

*Martin as it was earlier in the century, showing the Priest's House on the right and the Manor House in the distance.*

neighbouring village of Damerham were granted by King Edmund to the Abbot and Convent of Glastonbury, was the first time that an authentic record of the name occurs — referred to as 'Domerhame cum Mertone'. The same names were included in the Domesday survey.

Until the reformation, the village was dominated by a large demesne, or tenanted, farm of the Abbey of Glastonbury which most probably is identified with the present Bustard Manor Farm in East Martin. The name 'Bustard' derives from the Great Bustard which existed in Wiltshire before finally becoming extinct about 1820. This same name occurs in connection with the House in 1739, the Pond in 1754 and the Down in 1845. All of which no longer exist. Interestingly enough, the present house, built around 1816, renewed its acquaintanceship with the Church when between the years 1903 and 1921 it was owned by the Cistercian Fathers of Our Lady of Paradise. These Trappist monks, refugees from France, built their chapel, planned the fields, planted and harvested a variety of crops and fodder and tended the apple trees from which they gathered the fruit to make their cider. It is said that on moonlight nights the ghost of one of the monks can be seen riding naked through the village on horseback — a result of too much strong cider no doubt. When they departed they took with them their goods and chattels and their dead and returned to their country of origin, France, where they settled in their present home in Briquibec, ruled over by the Bishop who was one of the original 'Monks of Martin'.

In one respect the village life of today has undergone an important change in that it has no market days. In 1331 Edward III issued a charter granting to the Abbot of Glastonbury a weekly market to be held in Martin on Fridays. This was in addition to the one held on Wednesdays, already permitted by the grant of Henry III in his charter of 1266.

Many of the buildings in the village date back hundreds of years with many of the present farms deriving their names from those former tenants of Glastonbury Abbey who occupied them more than five hundred years ago — Sweetapple (John Sweetapulle), Harris's (William Harries), Garrett's (John Garrett), Prince's (Thomas Prynce). The family name Martin also appears frequently, although having no connection with the name of the village today.

As is often the case in village histories, the oldest building is the Church and Martin is no exception. The present Church of All Saints (a common Wiltshire dedication) has a western part of the nave



which represents a small, but complete Norman Church, probably as old as 1080. The Tower and the Tower Arch were built in the early part of the 13th century. In keeping with the 19th century devotion to restoration, the present octagonal spire was added during this period, together with other alterations. As evidence that certain aspects of village life don't change, it would appear that the North door was used by the residents of West Martin and in particular the occupants of the Manor House, whilst the South door was used by the residents of East Martin.

In the words of the popular song, 'the pub with no beer', Martin is 'the village with no pub'. It does however possess a British Legion Club on the outskirts of the village where members can enjoy a quiet pint and a game of snooker — over which I find I can be appraised of the latest beef or lamb prices and the state of the harvest. The absence of a pub has not always been the case, for Hart House, next to the church probably the oldest building in the village, was up to the turn of the century the White Hart Inn. There are almost as many references to this one time mediaeval hospice as there are to the church, which is some indication of the importance placed on religion and revels — in that order. After all, in those days the church accepted the responsibility for the poor, needy and sick and many of these ailments no doubt originated in the local inn. A beam found in Hart House at the time of its most recent restoration has the date 1429 carved in it which could supposedly be the date the building was first erected.

A little further along the main street is the Priest's House, a delightful 15th century thatched cottage, most probably named after the parish priests, appointed by the Vicar to care for the souls of the inhabitants, who are said to have lived there in the Middle Ages. The house contains a bricked-up opening which some say is a tunnel leading across the fields to the church — which could be construed as being a bit sneaky — and others say it is a priest's hole. Other old

buildings include the Manor House, built around 1550 although now much reduced in size and altered in appearance; old farms and a number of half-timbered cottages dating back to around 1650. It is one of these that I now occupy and did, at one time, share with Old Simeon. Old Simeon was, or still is for all I know, a ghost. Whilst I was never aware of his presence my wife certainly was, together with the dog who took a rooted objection to his being there.

He made himself known by the smell of his pipe tobacco and the ticking of his old fob watch. That he existed in ghostly form I have no doubt for a former occupier of the cottage, through a spiritualist friend, verified the fact. Whether or not you believe in ghosts, all I know is that when we took out the modern fireplace to reveal the original inglenook, Old Simeon must have been content for he has not since visited us. However, I digress. Between the mid 1700's and the early 1800's many old buildings were demolished and new ones erected. This blend of old and new so endeared itself to the author W. H. Hudson that he described it vividly in his famous book, *A Shepherd's Life*, under the name of Winterborne Bishop. The central character, Caleb Bawcomb, he based on the Martin shepherd, James Lawes, whose gravestone can still be found in the churchyard.

The population of Martin, which currently numbers some 360 souls, has seen many fluctuations over the centuries according to the many surveys conducted. In 1189 there was thought to be a population of 394 reaching a figure of 599 in 1851. The black death stretched out its ugly hand, even in this remote part of the countryside, decimating the inhabitants by one third or more. Early records show that smallpox appeared repeatedly between 1790 and 1800 bringing with it the inevitable deaths. During the late 1600's it appears that not above half of the women of Martin were married and, not surprisingly in such an isolated village, the illegitimacy rate was high. As the maintenance of an illegitimate child was