



Manor Farm Ansty, Wiltshire in the 1950s and Early 1960s

Manor Farm, Ansty, Wiltshire, was one of the largest and most important buildings in this village. At this time there were very few new houses built in the area since the outbreak of World War Two.

Turning off the Salisbury to Shaftesbury road, the A.30, towards Ansty village the road follows the lowest contour in a shallow valley. The first building encountered in those days on the left hand side was a very large stone barn. This barn belonged to the owner of Manor Farm and by the look of the stonework it was the same age as the farmhouse, which meant it was very old indeed. The barn measured approximately 100 feet in length long by 25 feet wide and was used to garage the larger farm equipment such as a bailer, haystack conveyor, tractor etc. and an engineering metal workshop. After the barn came Ansty Pond which was fed by two underground streams from the higher ground. This was a very large pond, in fact it was over an acre in size, and again belonged to the farm owner. At the end of the pond in the centre of the road junction came The Maypole, a centre of festivities on every Mayday and when the Ansty Silver Band gave its best. The Maypole, with the village streetlight, was just under half a mile from the main road. Ansty village was on the electricity mains but there was no gas.

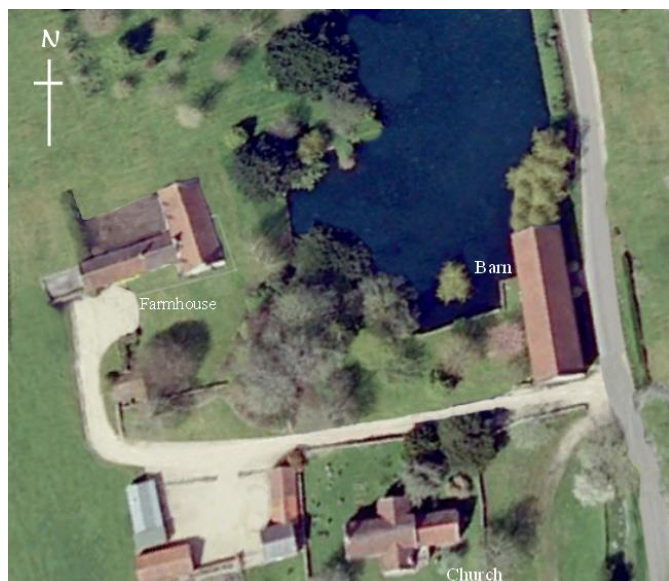


The stone barn runs south to north and at its southerly face was the vehicle turn off into St. James Church and Manor Farm. The drive entrance was shared by both and then split about thirty yards later. Turn left and that was the church approach. Turn right and the entrance to the farm rose gradually and curved away to the right passing the milking sheds and cow barns on the left hand side. Outside the milking shed area was the standard height wood platform which was the collection/delivery lorry's platform height as well, for the galvanised metal milk churns, collected daily. These were outside every dairy farm at this time since the Milk Marketing Board started in 1933 and regulated such constructions.

Up to the farmhouse and near the door was a flat area of standard diameter originally to turn a pony and trap now squared off and spaces created for car parking. This side entrance to the farm house faced the south and church, and was a small latch door in the side of what was the 'capital T' shaped structure. The main entrance doors, at the bar top of the T, and

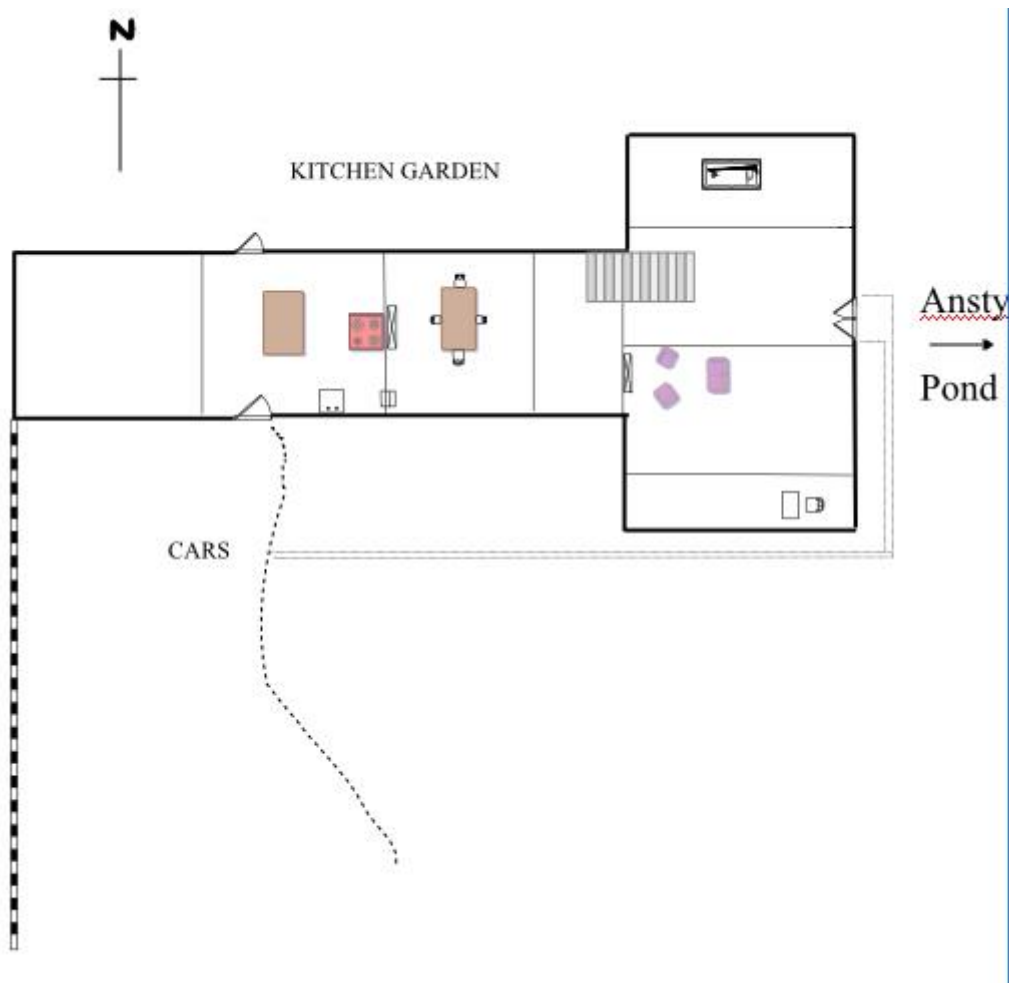
facing Ansty Pond, were equally unimposing at the front of the house. The front doors were never used in the 1950's.

In the 1950's and part 1960's the farm, pond and barn were owned by Douglas Davis, the most affable of men, respected and very popular with the local community as was his wife. He was a son of farmer Davis of Bishopdown Farm, Bishopdown, near Salisbury. The family had lived and farmed at Bishopdown for several



generations. Douglas Davis was possibly a tenant at Ansty Manor Farm from the late 1930's. He and his wife Ethel had three sons and a daughter between 1937 and 1941. They would be educated at St Probus School, Salisbury, and the Leehurst Convent School for Girls, Salisbury, travelling the not inconsiderable distance each day to and from Wilts & Dorset bus.

When the farm was sold freehold in 1946, Mr Davis as a tenant, had the opportunity to purchase, which he did. The sale also included New Barn farmstead on the A.30. and the large Ansty Pond as well as the barn by the church. The pond he kept in first class condition, regularly importing quality ducks although in the mid 1950's he purchased three Canada geese which he regretted as they bred very quickly and tended to terrorise the indigenous ducks. They were all a pleasure to see on the water.



The farmhouse was an ideal family home. Because of the very thick stone walls and small windows there was never much variation in the internal temperature. All the rooms were a good size. The ground floor throughout had the original large flag stones as base flooring. The latch door entrance entered directly into the large kitchen, somewhat dominated by a large solid ancient table in the middle of the room and larger than average stone enamel washing sink near to the door, and an electric oven. The next room was where the family ate and there were five well-worn steps down into it from the kitchen because the whole building was on sloping ground. This room had a hearth and had a cast iron double oven cooking facility of indeterminate age in it with its coal fire at its centre. Not used for cooking now the ovens were ideal places to keep new-born lambs at spring time who were in distress, warm, with the fire at an absolute minimum and the doors open of course. In the centre of the room was the family dining table.

Like all houses of this age and character every room was on a different level by either one or two steps. Exiting the dining room was a wide corridor with the option of turning right into the lounge,

straight on for the stairs or left for the largest room in the house which acted as a family games room complete with full sized snooker table. In the lounge the really large recessed hearth meant big logs could be burned in it and there was a door off for Mr Davis's office.

The government at this time was urging such farms to produce as much food as possible following World War Two. Rationing continued on many items so the produce from the farm was typical of the age. There was a herd of cows with the milking sheds nearby, with a bull for breeding from the cows. There was a flock of sheep with a ram, many chickens with cockerels and early on a piggery. With animals such as these farming here was a three hundred and sixty-five days' occupation. Then there was the seasonal ploughing and harvesting of either corn, wheat or barley in the big fields alongside the main A30 road. The biggest cattle market in the area was in Salisbury and took place every Tuesday.



Mr. Davis drove a Ford Pilot car, the V8 side valve version and a ton and a half in weight, originally designed by the Americans for their market. It was an ideal

workhorse for a farm of this type and each wheel had its own jack built-in should a puncture occur. It could haul a goodly sized trailer. In the middle to late fifties when the Rover car company started producing the ubiquitous Land Rover he purchased one of those in place of the Pilot.

The farm land was just under two hundred acres surrounding the house and included fields alongside the A.30 road and fields between the farmhouse and a farmstead called New Barn, some half mile from Manor Farm towards Shaftesbury. New Barn consisted of two stone built buildings which stored hay, straw and animal feed and two tractors one of which was a big engine Fordson mainly used for ploughing and harvesting and to hauling hay bales. The other had its front wheels close together for crop row working and might have been a John Deere.

In the nineteen sixties farmer Davis's health deteriorated. Running and maintaining a building such as The Manor farm house as a working unit was obviously difficult in later years especially as the children had grown up and left home. It was far too big for two people to live in anyway so he and his wife decided to build a new house on their land near New Barn.

Manor Farm then changed usage to a residential house without the farming business part of which was transferred to the smaller and more modern new house at New Barn. An era had ended.

With acknowledgement to Google Maps and the Rover Car Company.