

## Gone, but not Forgotten

# Poplar Farm

Many of the local farms, especially those in the centre of the villages, have had some major changes in the last fifty years. On these farms the farmhouse has become a separate entity and the farm buildings have been converted to uses other than those connected with farming. (As with the changed Coldstone Farm, Shipton and Lower

Farm, Upper Milton, which is undergoing changes.) But, only one local farm has disappeared completely – Poplar Farm, High Street in Milton.

In 1900, Poplar Farm was a small, mixed farm of 120 acres tenanted by John Henry Watts at a time when local agriculture was not doing well due to competition from imports of cheaper grain and meat. During the first world war Frank Gillett acquired it, but he, like other local farmers had a difficult time and by 1929 he had become bankrupt (which also saw the end of the Fowler-Maddox occupancy at Coldstone Farm in Shipton).

Meanwhile, Charles Wells, as an ex-soldier, became tenant of the newly acquired county-council owned Heath Farm in Green Lane, Milton. Then wishing to increase his acreage (from 67 acres) he took over the tenancy of Poplar Farm. Later, when the farm came up for auction Mr Wells could not afford the reserve ask-



The old Poplar Farm house and below: Girl Power! Does anyone know this lady?

ing price. The solicitor handling the auction asked Mr Wells how much he could afford which was a figure well below the asking price. As the solicitor was anxious to make a sale on behalf of the creditors the lower price was accepted (there being no others).

With the introduction of a fixed price for milk Mr Wells increased

his dairy herd as he now had a guaranteed income. This, together with the sale of other products from the farm (except sheep) meant that Mr Wells kept in business. The farm was given a boost by the need for extra food production during the war years and immediately after.

But, after a 35-year occupancy of Poplar Farm, Mr Wells, now facing old age, and with no-one in the family to take over, the farm was sold as a working farm in 1964. As happened with other local farms it was bought by an adjoining farm to increase its acreage of land. The farmhouse, buildings and orchard became superfluous to the new farm and were sold on. Subsequently all were demolished for the building of a close of 32 residential houses and all that remains of Poplar Farm is the name incorporated in the name of the close and a small part of the garden wall fronting the High Street. Memories remain.

**John Rawlins**