
The Village of Codicote, Hertfordshire, England

CODICOTE IS a large Village, and Civil Parish about 2 miles northwest of the Town of **WELWYN** and 7 miles south of the Town of **HITCHIN** in Hertfordshire, England.

The Village of **CODICOTE** has a history going back at least **1500 years** but the earliest written reference to the Village comes from the **year 1002** when **KING AETHELRED (Ethelred the Unready)** sold the Manor of '**CUTHINGCOTON**' to one of his advisors, a man named **AELFELM**.



AELFELM, in turn, granted the estate to the Monks of **St Albans Abbey**, and the Abbey held the manor for the next **537 years**. The Abbots were demanding Landlords, requiring the villagers to provide them with a boar, 1000 eggs, and cheese at **Easter** and a boar with 50 fowls each **Christmas**.

The Abbot carefully planned the layout of **CODICOTE**, with narrow **BURGAGE PLOTS** stretching away from the market place. The village name evolved during the Saxon period and refers to the '**cote**', or **cottage**, of a man named **Cudda**.

BURGAGE, in Normandy, England, and Scotland, an ancient form of tenure that applied to property within the boundaries of boroughs, or burghs. In England land or tenements within a borough were held by payment of rent to the king or some other lord; the terms varied in different boroughs. Among English feudal tenures, burgage ranked as a form of socage, the holding of land in return for agricultural or economic services.



The Village was listed in the **DOMESDAY BOOK** of **1086**, and within the next 30 years (sometime around **1110**) the **PARISH CHURCH** of **St. GILES** was built. The oldest part of the present building dates to the 13th. Century but the Church retains what must be the original 12th-Century ironwork supporting the south door. In the churchyard is an unusual grave rail, or leaping board, to **John Gotheridge**, who died in 1824. **The inscription records that Gotheridge had to be buried twice, after resurrection men dug up his corpse and then abandoned it.**

Body snatching is the secret removal of corpses from burial sites. A common purpose of body snatching, especially in the 19th century, was to sell the corpses for dissection or anatomy lectures in medical schools. Those who practised body snatching were often called "resurrectionists" or "resurrection-men"

The **ABBOT OF ST ALBANS** obtained a Royal Charter from **Henry II** to hold a weekly market in Codicote in **1267** and four years later in **1271** he obtained the right to hold an Annual Fair. It was the combination of the market and fair that led to the growth of the present village, especially since the village stood at the junction of roads between **HITCHIN** and **BEDFORD, LONDON, and WELWYN, and St. ALBANS and WHEATHAMPSTEAD** and thus attracted a large number of travellers.

The **MARKET** was held on the Village Green and gained a reputation for selling fine quality cloth. The market may have helped the village grow but it also helped spread the **BLACK DEATH PLAGUE** in the 14th. Century, with the deadly plague germs thought to have been carried in bales of cloth.

We know that a few years later in **1279** there was an **Inn** (later named the **GEORGE AND DRAGON**). The inn catered to Pilgrims on the road to **St Albans Abbey**. The pilgrims might have been better advised to stop elsewhere, as in **1279** the landlord, **Hugo Cocks**, was fined for bad brewing practices. Manor courts were held here, and the '**vestry**', an early form of a **Parish Council**, also gathered at the Inn.

The **George and Dragon** is now the **As You Like It** restaurant, but it is the oldest premises in Hertfordshire to still hold a license to sell alcohol.

The villagers took part in the **PEASANT REVOLT** of **1381**. One Codicote native, **Stephen Truebody**, was executed for his role in the Revolt. The outraged villagers retaliated by burning the Abbot's Mill at nearby Codicote Bottom.

When **ST ALBANS ABBEY** was dissolved by **Henry VIII** the Manor of Codicote passed to John Penne, the Royal Barber-Surgeon and Groom of the Privy Chamber. The Penne family held the manor until 1653 when they sold it to George Poyner.

Codicote High Street formed part of a turnpike road, with a popular Coaching Inn catering to travellers.

In the 19th Century, **CODICOTE** had a flourishing **STRAW-PLAITING INDUSTRY**, with most local women making plaits for **LUTON'S HAT INDUSTRY**.



THE HILL

The area at the junction of **High Street** and **St Albans Road** is known as **THE HILL**.



In the Medieval period, it housed the weekly **Market** and the annual **Village Fair**. The market was abandoned in the Tudor period but a **Hiring Fair** took place each September, with local employers vetting new labourers and servants.

On the Hill is a set of **Village Stocks**, which were used to punish miscreants.



The present stocks are replicas, but the original set stood very near the same spot. The stocks were eventually replaced by a small gaol or 'cage' that stood beside the Bell Inn.

The white house is **APPLE TREE COTTAGE**, a 17th-century building once the home of the village **Carpenter and Undertaker**, and later used as an early 19th. Century **Drapers Shop**.

Note the “blue plaques” on the wall...

CODICOTE village has over 70 listed buildings. Many of the older buildings have blue plaques outlining the property's history.

Another plaque is set on the wall surrounding **CODICOTE HOUSE**, a late 18th-century building on the site of an earlier Tudor house known as **STAGENHOE HALL**.

On Bury Lane is **THE BURY**, once called the **Manor House**, built around 1659 and listed Grade II* for its heritage value.



The **BURY** Manor House