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THE VILLAGE AND THE ROAD

John Trigg

Woolhampton, bisected by the Great Bath Road (the A4), lies mid-way between Reading and Newbury and betwixt the villages of Theale and Thatcham. It is some 50 miles distant from London. The canalised River Kennet and a main railway line lie to the south within the village, parallel to the Bath Road.

Since at least the eighteenth century, the village has had mixed feelings about the highway and its traffic. The impact of the canal has been less dramatic, although in 1742 and again in 1862, the parish vestry engaged in legal disputes with the canal company with regard to the upkeep of the river/canal bridge that provided the southern entrance to the village. In the latter instance the vestry lost the case with the GWR, who then owned the canal, and the parish incurred a debt of £237 8s 8d.[1]

The railway came in December 1847 on the completion of the GWR's Reading - Hungerford extension under the direction of Brunel at a cost of £20,000 per mile. The village could now boast of a station and level crossing and Bridge Street became Station Road. Woolhampton ceased to appear on railway timetables after 1873 when the name of the station was changed to that of the neighbouring village, Midgham, reputedly on account of its confusion with Wolverhampton as 'too many mistakes kept arriving'.

The railway's coming presented the village with both opportunity and drama. On a fine June morning in 1862 a train left Newbury bound for the 'World Fair' exhibition at South Kensington. The engine pulled 33 carriages and conveyed 1,274 passengers, including 61 who boarded at Woolhampton. The excursion reached Paddington at 10 O'clock that morning. Comfort may have been uncertain, as it was not until 1875 that the Midland Railway, the first to do so, upholstered the seats in the third class compartments.[2]

The village became home to a stationmaster, porters and signalmen, with packers in the goods shed and plate layers on the permanent way. In 1893 'an old respected porter' died as a direct result of a platform accident

Midgham station pre- 1914

involving a departing train. A major disaster was narrowly avoided in 1927 when the bogey wheels of the prestigious King George V locomotive left the rails. The express was carrying 600 passengers on the 225 mile non-stop Cornish Riviera run. The train was skilfully brought to a halt as it churned up the permanent way close to Midgham station. In 1961 a mother and child were killed by an express train when walking to their canal side cottage by means of a crossing to the west of the village.

As this article explains, however, it is the demands of the road that have done most to shape the village and its inhabitants.

Stage and Turnpike

In 1670 Celia Fiennes commented 'From Reading to Theale and hence to Newbury all clay mirey ground'[3]. Such words indicate the poor state of this important route and as the Frankum family papers indicate (see below). It is by no means certain that the most used 'road' would have been along the lowlands of the Kennet valley.

The papers of the Frankum family of Woolhampton contain the following information. In 1757 a Sarah Owen married a Mr Appleby 'whose father built for him the Rising Sun at Woolhampton Hill by which spot the Bath Road which had previously passed by Beenham and Kiff Green had been recently brought under a new survey and turnpike trust'.[4] The Rising Sun is one mile to the east of the village and Kiff Green is in Upper Woolhampton to the north of the present Bath Road. Turnpike trusts had statuary powers to erect toll gates {originally bars or pikes) across a designated stretch of road and to collect tolls from travellers. Revenue so raised was used by the trust, who employed a surveyor, for the upkeep and improvement of their particular stretch. This replaced the annual responsibility laid on the parish for the, repair of their local roads, which generally had been unsatisfactory.

The newly turnpiked road reached Bath in 1756 and it was recognised as having the best surface in the country. It was for this reason that the *Reading Mercury* of 25 July 1784 reported that 'on Monday next the experiment of the more expeditious conveyance of the mail by post-coach with a guard will be made on the road from London to Bristol, the letters to be posted in the London office every evening before seven and to arrive at Bristol the next day at twelve'.

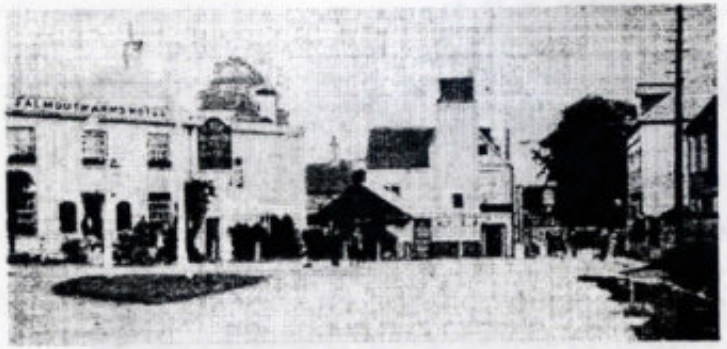
Mail at this period was, generally, carried in a relay system by postboys who changed horses at inns, known as post houses, conveniently placed along the main roads. A letter from London so delivered would have taken at least 30 hours to reach Bristol.

The mail coach was the suggestion of John Palmer of Bath who arranged with Edward Fromont, of the Kings Head, Thatcham for the hire of coaches; he was also to provide the horses for the middle section and his inn was nominated as the staging post for the Reading - Newbury stretch.[5]

The Bristol-bound coach was due to arrive at Thatcham for 2 45 a.m. 'Twenty minutes are allowed for refreshments, to be off by three minutes past three o'clock in the morning'.

In later years shorter stages were introduced and the then landlord of the Lower Angel, Francis Sampson, was a Woolhampton postmaster.

The village inns flourished in the golden age of coaching. *Kelly's Directory for Berkshire (1842)* recorded that Woolhampton had 'two comfortable inns for accommodation of travellers' and coaches to Bath, Bristol, Marlborough and Reading pass through Woolhampton daily calling at the Lower Angel and that the Optimus to Marlborough and Reading passes through daily and calls at the Old Angel (the present Falmouth Arms).[6] Sarah Frankum of the Rising Sun, 'who in 1795 had married a John Rimell, a driver of the Bath coach, spoke of 13 coaches stopping there during the night'.[7] In May 1818 an unidentified 16-year-old travelling by coach died at the inn.



Falmouth Arms & village looking east

Although Dick Turpin and others may have enjoyed notoriety there were less ostentatious ways of robbing a coach. On 27 February 1827 the coachman driving the Gilder and Co.'s coach from London to Newbury came to rest at Woolhampton only to discover that 'his hind boot was unlocked and entirely cleared of contents'. The driver recalled being followed from Reading by two men in a light cart who 'before reaching Woolhampton had disappeared'. Had they carried out a daring robbery on the move?

In June 1838 the *Reading Mercury* reported 'Four felons from Midgham - Messrs Walter, Chambers, Budd and Law - were apprehended for stealing a hamper containing wearing apparel from a stage-coach at Kings Head, Thatcham'.

The 'Iron Horse'

In 1840 the railway from London reached Reading and at a further cost of £2,825,830 continued to Bristol. The year 1843 saw the last through stage-

coach from London to Bristol. The 'Vivid' from the Pelican Inn, Newbury, now conveyed passengers to Reading station where the coach was placed on board the train and carried forward to London. It then proceeded across the city to La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, fulfilling the onward movement that was later to become the monopoly of the familiar hansom cab. The coach returned by way of the 5 p.m. from Paddington and hence to Newbury for 8 p.m. to complete the 12 hour journey. By 1852 the annual toll revenue at Thatcham had been reduced from £1,227 to a mere £263. The turnpike gates were removed in 1878 but the tollhouse remained until 1964.[8]

Two Wheels

The coming of Stanley's Road Safety Bicycle in 1884 enabled the mobility of the common people to be extended by freeing them from a reliance on the expensive horse or conveyance by the local carrier. Its popularity by 1903 was great enough to support a cycle retail and repair shop in Woolhampton where a Humber cycle might sell at £4 - £5 with possible local purchase arrangements (the average agricultural labourers wage being 18s a week at this time}. In 1898 the Cyclist Touring Club, a voluntary organisation, had some 60,000 members and was responsible for many early road signs. Local authorities in rural areas were slow to address this need and the sign warning of the steepness of Woolhampton Hill was provided by the C T C.

Road races were held on the Bath Road. In 1872 there was a 105 mile challenge from London to Thatcham and back between Thomas Carlyson, London Athletic Club, and Charles Spencer, editor of *Modern Gymnastics*. A collision with a black pig disrupted proceedings - verdict 'match drawn in Carlyson's favour'. Woolhampton builder and Congregational Sunday school superintendent George Johnson was the proud owner of a cornet won by him in a cycling event on his 'penny farthing'. Family history and family memory would suggest that he gained this success in the early years of the 1880s.

The 'Horseless' Carriage

In 1913 children were warned of the dangers of 'doing their dags' on the Bath Road. This was a game of dare as they vied to cross the road at the last possible moment in the face of the oncoming motor vehicles, now increasing in numbers. In the year following this warning a total of 132,015 cars were

registered and by 1928 1,510,000 vehicles were using the national highways.[9] Such growth was stimulated by the falling costs. In 1925 an Austin Seven cost £225, but by the early 1930s this had been reduced to £118 - about one third of the salary of the village schoolmaster.

A J P Taylor wrote 'the motor car enjoyed an extraordinary freedom. Virtually no roads were barred to it. Anyone over the age of 17 could drive one'. The number of those killed on the nation's roads in 1934 was higher than those killed 19 years later when there had been a six-fold increase in the number of cars.[10] The young unprotected motorcyclist was particularly vulnerable, as was the cyclist with a carbide front light and a mere reflector and white painted mudguard at the rear. Both the elderly and young pedestrians were at risk, confused by their lack of experience with the speed of the 'new' traffic.

Attempts were made to regulate the speed of vehicles and one such offending motorist was fined £5 5s in 1903 for exceeding the 12 m.p.h. speed limit on the Bath Road, having been timed by a policeman over a measured half-mile which he had covered in 15 seconds. A district councillor complained of cars 'keeping up with the expresses from Aldermaston to Thatcham'.

The general state of the roads prompted unfavourable comment. One unnamed Berkshire councillor described the rural roads in 1930 as 'not fit for any self-respecting donkey to travel over even at his sedate pace'. Newbury District Council had neither the capacity nor willingness to spend sufficient money on road building or maintenance. Such work that was done was contracted out to local farmers or others who had access to gravel and a steamroller, who did such work at a time of their own choosing and certainly not by qualified civil engineers. The landlord of the Angel Inn, Woolhampton, did such 'maintenance'.

It was during the Georgian years with the advent of the motor car that Woolhampton and the neighbouring stretches of the Bath Road first acquired a reputation as an accident black spot.

On Good Friday 1912 a cyclist was killed and a catalogue of 'spills' and more serious collisions continued unabated. In 1928 a village boy was killed when crossing the Bath Road on his way home from school. On the August Bank Holiday of the same year a Woolhampton couple, whilst riding their

motorcycle and side-car, collided with a lorry outside their home as they were setting out for a holiday excursion. The wife was fatally injured.

In 1924 the Ministry of Transport decided that there should be no speed limit through the village. The policy was that road improvements and 'good manners' would reduce the risk of accidents

Defoe had noted during his travels of the 1720s that 'road by Woolhampton so narrow and inconvenient that no room for two coaches to pass'. In 1767 J Smith wrote to the *Reading Mercury* in the following terms, 'another very narrow place just on east side of stone barn a little to this side of Woolhampton where a trifling sum would pay for cutting down a few trees and laying a little of the field on the north side of the road'. A little more than the 'cutting down of a few trees' was proposed in 1930 by Berkshire County Council regarding the planned extensions and improvements between Reading and Newbury. This was to include bypassing Theale and Thatcham, although this was cancelled because of the financial crisis of these years. Over 90 men from the depressed areas were employed on this project. Villagers witnessed many Welsh miners marching to London at this time, and gave them soup.

Pre-1914 view looking west at the bottle-neck

In 1931 the removal of Defoe's bottle-neck at the east end of the village began. Thus was set in motion the demolition of the Angel inn, which housed s butcher's shop, the adjacent old Woolhampton brewery which held the newsagents, the post office and two cottages adjacent to the road - all on the north side of the village. The present Angel was built behind its predecessor, the newsagents was replaced by the present village shop; a butcher's was built as an extension to the new inn (it now houses the post

office).[11] Modifications were made to the gradient and sharp bend at Sun Hill and the bend so eliminated holds the modern substantial lay-by.

Dangers continued. Steam wagons from a depot at Thatcham and from the Hovis mill at Newbury spilled into cottage gardens and left loads of butter or other cargo on the road. This was compounded by the increase in the number of large motor vehicles, such as lorries and charabancs, striving for speed to gain a competitive edge over rivals and the railway. These pioneering operators were initially free of inhibiting laws and regulations and such matters as brakes and lights, so essential on poor road surfaces and unlit highways, were not given the required maintenance.

Matters reached a crisis point in the 1950s with an increase in both traffic and accidents. There was a depressing litany of such happenings taking place in the village and adjacent highway. The local newspaper kept a file devoted to Woolhampton accidents. The village was unlit; there was no sign to indicate that a traveller was entering a village and no speed limit. (for the drivers, there were no crash helmets, no MOT and no seat belts). Ironically post-war road improvements had made the Bath Road faster for the motorist but no safer for the pedestrian.

Modern times looking west

The nadir came in 1958 when two local residents were killed while crossing the main road within four months of each other. Questions were asked in the House of Commons by local member Anthony Hurd, and in November of that year a packed village meeting attended by the Chief Constable, the local county councillor Sir William Mount, and the District Surveyor, resolved to provide pedestrian refuges to enable the road to be

crossed in two 'bites'; to mark the approach to the village with a name board and a Slow sign and to light the main road through the village. In 1980 a 40 m.p.h. speed limit was imposed but not before two children had been fatally injured. Currently there is a 30 m.p.h. limit supported by a speed camera.

It is still possible to travel from Midgham station to Reading, Paddington and Newbury and the canal has been rejuvenated for leisure and pleasure. But the road still dominates. Crossing the road can be an 'adventure'; the noise is ever present, with some mitigation since the opening of the M4. Shop and post office survive because of passing trade.

Motorists slow down as they approach the village, check their watches with the clock on the Gill Campbell Hall and observe the conserved half-timbered south side of the village. The villagers have a love/hate relationship with the road that has both bestowed and destroyed.

References

[1] J Trigg *Before the 'Fountain* (1995) pp 105 - 106.
Woolhampton Parish Records (Berkshire Record Office BRO D/P 156).

[2] Donald Read *England 1868* -1914 (Longmans 1975) p 67.

[3] Daphne Phillips *The Great Road to Bath* (Countryside Books 1993).

[4] Frankum Family papers (part held BRO D/P 156/28/3).

[5] *John Palmer and the Mailcoach Era* (Bath Postal Museum 1984) p 7.

[6] *Kelly's Directory for Berkshire 1842.* entry under Woolhampton.

[7] Frankum Family papers (BRO D/P 156/28/3).

[8] Roy Tubb *Thatcham Road Names* (1991) p 227.

[9] Donald Read *England 1868 -1914* (Longmans 1975) p 417.

[10] A J P Taylor *English History* 1914 – 1945 (Clarendon Press 1965) pp 302 - 303.

[11] Deeds of Angel Inn, Woolhampton (BRO D/EX 1172/1/3-11).

The reported pre-1867 events are from the *Reading Mercury* available at Reading Local Studies Library. Later items are from the *Newbury Weekly News* available at West Berkshire Library, Newbury. (Both are on microfilm).

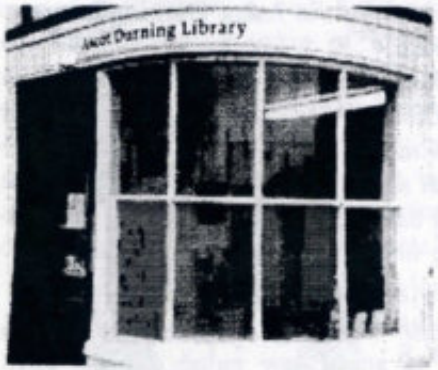
Note. *Village Collection: more old tales of Woolhampton,Midgham, Brimpton and Wasing* by John Trigg (2000) is available from Woolhampton Stores or Woolhampton Post Office.

FOR INNOCENT ENJOYMENT AND IMPROVING THE MIND: A VICTORIAN BENEFACTION

Pat Smart

In February 1890 the *Daily Graphic* reported the formal opening of the Durning Library at Ascot 'for the use of Ascot and its vicinity'.[1] The donor, Miss [Jemina] Durning Smith, was described as 'the lady who built the Lambeth Free Library'. Miss Smith donated ten thousand guineas to the Lambeth Library Commissioners.[2] The newspaper reports of the openings of both libraries show a less heavily didactic, more intimate tone of personal goodwill at Ascot than at Lambeth in the style of the occasions and in the reporting.[3] However the history of the Ascot library can reveal more clearly what the benefactor's intentions were in founding a library for a neighbourhood.

Private benefactions were important for the development of the public library service in England. At that time, Ascot parish had neither the legal power to fund a library, nor the means. Even for those authorities where a rate levy was permitted, the product of a halfpenny or penny rate would usually be insufficient to provide initial funding for a site, dignified building and adequate bookstock. Although Andrew Carnegie is the best-known benefactor, because of the interest he took (particularly in his retirement) in providing library buildings in both America and Britain, there were others before him, albeit on a more local scale, and these included women. Miss Durning Smith hoped that others would follow her example. In 1869 J S Mill's essay on *The Subjection of Women* had pleaded for perfect equality. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882, and the Women' Suffrage bills from 1886 onwards, indicate a trend towards opportunities for more independent thought although in practice these were only available to the privileged few. Jemina was single and of independent means being a co-heiress with her younger sister, Edith Jane.



As to the unusual Christian name 'Jemina', there is a reasonable possibility that it was an individual choice as a more elegant feminine version of Benjamin than the Benjamina deplored by Charlotte Yonge in her contemporary book on the history of Christian names.[4] Her grandfather was Benjamin Smith, a cotton merchant in Manchester; his eldest son (Jemina's father) was John Benjamin Smith; John was to become one of the founders of the Anti-Corn Law League; by 1841, after strenuous public campaigning about import duties and the severe distress amongst manufacturing workers caused by the resulting scarcity and high food prices, his health suffered to such an extent that he had to retire abroad for two years.[5]

John B Smith

Although father and daughter have similar strong features, Miss Durning Smith was always delicate, having been partly paralysed as a child.[6] It seems reasonable to suppose that this disability accounts for the twofold object of the Ascot Durning Library, which was quite as much to provide harmless recreation as it was to afford opportunities for improving the mind.[7] One might deduce that reading had been found to be a valuable antidote to the dullness of a quiet life, although it is also evident that as an adult, she was in contact with people of influence with wide interests. Jemina's circle of friends included one of the Lambeth Library Commissioners, Mr W S Caine. Amongst others, Lord Rosebery, as chairman of The London County Council, and her brother-in-law, Edwin Lawrence, attended the Lambeth Durning Library opening; both men were interested in literature. In later years, Edwin was to become a Liberal-Unionist MP and well known as an enthusiastic propagandist for the Shakespeare / Bacon theory.[8]

Jemina Durning Smith

Miss Durning Smith lived with her married younger sister, Edith Jane, and Edith's husband, Edwin, in her father's old home at Ascot, until her death in 1901, aged fifty-eight.[9] A nephew of Edwin's married a suffragette, incorporating her maiden name with his family name of Lawrence. As Edwin has been described as following his example in that he adopted the name Durning before being knighted in 1898, so becoming Sir Edwin Durning-Lawrence, it is likely that the family were not unsympathetic to the Women's Suffrage movement.[10]

They may also have been sympathetic to the idea of self improvement as Edwin Lawrence's father had been a prime example of a self-made man, coming from Cornwall as a carpenter and eventually becoming wealthy and an alderman in the City of London. Three of his sons became MPs. Edwin was a younger son and took a benevolent interest in both the parish of Lambeth and in Ascot; he had addresses in both the capital and Ascot.[11]

The well-to-do were attracted to Ascot by its convenient location for travel to London, the cheapness of the building land and the 'invigorating breezes' over the heathland.[12] A practical guide for the 'unprofessional reader' for selecting and building a house advised that 'Nothing can counterbalance the value of a healthy locality...Popular knowledge on sanitary subjects is now so extensively diffused that healthy localities are always of ready sale'.[13] Richardson also observes that 'the erection of country mansions, villas and other residences, has of late years been greatly stimulated in our country. The enormous accumulated savings of the commercial portion of the community have induced a large amount of capital to be invested in such objects'.[14]

Commercial directories list only the more important householders, but they do give helpful descriptive comments about the district. In 1863 when Miss Smith's father was living at King's Ride Ascot, his address came within the directory entry for Sunninghill, 'an extensive parish and large village... . The vicinity of Sunninghill is entirely occupied by a succession of extensive parks and seats of the nobility and gentry'. There were railway stations at Sunninghill, Ascot and Virginia Water. In the same directory, Ascot Heath addresses were within Winkfield 'being only six miles from Windsor, it abounds with seats of the nobility'. Both entries divide the residents into Gentry and Traders.[15] By 1869 Ascot Heath contained' several

fashionable villa residences and two good hotels'. The directory also remarks on the many 'newly erected mansions in this parish'.[16]

At Lambeth the Kennington Durning library was purpose built with a Venetian palace style façade; the site was between two modest houses and the young architect made the most of his opportunity.[17] By contrast the Durning Library building at Ascot was an adaptation of the old post office in Winkfield Road. After the initial gift, the income for the library was to come from the rents of adjoining properties, purchased by her for that purpose. Miss Durning Smith decided that the area of eligibility for library and reading room membership should be extended to a three-mile radius from the library building. The caption to a contemporary photograph states that the total population of the area at that time was under 7,000 and the bookstock 6,500. This was a generous provision, particularly as it was funded by one individual.

The help of an invited committee of Ascot and Sunninghill residents (including two clergymen) was requested to manage the affairs of the library at Ascot. As the minutes of these Trustees show, Miss Durning Smith exerted an active influence. Her wishes were usually made known through her brother-in-law, although sometimes by letter. Her detailed instructions were always for the improvement of the effect of the benefaction and included further financial help if that was needed to carry out some extension of the library's responsibilities. She was described as having a benevolent attitude to all her neighbours; this facility was not intended for just one strata of society.

However it was reported that

> 'It must not be supposed that simply amusing or entertaining books were necessary for a village library. In the collection there were a number of technical books relating to various trades; it was hoped that different village workpeople in the district would [find] valuable popular books dealing with their respective trades and crafts which would enable greatly to improve themselves as craftsmen.' The two-fold object of the library was to provide both harmless and innocent recreations and 'to afford opportunities for improving the mind and for study, and the general elevation in the social scale of those who enjoyed these great advantages.'[18]

Library Staff

The early librarians were not professionals and their duties were in keeping with their previous experience in the army: keeping accurate records of books issued from the closed-access shelves to registered readers, accounts of the small payments involved, supervising the building, which included a reading room and reporting to the Trustees.

Unfortunately these reports do not survive and are only quoted from in part, whenever the Trustees needed to decide on any matter arising. The librarian had very limited powers; living accommodation was above the library rooms; the hours of library supervision were long. Members of the committee employed household staff, so this would seem quite usual to them. The Trustees instructed that no woman should be considered for the post of librarian. (Women readers were only allowed in the Reading Room till 5 p.m.).[19]

The first librarian, Mr Bradshaw, stayed for one calendar year in 1891; the second resigned in 1893 when the Trustees had to arrange for the library building to be fumigated against scarlet fever, including the librarian's quarters. They agreed that he should be given a reference stating that he had carried out his duties satisfactorily. It was then decided that children were not permitted to live on the premises. It seems probable that the presence of a child led to the infection; in the 1891 census Edwin J Parker aged 39, born in Ireland and his wife, Isabella, aged 26, born a British subject in the East Indies had a visitor, Ada A Ingram, aged seven, born at Gosport, Hants.[20] Contagious and infectious diseases had to be taken very seriously. In addition to library premises, library books were perceived as carriers of infection if handled by a patient, so that strict measures were taken.[21]

Recruitment had been through the local newspapers and an advertisement placed in the Athenaeum. The third librarian, appointed in April 1893, was of a different calibre; Mr Walters was an Oxford MA. From shortly after its opening, a caretaker had been employed to facilitate the building being open over the librarian's lunch break, after a request by local workmen; he had recently been dismissed after some disagreements between him and the trustees. Mr Walters volunteered that his wife would fulfil the duties of caretaker, thereby increasing their remuneration, but he and his wife stayed

for only a few months. His successor was chosen by a sub-committee of two trustees. There is no record in the minutes as to his qualifications, but Mr O'Byrne proved to be a good choice as he stayed for twenty years, until he retired on a monthly pension in November 1913.

Bookstock and Attitudes to the Purpose of Libraries.

Miss Durning Smith had a reputation for being concerned for the well being of all her neighbours, both rich and poor. The librarian at Lambeth was requested to select a bookstock of standard works for Ascot. It seems reasonable to assume that this meant writings of a certain calibre and included fiction with a respectable reputation. However one of the Ascot 'librarians' differentiated between 'standard works' and 'novels and tales'.

Nationally, subscription and circulating libraries included in their stock popular stories and light romantic novels. At Lambeth Durning library opening, Spurgeon, 'the most popular preacher of his day', who was not well enough to attend, wrote to warn against acting as 'novel-mongers' He was much concerned with the bookstock improving the minds of young men.[22]

In 1890 the Library Association held their annual meeting at Reading. At that time, the president was the principal librarian of the British Museum. He commented on the demise of the old fashioned three-decker novel, which 'the nervous impatience of the present day' found 'too much for endurance'. He considered that 'we live in days of small books, in which is condensed, the information, which used to be conveyed in a much larger form ... It is an age of literature in nutshells ... most people read, but we live too fast to find time to read deeply'.[23] The Ascot library catalogue appears to contain some of these 'nutshell' series, for example: English Men of Letters, Story of the Nations, The Great Musicians, and British Manufacturing Industries.[24] The growth in readers was for recreational reading. The borrowing of books rather than buying was becoming socially acceptable, but equally the demand from libraries encouraged publishing.

The first book taken down from the shelves by the librarian at the formal opening was the Bible, which was then used during the ceremony. The library was the normal closed-access collection with choice being made from a printed catalogue, which could be purchased for three pence for use at home. Only the librarian was allowed to reach down the requested book

from the shelves and hand it to the caller for a registered reader. The reported totals of books issued by the librarian in the first three months of opening indicate that 25% were standard works. In 1892 the average was 16% standard works and 84% fiction.

The exercise book listing registered readers is in number order. Retrospectively the book has been dated for the period of Mr O'Byrne's stewardship, but must have been commenced before then. Miss J Durning Smith is number 1. In the earlier entries the names and address details are minimal. In many instances full Christian names are not given, merely a first name's initial, and titles such as Mr, Mrs, or Miss are often not written down, so gender is not indicated. The handwriting changes at number 1282. Thereafter the details are more carefully given. At the big houses these include occupations such as servant, butler, maid, kitchenmaid, gardener. Later some names have been struck through and a few have been underlined. Any person who was not a ratepayer needed a guarantor's signature, a very usual requirement. There was a lower age limit of 16 years. The last number is 3332. The full register would probably have been a file of the signed readers' application forms, so the list would have acted more as an index. Addresses included Ascot, Ascot Heath, South Ascot, Sunninghill, Swinley, Cranborne, Bracknell, Chavy (or Chavey) Down, Winkfield and Windsor Forest.[25]

The fact that someone appears as a registered reader does not absolutely confirm that they borrowed books. Perhaps this was necessary in order to use the reading room, or to attend the classes held at the library building. For staff at the big houses there may have been influence exerted by the employer, who wished to be seen to be supporting a local benefactor.[26]

Up-to-date reference books, and newspapers and periodicals were provided in the reading room. The weather and season affected attendance. At the beginning of May 1890, the librarian had reported a lessening in numbers using the reading room with the commencement of the better weather.[27] March and April in the countryside with spring tasks and the lengthening daylight hours would have made a difference to those with limited leisure time.

It was difficult to find families and individuals in the census returns in order to assess the gender, age and social status of readers. The 1891 returns were not as revealing as expected. The census enumerators' returns for the Ascot area appear as part of at least four different districts. At times only a skeleton staff was at a house. Unfortunately this could coincide with a census day, and some people may possibly have been abroad as they do not appear in any census return.

The only detailed record of loans that has been deposited is for two months, March and April 1892, during Mr Parker's tenure. This seems to have been kept as an accounting exercise at a time in the year when the usual routine of meetings fell into abeyance. Apart from the date, a running order of loans and the signature of the recipient, other information has to be deduced from the registered reader's number and the book number.[28]

Two months' loans in 1892 are too small a sample to come to a meaningful conclusion statistically. It does provide some examples of trends: the busiest day of the week was Saturday; most callers only collected one book, but others collected more. Each registered reader was allowed one book at a time for up to a fortnight, for a penny loan. (Perhaps occasionally more than one member of a family might have joined to enable a keen reader to have more books collected for them during a caller's visit to the library).

The number of callers and loans varied:

[Thursday]	24 March 1892	Callers 23	Books Issued 28
[Saturday]	26 March 1892	Callers 43	Books Issued 60
[Saturday]	2 April 1892	Callers 40	Books Issued 51
[Tuesday]	12 April 1892	Callers 14	Books issued 24
[Saturday]	30 April 1892	Callers 35	Books issued 49

The length of loan before the book could be got back to the library usually varied from one day to one or two weeks. After the fortnight's loan, overdue fines were charged. The order of the entries was most likely to be as events happened; there does not seem to be a hierarchy by status, rather that some regular callers tended to come earlier or later in the day.

Statistics do not reveal whether books were enjoyed – a next day return could mean either disappointment or voracious enjoyment.[29] However if a reader continued to borrow the same author's works then that must

demonstrate some satisfaction. This is more apparent for those novelists who had a number of titles published, for instance: E J Worboise, whose novels were of a religious and domestic character; Wilkie Collins, Mary E Braddon, and Mrs Henry Wood who wrote 'novels of sensation' which were as popular here as elsewhere.[30]

Other readers had individual tastes. One reader borrowed Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* in a combined volume. Someone else made a request for the purchase of a new book by the explorer Herbert Stanley. Another reader borrowed volume one of Agnes Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England* for a fortnight and two weeks after its return, took out volume three. By laboriously crosschecking between the loans record, the readers register, the printed library catalogue, census enumerators returns and directories, strands of evidence were disentangled of ordinary library matters that would have been familiar to experienced public librarians fifty years later.

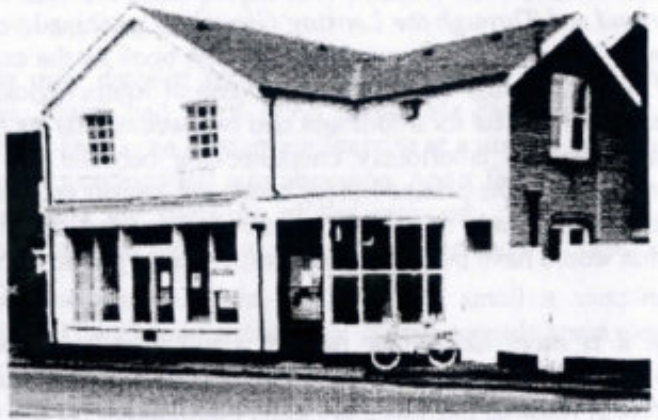
In the 1890s it is more likely that reading aloud may have been an unrecorded use of library books.[31] Not everyone in a family had an accomplished level of reading, nor was there good illumination for the whole of a room; imperfect eyesight and spectacles which had not been prescribed may have been added difficulties. Already there had been a custom of reading newspapers aloud, before the growth in literacy. It might well be that selected readings from library books might have provided home entertainment and callers collecting books for other readers may have been reading aloud to invalids - one of the 'good works' undertaken by the better educated.[32]

Conclusion

A variety of sources have been used to research a Victorian benefaction for a locality which developed in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a residential area in which the well-to-do could have a house in the country and where also building on a more modest scale took place.[33] In the 1890s, a librarian at Ascot's Durning Library divided his readers for statistical purposes into Gentry and Cottagers.

The public library can be both a research resource and of interest of itself as part of the community's history.[34] Although a late nineteenth century

public library with a good standard bookstock and a range of readers may not seem to be unusual, the provision of such a facility as a 'village library' was exceptionally fortunate for the people of the area, and was largely the result of one woman's enterprising and philanthropic initiative.



The Durning Library still serves Ascot library readers (since 1959 being a branch public library, now within the Windsor and Maidenhead group). The Trustees have continued their interest in the welfare of the library. From 1979 they were able to include Ascot Heath and Sunninghill libraries. A programme of copying local archive material deposited with the Berkshire Record Office was begun in 1980, so copies of various maps and documents could be easily available for reference to local residents by being nearer at hand in the locality.

Acknowledgements

Miss J V Cook, FLA, first drew my attention to the Durning Library at Ascot. Thanks are due to The Durning Library Trustees, the Lambeth Archives and The Minet Library, the Berkshire Record Office, Reading Borough Libraries, Windsor and Maidenhead Libraries, and the Durning Library at Ascot. Thanks are also due to staff, friends and family, who encouraged with practical assistance.

References and Notes

[1] The *Daily Graphic* 14 November 1890 quoted in P Smart editor *Extracts from the Past: Ascot*, Durning Library Trust (1997 reprint) p 26.
[2] Newspaper cutting headed South London Press 9 November [1889] in Lambeth Archives and Minet Library LBL/DAS/RL/4.
[3] Berkshire Record Office BRO D/EX 466/11 and Lambeth LBL/DAS/RL/4.
[4] C M Yonge *History of Christian Names.* (1878) 2 vols.
[5] John Benjamin Smith (1796-1879) merchant, MP, and financial writer. The Illustrated London News xviii (1851) p 540.
[6] Jemina Durning Smith: photograph in the Ascot Library, reproduced by Jeff King for the Durning Library Trust.
'A lady possessing considerable wealth, but whose state of health debars her from the ordinary enjoyments of life'. Newspaper Cutting. Lambeth Archives LBL/DAS/RL/4.
[7] Quoted in P Smart.op.cit.
[8] Obituary *The Times* 22 April 1914.
[9] A Macnaghten 'The Durning Library, Ascot, the legacy of a Victorian philanthropist' in *Berks and Bucks Countryside* May 1980 (the author was a Durning Library Trustee).
[10] From comparisons with other contemporary changes of name, it seems most likely that Durning may have been a maternal family name of the Smith daughters (both born in Manchester). At that time other Ascot and Sunninghill residents were adopting double barrelled names which included the maiden name of their wives, though not necessarily incorporating a hyphen.
[11] The newspaper report of Sir Edwin Durning - Lawrence's funeral in London recorded that he was a Unitarian *(The Times* 27 April 1894). One of the tenets of Unitarianism, as described in a contemporary encyclopaedia, was the Brotherhood of Man *(The Everyman Encyclopaedia* c.1913). The rector of Ascot knew that he gave generous donations in Ascot and East London without any publicity (Letter to *The Times* 24 April 1914).
[12] *The Graphic* 17 June 1899.
[13] C J Richardson *The Englishman's House: a practical guide for selecting or building a house* (1898) new edition pp 37-38.
[14] ibid. p 29.
[15] Dutton, Allen & Co.'s *Directory of Oxon, Berks & Bucks* (1863).
[16] Kelly's *Directory of Berkshire 1869.*
[17] *Lambeth Post* 9 November 1889 LBL/DAS/RL/4.
[18] Newspaper cutting BRO D/EX/ 466/11.
[19] By October 1890 this was extended to 6 p.m.
[20] 1891 census, microfiche at BRO RG12/1010/2.
He was described as Edward James Parker in the Durning Trustees Minutes.
[21] Lending library rules and regulations BRO D/EX 466/12.
Later, a long-serving librarian (Mr O'Byrne) was allowed to have his daughter home for Christmas from the convent boarding school she attended, provided she had with her a medical certificate from her school giving her a clean bill of health.
[22] Lambeth LBL/DAS/RL/4.

[23] *The Times* 18 September 1890 p 8.
[24] BRO D/EX 466/12.
[25] BRO D/EX 466/21.
[26] From an attendance of about 40 per diem to about 30.
[27] The library catalogue is in dictionary order: authors, keywords and subjects in one alphabetical sequence. The book number appears at the end of the entry and has been allocated quite randomly, very likely as they came to hand to be dealt with. Because of this random order an analysis of book numbers failed to produce useful data.
[28] BRO D/EX 466/15/1.
[29] Jonathan Rose's recent book on working class intellectual aspirations discusses 'reader response' and its archival resources and research methods for investigating the reading by ordinary people. J Rose *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2001).
[30] The novels of sensation flourished from the 1860s onwards. This genre later developed into the thriller and detective story. Useful reference books widely available are *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* 5th edition, edited by M Drabble reprinted with corrections(1985), *The Cambridge Guide to English Literature*, edited by I Ousby (1988), and *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (1992) which includes authors who may not be included in the aforementioned literary guides.
[31] J Rose op. cit. points out that reading aloud is sociable and silent reading alone could be unpopular as being antisocial.
[32] From my own experience, a tradition of reading to sewing groups still persisted into the 1940s in a school needlework class in Reading.
[33] As may been seen by walking along New Road, where there are pairs of 'Cottages' with dates on their frontages from 1892 –1913.
[34] Recently The Library Association celebrated 150 years of the public library movement, but the adoption of the powers to start a public library were taken up quite slowly by those towns and cities, which were eligible. William Isaac Palmer's donations at Reading, including his West Street library, were to stimulate support for the idea of a public library for the town. The Reading Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery opened in 1883-4 and 1897, were chiefly paid for by public subscription (D Phillips *The Story of Reading* (p 135). In Palmer's index to *The Times* for 1890 there are thirteen mentions under the heading 'Libraries'.

Note The Durning Library Trust has supported local history publications devoted to the Ascot area. *Extracts from the Past: Ascot* edited by P Smart (1997 reprint) may be obtained from the Ascot Durning Library.

BERKSHIRE OVERSEERS ACCOUNTS

IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Gillian Clark

One of Berkshire's more dubious claims to fame is that it was the county which invented the 'Speenhamland' system of poor relief in 1795. The Speenhamland system tied the level of poor relief to the price of bread. This was a generous policy, but many contemporaries held it responsible for the rapid rise in the poor rates in the early nineteenth century, and it was severely criticized in the great Poor Law Report of 1834.

Because the Speenhamland system was so controversial, many historians have studied the poor law in Berkshire between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, very little work has yet been done on poor relief in Berkshire prior to this time. This is a serious omission, because it is difficult to assess the significance of innovations in the poor relief system during the Speenhamland era if we have no benchmark with which to compare them.

This article looks at the way in which poor relief was managed at the parochial level in the mid eighteenth century. The focus of the article is on those unable to support themselves (for example because of unemployment, disability or age). An important question about poor relief in this period, which this article addresses, is whether the Workhouse Act of 1723 was put into force at the local level. This Act authorised parishes to set up their own workhouses and to contract out the lodging and employment of the poor. The article also considers whether poor relief was conditional upon being willing to work, and to what extent the poor house was a place of work or whether the widely-used term 'workhouse' was simply common usage for accommodation for the poor. These issues are explored through the overseers' records (these are records of relief payments made to the poor). The article concentrates on the period between 1723 (when parishes were given the authority to open a workhouse) and 1782 (when the Gilbert Act allowed them to work together to provide for the poor and to group workhouses together to form unions). The article does not look at the methods (examinations, removals, settlement orders, apprenticeships) which parishes used to control access to relief, nor what categories of poverty or need were considered eligible for relief.

The evidence

The system of relief operated by means of a locally-set rate(s) levied on property values, with unpaid parish officers (the overseers), appointed by JPs, disbursing the collected money to those accepted as being in need. The rate was set by the parish officers, based on previous experience and on local knowledge, and it varied from

year to year. A further rate or rates could be collected if unforeseen circumstances arose. All the parishes in Berkshire with extant disbursement accounts (see appendix) beginning before 1780 were examined.[1] The study was therefore county wide.

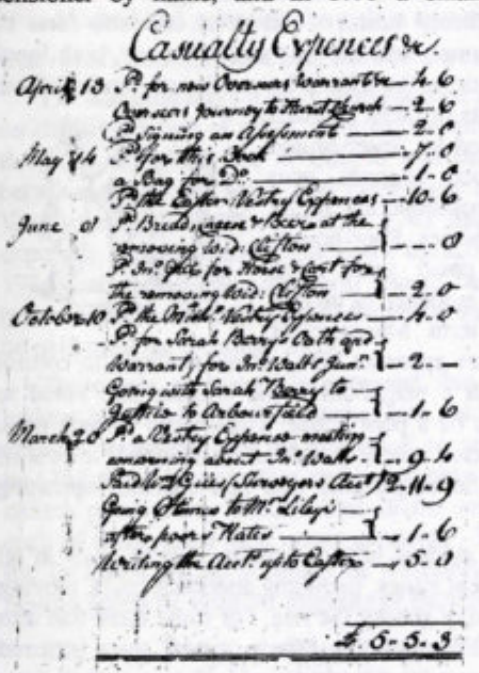
Berkshire overseers' accounts are highly individual in style and often surprisingly rich in content. All parish officers used bound volumes for their records but pages, although sometimes numbered, were not normally ruled. The layout of the accounts varied but it was common to find income and disbursement accounts on opposite pages of a single volume, the expected income being described as in terms of parishioners who would be paying it and the value of the properties on which they had been assessed. Where three or four overseers split the work between them, the accounts of each are drawn up separately regardless of how the split was made. The parish of Bray in 1747-48 had four administrative subdivisions, each with its own overseer and accounts, its own pensioners and its own contributions to the workhouse costs.[2]

The annual records ran from Easter to Easter and, written up by a clerk, they were presented for approval to the vestry at year-end and countersigned as accepted. The sequence of accounts is sometimes broken by a minute or an agreement from an important or significant vestry meeting. There is no indication of the speed at which income was paid across from parishioners to overseers nor of any efforts to match or pace income and expenditure during the year, but some parish accounts acknowledged 'bad' (uncollected) rates.[3] There are references at Tilehurst in the 1740s and 50s to rates being 'paid' in the form of livestock.[4] Elsewhere, money paid out of, or received by, 'stock' apparently has the meaning of 'money in hand'. The accounts in all parishes were broadly in balance at year-end.

As with parish registers, the amount of detail given depended on the recorder of the time. Some clerks listed the outgoings so that pensions, casual payments and payments to suppliers were separated; some simply listed payments in date order with or without the items being described in detail or the recipients being named. Work on proportional spend (that is, across categories of spend) in one parish is therefore only possible in a single year or sustainable over a period of years where there is an appropriate and consistent entry pattern. Annual summary balances appear at year-end for income and expenditure and thus the records of a single parish allow year on year comparisons to be made, even if it is only at the level of total spend. In order to see expenditure in relation to parish population size and thus to make comparisons, there are recognized calculations to apply to numbers paying rates and to numbers in receipt of pensions and of casual relief to achieve an estimated population figure.[5] Because of the variety of style and changes to the basis

of the accounting, overseers' accounts do not otherwise lend themselves to inter-parish comparisons.

Sandhurst's accounts for the years after 1788 stand as models of clarity and professional layout, setting out details of spending and subtotals of spend by category of expenditure: county rate; weekly payments; rents; cutting the poor's firing; casualty expenses (officers' costs); itemised accounts by month for each pensioner by name, and in 1795 a smallpox account. Medical care (nursing medicines, burying) and the provision of clothes and shoes (garments, quantity, fabric, repairs) for individual pensioners can be followed and the circumstances of some of them are described. No other set of accounts approaches this level of recording but other valuable sets of accounts include those for Newbury, Sunninghill, Wantage and Shinfield. Newbury's accounts in the 1770s grouped cash relief by category of recipient (column headings were: old men, men with families, widows, single women, women and children, sick and crippled, certificated, orphans, bastards, casual, workhouse, children put out from the workhouse) and for a short time supplied ages, occupations and circumstances of recipients. After approving the annual accounts, throughout the period the officer at Sunninghill recorded as agreements the individual decisions that had been made at the meeting for action during the following year. The subject matter of these agreements covered major building projects, the level and period of care that the overseers were going to fund for a parishioner or the purchase of clothing such as stockings or a coat but their importance is that they set out the detail of the transaction: dimensions and use of a proposed building, the price of the sale stockings (that is, shop purchased) or the place and time of purchase of the coat. This good business practice, forward expenditure planning and recording of decisions taken, was not seen in accounts other than at Sunninghill.


Casualty Expences &c.

Sandhurst accounts 1787. In the 1780s & 90s were set out in a professional and organised way

BRO D/P 102/12/2

At Wantage the introduction of poor-house accounts, (summary figures from 1746 but comprehensive reports from 1750) alongside the main disbursement accounts, was also a means of tracking spending more efficiently and of making the providers more accountable. In 1773 and 1778 Shinfield had a summary account of workhouse costs within total disbursements.

The local systems

The accounts showed that a variety of systems of administering parish relief was in place in Berkshire in the mid-eighteenth century. The most common form of relief, alone or in tandem with a poor-house, was the payment of money, both long- and short-term, direct to those in need or in the form of a purchased service (food, fuel, clothing, medicine). In the accounts of these parishes the interest lies in the difficulties posed by unscheduled expenses, and the need to introduce controls over spending, particularly in the face of increasing costs, in the form of contracts and of purchasing schemes. Poor-houses (residential accommodation for the poor) were often referred to as 'workhouses' but with no evidence of on-site employment to support the use of the term. Management and maintenance costs of the houses are apparent here, as are attempts to control costs. One parish shared facilities with a neighbour while another had voted to borrow the money to build what was to be a poor-house. There were various work schemes, short-lived, as might be expected where parish officials served a term of one year only before being replaced. Some parishes also had charities operating within their territories.

The cost of administering relief is evident in the accounts. Major costs in all parishes were those of resolving settlement issues, including attending court, moving families in and out of the poor-house and of setting the rate. For some there was also interest to be paid on money borrowed for projects. Minor one-off costs incurred include: Easthampstead's expenses in connection with renewal of power of attorney for trustees for the administration of a charity; 'fetching poor's money' to Aston Tirrold and dividing it out; Reading St Giles, buying overseers' accounting materials for the poor-house, and Reading St Mary's 'a frame for ye rules and orders' for the house.[6] Two parishes record payments for advertisements announcing the opening of workhouses. Some costs were offset by the sale of the effects of paupers after their deaths.[7]

Out relief [8]

The overseers paid regular weekly sums to some parishioners (pensioners). Out relief (casual payments or casualties) was also paid to those in temporary difficulties, particularly illness. Clothing could be provided or an item in pawn might

be redeemed. The cost of medical care and of burials of those on relief was a charge on the parish. It was common to find one poor parishioner paid to look after another's children during periods of parental difficulty or illness or to look after another adult, particularly where illness was terminal. Payments in kind of such items as heating material were common because bulk purchase and single deliveries would be both economical and practical. Overseers also paid for apprenticeship indentures for the placing of parish children and provided support to families where an individual had gone into the militia as a substitute for another parishioner.

Out relief: management practices and work schemes

The administrators tried to manage their affairs efficiently and to impose controls on the distribution of relief. Sonning overseers agreed in 1745 that they would pay the poor anywhere but at Church and that no casual payments would be paid between the vestry days and even then notice should be given to the parish. Woolhampton's vestry agreed in 1783 that no constable should be allowed any expenses 'for any matter that don't immediately concern the parish'. It agreed in 1784 that all bills [for payment] should be brought to the overseers a full month before Easter to be exhibited in the vestry and all who neglected to do so should not be paid until the ensuing vestry.

There was a national requirement that those in receipt of relief should wear badges to distinguish their status, and evidence of this practice at the local level appears occasionally in the overseers' records. Coleshill recorded a vestry decision in 1755 that 'the poor that receive weekly collection shall receive ye same in the church porch every Sunday after divine service in the morning with their badges, each of them, upon their upper garments'. This statement of policy is supported by the inclusion in the accounts of Coleshill (1757-59) and elsewhere of costs for buying letters or cloth for marking or badging the poor.[9]

The same vestry meeting at Coleshill agreed that no poor person able to work should be allowed payment unless there was no work to be found for him, and if this happened then he should be obliged to work on the highways. The accounts as examined do not show that this attitude was general. Parishes recording payment for work on the highway or stone picking for the highway as employment for the poor were few in number and payments were on an occasional basis only.[10] Wantage paid for pounding hemp and for stone picking one winter. Payments at Shrivenham in the 1750s for hedgehogs and polecats may also represent work schemes, as may payments elsewhere for shot, powder and flints for keeping birds off the fields.[11] Sulham operated a roundsman system (the assignment of paupers to employers on a rota) in the 1780s for three employers.[12]

Medical provision

Margaret Railton has described the contractual arrangements from the late-eighteenth century onwards between medical practitioners and parish officials in Berkshire to provide care for the poor, and she anticipated that the origins of this practice might emerge from mid-century material.[13] Such arrangements for medical care appeared quite commonly within the overseers' accounts from mid-century, varying in their level of formality at anyone time, but with an underlying trend towards the use of formal, witnessed contracts between local practitioners and parish officers for the provision of care to the poor. Whereas in the 1750s and 1760s local apothecaries submitted bills to the overseers for payment for visits to the sick poor and for remedies prescribed for them, in the 1770s and 1780s the amount they spent on visits and prescribed items and the number of people receiving treatment was often controlled by contract. No longer were bills submitted; instead, a fixed annual sum was paid by the parish to cover all costs and at the same time categories of patient were specified and some additional payments set out to cover such events as childbirth and fractures. The change was to the advantage of the parish in that agreements contained spending within pre-set limits and stipulated that the practitioner was paid in arrears.[14] No parish defined the right to medical care in terms of accommodation. The poor could receive care if they lived in their own homes or if they had been moved to a poor-house or workhouse.

The advent of an epidemic had a major impact on funding relief in a small community and on the administrative abilities of the non-professional officers. It brought more people into its orbit for a short period during illness or inability to earn because of quarantine or the closedown of activities, or for a longer period through death of the wage earner or parent, increasing the amount of casual payment required to support daily living and increasing the proportion spent on medical provision for those already in receipt of a pension or of casual payment. There was little time or occasion for debate about the course of action. A parish very quickly found its bills increased for nursing, remedies, shrouds, coffins, burial and long-term family support.[15] This was particularly evident during the widespread smallpox epidemics of the 1760s, and extra payments to a contracted medical man at Bray in 1763 suggest that fixed arrangements with practitioners did not stretch to include epidemic situations. A period of epidemic death was the sort of occasion when a second rate may have been levied on the parishioners to cover costs.

Parishes could send patients to hospitals under a subscription scheme where an annual payment allowed the reception of an agreed number of patients; but there were medical and living expenses to pay as well and dependants to support while a wage earner was in hospital (it was men, not women, who were the recipients of hospital treatment).[16] The suggestion at Coleshill in 1748 to send Thomas Tibbalds

to Bath 'to enjoy the benefit of ye General Hospital there' warranted a vestry meeting and a signed statement in the accounts to record its acceptance.[17]

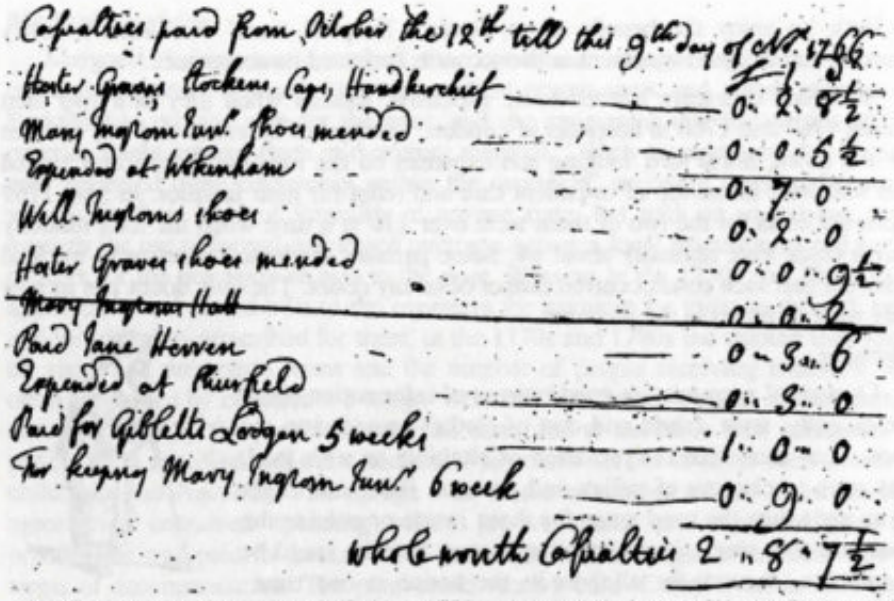
Midgham overseers learned some expensive lessons when they sent two men during 1767 and 1768 to hospitals in London. The cost of letters to and fro, coaches up and down, horse hire, lodging and expenses on the road and certificates signed and sent were all on top of in-patient care and relief for their families. In May 1767 alone the costs for the two of them were over £10 at a time when the total monthly parish costs were normally about £4. Some parishes made no reference to medical costs but that such costs occurred cannot be in any doubt. The only doubt lies in how they were recorded in the accounts.

Clothing

Overseers' accounts are good sources of information about the quantity, style, fabric and cost of clothes provided to the poor. They show that the provision of clothing, as with food, was open to changes of policy and practice. Provision might be as and when the need arose for those inside or outside the poor-house or single items (stockings, caps, aprons) could be supplied to, or made for, all those in the house at one time. At Burghfield, and on one occasion at Peasemore, among the casual payments are sums for outdoor working clothes for men and boys, a common-sense approach to provision that could have actually saved money by fitting out parishioners to get off relief and into employment and by lessening the need for future medical care at the same time.[18] Provision of clothing to an individual parishioner was sometimes defined by contract.[19] Occasionally a parish made an attempt to bring the provisioning to wholesale level by the bulk purchase of cloth, but it did not continue the idea into the following years.[20] Warfield accounts in the 1760s and 1770s are a good source for cost, nature and replacement interval of items of clothing worn by the poor, because of the generous provision made to named parishioners.[21]

The poor-house: setting up

The transfer of people from their own homes to places specially designated for the use of the poor was both an attempt to make the receipt of relief unattractive and stigmatising (and so keep the numbers down) and an attempt to introduce economies of scale and control. The scale of accommodation could be small, as at Warfield when five people were put into Scotland House, 'in the end of it rented by the parish'; or as at Burghfield, whose officers met in February 1776 with Mortimer to agree with them about sharing workhouse facilities, or the scale could be larger, as at Aston Tirrold in the 1740s, where a whole house was rented for the poor.[22] Aston found that property management was expensive: windows to be glazed; thatch


Capaltees paid from October the 12th till this 9th day of Nov. 1766
Hester Graves Stockens. Cap, Handkerchief — £1 3 8½
Mary Ingrom Junr shoes mended — 0 0 6½
Expended at Wokingham — 0 7 0
Will. Ingroms shoes — 0 2 0
Hester Graves shoes mended — 0 0 9½
Mary Ingrom Hatt — 0 0 9
Paid Jane Heaven — 0 3 6
Expended at Rumfield — 0 3 0
Paid for Giblets Lodgen 5 weeks — 1 0 0
For keeping Mary Ingrom Junr 6 week — 0 9 0
Whole month Capaltees 2 8 7½

Warfield overseers' outgoings in October 1766 were heavily in favour of Mary Ingram [19 & 21] BRO D/P 144/12/1

repaired; re-thatching done; boards, bricks and mortar purchased; a new oven built and a floor laid. Such activity had to be co-ordinated or managed, and this need became even more apparent once a house was occupied.

Building new accommodation for the poor was a major undertaking which required substantial financial planning as well as organisation. A special vestry held at Tilehurst in 1767 agreed to borrow the sum of £400 to build a workhouse. Woolhampton bought two cottages in 1790 for the use of the poor.[23] Fitting out accommodation also took time. At a vestry meeting in 1775 at Buckland it was agreed that a poor-house be established to accommodate the poor, but it was not until 1780 that items bought or made to equip the house appear in the accounts, and not until 1782 that domestic supplies appear, suggesting that it was only ready for occupation seven years after the initial decision to build. Wantage was fitting out its 'workhouse' in 1740 and 1741 and it was inhabited by 1742 when large quantities of food were purchased. Thatcham's accounts for 1785 include the rent for both the 'late' and the new workhouses and insurance payments. They show also an item relating to money raised for the new building: one year's 'intrust' on the workhouse (due in 1784 and so paid in arrears). The parish raised the money by borrowing sums of £25 from individuals on which it paid 5% interest until such time as it paid back

the capital. John Butler was repaid in 1786 with 8 years' interest the sum he had 'advanced for the workhouse purchase' thus providing a time scale for the project and demonstrating that here too it was a slow business.

The accommodation built at both Reading St Giles in 1746-47 and Reading St Mary in 1771-72 was on a far larger scale than anywhere else in the county. The work at St Giles began with digging out foundations and sinking a well, suggesting that a new site was being prepared, and both parishes bought materials and employed brick layers or stonemasons, pile drivers, glaziers, painters, carpenters, sawyers and locksmiths, pointing to substantial undertakings.[24] Furniture and fittings for the houses were essentially domestic, not commercial or industrial, thus indicating that the parishes were to preparing only to accommodate parishioners, not to force them to work.

The poor-house: management practices

In the 1760s and early 1770s Wokingham, in addition to supporting pensioners and making a wide range of casual provision in cash and kind, had a house called the poor-house or the workhouse. The overseers' accounts contain inventories of the contents and lists of inmates, the first showing that the fittings in the house were entirely domestic and the second that the residents were an unlikely work force.[25] With the inventories are lists of household items replaced during the year and this suggests that there was active management of the house affairs. The costs of this came, of course, on top of the costs of property maintenance and of providing food and warmth for those in the house. In 1766 the parish was making weekly payments for the poor in the house to Edward Hibbart who with his wife (as the account book says) 'farmed' the poor but there is no indication of what his duties were, nor of whether part of his fee went to meet daily needs. Bulk purchases of fabric were made for the house and a woman paid 12 days' work to make up garments. By the early 1770s the accounts reflect a change in style of provision. The town continued to support its pensioners, but at a lower total cost, and the cash sums for the house and casual payments disappear.[26] In their place are some tradesmen's bills and large weekly purchases of food: beef, bacon, sheep's heads, ox cheeks, herrings, cheeses, oatmeal, bread, rice, salt, potatoes, flour, sugar, treacle. This may represent an effort at economy of scale by bulk buying for the house or it may be an attempt to control the provision of relief.[27]

In either case, it demonstrates that management of relief was not static, but that overseers responded to changing conditions or to new ideas.[28]

The poor-house: work schemes

The composite picture that has emerged of poor-houses is one of a basically domestic environment where a dozen or more people lived together and probably shared domestic tasks such as food preparation and gardening according to the skills and abilities of the group, leaving the household management to an employee of the parish. Idleness would not have been encouraged in, nor even desired by, active residents and references to the purchase and repair of spinning wheels, and even of the parish wheel, suggest a contribution to self-sufficiency or even to earning money.[29] The purchase by the overseers for the poor-house of hundreds of cabbage plants also suggests purposeful activity, and reference to income being made from apples and walnuts and also from a pigeon house suggests other forms of domestic husbandry.[30] If the poor were able to work, they could be hired out, as they were at Sonning and at Sulham. To put these schemes into perspective, their contribution at Sonning in 1766-67 can be shown alongside other expenditure on relief: weekly (regular) payments £29 17s 0d; casualties £84 4s 3d; cash paid out at the poor-house £24 4s 9d; cash received at the poor-house £7 7s 11d. The overseers at Sonning in the mid 1760's and at the constituent Liberty of Woodley in the mid 1770's kept specific accounts, within the main series, of cash paid and cash received at the poor-house. At Sonning the format was adopted following a visit from 'the workhouse man to survey the poor-house'.

The use of the term 'workhouse' at Tilehurst is justified to the extent that some work did take place there, for a short time at least. The Minutes of the Poor-house 1776-81 (in fact overseers' disbursement accounts) have references to income from labour in just one year, this being either 1778 or 1779. This sum was set against outgoings of £50. It was therefore more properly a poor-house with a short-lived work scheme.[31] At Wantage workhouse (a poor-house) in 1746, the contribution of work was about 15% of total income but neither the kind of work nor the raw materials were described. It required the hire of two horses to take 'the work' from the workhouse to Abingdon at intervals (1743-45). It may have been produce from the workhouse garden or from the pigs which were kept. The contribution was short-lived. The poor-house (a domestic environment but called a workhouse) at Reading St Mary's was built in 1771-72 and here too there was a work scheme. At first the accounts record house expenses and house earnings. By 1775 the workhouse governor, Mr Thickbroom, was returning to the overseers regular sums 'for moppes and the poors' work' or for 'yarning and moppes' and by 1777 the income from the

work and for selling the mops made by the poor are set out separately (in total only about £10 per month against outgoings of about £80), although there is no further description of the nature of the work. The work and mop-making schemes continued for awhile under the next governor, diminished through 1787 and disappeared after that, suggesting that employment practices in the workhouse were at the discretion of the management.

Conclusion

Two thirds of parishes with extant records operated a system of out relief while one third also had a poor-house.[32] There were sporadic and short-lived attempts at work schemes and two parishes in Reading were preparing for larger-scale operations. The form of relief was not the real issue however. There were basic flaws in the administration of poor law which prevented the system from being efficient. The system of annual re-elections limited the ability of the officers to build up experience, to anticipate overheads and needs when setting the rate or simply to plan ahead and the small budgets with which they worked did not have the tolerance to withstand distortion from unexpected overheads and from single expensive outflows such as those brought about by epidemics. The legal requirements to keep accounts under specific heads may have improved accountability to some extent, if only by providing some consistency of record keeping from year to year.

The blanket coverage approach to examining the accounts adopted here has proved particularly valuable in building up a composite picture of the need to impose control on spending. It reveals another basic flaw in the system of administering relief in that each parish had to learn the same lessons independently of its neighbours. This was particularly apparent in the writing of contracts for the provision of medical support and in the management and provisioning of poor-houses. The approach adopted in this article shows how common were the problems faced by parish officers in organising the poor into communities to create economies of scale: costs of borrowing and building, problems of fitting-out, providing, maintaining and managing. These events were sufficiently widespread in distance and in time for there to be little opportunity for sharing the learning process. The degree to which overseers worked collaboratively or supportively with the other officers and the vestry, helping to bear the weight of decision making, must have been an important factor in the effectiveness of the provision of relief.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the staff of the Berkshire Record Office for making documents available and to the Chief Archivist for permission to reproduce the documents illustrated in this article.

Appendix

EXTANT DISBURSEMENT ACCOUNTS EXAMINED

Document references are those of the Berkshire Record Office for these deposited archives.

Out relief Aldermaston D/P 3/12/1,2 (1719-85); Ardington D/P 7/12/1 (1778-1805); Ashbury D/P 9/12/1,2 (1721-90); Beech Hill D/P 121/12/1,2 (1767-90); Bisham D/P 19/12/1 (1797-84); Brightwell D/P 25/12/1 (1752-54); Brimpton D/P 26/12/2 (1705-41); Chilton D/P 36/12/1 (1727-1834) summary accounts only; Cholsey D/P38/12/1 (1681-1747); Coleshill D/P40/12/1 (1735-66); Drayton D/P 48/12/1 (1739-94); Easthampstead; D/P 49/ 12/1 (1743-1820); East Ilsley D/P 74/12/1,2 (1702-66); Enbourne D/P 51/5/1(1657-1705); D/P 51/12/1,2 (1775-1807); Great or West Shefford D/P 108/12/1 (1770-97); Hurley D/P 72/5/1 (1698-1715); Hurst D/P 73/12/1,2 (1752-66); Kingston Lisle D/P 115B/12/1-3 (1704-97); Little Wittenham D/P 152/12/1; Midgham; D/P 130C/12/1-4 (1717-73); Old Windsor D/P 150/12/1 (1782-1895); Peasemore D/P 92/12/1,2 (1764-89); Sandhurst D/P 102/12/1,2 (1751-56, 1787-1809); Shellingford D/P 109/12/1,2 (1776-1834); Shrivenham D/P 112/12/1 (1738-59); Sotwell D/P 114/12/1 (1739-67); Speen D/P 116/8/2 (1724-47) summary accounts only; Stanford in the Vale D/P 118/12/1 (1733-86); Sulhamstead Abbots D/P 124/12/1,2 (1694-1799); Sunninghill D/P 126/8/1 (1706-37); Uffington D/P 134/12/2-6 (1708-1887); Ufton Nervet D/P 135/12/1 (1768-89); Wallingford St Peter D/P 139/12/1,2 (1744-97); West Hendred D/P 67/12/1 (1783-1817); Winterbourne D/P 34C/5/ 1 (1737-1803); Woolhampton D/P 156/12/2 (1740-72).

Poor-house Abingdon St Nicholas D/P 2/12/1,2 (1730-88); Aston Tirrold D/P 10/12/1 (1714-46); Bray (called workhouse) D/P 23/12/8 (1714-46); Buckland D/P 27/12/1/4,5 (1693-1790); Burghfield (shared use) D/P 29/12/1,2 (1759-96); Hungerford (called workhouse) D/P 7:/12/4,5 (1750-94); Newbury N/AP 3/1,2 (1771-87); Reading St Giles D/P 96/12/17 (1745-47); Reading St Mary D/P 98/12/51,61-63,178-207,216-227 (1730-90); Shinfield D/P 110/12/1-4 (1768 –1862) (called a workhouse); Sonning (including Woodley and Sandford) D/P 113 12/1,2,5-7 (1742-89); Sulham D/P 123/12/1,2 (1781-89); Thatcham D/P 130/12/1,2 (1784-91); Tilehurst D/P 132/12/1-6 (1720-84); Wallingford St Mary D/P 138/12/1 (1779-1827); Wantage D/P 143/12/1 (1740-55); Warfield (rented part of house) D/P 144/12/2,3 (1764-93); Wokingham All Saints D/P 154/12/3 (1766-73).

Not categorised Cookham D/P 43/12/1 (1730-1829) very incomplete.

References and notes

[1] There is less than half that number of parishes with rating or income accounts for the same period.

[2] Burghfield is a good example of overseers sharing responsibility. At Hurst in the 1750s two overseers each did 6 months of the year and at Hungerford 1759-87 duties were split so that one paid the regular pensions and the costs of the poor-house while the other looked after the 'extraordinaries'. In Reading St Mary 1753-71 there were three overseers who worked a monthly rotation, each with his own book, and at Newbury four worked a rotation. By 1761-62 the accounting systems of the four divisions in Bray had undergone a change but the exact nature of the re-alignment is not clear.

[3] Bray and Burghfield accounts, for example, mention uncollected rates (for Bray these represented between 1 and 5% of the income) and Wokingham sometimes referred to money coming in late.

[4] Tilehurst accounts in 1752 contain a promise to deliver seven animals to be sold for the payment of money owed to the parish.

[5] The interpretation of overseers' accounts for calculating total outlay on outdoor relief, numbers of paupers supported and numbers and proportion of householders paying for their support through the rates, is discussed in Paul Slack *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (Longman 1988) pp 173-182.

[6] Easthampstead undated fragment between 1779 and 1783; Aston Tirrold 1725; accounting materials at Reading St Giles: broad and long folio (with alphabet), letter case, ink, foolscap, pens and one very best pencil.

[7] For examples of inventories of pauper goods see Stanford in the Vale 1743,1747 and 1763.

[8] Out relief was regular or occasional payments in cash or kind to people in their own homes.

[9] W E Tate *The Parish Chest* (Cambridge UP, 1969) p 193. From the late seventeenth century it was required that those in receipt of relief should wear a badge to witness their status. No one wearing a badge could augment their income by begging but could beg food from their neighbours at fixed times. Sunninghill bought badges in 1708, Easthampstead in 1749, Wantage in 1753. Coleshill paid for cloth to mark the poor and to have the badges made up (1757 and 1759). Stanford in the Vale 1733-34 paid 12s for 48 letters for badging of the poor.

[10] Aston Tirrold (1734); Shrivenham (adults and children 1741); Sotwell (1755, 1762 and 1764); Kingston Lisle (1771); Stanford in the Vale (payments for digging stones and blowing rock, 1778-9); Burghfield (out of work labourers digging gravel, 1783).

[11] Aston Tirrold (1728-30) made payments for 'keeping birds', 'keeping birds in the lower fields', 'keeping rooks' and Stanford in the Vale (1743-44) to Joseph Winterbourne for subsistence and for crowkeeping. These activities are more clearly understood through entries elsewhere, notably at Drayton in the 1740s and 1750s where there are payments for keeping the fields and for shot, powder and flints: the parishes were paying to have the birds kept off the fields

[12] The roundsman system in Berkshire is described in M. Newman *The Speenhamland County: poverty and the poor laws in Berkshire 1782-1834* (Garland Publishing Inc 1982) p 185.

[13] M Railton *Early medical services: Berkshire and South Oxfordshire from 1740*, (Polmood Publications 1994) pp 5-19.

[14] Agreements were made at: Easthampstead with Mr William Taplin, surgeon and apothecary of Wokingham, in 1780; Bray with Mr Joseph Rickman of Maidenhead in 1772; Finchampstead with Mr Taplin in 1787; Aldermaston with Mr Baylis in 1785 who would have to fund at his own expense any extra assistance he brought in for an extraordinary case or it would be left to the parish to allow him what they thought proper.

[15] In the 1763 outbreak at Bray, the visible cost of smallpox was over £30 in two of its divisions alone, within a total disbursement of some £200 for the two. Quoted sums are likely to be minimal. Drayton's total spend of £52 (normally in the region of £20 to £35) in the epidemic year of 1764 included 9 guineas paid to a surgeon.

[16] Bray was settling up with Guy's Hospital in 1758 for 'necessaries' and in 1778 Easthampstead settled for a parishioner (one of the poor) to be a patient in St Bartholomew's for 170 days at a cost of 6d per day. Stanford in the Vale paid £1 1s for a boy going to the 'London Hospital' in 1760-61 and Burghfield sent a man to Bath Hospital in 1782.

[17] The number of parishes subscribing to such schemes is an unknown as far as Berkshire records are concerned but it is possible that the hospitals may have such records. Whether or not parish or hospital set criteria for selection of patients for treatment is also unknown.

[18] Burghfield 1776, 1784-89: 'a fowl weatherjacott' for a boy; breeches and a smock frock for a boy; waistcoat and breeches; breeches, stockings and jacket; round frock and 2 hats for children; a 'large fowl weather waist coat' for a boy. Peasemore 1776: Bought at Wantage Fayre, 'a fowlweather coat and waskot, hatt, pare of briches, pare of stockings'. Sulham 1782: 'a foulweatherjacket'.

[19] Warfield in 1767 agreed that Mr Stephen Morton of Binfield 'shall have Mary Ingram and keep her in food and diet for one year from this day, the parish of Warfield to keep her in cloats [clothes]. Mary, a repeater in bastardy, who, with her children, had already cost the parish dearly in clothing and other relief, was kitted out again during the year. BRO D/P 156/12/1 Woolhampton Vestry meeting 1735: the vestry agreed with those who took in parishioners that it would put them into 'decent wearing apparel'. BRO D/P 156/12/3 Vestry meeting 1784 (this item was recorded at the back of the parish book): the meeting agreed that it would put a boy into decent apparel by buying a new suit of clothes, provided that his master would give him a new suit when he left his service.

[20] Wallingford St Mary: April 1778 bulk purchase of cloth including 75 yards of 'camblit', about 17 ells of Dowlas and lengths of coating, check, and Irish [linen].

[21] Those for example with the surname of Graves (Ann, Rebecca, Hester, William) were well supplied with clothes between 1765 and 1770.

[22] In June 1776 there is an account of the goods (2 each of bedsteads and bedding items), all marked with a letter B, sent to Mortimer for use of the parish of Burghfield.

[23] The earliest reference to a house came from Abingdon in 1636-7 when it was agreed that a house in the Abbey should be purchased for the use of the borough to make a work house. Bromley Challenor (ed) *Selections for the Records of the Borough of Abingdon 1555-1897*, (Abingdon 1898) p 142.

[24] The full costs of the building, in the form of the bills submitted by the tradesmen, are set out in the accounts of each parish. The invoices are in sufficient quantity and detail to allow a knowledgeable present day reader to 'recreate' the building.

[25] Wokingham All Saints 1766-73. Beds, bedsteads, blankets, sheets, chairs, stools, cooking implements, food and water storage containers, trenchers, platters and spoons were all provided. Replacement items purchased in 1767 were rugs, beds, blankets, bolsters, pillows, and coverings. There were 22 residents in the poor-house: two elderly (aged 86 and 70); two lunatics (60, 23); a cripple (19); a blind man; four siblings (6-12); three siblings (5-12); a mother and four children; three individual children (5-11); and an infant abandoned in the parish.

[26] The accounts of Wokingham All Saints contain annual tabulations of payments to named people both pensioners and residents of the poor-house which would lend themselves to financial comparisons and would allow turnover or occupancy figures to be calculated.

[27] Bulk purchase of food was also recorded at Sulham for a while in the early 1780s.

[28] The Wokingham accounts are good sources for descriptions of the use of charity money for poor relief.

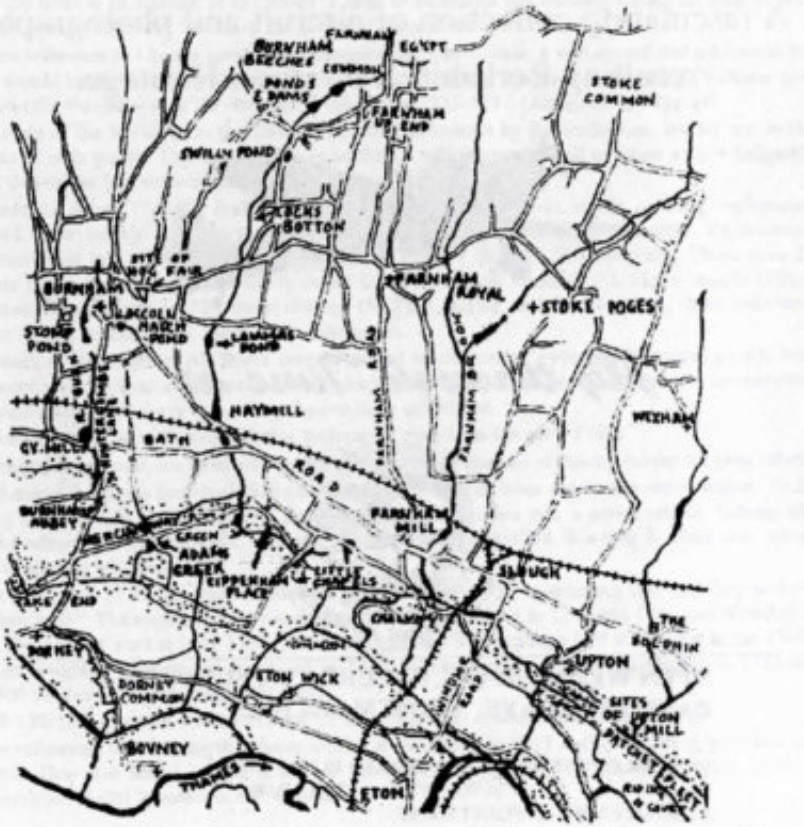
[29] The purchase of 3 nurse's [nursing] chairs at St Giles in 1747 confirms a domestic environment. Packs of wool were bought at Buckland to employ the poor and there was a parish wheel. Sulham had spinning wheels mended in 1782. Sonning bought 3 wheels in 1764. Reading St Giles was set up with 24 spinning wheels in 1747.

[30] Warfield 1715 and 1716. To Ann Underwood and Mary Marshall in spinning flax and they to have what they earn '. The apples and the pigeon house were at Sonning in 1765 and 1764 and Woodley in 1771. The walnuts were at Bray 1759. There are payments for keeping a bull at Drayton in the 1740s. Wantage bought 2000 plants of some sort in 1741; Sulham bought 300 cabbage plants in 1783 and Bray 900 for the workhouse garden in 1780.

[31] BRO D/P 132/12/2 Tilehurst overseers book 1753-75: *Minutes of the Poor House* 1776-81.

[32] There are references to thatching the 'poors house' at Woodride in 1781 and to thatching 'poor-houses' in 1786. Thus the status of the house or houses is unclear and it follows that the style of administration at Old Windsor is also in doubt.

Editor's note: Articles which do not provide page references to sources where relevant will not be published in *Berkshire Old and New* other than in quite exceptional circumstances. The article which follows falls into this category. The author is unable to provide references to his sources for the place-name derivations mentioned in the article but has refused to allow the article to be published without these derivations. Since in the view of the editorial committee the oral history content of the article is of significant value and would probably be lost to posterity if not published here, the article has reluctantly been accepted in its entirety.



MARSH & BOG RIVER & STREAMS ROADS

WATERS THAT WENT

Michael Bayley

An oral history of some streams and springs, marsh land and bog areas around Slough in Berkshire, that have now shrunk or disappeared.

I was born in 1922, into the cold hard world that was the land fit for heroes after the First World War. Slough was still a small market town, twenty miles out of London, mainly across market gardening land. Nearby, in the middle of the best corn growing land in Berks, Bucks and Oxon manured by a couple of centuries of dung from the coach horses on the Bath Road, lay a dump for old army lorries and a group of timber huts for munitions workers.

One of my earliest memories is having a picnic with my sister and my great-aunt, Amy Headington from Cippenham Court Farm, among the barley stooks beside the cinder track that became the Farnham Road.

Cippenham Court & Stables Wood Lane Great Barn

Like my father, I spent much of my boyhood around my great grandfather's farm, Cippenham Court. It was there that I started to get interested in ponds, streams, marshland and bogs - and to learn their secrets, how to use them and to amuse myself with them. I watched the farmhands digging ditches out when work was slack. I watched the streams turn into raging torrents when the rains came or the snows melted. I saw puddles form in fields and spread in winter as the floods came up through the ground and swallowed the marshes, then the meadows and finally, the fields and roads.

To explain this interest to the twenty-first century reader, I must take you back to a landscape that has disappeared. We must start from Cippenham Court Farmhouse, as I would have done. It is now an accountants' office in Upper Cippenham Lane. Next door to this is a public house called The Long Barn. That was the southern of the two carthorse stables of the farm. The northern one was at Biddles Farm, just north of Slough Trading Estate. To the south of The Long Barn, just beyond the cobbled forecourt, was the farm muck-heap. To this, was added the straw and dung from regular mucking-outs of the stables, cowsheds, horse boxes and so on throughout the year,

The Stables Cippenham Court

including all the farm's household rubbish. The chickens scratched it over for the larvae and worms that lived there.

To the east of that lay the Great Barn, still standing today. South of this was a row of pigsties that drained into the bullocks yard, that drained into the marsh, that drained into the pond - which stood at the bottom of the hill on your left, as you go down old Wood Lane. The farm well lay at the side of the road just north of the pond. When staying there, my job at midday was to

fetch a jug of water from the pump for drinking. The water was cold and sparkled, which as an architect I now know is a sign of pollution.

After all, the muck-heap, pigsties and bullock pen all drained into the marsh that fed it. They kept a big old eel in the well to eat any frogs and worms that fell in. But I suppose we were used to it so it did us no harm!

It was on this marsh that I learned how a small boy could run over it dry shod (usually) by stepping on the centres of tufts of tussock grass, leaving them quickly before they sank into the bog. I learned from the carters' boys that these floating islands of grass were called monkey bumps.[1] It was some five or six years later when other boys, probably from Chalvey, showed me how this art of crossing quaking bogs could be used to cross the bogs between the Datchet Road and the orchards of Upton Court Farm, to go scrumping for apples. I was probably only told then as it had become an unprofitable pastime because Mr Cornish, the farmer kept a pile of planks under an apple tree, so that he or one of his men could cross the bog safely and catch the raiders.

The quaking bogs of the early twentieth century were the yoke oxens' pasture and wallows of earlier centuries. This I knew from herding Mr Cornish's cattle across The Marsh at Upton Court Farm, which I was sometimes allowed to do as a treat, riding bareback on a pony. None of these marshes now exist but they ringed Upton-cum-Chalvey south of the Bath Road and were locally known as the treacle mines.[2] The same name is used for similar areas at Hedgerley, Egham Marsh, Chobham Common and Wokingham. They were an escape route for n'er-do-wells.

To show how land drainage has changed, I will describe an imaginary walk down one of the Thames Valley streams in the mid 1920's. Living in Slough and being too young to cycle, we would catch a bus to Farnham Royal from where they stopped opposite the White Hart public house, which stood on the site of the present Slough Library. Once the bus had gone over the Farnham Road railway bridge we would have left the tarmac road surface and were on a rutted cinder track. This continued to the motorbus' furthest stopping place, at the pump in the middle of Farnham Royal. From there on, the roads were gravel and in summer you could catch a horse-drawn charabanc up to Burnham Beeches, on to Seven Ways Plain and Macro's or

Spindlers' Tea Rooms. In the later 1920's the tin lizzies, converted old Army lorries, would take you up to Farnham Common - or as my elderly relation called it, Farnham Up End.[3]

Transhumance was still practised by the villagers of Dorney, Boveney, Chalvey Cippenham and Burnham in the 1920's and 1930's. People could register a certain number of animals at the pound opposite The Crown in Crown Lane to graze on East Burnham and Farnham Common, between Mayday and Michaelmas. Cattle and goats were driven up in charge of an old man, the equivalent of the hayward on Eton's Lammas Lands.[4] He was assisted by young boys. They lived on the Common in temporary bothies built into the furze and broom bushes. There were broad swathes of grass laying between bracken and heather, with no trees except two or three clumps of birches and a few crab apple trees. The present tree cover only dates from 1939 when grazing was stopped. The open land stopped to the north at the belt of Scots pines above the steep slope down to the stream that rises near Egypt.[5]

The slope down to the stream, now covered in pine needles, fir cones and beech leaves used to be a soggy blanket of pale whitish-green bog moss. I am told that locals found that they could sell it to London florists for lining hanging baskets, as it could absorb such a lot of water, that it kept plants in hanging baskets looking fresh. The stream ran along the valley bottom and eventually into a hazel lined swallow hole.

However, from there it found its way into little rivulets that fed the Burnham Beeches Ponds. These ponds are not natural; they are only some 250 years or so old, dating from the time when Farnham and East Burnham Commons were surrounded by sheep pastures.[6] The shepherds needed ponds to wash and rinse their sheep in before shearing, so they constructed them as shepherds always had done; by felling a mass of brushwood and laying it butt end on to the stream's current in the bottom of a valley, as a brushwood dam. Over the top of this they laid brushwood and poles in the opposite direction then turfs and finally a layer of gravel to provide weight on the dam and to allow the wagons for carrying the fleeces to cross. Because the

brushwood dam was always wet, it did not rot, it just allowed water to percolate through so the stream started again down the dam face and onwards.

In the early 1930's some repairs were carried out to these dams, but the twentieth century type repairs consisted of gravel, hardcore, and a drainpipe, but no brushwood. However, it did give my father and I the opportunity to see how it had been made and check that the local history lesson that my father had had from the shepherd at Cippenham Court Farm was indeed true.

It was some twenty or thirty years later, that I found a similar soil structure of dark humus rich soil and gravel in the causeway called Grand Pont at Oxford and at the raised footpath called The Causeway at Bray on Thames. It was when I saw that the coat of arms of the city of Oxford had as one of its supporters, a beaver, that I realised that the Grand Pont at Oxford and The Causeway at Bray were both the remains of brushwood porous dams, with a roadway on top, just like the ones that the shepherds had built in Burnham Beeches during the 1700's. They were all early bridges built like beaver dams; they were the pre-Roman type of bridge the BRIVA that the Celtic people of forested Europe had built. This may be the reason why all the place names, including the word Bray in both France and Britain, are crossing of water courses.[7]

But to return to the stream that leaves the last pond in Burnham Beeches, this crosses the main road in a culvert and flows down Crowpiece Lane (O S grid ref: SU 948 843) to the Swilly Pond and there the water stops for most of the year. Why does it not come out the other side of the pond? The answer I was given as a nine or ten year old was that 'the water is shy, so does not often show itself'. It was only 20 years later that I realised that it may have been called the SWIL-WY pond because that means shy water in the old local British dialect, which was according to my relations still used in the nineteenth century.

When the ground water level is high, this stream used to flow out of the Swilly Pond and down dry ditches beside hedgerows and in folds in the ground, to a farm called Locks Bottom (O S grid ref: SU 948 837) in one of the deepest valleys near Burnham.[8] It now lies buried deep below Slough's present rubbish tip.

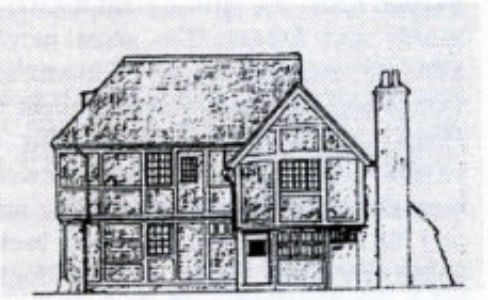
During the winter, the stream from Locks Bottom would flood and flow across Farnham Lane forming a water splash at Bottom Waltons (O S grid ref: SU 945 830). Perhaps this derives from BOT AM EAL TONE: the ox pasture of the dwelling of the cultivated land. Working oxen needed a lush growing damp pasture to feed on in order to make up for the time they spent ploughing and pulling wagons.

Across Farnham Lane, the stream flowed well all year and filled Lammas Pond (O S grid ref: SU 941 821); this turned Lammas Mill. The name derives from the small bream, called LOMMAS and still found in Cornwall, which could be found in the pond. This pond disappeared in 1798 when it was drained by my great-great-great-great-grandfather, after his eldest son drowned in it. The stream when it does still run flows down to Haymill pond and mill (O S grid ref: SU 943 814). The flow of water here was sufficient to turn two mill wheels, so the original mill was on an island with a wheel either side. Hence it was called AYMILL in 1262, the 'island mill' and this stayed the local pronunciation. Where the stream from Haymill met the Bath Road, up until the early 1930's, there was another millpond where steam lorries stopped to take on water. This millpond now has a garage and parade of shops on it, but the stream continues across the Bath Road where it used to turn two more mills. One of these mills became the White Horse public house while the other remained in use as a mill until the 1930's. The stream that flows south from here alongside Brook Path, was locally known as Two Mile Brook.[9] This seemed a silly name to me, as it is only about half a mile long, until I realised it was two mill brook.

A watermill & flash lock

At Lewins Farm (O S grid ref: SU 947 805), there were sluices as the stream divided and one branch fed the village pond. This was augmented by water from the ditch along the south side of Lower Cippenham Lane, which was fed from the springs in the watercress beds, in

front of the cottage at the east side of the junction of Spring Lane and Upper Cippenham Lane. Some of this water diverted to the moat round Cippenham Place Farm on the site of the Dark Age and early Medieval, Cippenham Palace.[10]



Cippenham Place

The main flow of Two-Mile Brook split just west of Lewins Farm. One branch ran down the east side of Millstream Lane on the east side of Cippenham Green, to Cippenham Mill. My great aunts and uncles knew that was where the mill stood, but I do not think that they had seen it working. From this mill the stream ran east, passed the end of the timber yard in Lower Cippenham Lane and crossed Wood Lane to run across the north side of Great Chapels, the field holding the earthworks called Little Chapels. From these, it flowed to join the stream down The Grove, Chalvey.

The third branch of the stream from Lewins Farm flowed west along the north side of Cippenham Green where at one time they cut a spiral turf cut at Troytown Maze.[11] This stream crossed Elmshot Lane where it was joined by a stream starting with springs in the south eastern end of the field, just west of the lane lined with elms and alders.[12]

The stream then flowed under the road to Mercian Way and down its side to Adams Green and its pond.[13] Many people think the name Mercian Way, is a 1930's developer's idea but it was called Mercian Way when it was only a slightly raised cart track with ditches either side, between open fields.

At Adams Green, the water from Cippenham Village met water from Lincoln Hatch pond, flowing down ditches along Oldways Lane and also the waters from Burnham Abbey ponds. The River Burn from the north of the village flowed down Huntercombe Lane and through Burnham Abbey Moat, also to Adams Green. It was beyond this point that Richard of Cornwall (King John's younger son, who became King of the Romans) diverted the northern river that flowed through Cippenham and Chalvey.[14]

The main flow for the moat round the Abbey came from the River Burn from Burnham village, which started just north of Gore Road where Burnham Water Works tapped the spring. It flowed between Burnham village and the hamlet of Lent and then across to Stomp Pond (O S grid ref: SU 930 820) - the village pond for watering cattle and for swelling cartwheel spokes and felloes. The name may be derived from the British word STREMP, meaning messy, as it was used by cattle. For drinking water, the village had the pond where I caught tadpoles at the south side of Lincoln Hatch Lane where it joins Hogfair Lane. The triangle of land between Hogfair Lane, Green Lane and Britwell Road touching Lincoln Hatch Pond was where the Michaelmas Hogfair was held.[15] It was called Lincolns Gore in 1368.[16] In 1927, the pond was backed with a hazel hedge and a similar hedge ran down the far side of Hogfair Lane, behind the pond overflow stream that mostly disappeared into the swallow-hole roughly where Shenstone Road now stands.

My great-uncle's generation remembered that the River Burn had flowed diagonally across Breach Field towards the millpond in its southeast comer, where Huntercombe Lane crosses the Bath Road. But my great-uncle told me that it had been canalised as a ditch beside the road at some time. It now flows in a culvert and a siphon under the railway bridge. They knew that there had been a mill where the stream crossed the Bath Road but did not know its name. It was only recently when discussing local history at Burnham Abbey, I was told the name of the mill which they once owned, but could not locate. This was GY mill, perhaps means the mill of the river. The River Burn is the nearest river to Burnham Abbey. It flowed into the Abbey grounds and flushed the reredorter lavatories when it was built. I also learned that its mill pool was called FYSH POL in 1368 and this lay just north of the Bath Road in Breach Field which formed the milldam.[17]

What used to happen to the waters of the streams south of Adams Green, Cippenham Mill, Little Chapels and Upton is another story. Pumping and boreholes for water have dried out the middle Thames Valley over the last 100 years and lost us many streams, ponds and the animals, fish, birds and plants that lived there. And the flood of newcomers from all over the country and world have practically swept away the real local history that was in the

telling, in company of those who knew the same story and would insist that there was no variation.

References and Notes

[1] **Monkey Bumps,** some 30 years after learning what they were, I discovered that the name may have been part of what my grandfather and his contemporaries called 'the old fashioned way of speaking', which I believe constituted the Lowland British Celtic language. My family and at least three other local yeoman families held that this language was still spoken up into the mid nineteenth century by old South Bucks farm workers and some farmers. In this language, MYNCOW BOEN BAS may have meant 'the platforms of the ox shallows'.

[2] **Treacle Mines** is the nearest English rendering of the Lowland British TIR SIGL MIGNEN, that is 'the land of the quaking bog'.

[3] **Farnham Up End** was the name in 1562 and occasionally used into the twentieth century for the uncultivated pasture land between Farnham Royal and Farnham Common. It was Farnham's EP EYN, that is its 'uncultivated land of the horse'.

[4] **The Hayward** had nothing to do with hay, he was the CAE GWR DA that is, 'the cattle man of the fields'.

[5] **Egypt** (O S grid ref: SU 959 859) the centre of Farnham Up End which the local farm people said was once occupied by gypsies. However many of the yeoman families said to be gypsies were certainly not of Romany blood.
Romanies were called Diddies, and were not to be confused with Diddy-Kai, who were travellers and tinkers. Local ' gypsies' were JY EP SAERI that is 'stable craftsmen'. They were 'good with horses'. Egypt was EYN JY EP - 'the uncultivated land of the stables'. Horses were watered at Deeping Well (O S grid ref: SU 961 851) that is, D EP HINS WY LLE –'the horses by-way place of water'.

[6] This story came from my father who probably got it from the shepherd on Cippenham Court Farm, circa 1900.

[7] This type of soil is what architects would call 'made ground' as it cannot form under natural forces. The research is my own, as an explanation of how these causeways came to exist. Both are on very ancient routes. There are 9 French and 5 British 'Bray' place names, all on water crossing. The word BRIVA is Old Celtic, and is found in connection with pre-Roman bridges on water crossings which in Roman or post-Roman times would be called 'Pont' or 'Bont'. The English Place Names derivation of BRAY from 'breg' - that is, 'the brow of a hill', is topographically impossible in all cases.
Margaret Gelling *The Place Names of Berkshire* part 1 (English Place Name Society 1973) p 43.

[8] **Locks Bottom Farm** lays in a deep re-entrant valley hidden by trees, and gets its name from the British LOCHES BOT AM meaning, 'the refuge of the winter homestead of the cultivated land'.

[9] **Two Mile Brook** as a British place name, tells us much more of its history. DAU MELIN BERW WY EOG tells us that it turned 'two mills', and that the swift flowing clear water over a gravel bottom, was 'the wild water of the salmon' - i.e., where they spawned.

[10] The present owner of Cippenham Place has deeds and records which confirm the local yeomanry's tradition that it is part of the site of Cippenham Palace. The establishment still promotes the ridiculous idea that an important Dark Age and Medieval palace could be housed in the small earthworks called Little Chapels (O S grid ref: SU 952 798) half a mile away. To the natives, this was LLI DOL CAER PALAS - that is, 'the flood meadow of the dug fort'. It was said to have been used in the time of the Danes, that is - D'ANES meaning 'the troubles'!

[11] **Troytown Maze** was a double spiral, a favourite Celtic decoration, cut in the turf by the peasantry and condoned by the Church for use as a penance. There is a field west of Farnham Royal called 'Troytown'.

[12] **Elmshot Lane** gets its name from its use as a lush pasture, not from having the usual hedging trees. It was EAL MA CHET - 'the wood of the place of the oxen'.

[13] **Mercian Way** runs west to the causeway crossing at Bray and is derived from MARCHION WIA the Romano-British for 'the unpaved road of the horse lords' (knights).

[14] T W E Roche *The Precious Blood*: A History of Burnham Abbey (1966) p 13.

[15] **Lincoln's Gore** (O S grid ref: SU 933 825) & **Lincoln Hatch Pond** (O S grid ref: SU 934 825) get there name from LLYN COLLEN HAR CHET ' the pond of the big hazel wood'. They are nothing to do with the See of Lincoln. The large triangular site of the Hogfair was explained to me by Mr Hearne, the butcher of Burnham, Miss Winch, the school mistress of Dropmore School, and by my great-aunts.

[16] G F Thomas *History of Huntercombe Manor*. (Buckinghamshire Education Committee, N.D.) pp 37-38.

[17] **Breach Field** (O S grid ref: SU 930 811) is so called from the milldam on its southern border, over which the Bath Road ran. This was a BRE-ACH that is, 'the hill of water to be crossed'.

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