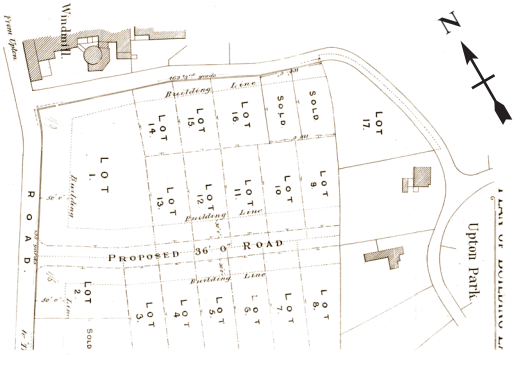
CHAPTER 7
Developments 1900 - 1939

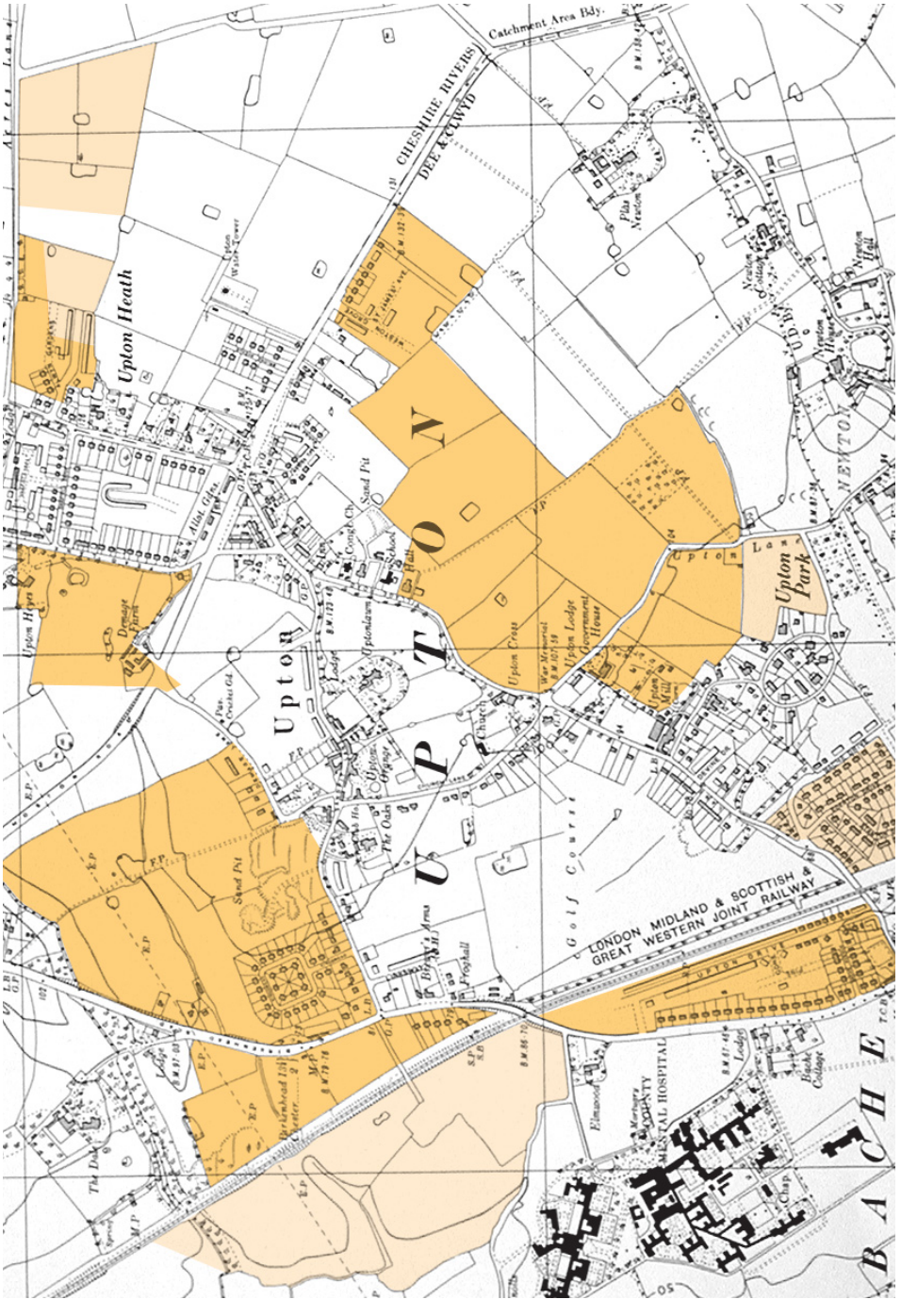
Despite Egerton's 1899 plans for large housing estates on most of the land remaining in his ownership, only modest ribbon development occurred until the mid-1930s. The new century started with a local population of some 750 plus an asylum population approaching twice that number. By the outbreak of WW2 the local population had risen to over 3000 with the much improved shops and services and with wider main roads. These roads generally had houses along at least one side. The first decade saw housing developments mainly around Upton Heath. The second decade saw a few detached houses on individual plots but by the late 1930s several green field housing estates were either complete or well underway. Modernisation of the infrastructure was the key issue of Parish Council concern. The Council now had incomers offering specific expertise blending with the views of the big private estate 'barons' whose control of village life was fading.

Egerton's 1899 plan for clean new city suburbs

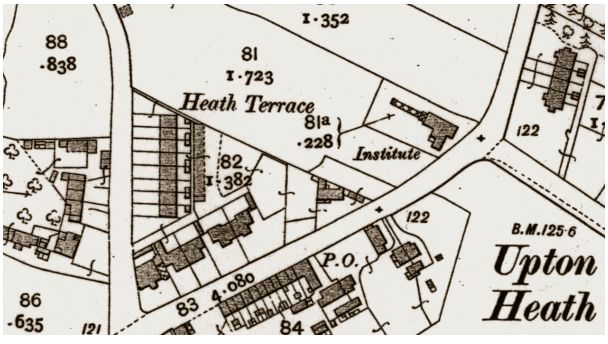
By 1899, Lord of the Manor, Egerton, had reduced his land ownership in Upton to around 50%. His detailed plans for 'greenfield' housing estates are archived with the Cheshire Records Office (DEO 206/5). The marked up 1936 OS Map (page 87) shows the extent of these proposals. The original plan not only shows the proposed areas for development but all the proposed new service roads with each house plot marked out. In common with other major landowners in the Chester area this was not to be high density development. A number of estates with say 100 detached or semi-pairs were proposed. Restrictive covenants to establish a high standard of housing were the norm at this time for the landed gentry. Note that even by 1939 only Kingsmead and the Upton Drive area had been developed on land he designated in 1899.

Not only was Egerton thinking this way but the declining Dicksons Nursery, which began selling land in Newton and Hoole, was also attempting to sell some of its Upton land as shown in this failed Auction Sale proposal. The area was developed later in the 1930s incorporating Delvine Drive. Properties were built in 1904 on the plots shown as 'SOLD'.




Catchment Area Bdy.
CHESHIRE RIVERS DEF. & CLWYD
Upton Heath
UPTON
Upton Park
Upton Lane
Upton Grove
Upton Lodge
Upton Hyde
Upton Cross
Upton Hall
Upton Cricket Gd.
Upton Golf Course
Sand Pit
Stand Pit
Church
Vicarage
The Oaks
Upton Hall Farm
Upton Hall Lodge
Upton Hall Cottages
Upton Hall Gardens

Upton Heath development in the early 20th century



The Upton Heath 'triangle' –
Reproduced from the 1911 Ordnance Survey Map

Upton Heath was the main focus of new building in the opening years of the 20th century. Builder George Austin bought the triangular plot in 1903. The deed describes land and cottages - but from the 1899 OS map we see that the only property was that in the eastern corner of the plot. Austin raised a mortgage and first built The Gables on the southern corner. It is understood that he made this his home. In 1905, he then built 2 pairs of semis on Heath Road (formerly Main Road) and the set of terraces (Heath Terrace) on Flag Lane. It appears that Austin retained the land behind the terraces as his builder's yard. Much later, the end semi and yard were sold to Mr Davies who used the yard for his engineering business. This c1913 photograph shows the area now well established.



The gable end cottages (in the right of the photograph) had only been added in 1897 and the pair of semis just off camera to the left were built in 1904 apparently on the site of a very old house – possibly the Heath's oldest. Built by Ithell, a family member lived in the Heath House half and the other half – Woodbank – was rented out to his son-in-law plumber Frank Morris. The shop in the centre of the photograph is covered on page 164. Even though the Heath was now well established with some new properties, some dwellings were in a poor state. A valuation in 1932 on the old end two cottages stated them as very poor and with no artificial lighting.

The Upton Heath Men's Institute which originally faced up Long Lane was formed on 31st December 1907. The site was given by Sir John Frost, and the foundation stone was laid by the Duke of Westminster. The building was erected for use as a reading room and club to be used by men of the farming, artisan and industrial classes resident in the Township of Upton. It was stipulated that the building was not to be used for *'religious instruction or religious meetings'* or *'the promotion of party politics whether Parliamentary, Parochial, educational or otherwise'*. There were further restrictions on '*the sale of intoxicating liquor'* and on '*gambling*'. The building was used for civil defence purposes during WW2 but returned to recreational use in the 1950s. Today it is known as the Guides HQ (see page 197).



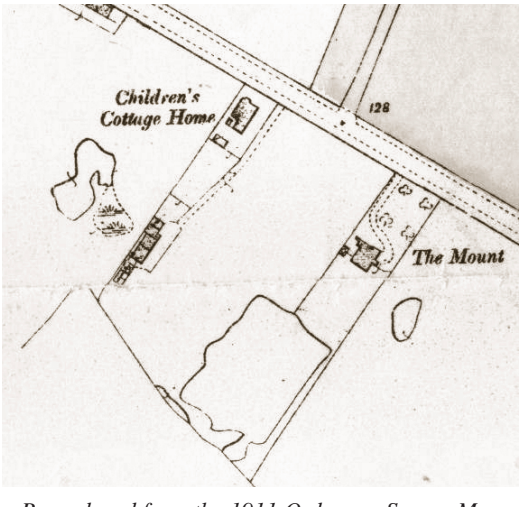
The new Congregational church, shown here, was built in 1900. Upton Heath now had the feel of a village centre with pub, shops and other community facilities.

Two significant properties were built on Long Lane in the early 1900s – both on the site of the former brickyard. The 1872 OS simply shows a field but by the 1898 survey there was a brickyard with kilns and a clay pit filled with water. The Mount was built on the site of the actual brickyard for local cattle dealer Tom Hinde. His slaughter house was built further back behind the other major building – the Children's Cottage Home – just off right - which still stands with its commemorative plaque.



The Mount was later acquired by auctioneer Leonard Wright until c1937, the Hindes having built a smaller house alongside. The Mount was used by the military during WW2 and was bought by auction in a poor state c1948 by Alfred Halliwell using the land to the side for his building business as shown above. Finally the Mount was demolished in 2000 and the current McArthur & Stone residence built.

Shown on the OS maps as 'The Children's Cottage Home' the characteristic building with its decorative rounded gable ends was built in 1900 as one of six such homes in the Chester area. It was built when public care of children rested with Poor Law Guardians but closed c1920 when this care passed to the County Council who operated under a different policy. Memories of this home are that it was a happy and friendly place under the long-serving matron Miss E M Flook. The children (who were possibly only boys) wore a uniform which was not much different from that of the local children with whom they mixed.



Reproduced from the 1911 Ordnance Survey Map

After the closure, the house lay dormant until 1930 when it was, in part, rented out to the Coventry family and upstairs as offices for the County's Roads & Bridges Dept. under district surveyor Basil M Trew. By 1972, it was used by the County for its Probation Service but is now in private ownership as a consultancy business.

The era of building large country houses had now gone but established roads near other properties were desirable sites for housing in the early 20th century. In 1904 a few properties were built near to the existing Upton Park on its road in from the Mill. One larger Edwardian house was built on the southeast side of Mill Lane complete with a tennis court in its large back garden.

In the early part of the 20th century leading up to the Great War, Upton had taken on board many of the signs of town living. Mains water had been available since around 1890 and some main sewers were in place. During the 1917 prevalence of epidemics, the Upton Council was seeking to persuade the owners of cottages still on privies to convert to water closets. Traffic was increasing considerably partly due to Upton roads being the link between the Birkenhead road and the Warrington road. There were frequent calls for respraying of the roads due to dust from the heavy traffic. Crosville was operating a bus service from Upton but the fares, suited to the long distance through traveller, were seen as expensive to those only coming back from Chester.

Throughout this early 20th century period however, Upton life was still influenced by the handful of gentlemen from the big houses or the farms. They often acted like squires, running the Council and holding village events in their



grounds. This continued after the Great War with traditional country pursuits such as shown here from the early 1920s. The pack is believed to be the Royal Rock Beagles and is accompanied by the young Dutton brothers – Thomas Piers and Leonard Parker Dutton.

The Upton Trust set up by Potts and acquired by Owen

The character of a large part of Upton – the golf course and its surrounding area – originates from the establishment of this Upton Trust.



This aerial photograph – with acknowledgements to Fotocraft – was taken over 50 years ago, but except for its foreground & background, is little changed. Mill Lane/Heath Road runs left to right across the photograph.

Charles Potts - Solicitor and Clerk to Cheshire County Council - had acquired the land bounded by Mill Lane / railway / Upton Lane / Church Lane as well other land outside this enclosed area. As covered on page 64 he had acquired Upton Bank and had bailiffs farming some of his land.

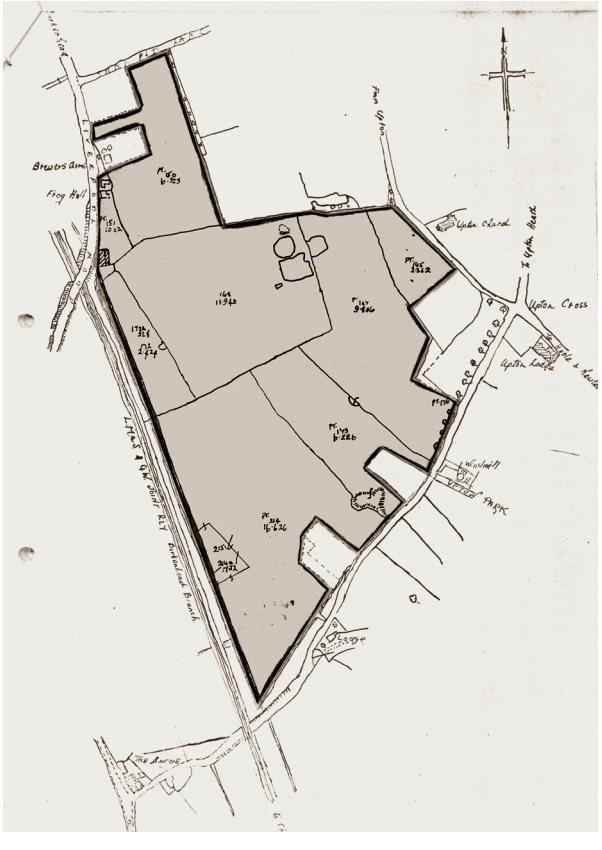
In 1871 he established in his will an 'Upton Trust' placing a restrictive covenant on the use of the land. This was a fairly common practice in the Chester area where the gentlemen of the City wanted to ensure quality developments. For several decades the trust was held by the Potts family with the pasture land rented to local farmers.

The only sale of any of this land before 1920 was a conveyance in 1896 to the London & North Western & Great Western Railway. The extent of this is not known.

In 1920 Trustee Hubert Potts sold land to the Brewery extending their land around The Brewer's Arms and then through the 1920s, sold a few plots to build

affluent detached properties in prime roadside positions. The Gerrards had a large house with tennis courts built on the corner of Upton Lane & Liverpool Road. Rebecca Potts had a house – the last one before the railway bridge on Mill Lane. Another example was Glendales built in 1925 for John Glendale Lightfoot. His father John had been Sheriff of Chester in 1898 and was in the grocery & provisions business as well as mining interests in Glendale California. He had been living at the Gables in Upton Heath but acquired a field know as 'Cross Croft' from the Potts Trust. After some land exchanges Glendales had large grounds and stayed with the Lightfoot family until 1947. It is remembered as the home and surgery of Dr. Benjamin Carr for many years around the 1960s after they too had moved there from 'The Gables'.

Reginald Potts – the next generation - had succeeded Charles as Clerk with Chester Borough County Council and lived at The Dale. The Potts family had long since sold 'Upton Bank' – now known as 'The Oaks' – with a few acres of surrounding ground. In 1931 Fred Owen acquired the Oaks estate and then in 1934 after the death of Reggie Potts he acquired the remaining part of the Potts Trust – understood to be the land shown here.



Fred Owen (who is covered on page 267) not only bought these 57 acres but acquired the ownership of the Trust and hence control of the restrictive covenant. Clearly a shrewd businessman, most of the cost of this acquisition was on mortgage from the previous trustees. After selling parcels of land for housing development along the periphery he was soon able to clear the debt. Squires – a local builder – had started buying some Mill Lane sites from Potts and continued doing so with Owen until much of that side of Mill Lane was built. A drive was left – shown on the 1936 OS - to access a small sandpit. This is only noted today by the shape of the back gardens.

Fred soon set up the Golf Club and was renting them a 9-hole course within months of acquiring the land. The rest of the land which included Bridge Farm

was in use by both David Davies who leased the Bridge Farm buildings and by the Inglebys. By 1935 the course had extended to 15 holes although still subletting to David Davies as pastureland until 1939. The Club was also gradually leasing more of the Oaks . Fred Owen built on a few of the plots bordering the golf course. One of these, Linksmead on Church Lane, he made his own home. The development of Linksway was started and before WW2, properties were complete on the east side and in the vicinity of Bridge Farm. By 1937, Fred Owen had acquired the Upton Lawn estate which was leased for farmland. This enabled him to extend the golf course across the road and have further valuable plots for housing along the periphery – see chapter 9. Although some of the former Upton Lawn estate returned to agricultural war use, it is understood that the greens were retained. The Golf Club was seen as offering recreation and relaxation during the troubled wartime period.

Developments during the 1920s

This was an affluent period but only a few houses were added. These were fairly substantial homes built on desirable sites alongside existing roads – either singularly or as two or three. Upton Rise and its neighbour were built off Mill Lane in c1927 as were Eardisley & Cedar Croft on the northern corner of Upton Lane and Liverpool Road. These were for the Cooper and Hinde families respectively. This junction was giving great concern to the Council over road safety and they took the building as an opportunity for improvements. Other properties were added on the Upton Park arm off Mill Lane.

Demand for services was growing but the village was still under the control of the ten or so 'local barons'. When the Upton Council had an opportunity in 1919 to attend a conference on electrical services they concluded that the Council '*does not wish to entertain the bringing of an electrical supply to Upton'*. Nevertheless the supply did come soon after and one of the houses being built in Upton Park - Rhosilli - had electric lighting, when built in 1923, but also had a back-up of gas. All very new, the electrical switches operated sideways. Interestingly the only electricity pole discussed in the Council, as raising concern, was the one at the Upton Park / Mill Lane junction. The Council pressed to get the services of a fire brigade, especially when they realised that their RDC taxes were funding the use of this service elsewhere. They also pushed for a railway station at Upton, possibly because several councillors actually worked in Liverpool or Manchester.

By 1922 Upton had 39 gas street lights and even by 1930 more gas lamps were being added where an electrical supply was not nearby. Conversion to electric street lighting was deemed too expensive and was delayed until post-war with the diminishing service of the local Gas company. Increasing standards of hygiene were important and rubbish collection (known as scavenging) came in during the mid-1920s although there was concern on the council over linking this charge to the Rateable Value ' *should only be paid for by those using the service'*. They still saw the eradication of privies and connection of WCs to main drains as being the key hygiene need. The various pits around Upton were being

used as tips and this was raising concerns. In the mid-1930s crickets were becoming a big problem in the Sandpit Lane tip. Smoke was another nuisance with complaints about excessive output from the Mental Hospital in 1930. Staff at the hospital required local housing and the 1926 Upton Council was pressing for additional housing to meet this need. The growing Upton Heath population was stretching demand on the water supply and a water tower was built c1930

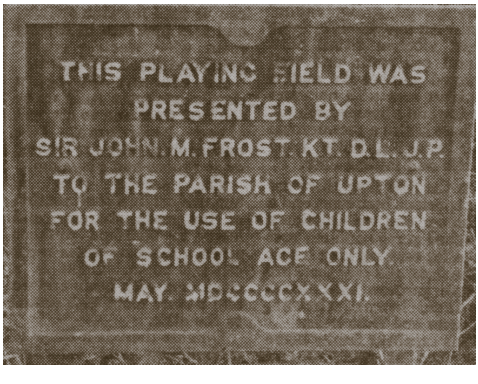
Traffic was an increasing problem and by 1926 there was a proposal for the Moston Road extending Long Lane to Moston and thereby creating a ring road around Upton. One implication of this was that the new road would pass through a field behind the Institute that Sir John Frost had made available to the children of Upton as a playing field. A long process over many years then started with Frost seeking to acquire an alternative playing field that could remain 'in perpetuity' for the children of Upton.

The Chemistry Pits Play Area

Various sites – all generally in the area of the final site – were suggested, offered or declined. The Council minutes imply that Sir John Frost was getting very agitated by this. He had agreed to sell his land for the Moston Road route for the sum needed to acquire this play area. It is understood – but not confirmed – that part of his desire for this play area was in memory of a daughter lost in childhood.

The ground was eventually bought and appears to have acquired the name 'Chemistry Pits' because it was 'by the chemistry pits' which was the name given to the area behind the Heath Cottages (see page 78). The site has had a difficult history from its beginning with poor drainage and being seen as a rubbish dump. In 1938 cinders were spread presumably because of the poor drainage. On another occasion mowing was not possible and grazing sheep were introduced.

The Council minutes frequently cover the need for repairs to the swings and the problem of keeping the area purely for the reason it was intended. Darlington, the local blacksmith, had to carry out repairs and Mrs Metcalfe complained, in 1939, of the swings squeaking badly. Boundary fencing was erected to prevent Mr Lawson of Longfield Avenue from trespassing by using it as a throughfare.



The plaque pictured here is the original which is now missing. Today's Parish Council is planning to erect a similar replacement as part of the recent refurbishment to the field.

The Upton Council Minutes for the immediate pre-war period indicate concern for recreational activities and the need for more suitable public ground. In earlier times landowners had made ground available for such use but this was declining as land was being developed towards suburbia. Playing fields were being built over. Up to WW2 the cricket ground complete with pavilion was to the east of Demage Lane and is remembered now by the name Willow Close, given to the post-war development on its ground. Football was played on the field later used for Daleside but this was a cattle field which rather hampered the standard of matches. Nevertheless some cine footage remains in the archives. The main recreation ground of today – off Wealstone Lane (see page 118) – Ben Roberts' small holding (shown below c1912) was still rented out for agricultural land.



From 1928 Upton had the facilities of the Village Hall (Chapter 12) but the 'local barons' continued to be a major part of community life with popular garden parties held in their grounds. This photographs records an event held at Upton Lawn



Some other 1930s building developments built on existing roads

The little old cottages, to the east of Upton Farm, were demolished and a Council Yard established. Shinn built some houses on the north side of Upton Lane and lived in one of these himself before moving to Upton Farm post-war. A few properties were also built on the lower end of Demage Lane. On the golf course side of lower Heath Road, a few properties were built in the late30s. The rest of the road up to the Wheatsheaf corner was tree-lined and undeveloped until post-war (see aerial photograph page 92).

Long Lane developments after establishing the A41

The Moston Road was constructed in 1932 and this encouraged development on Long Lane. It is understood that the railings shown here were removed during



the war. The Long Lane shops can be seen. Working from the garage (see page 159), the shops are remembered as follows –

The Post Office & Newsagents run by the Bradleys (see page 159).

Furleys Electrical shop (see page 163).

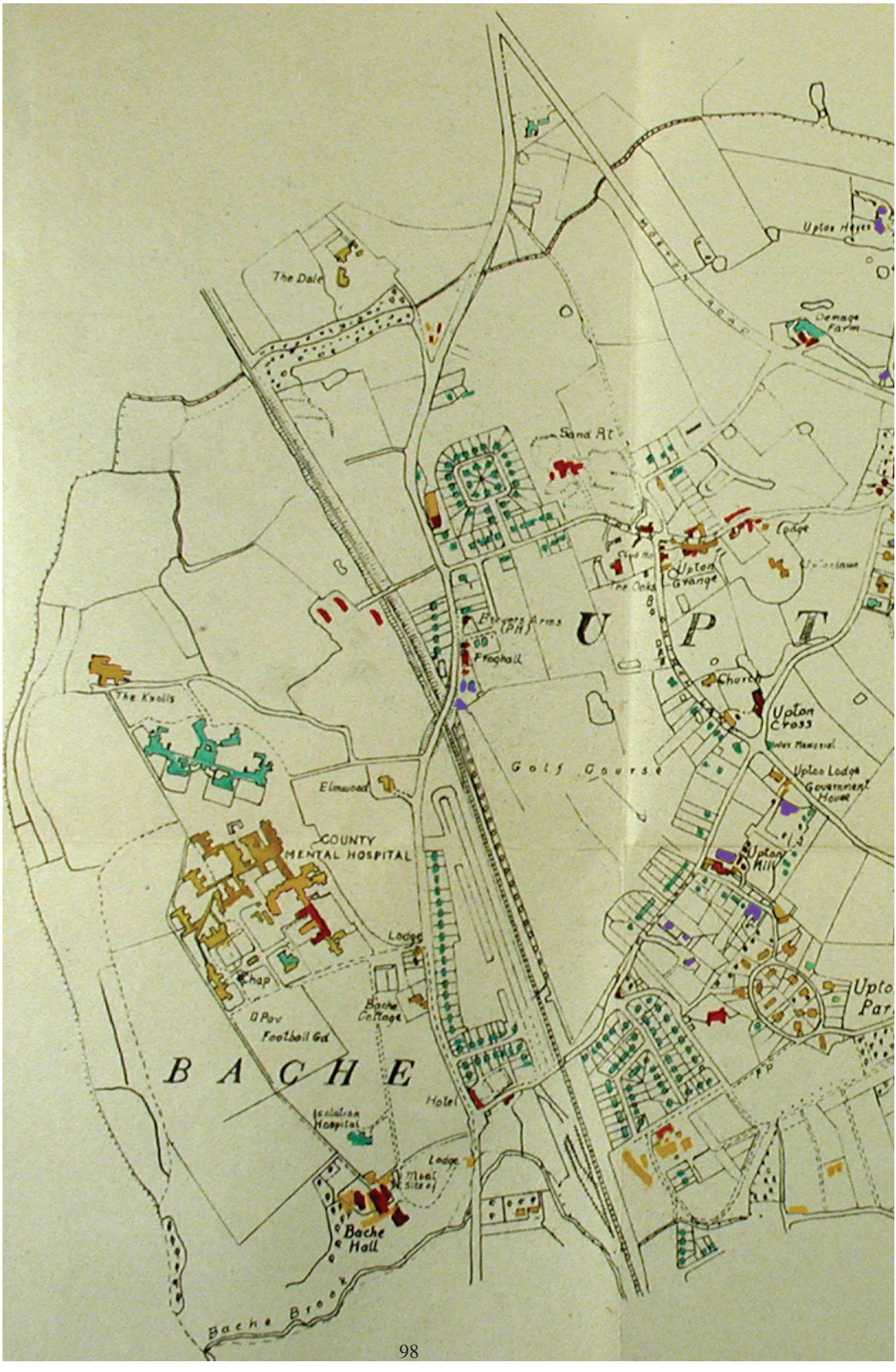
Florists / Garden shop.

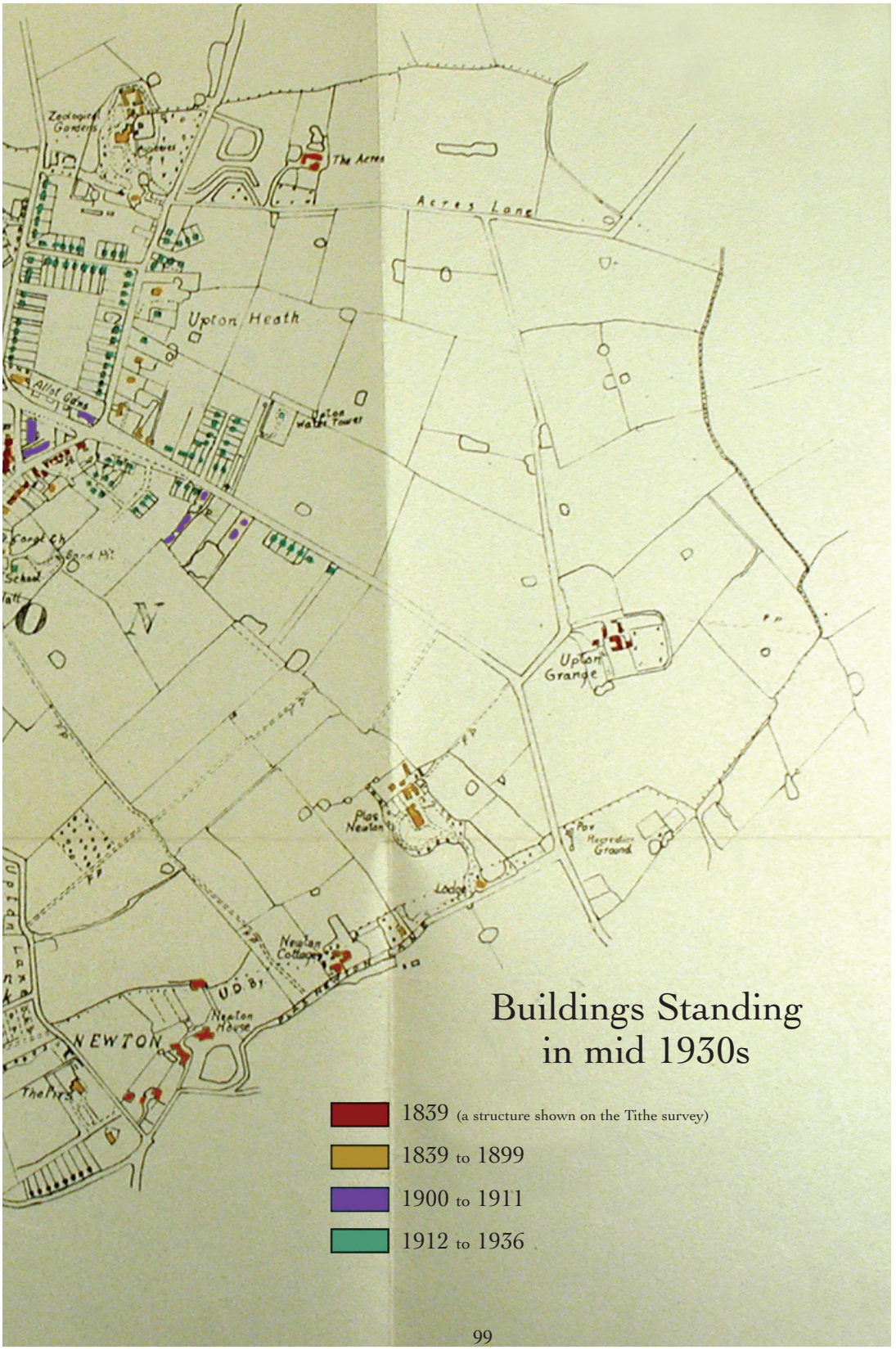
Fish & Chip shop run by Mr Smith during the war period and later by ex-military men Reece & Barnes before Doug Hughes and later the Moseleys.

Bakers & Confectioners (Delice?).

General Provisions Wholesalers run by Mrs Roberts.

Across the entrance of Marina Drive was the Pharmacy run by Mr Taylor and then Miss Henshaw's Wine shop (later Irwins).


The Dale
Upton Hayes
Grange Farm
Sand Pit
Upton Grange
Lodge
Fiveways Arms (PH)
Froghall
U P T
Church
Upton Cross
The Knolls
Golf Course
Upton Lodge Government House
Elmwood
COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL
Upton Hill
Lodge
Chap
Bache Cottage
Upton Par
Pav
Football Gd
B A C H E
Hotel
Isolation Hospital
Lodge
Meat Store
Bache Hall
Bache Brook



Buildings Standing in mid 1930s

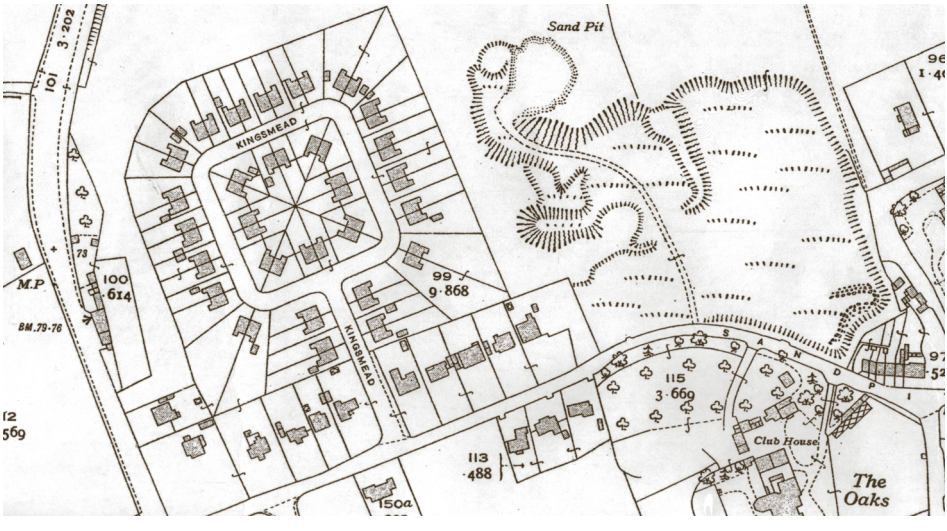
- 1839 (a structure shown on the Tithe survey)
- 1839 to 1899
- 1900 to 1911
- 1912 to 1936

Housing estate development from the mid-1930s

The depression must have decreased the wealth of Upton's 'barons' as well as the absent landowners – principally Egerton. There may be many factors why land became available and why a demand for housing was deemed to be growing. Certainly in the Upton area, several housing estates were started in the mid-1930s, building off new roads cut into green fields.

Kingsmead

This was developed by Mr Cottle and Peter Cooper believes it was possibly named after Cottle's prep school on the Wirral.



The Kingsmead cul-de-sac estate – in the northern corner of Liverpool Road and Upton Lane – first appears on the 1936 Ordnance Survey Map

The fields known as 'Long Croft' and 'The Dale' had been leased by the Egerton estate to Richard Ithell. By a 1927 mortgage we know that Richard Ithell still had the sandpit area but Long Croft and the Dale fields were now tenanted by Arthur Hinde. In December 1933, Egerton sold some 7 acres to the Surbiton Development Co. Ltd of London. This sale gave access from Sandpit Lane (now Upton Lane) to develope a fairly typical 'mid-1930s' quite suburban housing estate. Kingsmead's builder was Mr Morgan who also built similar properties at a similar time (1934/5) on Liverpool Road opposite the Frog. Morgan himself lived opposite the Frog. The 1935 Ordnance survey shows the estate complete nestled between the declining Darlington's smithy business and Richard Ithell's sandpit which was also nearing the end of its days. The properties were apparently a mix of owner occupier and rental at this time with more take-up on the freehold post-WW2. Indications are that the properties fronting onto Upton Lane were sold as plots to other builders/owners.

Oakfield estate



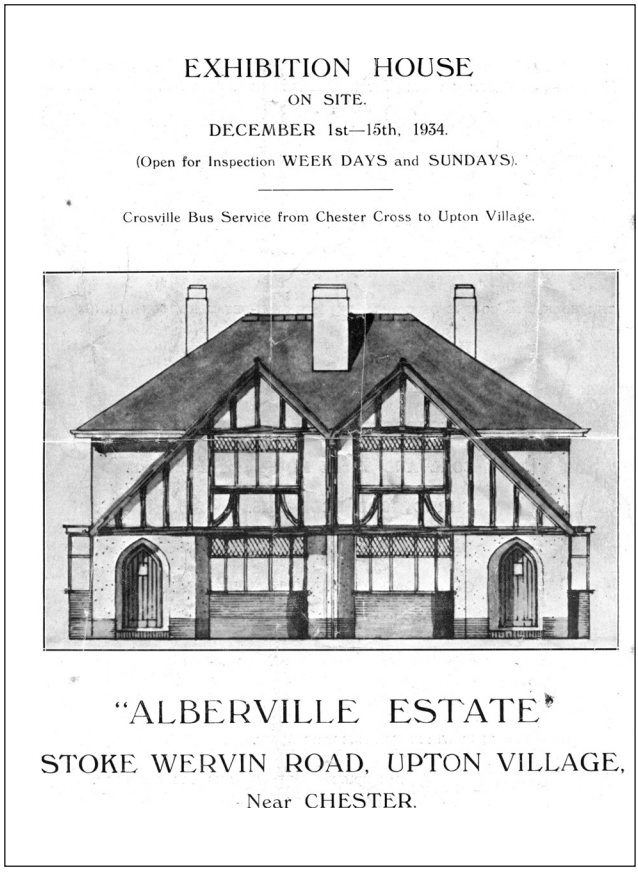
When George Mottershead bought Oakfield in 1930, this former part of Roberts' Oakfield estate was already earmarked for housing development which then started in the early 1930s. The zoo bought strips of land along its boundary to prevent bungalows being built around its Lodge. Oakfield Drive had been built as a public road c1912 linking Caughall Road and Flag Lane (the former link lane having been absorbed within Roberts' Oakfield estate). In 1913, T A Rigby of Upton Heyes had acquired the land south of Oakfield Drive from Roberts. At some 13 acres it had acquired the name of 'The Cricket Ground' and leased initially to Darlington and later to Fred Davies of Damage Farm. In 1931, Liverpool architects Brown & Sanders acquired the land from the executors of the Rigby estate and housing development started shortly after. This early photograph records the northside of Oakfield Drive showing the access into Oakfield Avenue. The 1936 OS map shows much of the estate as built and with partly-built Oakfield Avenue named as Oakfield Crescent. By 1933 the Council was agreeing to an electric street light on Oakfield Drive. The 1938 Council Minutes record house numbering concluded for Flag Lane, Oakfield Drive and Oakfield Avenue. It is understood that Danny Jones built at least the bulk of this estate. Endsleigh Gardens was then developed from c1938 and was being occupied by 1939. Developed under the 'Cheshire Investment Trust' the name 'Endsleigh Gardens' was requested by Mr H W Stacey.

Meadows Way area

In the mid-1930s the area enclosed by Demage Lane, Moston Road, Upton Lane, the penfolds and the Heath back gardens was still open pastureland and the village cricket ground complete with pavilion. In the late 1930s house building was underway with each end of Meadows Way and all Walnut Close built before the war suspended further construction. The road was named 'Meadows Way' in memory of Sir John Meadows Frost and the cricket ground appears to have been remembered by Willow Close built post-WW2.

Upton Heath (West of Caughall Road)

The new Arterial Road led to considerable housing development besides the Oakfield estate. The exhibition house, shown here copied from the original publicity, can still be recognised on Caughall Road.



3-bedroomed semi-detached properties were available as outright purchases or for a deposit and a weekly rent

They offered –

drawing room, dining room and kitchenette.

electric lighting and gas boiler.

coal and undercover washhouse.

garages were available at an additional cost.

The agents were Curlender of Liverpool.

Alwyn Gardens had just been started at the time of the 1936 Ordnance survey. The entrance on to the main road and the first properties on the northern arm are shown. By war-time, Alwyn Gardens was complete and the Acres Lane development had started (see page 124), allowing re-housing for those in poor Upton village centre cottages that were being demolished. The land had become available from the Egerton estate and acquired by P Curlander (Chester) '*for the building of private properties only and with a sale price no less than £550'*. This restriction was later reduced down to £450. The properties were initially a mix of owner occupier and rental, having been acquired by investors from Liverpool.

Curlander had started building along the south side of Acres Lane but this was suspended with the war. When they restarted in 1946 the properties were in great demand due to the post-war restrictions on building.

By 1936, Brooke Avenue had been completed except for the far end which was built post-war. The name 'Brooke' comes from the developer who used Danny Jones as his builder.

Stanton & Egerton Drives area

The area bounded by Mill Lane, the railway, Bache Drive and Park Drive was all former Dicksons nursery ground which they were looking to sell as early as 1925. They, too, established a restrictive covenant to maintain a minimum standard of building. By 1930 the land was owned by The Newton and Upton Land Company Ltd and appears to have been sold to various builders. In 1934 at least some of the Bache Drive area land was acquired and developed by Hoole builder, Rowlands. Stanton Drive (see page 9) was built c1937 by local builder George Morgan, who lived on the Stanton Drive/Rosewood corner.

Delvine Drive

Eddy Jones built the north side of Delvine Drive in 1939, not building his own property at the end of the cul-de-sac until the immediate post-war period. The south side, completed post-war, is understood to have been by another builder.

Upton Drive / Liverpool Road area

Peter Warrington recalls the story of how his uncle called into the Egerton Arms one evening c1930, to be told by the owner publican that he was selling former nursery land to the north of the pub. Warrington concluded the deal that evening and his company then built Bache Avenue and the first few houses up Liverpool Road from the pub. Liverpool Road development was continued north by Heywoods during the mid-1930s. Also in the mid-1930s, Capstick & Owen acquired and built on the rest of this ex-nursery land - the wedge between the railway and Liverpool Rd. While the 1936 OS map shows only a few houses on Upton Drive nearly all the rest were completed, along with the Bache shops, before the outbreak of war. Post war, when it was possible to start building again, they completed the last few, including Beechway, at the far end and Pine Gardens, all before 1950.



Wards shop alongside the Egerton Arms, 1940s

The first shop, after the Egerton Arms, was Williams newsagents which was soon taken on by Wards, as featured in the previous photograph, relocated from Liverpool Road. The baker/confectioner was Miss Miffans followed later by Yoxhalls. The greengrocers was Hanlons and then followed the chemists, initially Lanceleys later Gittins. Finally a grocers initially run by the Wilsons and then by the Stears. The Post Office was still across the road with Miss Nixon (see page 165).

Capstick & Owen also acquired Dicksons' Stanton House estate and started building in the grounds. Before building was suspended by the war, only the first few properties on The Croft had been constructed.

Life in the immediate pre-war period

Much of the land was still being farmed especially around the boundary of the village. Fred Davies continued farming out of Demage Farm until his death in the mid-1940s. Within the village, Powell of Upton Farm had pigs in the former penfolds and was slaughtering and processing, selling pork pies and black pudding.

With a steady growth in the population, several issues were being addressed by the Parish Council – then under the chairmanship of Richard Ithell and vice-chairman Frank Morris. Bache was amalgamated into Upton-by-Chester and for the first time, Public Indemnity insurance was adopted for Parish Council ground. Land was for sale and the Council was encouraged to acquire some for both recreation and for allotments. While the new Moston Road had encouraged considerable development in the northern part of the Heath, there was now concern about traffic dividing the community. The'Upton Ratepayers Association' was requesting a Caughall Road by-pass. Some development was clearly slower than expected – the Council sent a letter to the Ministry of Health complaining about lack of progress by contractors on the Acres Lane development. Meanwhile the Parish Council was still meeting in the schoolroom but had acquired better seating for their meetings.

Dicksons nursery had largely become waste ground offering children a play area. Remnants were harvested – either children scrumping from the orchards or



families of the previous nursery workers still managing to grow and gather a few crops. This view spans from the Upton Park Avenue of trees to the left and Newton's Rose Cottage, at the cul-de-sac end of Well Lane , to the far right.