

## Elstow - Historical Cryptic Quiz. The answers.

*Question 1. The name of a house and a cottage confuse postmen on high. What is the name of both and the number that has been assumed by the smaller?*

Answer. Pilgrim House and Pilgrim's Cottage. Pilgrim's Cottage has the number 155 on it, which is puzzling, as this cottage did not even exist when the Whitbread Estate owned most of Elstow. (Apart from Bunyan's Mead, none the numbers on old properties in Elstow are *Street* numbers, they are all Whitbread Estate numbers.)

*Q 2. Although there are several in the village, you cannot fish from any of them.*

Answer. Jettys. Many of the old cottages are 'jettied' – i.e. the upper floor juts out over the lower – as in a jetty.

*Q 3. What originally rose daily in this now blooming place? And when?*

Answer. Bread – the building that now houses Simmons' Florist was built in 1888 and was a bakery. It became a florists in 1962. <http://www.floristsbedford.net/>

*Q4. Between 2 and 3, in 77 was, and is, an opening. Look for a direction to find out who the architect was.*

Answer. In the mid 1970s, the Whitbread Estate sold the old cottages on Elstow High Street the Bedford Council for £1. The idea is that the Council would restore the cottages and build bungalows behind them, to form a new sheltered housing scheme called Bunyan's Mead. Between what is now numbers 2 and 3 of Bunyan's Mead (under the arch) is a wooden plaque, commemorating the opening in 1977 of this new development. The cottages lost their old Whitbread Estate numbers and, with together with the new bungalows behind them, were renumbered under the collective name of "Bunyan's Mead". The main architect who 'directed' this project was (Bernard) West.



*Q5. Horseshoes, petrol & pop came from this location. When did a brewer acquire the house?*

Answer. No 28 Bunyan's Mead is thought to have been the home of Elstow's Smithy. As the round 'SW' plaque (on the front of the cottage above the door) indicates, Whitbread purchased the house (and the land around it) from the last members of the Hillersden family (two sisters) in 1796. This later became the local garage and then, in the late 50s, a Schweppes drinks depot. The site was then absorbed into the Bunyan's Mead development in the 1970s. (If anyone has old pictures of the smithy or garage, do please contact me, via my website; <http://clivearnold.weebly.com/contact-me.html> )



*Q6. It's a sign and a celebration for 51. What was it called, when and why?*

Answer. The Elstow sign opposite no 28 Bunyan's Mead was erected in 1951 and bears the logo of the Festival of Britain. This festival was staged partly to cheer people up after the war and to celebrate English heritage and innovation. There was a big exhibition and fair in London and several heritage restoration projects were carried out around Britain – Moot Hall being one of the most notable.

*Q7. You can see it was quite a drive, but what was this place's proper given name?*

Answer. In the field where the 1951 village sign is, just a few yards north, you can see the contours of the wide driveway that lead up to what is now referred to as the Hillersden mansion. Thomas Hillersden (the second) had inherited the Elstow estate from his father, Sir Thomas Hillersden, and decided to convert part of the old Abbey cloisters into a grand house. He died before this was completed, but left a bequest of £100 for his wife to carry out the work. The finished house was named 'Elstow Place'. There is a model of how the house probably looked on display in Moot Hall.

*Q8. Before the first Act, for over 60 years, children learned here.*

Answer. Moot Hall. The Elstow congregation of the Bunyan Meeting Church leased Moot Hall from the Whitbreads, from 1812 and used it as a place of worship for almost 100 years, until their purpose-made church was built in 1910. They also, in Moot Hall, ran a one day a week school (on Sundays) for local children. (This would have been those children's only formal education!) In 1870, the first Education Act was passed, making primary education a statutory requirement for all children in England. Elstow's first full-time school was opened (on the High Street) in 1873.

*Q9. Two lights in the north-eastern shop contain how many diamonds?*

Answer. Moot Hall originally had four (later on, six) shops on the ground floor. Windows used to be referred to as 'lights' and windows made up of multiple pieces of glass were called 'leaded lights'. The window of Moot Hall's north-western shop has two leaded lights and you can – if you wish - count the number of diamond shaped panes for yourself!



More information about Moot Hall: <http://www.bedford.gov.uk/moothall>

*Q10. Go green if you are stumped to find out who renewed a charter.*

Answer. On Elstow green is the stump of a medieval cross. This denoted Elstow (i.e. the green *and* most of the surrounding fields) as being the site of a (Royally) chartered market. Henry I granted the first charter in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and, 450 years later, that charter was renewed by Henry VIII. By Bunyan's time, this was a very large event and was the inspiration for his 'Vanity Fair' in "The Pilgrim's Progress".



*Q11. Norman's niece enabled others to follow Benedict. Who was she and he and how did she accomplish that?*

Answer. The Norman was William the Conqueror. His niece was the Countess Judith. She owned more land in England than any other woman, indeed more than many male owners! Judith founded Elstow Abbey, a nunnery of the Benedictine order.

*Q12. What was the name of that lady's husband's and why did he die?*

Answer. Countess Judith's husband was a Saxon named Waltheof. He was said to have been involved in a plot to overthrow King William but William let him off. Later, there was talk of a second plot and Judith, either deliberately, or inadvertently (depending on which account one believes), revealed either: that Waltheof was again involved, or: that the plotters were trying to involve him. Whatever the truth, this time Waltheof was not let off and he was executed. Some say Judith founded Elstow Abbey as a penance (either for inadvertently giving away or for deliberately betraying) Waltheof. Others surmise that, as Waltheof was a Saxon, she may have married him simply in order to legitimise the Normans' acquisition of his lands. His connection to any plots against William may have been fabricated so that Judith could be rid of him.

*Q13. Before Medieval times, no-one rang here but they kept a lookout.*

Answer. The bell-tower of Elstow Abbey Church. Originally, this tower was only two thirds of its present height and its purpose was as a watch-tower. The belfry was added sometime in the medieval period.

*Q14. At its height, what was at least twice as long?*

Answer. Elstow Abbey has undergone several transformations in its almost 1000 year history. At one point, it was a very large building – the nave once stretched almost to the back of the Swan Inn. More history can be read here: <http://www.elstow-abbey.org.uk/history/index.html>

*Q15. One day every week, young Bunyan saw something that gave him the idea for the symbolic starting point of Christian's journey. It still exists - but what, and where, is it?*

Answer. It was mandatory to attend church every Sunday, so each week John would have gone to the Abbey church. In the western wall, there is a (now disused) second large wooden doorway and, within that doorway, a much smaller door. These were known as 'wicket' gates. In "The Pilgrim's Progress", John's main character commences his journey by going through a wicket gate. This reference carried significant symbolism –in that entering Elstow Abbey church (possibly through its wicket gate door?) was the beginning of a journey that eventually lead to John Bunyan's conversion and thus to the start of his spiritual journey.

*Q16. Formally a lady of letters, she now refreshes visitors. Who and where?*

Answer. Anyone who is a regular at Elstow Tea Garden – 229 Church End - will know that Joyce Willis, who runs it, used to be Elstow's post-mistress.  
<http://elstowteagarden.weebly.com/>

*Q17. Site of 1000s of images of Elstow.*

Answer. Sorry, but this is not a *physical* site in Elstow but a *web*-site. There is a link to it on my website links page, <http://clivearnold.weebly.com/links.html> - click on 'Elstow Picture Archive'. If you have any drawings paintings or photos of Elstow that you would permit me to scan and add to that archive, please contact me via my website.

I hope you enjoyed this cryptic quiz and that you learned something of interest? Do use the contact form on my website - <http://clivearnold.weebly.com/contact-me.html> - to let me know what you thought. Eg. Was it interesting / too difficult / too easy? Would you like me to try to devise another?

*Clive Arnold*

Pilgrim House, High Street, Elstow