

## THE HISTORY FILE

'A Country fit for Heroes to Live in' Prime Minister Lloyd George, 1918

John Fox

New homes rewarded the returning soldiers of 1919 when local authorities became major landlords, with subsidies and powers to compel land purchase. Wheatley's housing stock rose by 30% (100 homes) in the 1920s, half of them the Wheatley Urban District Council black-and-white faced 'Tudorbethans' on the new London Rd [The Cut] and The Avenue. The gutter hoppers read *W.U.D.C* 1927 and both roads cut across the lower fields of Ambrose Farm where they sloped down to Common Brook. Postcombe, Lewknor and Warborough built identical houses in smaller clusters. With big gardens for fruit, veg. and trees, the houses at eight per acre were set at angles, to encourage neighbourliness. Half-timber facings and gables hinted at 'olde England' and a pre-war London exhibition about Shakespeare's Stratford (his tercentenary in 1916 passed unnoticed) had made mock timbering popular. Private, timber-faced and gabled villas had been familiar in Henley and Oxford, but now ordinary people had them and on prime sites, not today's marginal wasteland. The purists reacted. 'Tudorbethan' was one of the gentler sneers, but Betjeman's 'ugliest houses in Britain' verdict on Wheatley in 1938 was crass. Across 'The Cut', Mrs Milne of the Manor House gave half an acre of land to three of her four House tenants. Charlie Shorter built *Sunnyside*, Archie Harding *The Homestead* and James Tombs his two-storey home *Milne Cottage*. William Goodlake, the fourth, remained at the Manor until 1939. All had served 1914-19, and three were gassed, wounded or injured. Wheatley 'did its bit' in the peace as well as in the war.