporation, for only a few months later, on 23 January 1947, the *Derby Evening Telegraph* reported that provisional approval had just been given to the Corporation's proposals for a new 850-home housing scheme at Chaddesden, which it called the Rettemoy Housing Site, although later generations would know it as the Trenton Green estate. These new properties would be built on much of what had only a few months previously been the productive fields of Hall Farm, and the *Telegraph's* banner claimed somewhat ambitiously, 'This Housing Estate Will Be A Town In Itself'. Along with the newspaper article was a bird's-eye view showing the general layout of the development and a crucial piece of the plan was the provision of a new road – Maine Drive – to link the new houses with Chaddesden Lane to the west.

For those familiar with Chaddesden Lane in the 1940s it would have seemed almost inconceivable that a new link road would involve the destruction of some well-known buildings. As Fig. 4 demonstrates, the street scene hereabouts destruction hadn't changed much at all over the previous hundred years. Sadly there are only two buildings in the photograph that have survived to the present day – 140 Chaddesden Lane and St. Mary's Church, the tower of which can just be seen to the left of Granary Cottage.

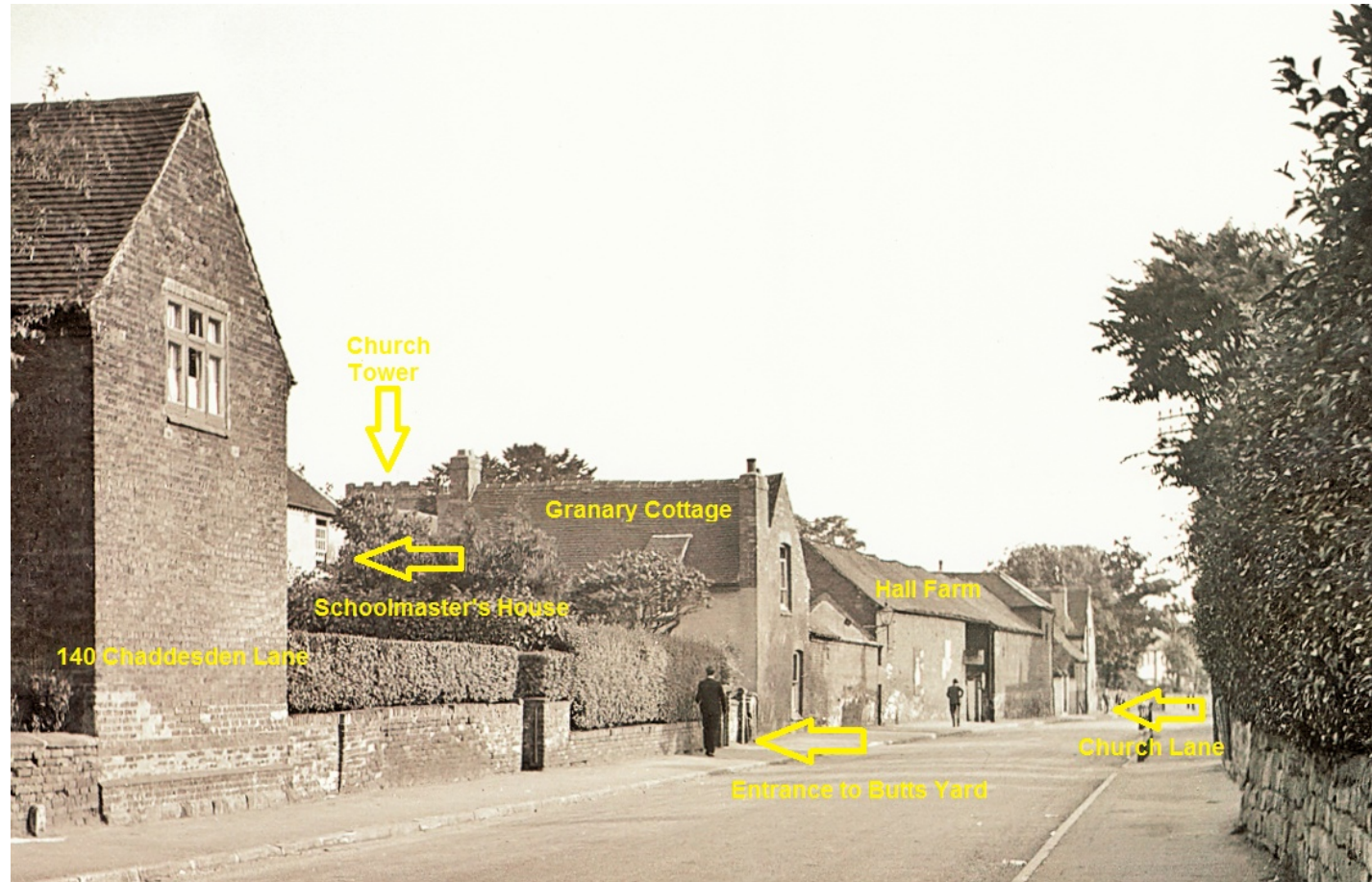


Fig. 4: A 1940s view looking south down Chaddesden Lane a few years prior to the construction of Maine Drive.

Aerial photographs taken in April 1948 show Maine Drive well in the process of being laid out and it is clear that some of Hall Farm's outbuildings had already been demolished, however, as far as Butts Yard was concerned, Granary Cottage and the two older cottages were still intact, as was the Schoolmaster's House. Unfortunately as Maine Drive neared completion, Granary Cottage together with the remaining buildings of Hall Farm were knocked down to ensure adequate visibility at the junction with Chaddesden Lane. On the plus side, however, this meant that the two cottages in Butts Yard could be seen from the brand-new Maine Drive, now that the built-up south side of the yard had been removed.

As the 1950s and 1960s progressed, more of the time-worn houses that had once formed the core of old Chaddesden were demolished, some to make way for new properties, others for no apparent reason other than the fact that they were old and in need of repair. Conservation of the built environment appears to have been something that the planners of that time were completely unfamiliar with! In the end, the two ancient cottages in Butts Yard that had survived the construction of Maine Drive only a few years previously fell victim to the might of the bulldozer, and in this photograph (Fig. 5) we see the cottages as the demolition team were actually working on them. The gable end of the easternmost cottage has gone and the yellow bulldozer is now making short work of its front wall. In the foreground of the picture is Maine Drive and over to the far left is the chimney of the Schoolmaster's House (also visible in Fig. 2), which I presume was demolished at the same time.



Fig. 5: The two old half-timbered cottages in Butts Yard, pictured during their demolition in the 1960s.

If I remember correctly, the photograph was given to me by the late Mrs. Phoebe Oldershaw of Jasmine Cottage on Chaddesden Lane, only a hundred yards to the south of Butts Yard. Unfortunately the photo is not dated, but I think it was probably taken in the early 1960s. The Butts Yard cottages and the Schoolmaster's House were quickly raised to the ground and the present 136 and 138 Chaddesden Lane built on their site.

© Peter Cholerton, 2022

REFERENCES

Note 1: See my article, *Archery in Medieval Chaddesden*, on Chaddesden Historical Group's website.

Note 2: Colonel Kerr (1873–1954), third son of Lord Walter Kerr of Melbourne Hall, renamed Hall Farm as Rettemoy Farm, after Rettemoy, near Gommecourt in the French Department of Pas-de-Calais. The area around Gommecourt, no doubt familiar to Col. Kerr as the result of his military service with the Sherwood Foresters during the First World War, was the scene of heavy fighting in July 1916 and March 1917. Col. Kerr later went on to command the 5th Battalion Sherwood Foresters from 1928 to 1934, and after leaving Chaddesden he and his wife moved to The Longlands at Findern.



Click me to go Home
(Chaddesden Historical Group)