

## CHEDISTON

The 2,500 acre parish of Chediston (sometimes shortened to 'Cheston'), is 2 miles west of Halesworth. The origin of its name, possibly 'Ceddes Stan' or 'Cedds Stone' may derive from one of its two glacial erratics, a large one at Rockstone Lodge and a similar one near Chediston Hall. Or the name may derive from 'Ched' denoting a ridge or brow (as in Cheddar). The findings of Roman pottery of ca A.D.60 and traces of buildings provide evidence of early Roman occupation.

Although a Church is mentioned in Domesday, the present Church of St. Mary probably on the same site, is of early English origin. The Register dates from the year 1630 and the square tower contains six bells but unfortunately these are no longer all ringable as a new frame is needed and one bell is cracked. It is hoped that remedial action will be taken. The building is well cared for and has several features of interest: a 14th century oak Chest; a Jacobean Pulpit; traces of wall painting; 15th century Font, and of particular recent interest a well restored Commandment panel which is believed to date from the 18th century. It is a coniferous wood panel, painted in oil the surround to represent marble, the centre panel depicting the Ten Commandments and the two side panels depicting Moses and Aaron. Several years ago it was removed from the Church and in 1986 special fund raising efforts raised about £650 for its repair. Finally in 1989 it was beautifully restored by an artist from the village, Barry Curtis. The panel was re-instated in an accessible position in a recess now sealing the former "Squires Pew" and in 1990 it was formally dedicated, at a Harvest Festival service.

In 1981 three members of the Chediston & Linstead W.I. did a survey of the churchyard. This was a very interesting project and has been a great help to people from Australia and America as well as England and in most cases they have been able to fill in missing links.

In the 1850's the old parochial Church School (the Church Room) was built to hold 50 children. According to records average attendance in the early 1900's was 30. In 1913 this school closed and a larger school built on the lower road in 1912 catered for children from Chediston and Linstead Parva up to school leaving age. In 1931 it became a primary school, the older children going to Halesworth and it finally closed in 1958 when all the children were transferred to Halesworth. Today, the older children are taken to Bungay and the school building is now a dwelling house.

The Church Room is now in a poor condition and needs updating and a thorough overhaul. At present, being the only village facility apart from the Church, it is only used for P.C.C and Parish Council meetings and the annual Christmas Sale. Fund raising has begun and to date over £1,000 has been raised towards the restoration of the Room to provide a social centre for all the village folk.

There were five almshouses for poor people given by Harry Claxton in 1575. These were rebuilt by the parish in 1832. Later they were condemned. The Town Pightle was attached to them and let for twenty shillings per year.

Henry Smith a prosperous London Merchant visited several country villages during his life time and in his Will of 1627, he directed that the poor and aged of 109 parishes he had visited should receive a yearly gift of food and clothing. Chediston was one of these parishes and until about 1970 its annual share was around £10. This has now risen and now yields several hundreds of pounds. A further major source of income (£5,500) was derived from the sale of the Claxton almshouses and invested in the Charity Commission. After the sale, the almshouses were demolished, but a bungalow built on the site retains the original external features and blends in quite well.

Elderly people are helped financially from the Charities especially at Christmas. At one time they were given coal and later they were issued with vouchers to shop in Halesworth, but they are now given cash. The Charities also help with transport for people should they have to attend hospital as there is no public transport available from the village.

There was a village Common or Green, about half a mile west of the Church but this disappeared between 1880 and 1900 (there is no record of its annexation in the parish records) An early Tithe map of 1839 and the 1880 Ordnance Survey map clearly show the Green as an open space. Field names appended to the Tithe map are most interesting - Potash Pightle (possible source of potash) and Hatchet Piece (in the shape of an old fashioned hatchet). At one time Chediston Hall estate comprised around two thirds of the area of the parish. The old Hall, once the home of the De Lacroix family, was damaged by fire in about 1950 and demolished. A new modern building was built in the 1960's and the estate is now owned by the Aldous family.

There was a very small, primitive Methodist Chapel on the Green between the Blacksmiths (now Violet Farm), and Willow Farm. This was later converted to a cottage and another Chapel was built in 1863 to the west end of the Green - this is also now a bungalow. Footpaths linking with other parishes radiate from this area.

The Duke of Wellington Public House on the Green closed in the mid 1950's and is now a private dwelling and Pottery. Shop row, a row of thatched cottages near the Church, once had a shop, as the name implies, and some time later a shop and post office opened in Thornton House and was still open in the late 1950's.

Chediston Grange is a moated site dating back to the 13th century and has been farmed by the Burroughes family since 1955. The late Harry Burroughes his Suffolk Punches, and large collection of horse drawn implements were well known locally and he was featured in the writings of George Ewart Evans who published books on horses and oral traditions. His horses "Stella Lady" and "Blossom" and their foals were a familiar site on the meadow, fetes, and at horse ploughing exhibitions, and in 1973 they appeared in a film: "Requiem for a Village" which featured Linstead and Chediston churches and involved many members of both villages.

The Gregory family, fruit and vegetable farmers of Ash Farm on the Green employ a number of casual seasonal workers and they offer 'Pick your Own' facilities which draws many people to the village. Believing that farming and conservation can go hand in hand, in 1975, having a 2½ acre low lying field which often flooded, they created and stocked a lake with brown and rainbow trout. Two years later another lake was created of 1½ acres on higher ground. Fly fishing only is allowed. The trees plants and shrubs have now matured and provide a peaceful spot and a haven for wild life.

Chediston and Linstead W.I. was formed in 1958 and meetings are held on the second Tuesday in the month at Linstead Village Hall. Membership keeps fairly steady at around 20. There is a joint Parish Council for Chediston and Linstead which attracts considerable public interest. Unfortunately its recommendations are not always heeded by higher authority.

Chediston is predominantly a farming area but many changes have taken place in the last 20 years as fewer men are needed to work on the land due to increased mechanisation and the demise of the small uneconomic dairy unit. Whereas 120 years ago there were 22 farmers in the village, as well as a shoe maker, shop keeper, blacksmith, miller, wheelwright and publican, today there are only about 8 working farms in Chediston.

Inevitably over the years the face of the village has changed with the loss of the shop, pub, school and decline in the people employed on the farms. Chediston has however acquired new life attracting a basket maker, potter, furniture maker, wood carver and sculptress. A prize winning crime writer and many artists live in the village and it is hoped that with the newly restored Church Room, exhibitions and sales will be held to illustrate the wealth of talent alive and flourishing in Chediston.

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Information received from Mr. Ted. Hurren, Jane Burroughes,  
Mrs. M. Burroughes and Mr. G. Bloomfield.