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Cranfield Then & Now

Introduction

This is a set of photographs showing the changes to Cranfield as a built environment by comparing old images with the same views taken in 2020. Most of the old photos come from the County Archive while others were donated by Cranfield residents and ex-residents through the Cranfield Community Facebook group.

Like most villages, Cranfield's population, and thus the demand for housing, has been constantly growing. According to the 1901 census there were 1,239 people living in the village, by 1951 there were 2,160 and by 2001 there were 4,905 residents recorded. In the 2011 census, there were 5,369. At the same time changing lifestyles have seen shops and pubs close and become private dwellings, while changes in both the amount and type of traffic have changed the roads themselves. All this can be seen in these photographs.

Please note that all the images are subject to copyright and should not be downloaded or reproduced without permission. I would like to thank the Bedfordshire County Archive for their support and Jane Owen, George Dixon and Bernice Maynard for their interest and contributions to the project.

Chas Leslie

[Bedfordshire County Archive - Cranfield](#)



82 High Street

A comparison of 82 High Street with its condition c1980. The original building has been extended at both ends and divided into two properties.

Jane Owen, who provided the original photo, tells that this was once a small-holding held by the Parker family.



Top Photo: courtesy of Jane Owen

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie

Court Road

Comparison of the view from the corner of Rectory Lane looking South – the older photo is dated 1910/20.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/5**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Goodman Almshouses

The Almshouses at the western end of High Street in 1910 and 2020. The top photo is from a postcard - on the bottom right-hand side of the card are the words 'x Mr Jack at home ' at the top right-hand side of the card is "x" above the last house on right. The boarding to the right of the lower picture is part of a housing development currently being built.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/22**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



51 – 55 High Street

High Street looking East in 1912 and 2020. The three houses on left with the ornate chimneys are almshouses (51-55 High Street), the second set of almshouses established by the Goodman family.

The houses on the extreme left are new and have been built further back from the road than the original photo hence the end of the almshouses is now visible.

Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive

Z1130/34/29

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Jessamine Cottages

The cottages were extensively renovated in the late C20th, the bricked-up windows can be clearly seen in the right-hand set of cottages. From the left the three cottages are 113, 115 & 117 High Street. The older photo is dated 1905

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/24***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Memorial Hall

The original photo is dated to sometime between 1912 and 1930. The hall was built in 1911, its full title is the James Frances Hatfield Harter Memorial Hall and was erected to the memory of the late Squire of Cranfield and the owner of Cranfield Court. The hall was extensively refurbished 2009/12.

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/5/7***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Mount Zion Chapel

Hardly recognisable to the 1906 original. The chapel is the house on the right of the picture with a modern garage built to the front of it. The other buildings, behind the tree, are mid-C20th(?) and appear to have been built on the same footprint as the original ones. Founded in 1849 due to a split in the East End Baptist congregation, the Chapel went out of use in the early C20th(?) and became a private dwelling while the remaining congregation re-joined the East End church. The chapel's burial ground in Merchant Lane still survives.

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/25***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



NW Corner of Merchant Lane

The western corner of Merchant Lane & High Street, original dated 15 Feb 1949. It is unclear what the shop on the right was at the time (in the 1960's it was a fish & chip shop) today it is a Men's hairdresser/barber shop. The smaller shop on the right (actually 2 Merchant Lane) was a snack bar in 1949 but is now a private dwelling.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 3512 02.**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Shop & Carpenters Arms (High Street)

The High Street, north side of village green showing the location of the grocery shop and the Carpenters Arms (on the corner of Merchant Lane) in 1908, 1940 and 2020.

*Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/6*

*Middle Photo Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/4*

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie

The Swan PH

The archive photo is dated to 1910, the original building was replaced in the mid-C20th by one on the same/similar alignment.

*Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/5/3*

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Teapot Row, 79-83 High Street

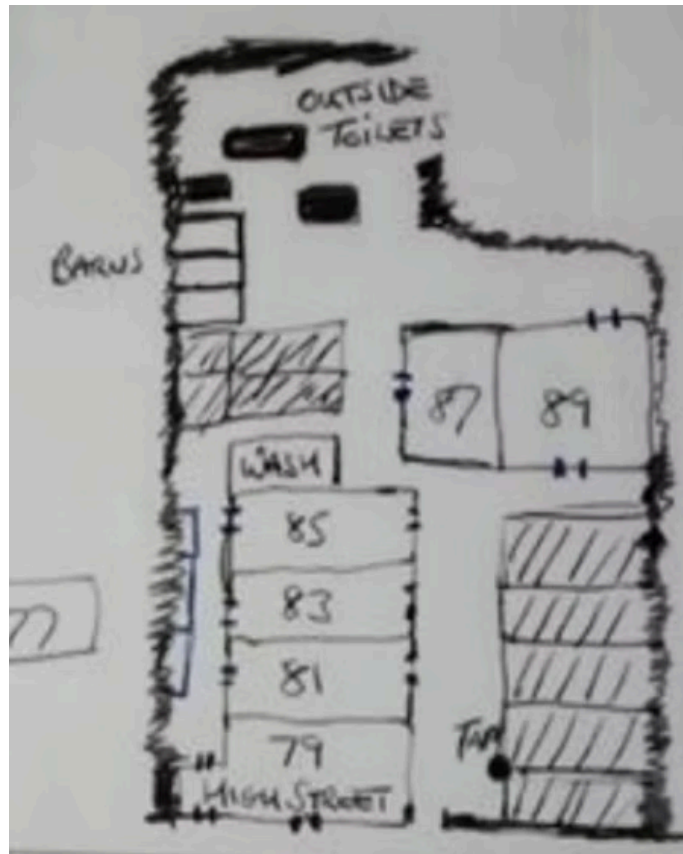
Four photos comparing two views of 79-83 High Street (formally site of 79-87 High Street, known as Teapot Row), the older images were donated by George Dixon. The original row had a shared water tap (outside No79), a shared washhouse and a block of toilets at the far end of the row (see sketch map). It was demolished in the late 1960's.

Top Photos (Left & Right): Courtesy of George Dixon

Bottom Photos (Left & Right): Chas Leslie:

Sketch Map - Teapot Row

Sketch map by George Dixon of the layout of the original Teapot Row showing the location of the toilets, washhouse and water tap. The whole complex occupied the same plot as the modern 3 houses and garages.



The Old House (109 High Street)

The original photo is 1906. Extensively rebuilt in the late C20th when the farm buildings behind it were demolished and modern houses built (Oak Barn Close). In particular, a modern extension was built at the back of the house and a garage to the front.

*Left Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/5/5*

Right Photo: Chas Leslie

The Old Post Office

The original is a postcard dated 1921. Allon White subsequently altered the house to the left of the Post office to open a car dealership & garage. At some point in C20th the Post Office, still run by the Whites, moved to the property to the right of the one shown as the car dealership extended. This closed in the late C20th (a sub-post office is now provided in the Co-op on Mill Road). Allon White's is still a noted Morgan car dealer and specialist sports car garage

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/6/2***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





The Old School

The Old School in Court Road photographed in 1915, c1960 & in 2020. It is largely unchanged apart from the railing/fencing - note the repairs to the chimney since 1960. The modern school buildings are behind, though the old building is still used for teaching. The "School House", on the left of the building, where the headteacher would have lived is now a private dwelling. The Memorial Hall, visible in the background in the original is hidden by garden planting in the furthest cottage. The middle image of the school is dated to c1960 (based in the cars parked by the school)

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/4/1**

Middle Photo Courtesy of Bernice Maynard

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



The Old Smithy

Now a private residence is largely hidden by a hedge. Located on the High Street, the smithy itself remains as a range of outbuildings to the left of the house. The older photo is as it was in 1905. It was used as a smithy into the 1970's(?)

Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/5/4

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



The War Memorial

The memorial was erected on the village green in 1920. Originally open it is now railed off and surrounded by a rose garden. Plough Cottage, at the end of Church Walk (in the background), is now whitewashed. The wreath in the lower photo was laid on 15 Aug 2020 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in the Far East in 1945. The older photo is dated 1921.

Left Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/6/4

Right Photo: Chas Leslie



The Warrens, Court Road

Three views of a cottage, now known as "The Warrens" (on Court Road to the south of the churchyard) comparing it in 1952, 1960 and 2020. It provides a good example of how some old cottages have been extended: note the extension and garage to the left of the picture. The church is largely hidden by the trees but the eastern entrance to the yard can be seen on the right of the picture.

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 4586 01***

Middle Photo Courtesy of Bernice Maynard

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Church Tower North View - of School

Three views from the Church Tower looking North across the old school buildings. The top one is probably 1930's, the centre one 1990's and the bottom one 2020. The house in the centre left of the original is probably Walk House, demolished in the 1960s and Walk House Close built on the site. The house to the left of the school was derelict in the 1990s and by 2020 had been replaced with a new building.

Top Photo: Courtesy of Bernice Maynard (from a postcard in her possession)

Middle Photo Courtesy of Bernice Maynard

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie

Church Tower SE View - Oaken Pin Close

Two views from the Church Tower looking South East over the churchyard comparing the view in the 1990s and 2020. The housing beyond the churchyard in the lower (2020) picture is Oaken Pin Close.

Top Photo: Courtesy of Bernice Maynard

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





44 Court Road

Two views of 44 Court Road and next door. The top photo is October 1940 and shows bomb damage following a raid on the airfield. The lower one is Sept 2020, note extensions on sides of both houses incorporating garages.

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 946 04
Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie***



Church Walk

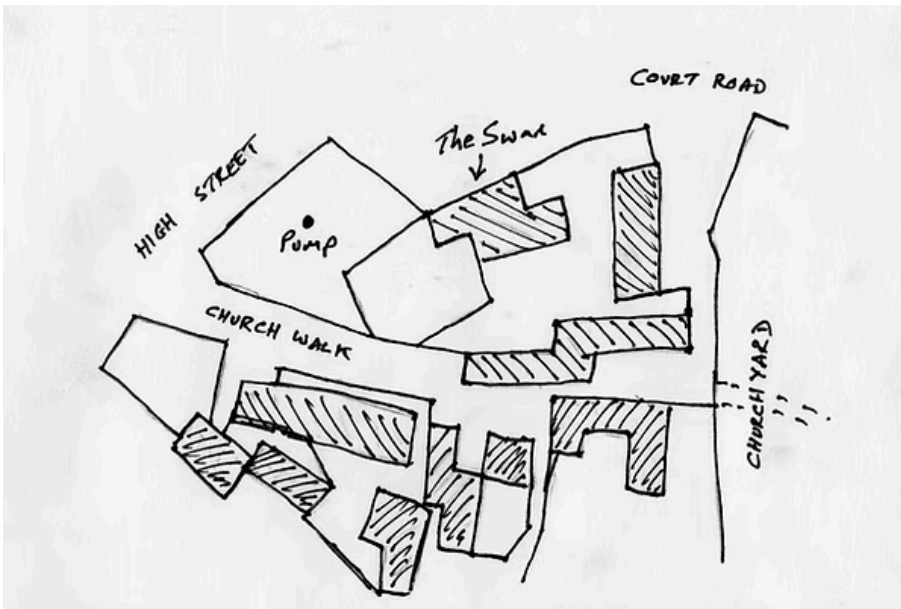
The church tower (the spire was dismantled in 1975) is hidden by the trees. Church Walk Looking East towards the church in 1914, 1947 and 2020. A hedge now lines the edge of the village green and the Church tower (now without its spire) is hidden by trees. The outbuilding on the left of the original photo was originally a medieval chapterhouse belonging to the Brotherhood of Corpus Christi. In the 1947 photo, it appears to have been used as a garage (or a workshop?), it had been demolished by 1983 (it was not there when I moved into the village). In the two earlier photos, the frontage of the houses at the far end on the right of Church Walk extends out to the lane itself. Sometime in the mid-C20th, these were demolished and the new houses built back in line with the other properties, giving a clear view down to the Church entrance and, presumably with the demolition of the chapterhouse, allowed vehicle access to the churchyard.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/11**

**Middle Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 2871 04**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Sketch Map – Church Walk c1890

Sketch map of Church Walk based on a late Victorian OS Map. Note the alignment of the Chapterhouse and the cottages nearest the churchyard.

High Street - Orchard Way

Orchard Way was built in the late 1960s, the semi-detached houses in the centre of the top two photos were demolished to give access to the estate. The top left photo is 1930's(?) while the top right is 1950's(?). The reference "Puryer's Stores" is probably to the shop that sold the card.

Top Photos: Courtesy of Bernice Maynard
Bottom Photos: Chas Leslie





130 High Street - Hardware Shop

A comparison between 1949 and 2020. The single storey building on the right is a hardware shop (and has been since the 1970s) now owned by the Marshalls. It is not clear from the original photo what its use was in 1949. Note also an aircraft (Douglas DC-3) coming in over the village to land at the airfield

***Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 3512 09
Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie***



The Old Rectory - East Hills

The old Rectory (shown here in 1927) was demolished in the late 1960s and the land subsequently sold for development. Maps in the ARCHI UK Database (<http://www.archiuk.com/>) show that the Rectory stood in the Northern corner of the site, what is now East Hills. A new Rectory was built in the SE corner of the grounds.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/20**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Parish Church – East End

The East end of the Parish Church c1915, 1956 and 2020. Taken from by the three tombstones in the foreground of the top photo, Churches tend not to change much externally. The top photo is recorded as being taken between 1905 & 1920. The middle photo was taken in 1956 apparently to record that the church walls had been repointed - presumably, this was also when the ivy was removed. By 2020 (bottom photo) the spire had also been removed and replaced with a weather vane (it was dismantled in 1975 having fallen into disrepair).

***Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/12***

***Middle Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 5394***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Parish Church - General view of the Nave & Chancel

General view of Church from the west end of the nave. One key change compared to 1905 original is that the communion table/ alter has been installed at the entrance to the chancel. The Chancel itself is blocked off as a temporary measure while the flooring is repaired.

***Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1130/34/36***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Parish Church - The Choir

The choir stalls on the north side of the chancel. Compared to the 1948 photo they are very much unchanged, except the church no longer has a formal choir of its own. The yellow plastic bags/sheeting and stacked tiles on the far right of the picture relates to repairs to the chancel flooring that was going on at the time the photo was taken

***Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 3453***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Parish Church - The Chancel

A view of the Chancel compared to that taken in 1950, showing the detail of the modern communion table. A further difference is the absence of the flags and banners over the choir stalls in the earlier photo. Note though the church group banners in the far right corner of the chancel.

Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP (Bedfordshire Press) Box 4000

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Parish Church - West end of Nave

A set of photos showing the west end of the Nave (the opposite end to the Chancel). The doorway was installed in c1950 (Top Left) using parts of the old rood screen discovered in a barn at the end of WWII. Above it was a gallery and the church organ (Top Centre). In 1999 the organ and the gallery were removed and a new organ installed at the East end of the North Aisle. The ringing chamber was also lowered to its present level and can be seen in the upper part of the arch in the 2008 photo (Top Right), the chamber was accessed by a loft ladder from the ground floor of the tower. In 2011 a meeting room was installed at the end of the South Aisle and a kitchen & toilet in the North Aisle with stairs up to a new gallery (Bottom photos). The ringing chamber is now accessed directly from the gallery through the upper part of the arch. (Thanks to Sheila Ewan for confirming the dates of the alterations)



Top Left Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive BP (Bedfordshire Press) Box 4000
Top Centre Photo: Courtesy of Sheila Ewan
Top Right Photo: Courtesy of Dr Marjorie Cotton.
Bottom Photos: Chas Leslie

19/21 Court Road

View of the rear of 19 & 21 Court Road from Rectory Lane. The original was taken in 1940 to show the bomb damage. The roofline of the building and line across gable end are recognisable as is the outhouse (front centre/left) and footpath to the left in the foreground. A most noticeable change is the garage (poss 1950s?) and the extension to the rear of No.19. Note similar extension on building left background (Nos 23/25 Court Road)

***Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 946 02***

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Broad Green / Mil Road Junction

The junction of Mill Road, Crane Way, Broad Green/Crawley Road and Bourne End Road, at the southern end of Broad Green. Now a roundabout with significant realigning of the Bourne End Road junction. Most noticeable is the amount of build and urbanisation since the original was taken in 1917. The building that became "The Leathern Bottle" is just visible in the background extreme left of the older photo.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/20**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Broad Green – NW Corner

The North West corner of Broad Green at the junction with Crawley Road (going away from the back right of the photo). The building shown in the original photo (c 1910) became "The Leathern Bottle" PH in the early part of the C20th (as can be seen in a photo held by Milton Keynes Discovery Centre). It was demolished in the late 1930s and a new pub built next to the site. That pub closed c2001 and was in turn demolished and the site used for housing - as shown in the lower photo. (see photo "The Leathern Bottle", Cranfield; Kitchen, Maurice; 1925 to 1936; KIT/7/150, held by Milton Keynes City Discovery centre <https://ehive.com/collections/4535/objects/279867/the-leathern-bottle-cranfield>)

Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/18

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





Millfield Close (site of The Ritz)

The Ritz Cinema was built in 1938 and demolished in the early 1960s, the site being used for housing (Millfield Close). The white building on the extreme left is a pharmacy, the edge of it is visible in the original photo. Maureen Cooley who worked there as a relief usherette remembers that the last film to be shown was "The 39 Steps".

*Top Photo Bedfordshire County Archive BP
(Bedfordshire Press) Box 276 01
Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie*



The Co-op Store

The Co-op store as it is now and as it was in 1940. The most noticeable change is the realignment of the junction of Mill Road & the High Street/Bedford Road and the car parking spaces that it created. In the 1940 photo, the roof of the Ritz is just visible behind what is now the pharmacy.

Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive

Z1306/34/2/19

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





The High Street by Village Green

Taken from the corner of High Street & Court Road, looking roughly SW along the High Street.

The older photo dates from the 1940s, the most noticeable difference is the realignment of the road itself and the trees on the corner of Church Walk just beyond the memorial. Notice also that the roadway has been narrowed to create a wider pavement and to move traffic away from the memorial.

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/3**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



The Lane behind 130 High Street

Taken from roughly the same location as Photos 13, 22 & 33 (the piece of green opposite 118 High Street), these photos show the lane that links Court Road and High Street. Though the older photo dates to 1906/16 the lane is basically unchanged though the building in the left middle distance has been demolished and rebuilt with a higher roofline thus hiding the church tower (now minus its spire).

**Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive
Z1306/34/2/13**

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie





High Street Looking SW

The High Street looking South West from the green opposite 118 High Street in 1910 and today. Apart from the road itself and the post box, very little has changed. The buildings on the extreme right are Jessamine Cottages, while the low building on the extreme left is the Marshall's Hardware shop.

Top Photo: Bedfordshire County Archive

Z1130/34/27

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



Church Tower NW View – Merchant Lane & Airfield

The view looking North West from the church tower. Merchant Lane on the right and Church Walk bottom left corner. The trees in the churchyard now largely obscure the view of the village green and the High Street. The airfield was built 1935/37 as an RAF base. The Maltings, where Maltings Close now stands, are in the centre of the older photo. Note the amount of building along Merchant Lane since the original photo was taken.

Top Photo: Courtesy of Bernice Maynard

Bottom Photo: Chas Leslie



For more information about the history of Cranfield go to The Bedfordshire County Archive Community Histories webpages for the parish:

<https://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk/CommunityHistories/Cranfield/The-Parish-of-Cranfield-in-General.aspx>