# BERKSHIRE Old and New

Berkshire Local History Association

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Berkshire Local History Association

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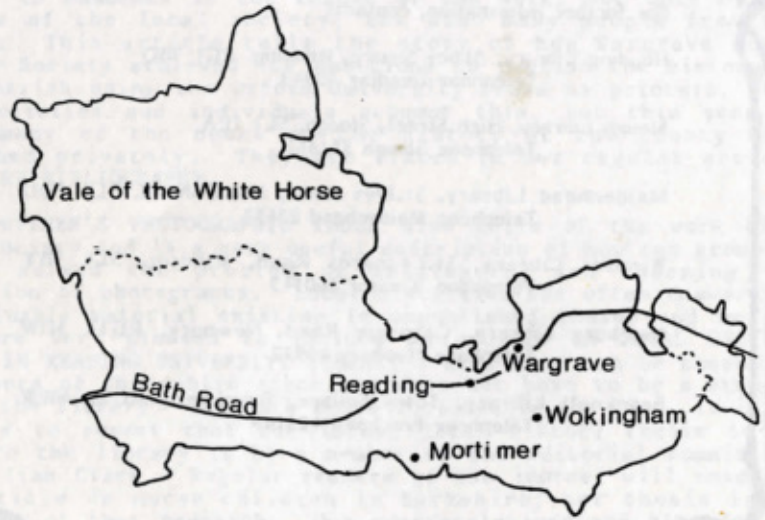
Each issue of the journal also includes a Bibliography of recent publications on Berkshire history

# Contents





# Editor's Newsletter

Local History in the county is flourishing! It seems that every year more and more people are taking interest in the subject, and at many different levels - from young children in the primary school to mature students researching aspects of the history of Berkshire for a PhD. The second group of students are nearing completion of their three years of study for their local history certificate and plans are now in the pipe line for an advanced course to begin in Berkshire in 1990. At the other end of the educational scale I was recently delighted to give a talk to a class of eight year olds about the fun of finding out the history of their own area, and many primary school teachers do at least some local history.

This year's articles reflect something of the wide range of interests and circumstances in which research is conducted in the county. PEASANT FARMING IN THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE has been taken from the author's thesis and TITHE DISPUTES IN TUDOR BERKSHIRE from the author's research for her degree. Two other articles, THE WOKINGHAM SILK INDUSTRY and THE GOUGH MAP AND THE BATH ROAD IN BERKSHIRE are the products of individual local historians' research. In contrast THE BOOK OF WARGRAVE: LOCAL HISTORY IN HARDBACK is the result of the work, not only of the members of the local society, but also many people from the parish. This article tells the story of how Wargrave Local History Society achieved its ambitions to publish the history of their parish using the Oxford University Press as printers. Not many societies and individuals attempt this, but this year as usual many of the books on the history of the county were published privately. They are listed in our regular article BERKSHIRE BIBLIOGRAPHY.

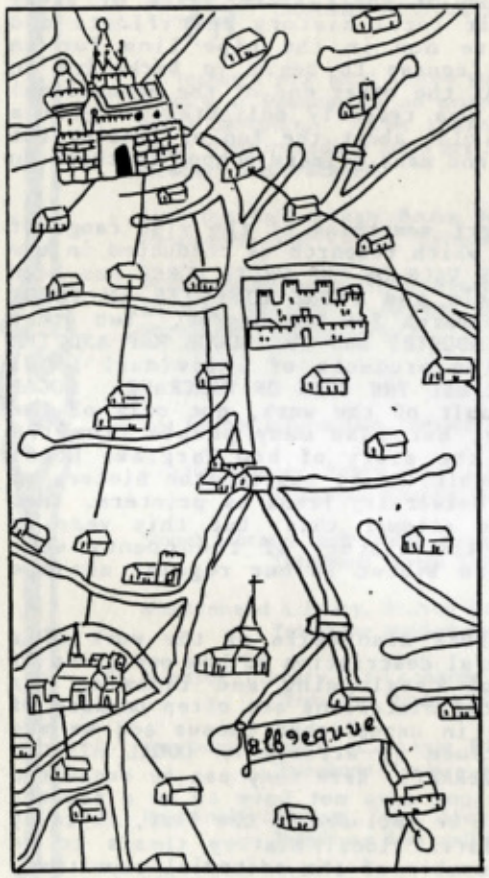
MORTIMER'S PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX also tells of the work of a local society and is a very useful description of how one group of people solved the problem of cataloguing and indexing its collection of photographs. Local historians are often unaware of the valuable material existing in unpublished theses and we are therefore very pleased to include an article on LOCAL HISTORY THESES IN READING UNIVERSITY LIBRARY. Here they can be consulted by members of the public since one does not have to be a student to use the library. Too late to be included in the list, it is my pleasure to report that the latest local history thesis to be added to the library is by a member of the editorial committee, Mrs Gillian Clark. Regular readers of the journal will remember her article on nurse children in Berkshire; her thesis is an extension of that research. Our congratulations are also due to Mrs Margaret Escott who has just been awarded a PhD in History by the University of Wales.

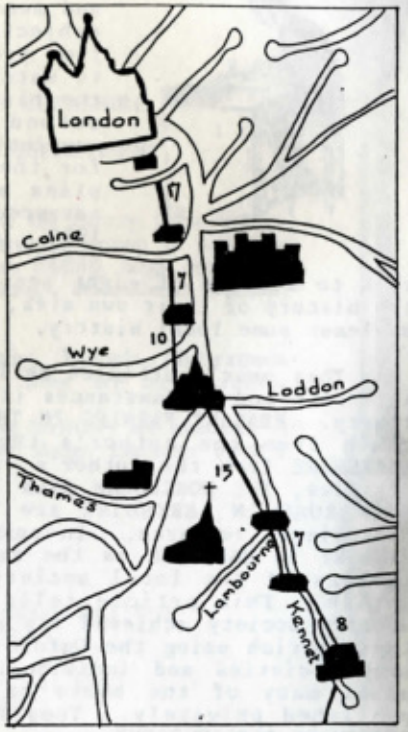
Judith Hunter, Honorary Editor

***THE GOUGH MAP OF GREAT BRITAIN***

*Taken from a facsimile of the map; place names have been ommitted.*

*Note: East is at the top of the map.*




*Drawing taken from the same section of the Gough map showing particular features:*

1. *The Bath/Bristol road, the numbers are the mileages given on the original map*
2. *The settlements along the road - Brentford, Colnbrook, Maidenhead, Reading, Newbury, Hungerford and Marlborough.*

*Windsor Castle is also shown*



# The Gough Map and the Bath Road in Berkshire

*Medieval messenger*

For some two hundred years the large manuscript map of Great Britain, known today as the Gough Map, was available at a central place for consultation by court officials, couriers and other important travellers. Its worn lower edge and the faded and rubbed lettering tell a story of long use, and bear witness to the many people who rubbed against its lower edges while they planned their journeys. Originally all the places and rivers shown on the map were named, but some of the writing can now only be read with the aid of ultraviolet light and small areas are too damaged even for this. The rusty nail holes suggest that for many years the map was hung on a wall - though where this was is not known (1).

Since 1809 it has been held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It was one of a magnificent collection of manuscripts given to the library by the antiquarian, Richard Gough. He had bought the map in 1774 at an auction of the books and manuscripts owned by Thomas Martin, another antiquarian and student of topography; the lot number can still be seen on the back of the map. Six years earlier Martin had exhibited the map to the Society of Antiquarians. As this is the first known reference to the map, we can only make educated guesses about its earlier history. In 1731 Martin had bought many papers and manuscripts from the sale of the library of his old friend, Peter le Neve. Le Neve's library is known to have contained several early maps and, although we cannot be certain that the Gough map was amongst them, it is at least a possibility. Le Neve had been deputy chamberlain to the Exchequer until 1706, well placed to gain access to the map (which became an obsolete document with the publication of John Ogilby's road maps in 1675) if it was still in some central office.

We know almost nothing about its earlier history - not even the most fundamental facts such as when and why and by whom the map was made. The map has no title nor key of any kind, but the style of the lettering and small details, such as the portrayal of the walls of Chester, suggest that the map was drawn in the second half of the fourteenth century and probably about 1360. Its unknown cartographer is most unlikely to have surveyed the country even in the most rudimentary fashion, but instead he must have compiled the map from information gathered from court officials, county sheriffs, the great abbeys and merchants and travellers of many kinds. Basing his work on the details of their itineraries and knowledge of the reputed distances and directions of places such was the mapmaker's skill as a cartographer that he produced a surprisingly accurate map of England. Both Wales and Scotland, for which information was less easy to obtain, however, are rather more misshapen.

The map, which was once richly coloured was drawn on two skins of vellum joined together to make an area of approximately 4ft x 2ft. Rather unexpectedly the sea and rivers, with their round-headed sources, are painted green rather than blue - the accepted colour for water since the Tudor period if not earlier. The rivers are a very prominent feature of the map, deliberately so one might presume, for waterways were frequently used by travellers, and for road travellers it was vitally important to know where the rivers could be crossed by bridge or ford. Hills and mountains, on the other hand, are almost entirely absent, perhaps because they were a hindrance to travellers and best avoided. Occasionally the location of large forested areas are indicated by two entwined trees, though Windsor Forest is not shown. A few other details were thought worthy of inclusion, such as Hadrians Wall and the Vale of the White Horse, but the most colourful and delightful features of the map are the varied symbols which mark the positions of the towns and villages. An imposing white tower marks the site of London, and the City, like that of York, is named in gold lettering. Other important towns are represented by small vignettes of houses, churches and abbeys, their roofs and names coloured red, while the smallest settlements are shown by a simple single-storey building.

Thin, straight, red lines link about half the town symbols and Roman numerals give the distance between the places. The relative position of one place to another is in general more or less correct, and these lines would appear to represent roads, or at the very least, suggested routes. If indeed this map was drawn for the benefit of the King, court officials and royal messengers, it would be reasonable to assume that roads shown on the Gough Map were the main highways of fourteenth century England. Some of the roads depicted undoubtedly were those most frequently used by medieval travellers and there is abundant contemporary evidence to prove it. The roads leading from London to Bristol and Gloucester are easily recognised for they follow the same route as those of later centuries, thus pointing to the continuity in importance of the A4 and A40. Although several other roads can be recognised, there are anomalies. Several roads known to be important in the fourteenth century are missing from the map although in some cases the towns which mark their route are shown in the right order. The best known of these is the London to Dover road, shown so clearly in Matthew Paris's maps and made famous by Chaucer's motley band of pilgrims. In several places too, although roads are not marked, the groups of town symbols are surprisingly accurately placed on the map in relation to each other. On the other hand some very much less important roads are shown in particular areas, notably around York and Lincoln, and also in the Midlands and elsewhere.

Such evidence suggests that the map was never finished and that the author only drew in the line of a road when he had collected all the information relevant to it. It also seems likely that there were once several copies of the map in use at different centres, each perhaps amended to give local information.

The map as a whole is drawn very approximately to a scale of 1:1 million, though it is unlikely that this was a deliberate act on the part of the map maker. No scale is given, and the mileages



marked along the roads, though roughly in proportion to one another, are not correct by today's reckoning, even allowing for the re-alignments and straightenings that have been wrought in the five hundred years since the map was made. In the fourteenth century people measured distances in customary miles, which varied in length across the country, but were approximately ten furlongs in length rather than eight as today. The mapmaker, however, had no means of getting the roads physically measured for this map; instead he recorded the distances which travellers or local officials considered correct - an inexact figure, but one hallowed by constant use.

The map depicts almost 3,000 miles of roads which, even if they do not link all the places of importance, must surely have helped the traveller find a satisfactory itinerary - but would the itinerary have been along a series of local roads, or by a long distance route, known and recognised as such? The more one studies the Gough map, the more interesting the question becomes. Could one prove that at least one road was not only a physical reality, a well worn track that was as much a part of the landscape as the fields and houses, but was a highway that did not merely lead from village to village and town to town, but was a long distance road with a destination many, many miles distant from London.

Brian Hindle in his book on medieval roads calculated that 40% of the routes shown on the Gough map are along the lines of Roman roads (2):

> "It is tempting", he writes, "to presume that the lines marked on the map represented actual roads on the ground; they probably did with those routes which ran along Roman roads, although there are numerous examples of where later roads have developed alongside Roman roads, because the travellers shunned the hard surface (if it still survived) for the softer ground alongside. The routes which do not follow Roman roads must have been tracks which made themselves through the continual passage of traffic; at the worst they were directions on the map to guide the traveller across open country."

This seems to me a very disappointing comment and one which begs the question of what the historian means by a 'road' (3). The word itself had not yet come into usage and instead contemporary documents refer to highways. Moreover to the fourteenth century lawyer the king's highway was not so much a narrow strip of land leading from place to place, but the right of passage for the king and his subjects to travel that way. A right that allowed the traveller to find an alternative route even through cornfields if the track became impassable for some reason. In spite of this, hundreds upon thousands of medieval deeds and surveys proclaim the fact that these highways had a physical existence that could be seen and delimited. There is evidence too that at least some of the long-distance roads which had come into existence since the Roman era bore no relation to the line of any Roman road. The A4 or Bath Road, the main road west out of London, is a good example.

The Roman road to Bath was via Staines and Silchester, but with the loss of the bridge over the Thames and the abandonment of Silchester by the sixth century the road fell out of use for the greater part of its length. In west Middlesex it is still the line of a main road passing through Brentford and Hounslow, but at the west end of Hounslow High Street the medieval and modern Bath Road begins as a right hand turning. The line of the old Roman Road continues in use as far as Staines, but beyond that the line is followed by a modern road for only short stretches. Much of its old route, however, can still be traced as an embankment (or agger) through Berkshire and Wiltshire - a poignant reminder not only of the achievements of the Roman engineers - but also of changing needs (4).

We do not know for certain when a new western highway came into being, but circumstantial evidence suggests that it did not happen until the Norman or early medieval period. Although it is known today as the Bath Road, in the Middle Ages the highway did not lead to Bath, but to Bristol, the most important port in the kingdom after London itself. Bristol is shown on the Gough map enclosed by walls, above which soared the steeple of the main city church. Nine towns are shown along the road, four of them in Berkshire. Maidenhead is the first of these, and like the two towns nearer London (Colnbrook and Brentford) it is depicted as a single building at a river crossing. Unfortunately the artificially straight course of the Thames made it impossible for the mapmaker to show Maidenhead in its true relationship to the Thames and the road does not cross the Thames until Reading.

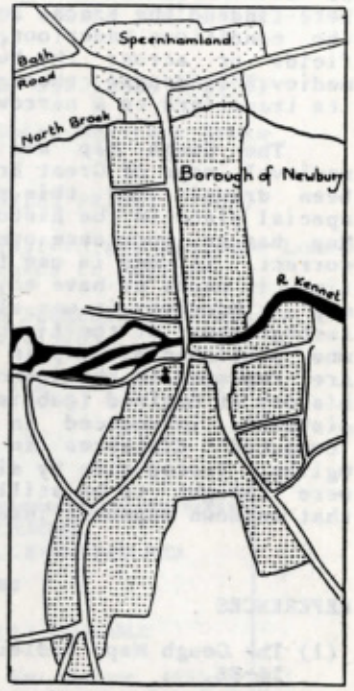
Reading, represented by its abbey, stands at the confluence of the Thames, Kennet and Loddon, although in reality the Loddon joins the Thames some distance away at Twyford. At that date Twyford was a small village which is not marked on the map. Reading, judged by the size of its symbol, would appear to be the most important town along the road. It was an early Saxon settlement and by the end of the reign of William I it had become the largest town in Berkshire. It was held by the Crown until 1121 when it became part of the endowment of Reading Abbey, newly founded by Henry I. Growth of Reading and its abbey in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had a considerable influence on the development of the road into a long distance route (5).

Reading and Brentford are undoubtedly Saxon settlements for both are mentioned in documents of that period. There are no such early references to either Colnbrook or Maidenhead, nor are they included in the Domesday Book compiled in 1086. However, by the fourteenth century they were small towns, owing their existence and importance to the river crossings and thus also to the roads which led over the bridges (6). Both towns lay in two or more parishes and part of the boundaries ran along the centre of their High Streets, a pattern which suggests that they came into existence at a much later date than the villages which gave their names to the parishes. This is also true of the two other villages - Hounslow and Slough; for although neither of these are marked on the map both were already in existence by the fourteenth century. The medieval villages of Knowle Hill, Twyford and Theale were not divided in the same way, but neither were they the main or original villages in their respective parishes. In each case



the parish also has a quite different name. Knowle Hill lies in the parish of Hurley, Twyford in Hurst and Theale in Tilehurst (7). From such evidence we can reason that the Bristol/Bath Road came into existence long after the Saxons first colonised the area.

The mapmaker chose Newbury and Hungerford as the next two places to mark along the road after Reading. Once again suitable river crossings influenced his choice, and the small town of Thatcham was consequently ignored. Both towns were important enough to become boroughs in the twelfth century - but they had both originated along north/south roads and their borough boundaries did not extend as far north as the Bath Road. This would seem to imply that at this date the road had not yet become an important long distance highway. By the time the Gough Map was drawn, however, the towns had spread northwards and along the road to give both a T-shaped plan. Charnham Street is first mentioned in surviving documents in 1366 when it was already a suburb of Hungerford. Speenhamland was recorded as early as 1225 (8).



*The probable extent of the medieval borough of Newbury*

The development of Thatcham followed a similar story and nineteenth century maps show that it too once had a T-shaped plan. The east/west growth of Thatcham can be traced to the late thirteenth century for the ancient chapel of St Thomas the Martyr, built on the eastern edge of the town in 1300 to serve the growing population, is a lasting memorial to this stage in its history. The road here was known as East Street and is named as such in several fourteenth century deeds. Other deeds merely describe the road as leading to Newbury or Reading, but in 1319 the clerk drawing up the deed leasing property to Thomas Alisaundre and Robert atte Walle chose a different form of words:

> 28th May 1319
> "Grant to John Blanchard of Thatcham to Thomas Alisaundre and Robert atte Walle, of a burgage in Thatcham, between the tenement of Robert Beyt on the east, a messuage of John Smyth on the west, and the highway between Bristol and London on the north." (9).

Here then in this very small country town, some fifty miles from London and Bristol, the road was quite clearly a physical reality and thought of as the Bristol Road.

Similar references can be found for other sections of the road showing that without doubt the road was a clearly recognised,

well trodden highway. It was frequently a narrow strip of land bounded by hedges or fences of the properties alongside. Of course there will also have been stretches where the road was not so well defined, particularly where it crossed open wasteland such as Maidenhead Thicket or the Wiltshire Downs west of Hungerford. Here indeed the tracks certainly shifted and merged according to the conditions underfoot, but in the towns and between enclosed fields or across the huge open fields that characterised the medieval landscape, there was every incentive to keep the road and its travellers to a narrow track.

The Gough Map and those of Matthew Paris are the only medieval maps of Great Britain to have survived, or even to have been drawn. For this reason alone they would occupy a very special place in the history of English map making, but the Gough Map has an importance over and above this. If our reasoning is correct, it was in use for some two hundred years during which time it seems to have enjoyed the status of the 'first official map'. Moreover it was almost certainly used by George Lily, the cartographer of the first English printed map of Great Britain, who published his map in 1546. Road distances given on the map are repeated in the itineraries of William Harrison given in his history of England (published in 1577), and John Norden's table of distances introduced in 1625. They were even shown as the 'computed' distances in the atlas and early road books of John Ogilby, listed side by side with the measured miles. Thus they were thought to be still of interest three hundred years after that unknown mapmaker inked them onto the parchment.

JUDITH HUNTER
Windsor Local History Publication Group

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(1) The Gough Map; Bodleian Library, Oxford Ms Gough Gen. Top. 16-8E.

E J S Parsons THE MAP OF GREAT BRITAIN KNOWN AS THE GOUGH MAP; Bodleian Library and Royal Geographical Society (1956)

Facsimile of the Ancient Map of Great Britain in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Ordnance Survey Office (1870)

(2) Brian Paul Hindle MEDIEVAL ROADS, Shire Publications Ltd (1982)

(3) F G Emmison ELIZABETHAN LIFE, Vol I DISORDERS, (1970)

(4) I Margery ROMAN ROADS IN BRITAIN, (Revised edition 1967)

John Wacher THE TOWNS OF ROMAN BRITAIN, Book Club Associates (1974)

(5) Daphne Phillips THE STORY OF READING, Countryside Books (1980) It is generally assumed that the site of Saxon Reading lay at the junction of two major land routes, but it can be argued that the east west route was a later development which came into being in the 12th century when Bristol became a major port.



(6) VICTORIA HISTORY OF THE COUNTIES OF ENGLAND: BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, (1923).

J W Walker A HISTORY OF MAIDENHEAD, (1971 reprint)

Brian Boulter MAIDENHEAD IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD 1582-1604, unpublished dissertation (1985)

(7) VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORIES OF ENGLAND: MIDDLESEX, (1970)

Judith Hunter THE STORY OF SLOUGH, Local Heritage Books (1983)

Rev F T Wethered THE LAST DAYS OF HURLEY PRIORY (1909)

I am grateful to John Finch of the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society for the early references to Twyford.

(8) Grenville G Astill HISTORIC TOWNS IN BERKSHIRE, Berkshire Archaeological Committee Publication (1978)

(9) S Barfield THATCHAM, BERKSHIRE, AND ITS MANORS, (1901)

Fig. 1.

**HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY AROUND THE MORTIMER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION**

I. **CARD INDEX**
Here you will find details of photographs listed under these subject headings:-

a. **Aerial** (1) b. **Buildings** (7) c. **General** (10)
d. **Trades** (10) e. **Transport** (4) f. **Other** (Comments)

There are two types of card in this index:-

(i) for those photographs for which we have a negative;
(ii) for those photographs for which we have NO negative.

On each card is a reference number in the left hand column which will direct you to the photographic record list.

II. **PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD LIST**
This is a list in two parts which provides the following information:-

**Part 1**
a. Museum of English Rural Life (M.E.R.L.) number;
b. Negative number or temporary reference number;
c. Description;
d. Type of photograph available (if printed).

C = Copy O = Original P = Print En = Enprint
PC = Postcard 1/2 = 1/2 Plate L = Large

Additional information will be found in the right hand column.

**Part 2**
a. M.E.R.L. number;
b. Negative number;
c. Subject heading (as in card index).

Having identified your photograph, refer to the sheet number (top right-hand corner) which will direct you to the appropriate packet of photographs.

III. **THE PHOTOGRAPHS**
Each photograph is protected by its own plastic sleeve. The number of photographs in the larger sleeve relates to the number of photographs listed on any given sheet. Each packet of photographs has an identification list. **Extra large photographs** - these can be found in the separate large box.

If the photograph you are looking for is not in the appropriate sleeve there should be a card in its place indicating its whereabouts - e.g. in the farm file.

If you remove a photograph **for any reason PLEASE** fill in a card and place it in the sleeve.

The collection will normally be held by the archivist.

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# Mortimer's Photographic Index

The Mortimer Local History Group is a small group that has been running for approximately twelve years. Over these years the group has accumulated a varied collection of photographs. This has grown considerably in recent years, particularly in connection with various group projects, such as the Barn Survey, and now comprises some six hundred photographs. These have been lurking in boxes until needed for files and exhibitions, when much feverish hunting was necessary in order to track down suitable illustrations.

The Chairman of the group decided that it was becoming imperative to devise some kind of subject card index. Accordingly, a sub-committee was set up to organise this. Little did we know quite what was involved, how long it would take, or how totally addicted we would become.

The first one or two meetings were spent in discussion of methods of subject indexing the photographs. However, it soon became obvious from the wide scope of the photographs, that we could not index until we had recorded and catalogued both negatives and photographs. It was also clear that the photographs needed individual protection for future handling and storage. Accordingly, each photograph was placed in a self-seal polythene bag, a practice recommended to us on a BLHA Photographic Day School.

We would like to describe the system that evolved over a number of working evenings:-

Step 1 - Numbering System. It was necessary to give each photograph a catalogue number. As our Chairman already had a numbered list of negatives it was decided to adopt this method of numbering. The number was written on the back of each photograph WITH A SOFT LEADED PENCIL.

Step 2 - Photographs. Our first task was to collect all the photographs together to ensure that the whole collection was

MORTIMER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS — SHEET No 5

| MERL No | MLHG No | DETAIL | C | O | P | En | PC | ½ | L |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20719 | 13.28a | Horse drawn fire engine Wakef'ld Rd | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 20 | 13.29a | " " cab by St. John's Church | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| 21 | 13.30a | Perrins Farm Cotts 1974 front | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 22 | 13.31a | " " " " | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 23 | 13.32a | " " " rear from E | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 24 | 14.33a | " " " " " W | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 25 | 14.34a | " " " " | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 26 | 14.35a | Mortimer Station Feb 1974 | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |

x 2 No

x 2 No

Fig.2 The top half of the record sheet

MORTIMER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS — SHEET No 5

| MERL No | MLHG No | BUILDINGS: Aerial | Churches | Forms | Houses | Pubs | Schools | Shops | Cottages | TRADES: Forming | B'smith | Railway | Retail | Timber | Undersid | TRANSPORT: Horse | Motor | Rail | Other | Roads | GENERAL: Groups | People | Lanes | Woods | Services | Societies | Schools | Sport | Social | OTHER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20719 | 13.28a | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | 13.29a | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | | | | | Gas Lamp |
| 21 | 13.30a | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 13.31a | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | 13.32a | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | 14.33a | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | 14.34a | | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | 14.35a | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ✓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | Station |

Fig.3 The bottom half of the record sheet



recorded. We then matched photograph to negative and recorded the negative number on the back (remember that soft pencil!) of the photograph, including all duplicates under the one number.

We found we had a large number of photographs, many of which had been generously donated or loaned to the group, for which we did not have negatives. We decided to record these separately, using a simple number system.

Step 3 - Negatives. We have an A4 negative sleeve folder such as can be purchased from any photographic shop. Each pocket holds a strip of negatives, the strip having an identifying number under each individual negative e.g. 1, 1a, 2, 2a etc. We used the number nearest to the negative for identification purposes. Each pocket was also given a number from 1 onwards. Thus Pocket 1 Negative 1a can now be numbered 1.1a. The record sheet illustrated in Fig 2 shows details of negatives 13.28a, 13.29a etc.

Step 4 - Record Sheet. Fig 2 is an example of the record we devised which not only numbers the photograph but also gives a brief description. In addition it identifies the type, size and condition (if applicable) of a photograph in a tick list form. Obviously, when choosing photographs, for example exhibition purposes, it is extremely useful to know its suitability. An explanation of column headings will be found in Fig 1.

The format shown in Fig 2 used half of an A3 sheet and listed details of between ten and twenty photographs. The whole collection was recorded in this style.

The detail on the second half of the sheet will be explained later.

Step 5 - Storage of Photographs. The ten to twenty photographs listed on each sheet already individually sealed in bags, were then stored in a large self-seal polythene bag. This contained not only the photographs but also a folded stiff card with the sheet number and the negative numbers contained therein, e.g. 1.1a to 1.15a. In addition, a copy of the appropriate list was placed in the bag. In this way one large bag corresponded to one sheet on the record. To keep storage space to a minimum the extra large photographs were removed and small polythene bags inserted in their place, each with a card inside indicating the whereabouts of the photograph involved. These photographs were then stored in a large box whilst the main part of the collection was housed in two small filing drawers. When the system is in use it is essential that any photograph removed should be replaced by a card with that photograph's new location written on it, e.g. exhibition, project file.

Step 6 - Analysis of Subject Matter of Photographs. Having completed Step 5, we moved on to the second half of our A3 record sheets, when we were actually allowed to study the photographs themselves in detail!

This half of the sheet repeated the index numbers. Here photographs are recorded in tick list form under various categories with sub-headings (see Fig 3). It is amazing how many

categories one photograph covers! We saw photographs we had not seen before, things in photographs we did not realize were there and photographs that were intriguing and amusing, such as 'Jimmy Reeves and his slaughtered pig'! This was definitely the most rewarding, if time-consuming, task.

We ended up with an A4 folder of record sheets, each A3 record sheet having been folded in half to fit. The first part of the folder contained the record sheets of the photographs with negatives, the second half the record sheets of those without negatives.

Step 7 - Subject Card Indexes. Having established exactly what we had in our collection and having recorded it, we now moved on to the subject card index, which was the original project!

The card index provides a useful quick guide to what is available when first looking for photographs on any particular subject. Each section in the card index box covers a subject heading corresponding to those on the record sheets.

The photographs listed were taken directly from the record sheet tick list - one subject heading at a time.

| MORTIMER LOCAL HISTORY GROUP PHOTOS (1) | |
|---|---|
| Buildings | Farms |
| 13.30a | Perrins Farm Cottages 1974 front |
| 13.31a | " " " " " |
| 13.32a | " " " "¾ rear from E |
| 14.33a | " " " " " " " W |
| 14.34a | " " " " rear view |
| 29.15a | Little Park Farm 1977 granary |
| 29.16a | " " " " cart shed |
| 29.17a | " " " " dutch barn |
| 29.18a | " " " " cart shed |
| | |

Fig.4 First index card under the subject heading 'Farms'

Conclusion

Our photographic record is now up to date and can be added to as the collection grows. The Museum of English Rural Life (M.E.R.L.) has copies of some of our photographs which they have identified by their numbering system. Where appropriate we have indicated this in the negative column. In addition to our basic collection we now have approximately one hundred and fifty estate agents' photographs of houses in our area.

Obviously we have approached this task in the manner we considered most suited to our particular collection and group



needs. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We tried the system out on an unsuspecting group at one of our meetings. After a little tuition and practice we are pleased to announce that even the most retiring member was persuaded to put the theory into practice and was rewarded by a successful search. An instruction sheet has been given to each member which we hope will aid and encourage use of the photographic collection (Fig 1).

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Mortimer Local History Group

# Tithe Disputes in Tudor Berkshire

Berkshire is fortunate in having a large number of 16th century Archdeacon's Court Records which contain, amongst a range of other litigation, a sizeable number of tithe suits. It is from these that a wide range of agricultural, social and economic details have been gained, considerably extending our understanding of farming in Berkshire during that period.

Tithes were the one tenth of everything produced within the parish and were dues paid to the rectors and vicars. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries a large proportion of Berkshire land went into the king's hands and was then sold or (more rarely) donated to non-clerical people. These people now became the recipients of the tithes from these estates. Not only did this change from clerical to lay hands bring new attitudes amongst the parishioners, but it coincided with particular economic and social pressure brought about by sharp inflation and a steep rise in the population. There were changes, too, on the land with the introduction of certain new crops, like flax, hemp and hops, and new agricultural practices, like the flooding of the water meadows for additional fodder, the varied rotation of crops and further enclosures.

Berkshire was favoured in having good arable and grazing land. This catered well for mixed farming which was especially important if there were to be increased yields. Only by increasing the stock was it possible to provide sufficient fertilizer and thus an increase in the production from arable crops.

Above all Berkshire was traversed by the Thames, Kennet and Loddon rivers. These played a major role in linking areas of production to valuable markets - to local towns and the ports of London and Southampton for overseas trade. London itself was an enormous influence on the county, providing a rapidly expanding market for food, clothes and leather goods etc. for a population



which rose from 60,000 to 215,000 approximately between 1520-1600. The population of Reading rose sharply too, particularly during the last thirty years of the 16th century. As a large proportion of its inhabitants were busy in the cloth industry, as well as providing retail and other services for the hinterland, the town must also have been an economic stimulus to local farmers. The trading routes and the presence of the Court at Windsor helped keep the county in the forefront of modern ideas.

The actual yields are difficult to assess, not only because they varied widely (often even within one field) but also because the weather had some wide fluctuations during the century, culminating in a succession of particularly poor harvests in the 1590s; overall, however, there appear to have been more average than disastrous harvests, especially in the second half of the century. Furthermore, poor conditions for grain are often good conditions for pasture, although if a bad harvest is due to prolonged wet weather it is likely that murrain and other ailments will have affected stock. Low yields of hay cut back on numbers and condition of stock and thus effect the following breeding season. Of course, high prices for produce favoured those who had anything to sell and it is likely that those with enough land and stock to have a surplus managed reasonably well even in such times, while those living on wages or very small holdings (as well as the poor in the towns) suffered real hardship.

The Berkshire landscape was significantly different from today as much of the county was open-field. These enormous fields were subdivided into strips which were leased from the lord of the manor. Within each large field several crops might be grown, including pasture fenced off for grazing by hurdles or withy hedges. Management of these fields had necessarily to be a community affair, planning what and when to plant in what section, and disputes frequently broke out over stock breaking out and invading the surrounding grain or pulse crop. All the fields had names; at Shellingford they had Upper, Middle and Lower fields (1), at Aston Tyrrold it was North, South Lollingdon and Thropfield (2), and at Winkfield it was Mill, North, Wellfield and Puckmead (3). In Sparsholt there were six fields - Westcott, Copper Leaze, Great Gayland, Little Gayland, Crowehill (or Cronnill) and Chawley's White Meade. Crowehill covered one hundred acres and was originally divided into three parts - one pasture, one sown and one fallow, which by 1600, was claimed to have yielded 'little profit these twenty years'. On the other hand some of the eighty acres in Coppice Leaze were estimated to be worth three times as much as those in Crowehill and to be 'in good profit and value' (4). In 1598 James White, a yeoman of Sparsholt, claimed that he would give £60 p.a. rent for both Coppice Leaze and Crowehill. There is a description of a field in Sutton Courtney where fifteen acres were put to wheat, fifty acres to barley and twenty eight acres to pulse. There is reference to an acre yielding thirteen bushels of wheat (it is often three to four tons an acre today!) but there was great variability of yield according to the quality of land which could occur within one of these huge, open fields. Naturally the strips were leased at varying rents, reflecting these differences. Sometimes exhorbitant rents might be charged and there is an example of this 'rack renting' in Sparsholt in 1597 (5) when half a yardland was

leased for as much as would be given for a whole yardland in other places in the field. Farming in these fields was a very public pursuit, all crops and stock being continually in full view of the whole community. All through the growing season a careful watch was kept by both payer and collector of tithes for abundant areas, or poor, grassy patches in the grain, as well as the numbers and quality of animals.

The manner of fixing the amount and the way of paying tithe was generally regarded as traditional, fixed as far in the past as the parishioners could contrive by 'time out of mind of the ancient men' of the village, in an age when so much was still based on oral tradition. They never seemed short of octagenarians to act as witnesses, and on one occasion Katherine Kingston of Garford was quoted to be one hundred years old (6).

In this time of sharp inflation the value of the tithes often fell far behind other values, especially if the payment had been commuted, i.e. turned into a money payment by agreement. Inflation hit the payer, too, and this no doubt prompted many an evasion of full payment. Evasion was attempted on a large scale with hay and corn. For these the custom for tithing was meticulously set out. The sheaves were bunched into shocks, approximately seven per acre (7), and every tenth one was marked 'as it fell out, beginning in order and not skipping any, working along the rows'. The harvesters tithed 'fieldward and homeward in a row as the ground lieth' (8), marked each tithe cock with a green bough or a 'thistle or a dock or some other such mark that it may be known from the rest' (9). The parson should have been given advance warning of the event so he or his deputy might oversee it and collect his tithe. The English weather must often have been on the parishioner's side in this matter as he tried to garner the crop quickly before a threatening storm.

There are many accounts of people trying to evade 'just tithe' by offering 'rushy or grassy' or undersized cocks. If the parson found any fault with the set tithe he would refuse to gather it until the matter was rectified. Apart from the ravages of the weather, leaving any tithe cock was asking for trouble. In Hampstead Norris, when a barley cock was once disputed and left, it was later found to have been spoiled by hogs, cattle (which name was applied to sheep as well as cows) and poor folk (10). 'A more unusual situation arose in Burghfield where Roger Higgs tried to outsmart the new parson, Mr. Gilbert Johnson, by putting his cattle into the meadow before he cut the hay' (11). Not surprisingly, Johnson was not amused to find only a third of the usual amount he received. He naturally refused to gather what was left as his and shortly after, that disappeared too. Higgs finally admitted that he had turned his cattle back into the field. Johnson countered these tactics by suing Higgs for 1.5d per cow per week in lieu of the hay tithe!

Mr. Johnson fared little better over another parishioner's tithe where he found the hay cocks were really only grass cocks (12). Not only would there have been far less quantity once the grass had been dried out, but it would have taken a good deal of labour to turn it into hay. He brought into Court two of his local clerical friends, Nicholas Hill of Sulhamstead Abbott and



Thomas Morland of Sulhamstead Banister, to testify that hay cocks should consist of properly dried grass (13). This clerical support may suggest that they were all encountering this evasion and trying to stamp it out by uniting against it.

Disputes of evasion of tithe payment also arose over stock. Some owners moved the animals to market just before the tithe collection - one man sent his cattle to the butcher's, while another in Enburne drove his into Wiltshire (14). Matters became particularly complicated over sheep since they were regularly moved around to graze, sometimes crossing parish boundaries to do so. This might be accidental, as on Shortcombe Down where the boundary was marked by 'mere stones' (15), or deliberate for improved grazing, or strategically by clever shepherds. There was a custom that tithe was due if the sheep had spent more than thirty days in the parish. In Buckland it was customary for 1/2d per sheep to be charged for those passing through the market. In Sulhamstead Banister Matthew Wilder brought one hundred sheep into the parish where he kept some only a day, others a fortnight or three weeks, "of which he paid no tenth" (16). Clearly the parson had to be constantly on guard to try to assess his tithe with any accuracy.

The shepherd was supposed to inform the parson in advance when shearing began so that he could keep his eye on the event. The parson would send one of his servants to oversee everything and check the weighing and tithing. When it came to tithing the lambs, the parson could choose his own. There is a delightful picture of one parson who "did chase and mark" a lamb (17), which must have been exhausting work with some of the large flocks!

The right to tithe was another area which gave rise to litigation. Many of these disputes arose after the sales of estates following the Dissolution and from subsequent leasing and sub-leasing. One such dispute occurred in 1559 between Richard Aldworth and Richard Radish over hay because of rival claims between the parishes of Wantage and East Lockinge (18). One day during hay making Aldworth gathered some strong young men together and "desired" them to accompany him to see the hay gathered in East Lockinge. He and the men tithed the crop, only to return the next day to find all the marks removed. The following day they went again and found Radish bringing up his cart to claim the same tithe. A furious quarrel broke out between the two men. It

turned to blows and Radish struck Aldworth's horse with a prong, driving his cart out and stopping the gateway with a bar.

An even more unpleasant situation arose in Sandleford (19). Newbury claimed it to be within its boundaries, but, since the Dissolution of its tiny priory, Sandleford had claimed to be a parish "of itself". It was at harvest time in the cornfields that trouble always broke out, when the parson of Newbury came with his men to collect his assumed rightful tithe. It was claimed that the parson's servants would gather together a band of strong young men and throw the sheaves from the other claimant's cart. These battles raged every harvest for over thirty years, and it was said that the parson's servants never got the tithes "but what they took by stealth and violence." The right to tithe in Sandleford was finally settled in favour of that parish by the King's Bench in 1615 (20).

Enclosure and the change of use of land gave rise to considerable anxiety and dispute, particularly in the last few years of the century. As there had been a series of good harvest between 1587-1593, Parliament had repealed the various Acts against enclosure but the four disastrous harvests of 1594-1597 forced further enclosure legislation in 1598. Land might be enclosed to consolidate holdings of scattered strips in the open-fields, to incorporate waste land for cultivation or private ownership, or to be converted from arable to pasture. Only 6,615 acres had been already enclosed by 1517 out of a total of 430,210 acres in the county, although much of this had taken place in the first ten years of the century at Milton, Marcham, Langford and Fulscot. 639 people had been displaced from these villages and this had come as a shock to the rural community.

In 1593 it was declared that ground in Bourton "hath been enclosed and turned from common into meadow" by agreement of the inhabitants to divide and hedge it (21). Some land in Sulhamstead in 1571 was said to have been "grobbed up", some piece subsequently being sown with barley whose yield increased over the following three years (22).

Tithe disputes reveal a wide range of farm produce being grown or gathered within the mixed farming, including nuts, garlic, saffron, cherries, apples, onions, milk and cheese, honey, pigeons, rushes, brushwood, furze and vetches. There are references to new crops such as hemp, flax and hops. Hemp was often grown on the "ends of arable lands" and was "sowed with the plough". (23) There was a hopyard in Enburn by 1595 which was producing 180 lbs. of hops a year (24). Conies also became subject to tithe demands, one parson claiming they were worth twenty nobles on Fawley Downs in 1591 (25).

Mills were a familiar feature in Berkshire. Speed's map of Reading shows a number of mills in the town and they were widespread along the county's waterways. In 1568 Martin Morland complained that he had received only two bushels of wheat per annum for the last two years at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel for the tithes of a mill in Letcombe Regis cause the "mill was in decay". (26) In Wallingford the mill's output varied with the 'weathers and waters' but was reputed to 'full' between



1,000 and 1,500 cloths a year (27). These cloths were enormous, each measuring twenty eight to thirty yards long and seven quarters wide and weighing 90 lbs. when dry after fulling (28). The mill owner was still paying only 20d per annum tithe, which had been the agreed sum for the ground and waters fourteen years previously, before the erection of the mill! In Streatley the miller claimed that he held the mill under fee and was exempt from paying tithes (29). That mill was busy, grinding up forty five quarters of rye, one hundred and thirty quarters of wheat, forty quarters of barley, thirty quarters of malt, forty quarters of oatmeal over two years and thirty quarters of pulses and vetches, and occasionally some maslin (a grown mixture of rye and wheat).

The pound was a vital part of village life and order. Stray animals were common. They were impounded and released on payment of a fine. In Brightwell the rector, Thomas Bird, found Richard Eldoridge's sheep in his pulses one evening (30). He began to round them up and drive them towards the pounds when their owner came along and furiously upbraided him, refusing to allow them to be put into the pound. He became so agitated that he grabbed Bird by the coat, tearing the sleeve. Luckily there was a witness to calm them, and assure redress. On another occasion, when there was further dispute the same two litigants tired of their legal battle and agreed to settle their differences out of Court. Besides agreeing terms and costs carefully, they set aside 6s 8d in order to provide themselves and their wives with a supper to celebrate their peace (31).

The lives of ordinary people come through in tiny glimpses. The witnesses in the Court cases come from a wide range of occupations - butcher, weaver, bricklayer and hive-maker to name but a few. The majority were husbandmen and a large number were labourers. Most had moved several times during their working lives, although usually within only a few miles of their birthplace, while one or two came from as far afield as Devon and Cumberland. The labourers are recorded as having meat, drink and wages, and living in, although some were hired by the day. One labourer had meat and drink but no wages for he carried on his own business (32). Unfortunately it was not recorded what that business might be.

There are few references to poor people. In Newbury in the late 1590s there is mention of the collector of money for the poor, who paid out a few shillings for the weekly expenses for an abandoned baby found on a farmhouse doorstep in Sandleford (33). The arrangement with the farmer and his wife continued for a

couple of years, but there is no mention of what became of the child. There is, too, brief mention of a corpse having been found in a field which the monks of Abingdon finally took away and buried because no-one else would accept it (34). There was also reference to poor people making the most of an apparently abandoned barley cock after harvest.

Women figure quite often in the records, usually as holders of tithes. They were frequently widows, and sometimes took over from their husbands following their death in the middle of a suit. A few were witnesses, like the shepherdess who was bringing her sheep home for the night when she came upon the angry dispute between Thomas Bird and Richard Eldoridge (35). Wives were cited as helping to make cheese (36) or deputizing for a tithe owner to witness the shearing or tithing of corn or hay. There are also a few references to parsons' wives (37), now that marriage was allowed for the Protestant clergy.

Most lay tithe owners were wealthy people, many of whose names were well known in Tudor Berkshire. Henry VIII granted to Edward Fetiplace and his wife Margaret and their heirs some tithes in Henwood by letters patent, sealed with the Great Seal (38). Some of these heirs figure in later tithe disputes. The Blagraves, Thornes, Aldworths, Nevilles and Williams and many others appear and re-appear, suggesting a fine network of connection between primary production in the countryside and trade and local government in the towns and beyond. Many of these families were inter-related too.

There was an amusing suit brought against John Gunter (possibly related to Nicholas Gunter, who apprenticed his son in London) for persistently taking his hawk into Kintbury Church (39). His son, Humphrey, also crossed swords with the local parson in East Garston, once remarking that if the parson wasn't content with the tithe he had set out, then he would take some of it back! (40). As a group, these county gentry come through as strongly independent and far from easy neighbours or parishioners at times.

To conclude, the Tudor period appears as one of both deep continuity and fracturing change in Berkshire. There must have been a certain stability in the long-established communities and a general pattern of settlement little changed since the compilation of the Doomsday Book in 1086, as well as the unchanging seasonal round and requirements of land and stock. Yet over all this was the need to reshape ideas and practices in the light of the changes brought about by the Dissolution and the social and economic pressures. Berkshire is indeed fortunate to possess such depth and breadth of records which afford so much valuable evidence concerning its 16th century farming community.

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(1) Berkshire Archdeaconry Court records, Berkshire Record Office, D/A 2/c.151. p 29.

(2) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40. p 4v.

(3) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40. p 19.

(4) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40. p 163.

(5) Ibid, D/A 2/c.46. p 26v.

(6) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154. p 103v.

(7) Ibid, D/A 2/c.155 p 57v.

(8) Ibid, D/A 2/c.151. p 151.

(9) Ibid, D/A 2/c.153. p 221. (Vicar could choose grain or beasts but not out of mill lands)

(10) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154. p 167.

(11) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154. p 5v.

(12) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40. p 181v.

(13) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154. p 25v.

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(17) V.C.H. Vol. IV p 84.

(18) Ibid, D/A 2/c.151 p 127.

(19) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154 p 181v.

(20) Ibid, D/A 2/c.154 p 169.

(21) Ibid, D/A 2/c.155 p 57v.

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(23) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40. p4v.

(24) Ibid, D/A 2/c.151 p 151.

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(26) Ibid, D/A 2/c.153 p 198.

(27) Ibid, D/A 2/c.46 p 71.

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(29) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40 p 39v.

(30) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40 p 191v.

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(33) Ibid, D/A 2/c.40 p 181v.

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(35) Ibid, D/A 2/c.155. p 70v.

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(37) Ibid, D/A 2/c.46. p 10.

(38) Ibid, D/A 2/c.151 p 179v.

(39) J Dils et al. READING 1540-1640, p 11.

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# The Wokingham Silk Industry


Among the tales of bygone Wokingham is one that says there was once a prosperous silk industry in the town. There are no surviving physical remains, but it is generally accepted that silk weavers lived in Rose Street and in South Place, a small court just off Peach Street. The houses in South Place have been demolished, but from examination made prior to demolition they appear to have been 18th century weavers cottages. There is also a tradition that mulberry trees were grown to provide leaves as food for silkworms. None of the original trees now remain, but the tradition led to a new one being planted by the town council in 1985 to commemorate the centenary of the mayoralty. In this century a number of accounts of the industry have been written, the two most often quoted being that in the Victoria County History of Berkshire and that written by A.T Heelas (1). Recent examination of some of the work on the early silk industry in England and of a number of deeds and bonds relating to Wokingham held by the Berkshire County Record Office, yields a fuller account of the local industry.

It has generally been assumed that the Wokingham silk industry was started about 1585 by refugee weavers from Flanders. However, the early references to silk in the town are concerned only with knitting stockings, indicating that the Wokingham industry started, as it did in other parts of the country, with the knitting of silk stockings. According to tradition this began about 1560 with the presentation to Queen Elizabeth of the first pair of silk stockings knitted in England (2). Until that time good quality stockings had been made of cloth, cut and shaped to the leg. Knitted stockings were much more comfortable because of the elasticity inherent in all knitted fabrics. After receiving the first pair Queen Elizabeth is alleged to have said that from that time on she would wear no other kind. Whether the story is true or not (it was first written down in the 17th century) fashion and comfort combined to produce a large and growing demand for the new product, and knitting silk stockings became the growth industry in England in the late 16th century.

The earliest record of the Wokingham silk industry (it was called a trade in contemporary records at this period) is dated 1616. In that year Jane Baber, who described herself as a silk knitter, engaged an apprentice to knit silk stockings and took out a bond to indemnify the town corporation against any expense resulting from her action (3). In the same year John Ticknor, who lived in Rose Street, called himself a silk knitter when he made his will. His probate inventory showed that he owned the house



that he lived in and was a prosperous man (4). Others in the town must have been engaged in the same business since in 1625 the Wokingham Corporation issued a set of bye-laws, several of which dealt with the silk industry. The first stated:

> "There is a trade of knitting silk stockings in the said Town for putting poor people to work ... that if any person do refuse to work in the said trade ... the Alderman may commit such ... to the house of correction"

Others prohibited anyone from setting up as a silk knitter without first serving seven years apprenticeship and limited the number of apprentices to three unless a journeyman was also employed (5). The trade continued for some years at least since a bond dated 1629 shows that in that year Richard Thomas, a newcomer to the town, "took to prentice a poor child ... to serve him at the trade of silk knitting." (6).

The two bonds come from a group of 74 originating from between 1607 and 1659 and are the only ones that mention silk. Of the others, seven refer to clothworkers, weavers etc. and two to clothiers, terms usually applied to those engaged in producing woollen or linen fabrics. No reference of any kind has been found to silk weaving in Wokingham at this period, the earliest being dated 1682. This is found in a marriage bond given by Henry Dearing, who is described as a silk weaver of Wokingham (7). It is the only known reference to silk weaving before the late 18th century. In comparison the names of eight weavers or clothworkers and six clothiers have been found for the period 1660-1715 (8). Taken together this evidence, although limited, suggests that, the early silk industry was mainly, if not entirely, concerned with knitting silk stockings and that the total trade was smaller than the wool weaving trade.

Although mulberry trees are said to have been planted in Wokingham to provide food for silkworms there is no evidence as to when this was done. Any that were planted may of course have been in connection with raising silkworms; mulberry trees were grown in the area in the 14th century (9). In the country as a whole the main attempts to cultivate them took place in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Both Elizabeth I and James I ordered the distribution of mulberry trees, more than 100,000 by James I alone (10). All attempts, however, to produce silk on a commercial scale failed, mainly because of the weather which made it difficult to have the leaves available when the silkworms needed them; this was the period known to historians as the Little Ice Age. Equally important, the natural food of the silkworm is the White Mulberry while the trees distributed and grown in England were Black Mulberries. Silkworms fed on leaves from a Black Mulberry produce silk of poor quality, of uneven thickness and liable to break when wound (11). Such silk was suitable for spinning the very coarse thread used by the early silk knitters, but difficult to use for making the fine thread that fashion demanded in the 18th century. One can only speculate as to when mulberry trees were planted in Wokingham but the information quoted above makes it likely to have been during the Tudor or Stuart times. Because of their longlivety such trees would have

had a good chance of surviving to the early 19th century - the most likely period for the origin of most of the traditions. By that time, however, raw silk produced in England could not compete with the imported product.

After 1629 there is no known record of hand knitted silk stockings being made in Wokingham. The scanty evidence available suggests that in other towns the industry also declined as, for example in Norwich where in 1720 the trade in hand knitted stockings was said to have "greatly decreased" (12). The period was one of rapid change for the English silk industry. By the early 18th century the knitting frame (a primitive version of the modern knitting machine), invented by the Rev William Lee, had been so much improved that it could be used to produce a finer fabric than could be made by hand and at a much faster rate. The number of such machines had quickly increased, their presence in Wokingham between 1720 and 1750 being confirmed in the records of the Framework Knitters Company (13). There is no direct evidence linking these frames specifically with either silk or wool, but in 1752 - 1754 the Wokingham silk workers are known to have opposed a petition to Parliament to abolish the powers of the Framework Knitters Association (13). The amount of silk produced, however, seems to have been small, for when Dr Richard Pocock briefly described Wokingham and its industries in 1754, he wrote:

> "They have a manufactury of serges, denim and baragons and send malt to London." (14)

None of the fabrics were made of silk, and one can only assume that the amount of silk produced was too small to be worth mentioning.

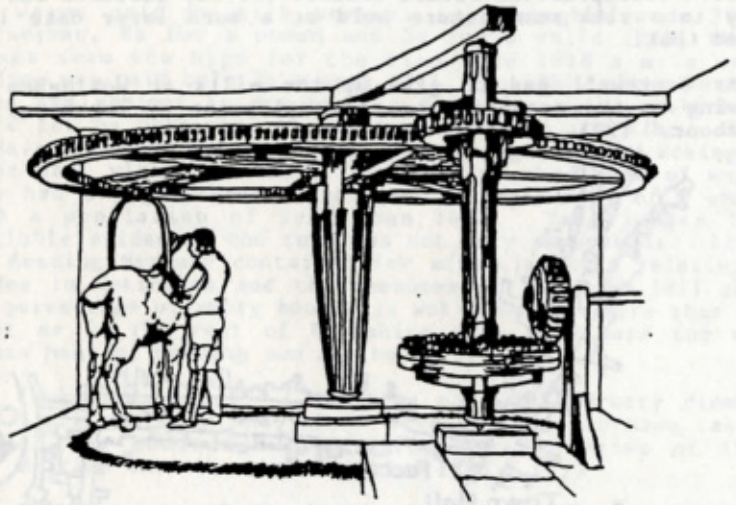
During the third quarter of the 18th century the silk industry in Wokingham underwent a dramatic change. In 1771 Clement Cruttwell, a surgeon, his brother William, a printer from Sherborne, and his brother-in-law, Thomas Brookes, (a draper in the Market Place next to the Roebuck) formed a partnership to set up as:

> "a manufacturer of silk ... the managers or proprietors whereof are commonly called silk throwsters ... to purchase two messuages or tenements ... and erecting proper workshops ... and in purchasing tools, engines and other things" (15).

Throwing silk was the process by which threads of raw silk were reeled and twisted to form threads of the right thickness for weaving. The three men each contributed £400, but after one year Thomas Brookes bought himself out of the partnership. Probably because of the financial problems caused by this, Clement Cruttwell took out a mortgage of £400 with Joanne Truelock of Thatcham in 1772 (16). No description is available of the enterprise at its foundation, but fortunately Mavor provided a description of the business as it was nearly forty years later (17). In his book, published in 1809, Mavor wrote that the premises consisted of a spinning mill and two other establishments which were used for weaving. The spinning mill contained a large



horizontal wheel which was turned by a horse. This large wheel drove others which in turn set 432 spindles in motion. Although Mavor called it a "spinning mill" it must have been a throwing mill, in part at least, if good quality silk was woven. He did not mention knitting, although directories of this period make mention of silk stockings as the major product (18).



The spinning mill is known to have been in Peach Street at the rear of what is now the Woolworth's site. One of the two "factories" was on the Racal site in the Market Place and the other is thought to have been on the present (1988) council car park site in Rose Street. It is generally assumed that silk was woven on the latter two sites, although, in common with the practice in other parts of the country, the outwork system was probably used. In such a system the silk was woven in cottages and the "factories" were mainly used for storage, for giving out raw materials and for receiving woven or knitted goods in return.

Neither the Reading Mercury nor the Berkshire Chronicle contain references to the start of the business, even though Clement Cruttwell was one of the owners of the latter newspaper. The Berkshire Chronicle did, however, mention the trade indirectly in as much as that Samuel Shelton, a silk dyer from Reading, advertised at the end of 1771 that he had opened a branch of his business in the Market Place (19). Presumably he expected that more townspeople would require silk to be dyed now that it was being manufactured locally. Two years later Elizabeth Cruttwell began to advertise that she now sold special dyes for silk cloth (20).

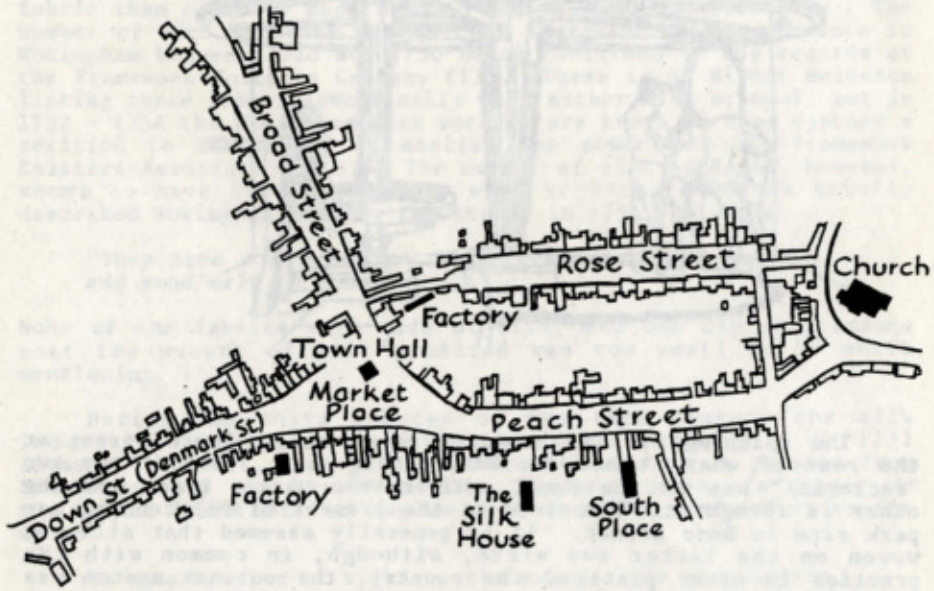
In the late 18th century it was normal practice to keep labour costs low by employing as many apprentices and paupers as

possible. This happened in Wokingham as is shown by an entry in the local workhouse records of 1772, which reads:

> "Irnings of the pore, money irned of Mr cruttwell at Silk house £21-0s-5d." (21)

This may not have been the only payment for workhouse labour made by the partnership but the surviving workhouse records are not complete. This practice caused trouble for the business and at an enquiry into silk manufacture held at a much later date it was reported that:

> "Mr Cruttwell had to give up the mills at Wokingham owing to the trouble over the employment of workhouse labour." (22)




Both Cruttwells soon left the town. William, who seems to have been to have been the prime mover in setting up the silk mills, returned to Sherborne about 1774 and set up a water powered silk mill there. It was managed by George Smout who took it over when William went bankrupt a few years later (22). Clement went to Bath in 1776, took holy orders, returning to Wokingham in 1787 to become alderman (mayor) of the town and master of the Lucas Hospital (23). The mills were sold to Mr Winstanley, a solicitor from London (24).

Nothing more is known of the industry until in 1794 a George Snout (possibly the same one as at Sherborne) was listed in the Universal British Directory as a silk thrower at Wokingham. The entry also stated that:



> "Wokingham has a large manufactury of silk stockings and cloth especially the former." (25)

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries the silk industry in England was subject to fierce competition and experienced frequent slumps and booms. Wages were low and fell lower in real terms, particularly during the early 19th century. Changes in fashion and a reduction in the demand for silk stockings compounded the troubles of the industry. Although Mavor said that the wages paid to silk workers in Wokingham were 30s for a journeyman, 8s for a woman and 5s for a child (26), these wage values seem too high for the time. In 1818 a male weaver in Reading was paid only 7s a week (27). Possibly these were nominal wages and subject to drawback, a deduction without which the job could not be obtained, a common practice at the time. According to Mavor "almost 100 employees" were engaged in the Wokingham silk trade and, with this number of workers, the level of wages must have had a significant effect on the prosperity of a small town with a population of less than 1400. Yet, judged from the available evidence, the town was not very prosperous. After 1790 the Reading Mercury contained few advertisements relating to any trades in Wokingham and the censuses of 1801 and 1811 show that the percentage of empty houses in Wokingham was more than twice as great as in the rest of Berkshire (28). Perhaps the words of Thomas Mann of Reading sum up the situation:

> 'Wokingham itself ... is the most dull dreary dismal place you ever saw, where Poverty seems to have taken up her abode and from whence the energies of the British character seem to have fled." (29)

The fortunes of the local industry fluctuated from year to year, probably in line with those of the national trade. There were some good years. In 1814 an advertisement in the Reading Mercury mentioned that the Wokingham industry had received large orders and required more employees (30). But from about 1815 onward competition throughout the country grew fiercer. Apart from the high quality goods that could now be imported from France, new large factories were being built in places such as Macclesfield and Manchester. The new factories could take advantage of the economies of scale, had easy access to canal transport and natural resources that were not available at Wokingham. The entry for the town in Pigot's Directory of Berkshire of 1830 reads:

> 'Under the heading of manufacturing can only be noticed silk throwing and the making of a considerable number of shoes. The trade however is chiefly confined to the town."

The word "trade" has here taken on its modern meaning, and implies that the industry now had to rely on local sales alone, a very poor omen for its future. No later mention of the Wokingham silk industry as a going concern has been found, but there are two pieces of indirect evidence to the date of its demise. A witness testifying before a parliamentary committee in 1832 stated that "1831 was a dire year for silk throwsters." while the 1835 parliamentary report on Wokingham noted in 1833 that "The town has no manufacturing industry." (31).

It seems likely that the troubles of 1831 were too much for the Wokingham silk industry. In retrospect it may be concluded that the Wokingham silk industry existed in one form or another for about 250 years. It started with the hand knitting of silk stockings, was reduced to a very small scale business in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and evolved to silk throwing, weaving and machine knitting before its final demise. Only in the last sixty years was it more than a cottage industry - but that was a unique period in the history of the town, the only time before the 20th century when it had a manufacturing industry with nearly 100 employees.

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**Postscript:**

Since this article was written, it has been confirmed that the silk factory did close in 1831 and was sold in 1832 (READING MERCURY 5th March 1832).

# Peasant Farming in the Vale of the White Horse, 1660 – 1760

This study aims primarily to show how probate wills may be used to identify peasant communities in the early modern period, and to study the peasant farmer's attitudes to land. It will be suggested also that wills can prove to be an unexpectedly useful source of evidence for tracing the progress of pre-parliamentary enclosure and of improvements in husbandry.

The period from 1660 to 1760 was one of crisis for the 'peasant' arable farmer, who may be broadly defined as an independent yeoman or husbandman farming less than 100 acres. The crisis was caused primarily by falling corn prices and fluctuating harvests, exacerbated by many other factors including the peasant's attitudes to land and the family; the difficulties were especially acute in the clay vales, as new crops and methods brought increased competition from the uplands (1).

The Vale of White Horse however, now in Oxfordshire but historically in north-west Berkshire, was one of those exceptional regions where independent farmers were still thriving in the nineteenth century. In 1809, William Mavor described Berkshire as a county characterized by a high-spirited and independent yeomanry: one where great landowners were rare and the number of freeholders was 'very considerable' (2). Even as late as the mid-nineteenth century (as Lady Wantage later recalled), the Vale of White Horse abounded with the muckyards and rough homesteads of 'the now almost extinct class of small owners and yeoman farmers, true sons of the soil, on which their limited interests were concentrated' (3). This suggests that there were many peasant farmers in the region during the earlier period from 1660 to 1760, and that they escaped the worst effects of the crisis. To test this theory was an essential element of a wider study of continuity and change in the Vale of White Horse in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (4).

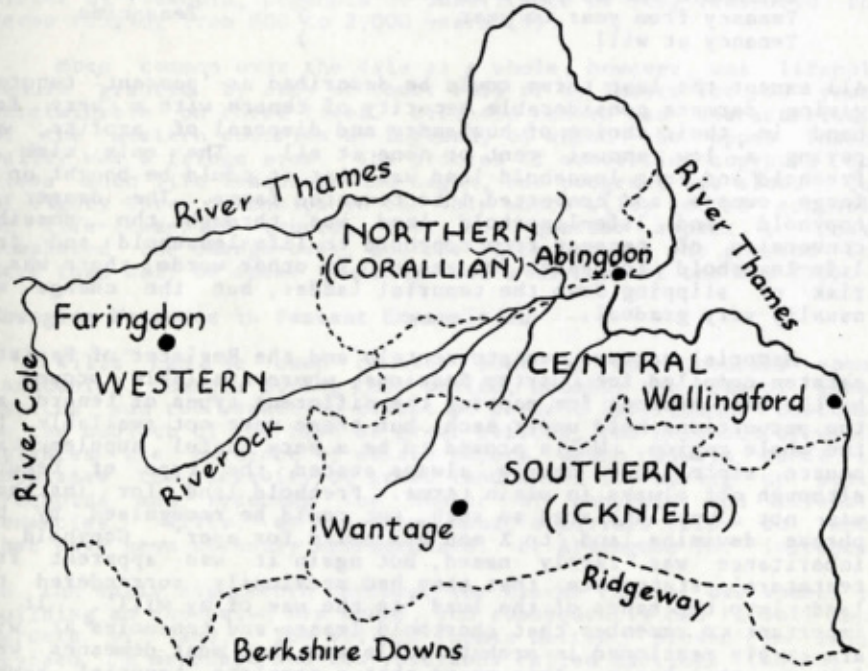
In seeking to identify peasant communities, one difficulty encountered at the outset was to find source material with evidence of land tenure for a region such as this, where so many parishes were not part of a great estate. It is usually wise to choose well-documented communities for research, but in this case the main purpose was to investigate villages for which there would, of necessity, be little extant material in the form of surveys, leasebooks, rentals or estate maps. Probate inventories are a well known source for crops, stock and implements, but they



do not record the value of real estate, except for chattel leases (leases for a fixed term of years). The probate will, however, emerged as one of the most useful sources for studying peasant landownership, since the main purpose of a will was to dispose of real property. About two thousand wills of full-time or part-time farmers or landowners of the Vale of White Horse were proved in the ecclesiastical courts from 1660 to 1760 and survive among the diocesan records in the Berkshire and Wiltshire Record Offices (5). Several ways were found of using these to identify and analyse tenurial patterns. More surprisingly, they also turned out to be informative on changes in farming methods and even enclosure.

**Identifying Peasant Communities in the Four Sub-Zones of the Vale**

The Vale of White Horse was not treated as one integrated region for this study, but was divided into four distinct land-use zones based on soils, relief and marketing opportunities (Figs. 1 and 2). Most of the area was still in common-field organisation, and therefore dependent on some sort of mixed farming, but the bias varied. The western side was more suited to a pastoral economy and was developing a dairying industry for the production of cheese. The remainder was mainly arable, producing malting barley and wheat, but variations in the underlying soils divided it into three zones. The northern band of Corallian stonebrash



and sands along the Oxford heights was typically sheep and corn country. The central area was one of heavy loams and gravels over clay in contrast to the southern band along the Icknield Way where a wide fertile band of Upper Greensand lay at the foot of the chalk downs. Each zone had its market town: Faringdon, Abingdon, Wallingford and Wantage.

One method of identifying the peasant communities of the Vale and comparing their distribution throughout the four zones was by studying the prevailing types of land tenure, bearing in mind that the word 'owner' at this date can include certain types of semi-secure tenancy as well as freeholders. The gradations in security of tenure are shown in the form of a ladder:

| | |
|---|---|
| Freehold ) | Secure |
| Long leaseholds of 700-2,000 years ) | Tenancies |
| Copyhold of inheritance ) | |
| Copyhold for lives ) | |
| Beneficial leases with right of ) | Less |
| renewal every 7 or 10 years ) | Secure |
| Leasehold for 99 years determinable ) | Tenancies |
| on lives ) | |
| Leasehold for 21 years or less ) | Insecure |
| Tenancy from year to year ) | Tenancies |
| Tenancy at will ) | |

All except the last three could be described as 'peasant' tenures, giving farmers considerable security of tenure with a very free hand in their choice of husbandry and disposal of profits, and paying a low annual rent or none at all. The only risk to freehold and long leasehold land was that it could be bought up by large owners and converted into tenanted farms. The danger to copyhold and life-leasehold land was through the possible conversion of tenancy from copyhold to life-leasehold and from life-leasehold to leases for years. In other words, there was a risk of slipping down the tenurial ladder, but the change was usually very gradual.

Manorial surveys, estate rentals and the Register of Papists' estates compiled for Quarter Sessions, where available, proved to be the best sources for mapping the different types of tenure and the proportions held under each, but these were not available for the whole region. Wills proved to be a very useful supplementary source since they nearly always stated the type of tenure, although not always in plain terms. Freehold land, for instance, was not always declared as such, but could be recognised by the phrase devising land 'to X and his heirs for ever'. Copyhold of inheritance was rarely named, but again it was apparent from testators' statements that they had previously surrendered the land into the hands of the lord 'to the use of my will'. It is important to remember that shorthold leases and tenancies at will are rarely mentioned in probate wills and that most demesnes were let on this basis. This means that a complete tenurial sample cannot be obtained. Nevertheless wills can justifiably be used to



gauge the frequency and geographical spread of peasant types of tenure.

One quantitative exercise carried out with the wills was to identify the zones with the greatest concentration of freeholders. On this evidence the Icknield zone produced nearly twice as many references to freeholders as the central zone. Taken by itself, chance survival of wills makes the above findings unsatisfactory, but a poll book for the 1768 election, naming freeholders qualified to vote, gave a remarkably similar result (6): there were more than thirteen freeholders per parish in the Icknield zone, eight per parish in the Central zone, six in the Western and only five in the Corallian.

While the Icknield zone had the greatest concentration of freeholders, probate wills indicate that all four zones had pockets of other secure, peasant-type tenancies. Long leaseholds for up to 2,000 years, granted by owners in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in times of financial hardship, were found scattered throughout the Vale (7). Copyhold of inheritance still survived on a few manors, such as Steventon, owned by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, and the Bishop of Winchester's manor at Brightwell (8), although none was found in the Corallian zone. At Great Coxwell, in 1736, nearly all tenants were holding either by freehold, copyhold of inheritance or long leasehold for terms ranging from 800 to 2,000 years (9).

More common over the Vale as a whole, however, was lifehold tenure granted by copy of court roll or by leases for 99 years determinable on three lives. Lifehold tenure was characteristic of the western counties of England, of which the upper Thames valley was a fringe area. The process of converting copyhold for lives into life-leasehold had begun, but progress was slow. Out of eighty three townships in the Vale where wills record copyhold or life-leasehold tenure, only one quarter appear to have completed the change-over, and one fifth had not yet started it. More than half of these townships had a mixture of the two (10).

**Changing Fortunes in Peasant Communities**

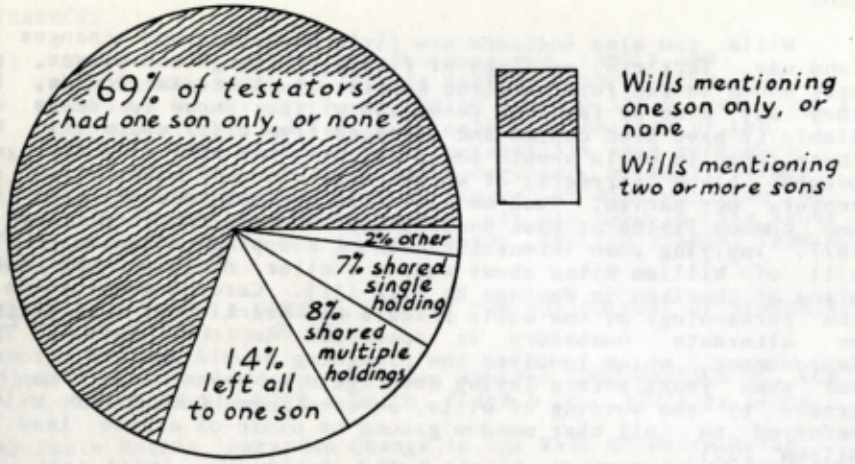
Wills can be used to test some of the theories about landowning changes during this period, notably the rise of great estates and the weakening effect of peasant inheritance customs. On the subject of the rise of great estates, the evidence of wills balances the evidence of estate papers, which always tends to emphasise the activity of great landowners in buying up small freeholds and reducing the number of copyhold and lifehold tenancies. Wills, on the other hand, sometimes refer to lands that have been recently enfranchised. At Ardington for instance, in the early eighteenth century, the Clarke family overspent in building an expensive new house, and subsequently had to sell many parcels of land. The will of Thomas Batten, proved in 1735, devised 'a messuage and two yardlands called Barricks (which) I first took by lease and later purchased from Edward Clarke esq.,' and also 'a messuage and 2.5 yardlands in Ardington, formerly copyhold, later purchased in fee' (11).

Wills have previously been used to suggest that the small farmer helped to bring about his own downfall by traditional peasant attitudes towards land inheritance (12). At a time when the gentry and aristocracy were increasingly handing on entailed estates to a single heir the peasant, it seems, was still forced by lack of capital to use his meagre landholding to provide for his whole family by his will. Freehold land might be physically divided between two or more children, a process known as partible inheritance. Eventually, freehold parcels would then become so small that they could no longer be considered a viable farm, but only a useful adjunct for the tradesman or craftsman. In the case of copyholds or lifeleaseholds, where partition was usually forbidden, the peasant is said to have weakened the position of the heir by ordering that he should pay some of the annual profits to the widow and siblings, or raise a mortgage on the land to pay lump sums as portions and dowries. The testator might also divide the stock and implements by his will, a practice castigated by the historian, Edward Thompson, as economic suicide for common-field arable areas.

The wills of the Vale of White Horse show that all these practices were indeed common in the region (13), but it does not follow that peasant society was thereby doomed to rapid extinction. It must be recognised, firstly, that many peasant farmers did not make wills, because their lifehold lands simply descended to the next 'life' named in the court roll or lease. So the peasant who goes to the trouble and expense of making and proving a will is the one who intends to make some more complicated provision, and this means that the evidence of wills is skewed in favour of sharing arrangements. Secondly, there is evidence that the gentry, too, were directing that lands should be sold or divided after their decease (14).

It was a surprise to find that partible inheritance of freehold land, more commonly associated with Kent, was by no means unknown in the Vale and was common in a few Corallian parishes where there were light, fertile sands. In such places a small, easily worked holding could support a family. At Kingston Bagpuize and Fyfield, both rich and poor yeomen divided their lands, sometimes including daughters as well as sons. In 1671 John Gould divided eight acres at Kingston Bagpuize between six sons and three daughters in carefully designated parcels, while William Herbert in 1685 asked
'two indifferent honest neighbours appointed by both my sons' to help with the division of a substantial holding between two of his five children (15). However, by analysing all the one hundred and ninety eight wills where freehold land was mentioned and the number and sex of the children was also stated, it was found that only one third of the testators had two or more sons, and were therefore in the category most likely to divide lands. Of these, nearly half left all the land to one son, and one quarter owned multiple holdings which they divided. Less than one quarter of the farmers therefore, left a single holding to be divided or shared - and this represented only 7% of the original one hundred and ninety eight in the sample (16). Thus peasant farming in the Vale was not being undermined by partible inheritance to any significant extent.






The most important point, perhaps, is that the structure of peasant society was not undermined by these inheritance customs unless some other class was ready to exploit the situation. If we look at the wills to see who was buying land in the Vale of White Horse from 1660 to 1760, we find that it was often the yeomen and craftsmen themselves who were the purchasers. There was a lively land market, in which the individual owners might change but the type of owner remained the same. Sometimes lands were bought with the full intention of endowing daughters and younger children, or providing a nest egg which could be sold to pay debts and funeral expenses. John Darman of East Hanney made seven purchases of land during his lifetime, one from the squire and six from other yeomen, and at his death he divided the total amount between two sons (17). This flexible attitude to landowning suited the peasant farmer and maintained a fluid land market which created a ladder of opportunity for the enterprising. Yeomen might become labourers, and craftsmen become yeomen. Only after 1730 do outside buyers from the towns begin to take up life-leaseholds in a few eastern manors as absentee-owners (18).

**Farming in the Peasant Zones**

The peasant was more than likely to survive if he could adopt the improved techniques pioneered by capital farmers on enclosed farms, such as new fodder crops. Although evidence on this comes mainly from inventories or from manorial and estate records, wills can provide valuable supplementary data, albeit of the 'instance' variety rather than the quantitative.

For example, probate inventories are known to be a poor guide to the sowing of new fodder crops, so it was significant to find a Marcham shepherd bequeathing turnips and hay to feed the flock of sheep mentioned in his will in 1742 (19). Inventories may not mention small items of livestock valuable in a peasant economy, such as bees and poultry, but the accompanying will may confirm that these did exist. Edmund Whitborne of Letcombe Regis left his wife all the poultry and all the cheeses except ten, with the

result that his inventory mentions only ten cheeses and no poultry (20).

Wills can also indicate new field divisions and changes of land use. Terriers, or lists of fields, furlongs and closes, are best known in the form of glebe terriers in diocesan records, but they may also be found in deeds and wills. Those in deeds are liable to have been copied and recopied from older documents, but those found in wills should be up to date, and will fill the gaps between glebe terriers, of which there are only about two per century per parish. Thus we know from a glebe terrier that the two common fields at East Hendred had been divided into four by 1677, implying some intensification of cropping rotations. The will of William Miles shows that a similar division had taken place at Charlton in Wantage by 1722 (21). Careful examination of the phraseology of the wills reveals the practice of convertible or alternate husbandry in operation in the Vale. This improvement, which involved the ploughing of old pasture grounds for some years before laying down again to grass leys, can be traced by the wording of wills, as when James Coombe of Milton referred to 'all that meadow ground or close of arable land in Milton' (22).

Some enclosures by agreement, an important development of the seventeenth century, were not confirmed by decrees in the Exchequer or Chancery courts, as commonly happened, but are known only through references in deeds or wills. This was especially likely when only part of the common-field system was enclosed. At East Challow, where the lower arable furlongs were enclosed in the 1660s, probably for conversion to grass, the only evidence of this so far found is from the wills of John Harbert and Stephen Penstone. Harbert's will, dated 1660, mentioned 'a close that is to be inclosed in the East bottom in East Challow', and Penstone in 1674 devised sixteen acres of 'several' or enclosed ground, 'allotted to me upon the enclosure of the Cow Leazes and other the lower fields and places in East Challow' (23).

The value of probate records as sources for the agrarian history of the early modern period has been well known for over thirty years. Yet whereas the inventories and accounts have been analysed for many regions with increasing sophistication of method, the wills have so far been under-exploited, although their importance for studying inheritance customs has long been recognised. In studying the Vale of White Horse the wills proved to be invaluable not only for recording inheritance customs but also for identifying secure tenancies and thus for identifying parishes whose farmers operated outside the control of the great landowners. In addition, wills occasionally supplied information on aspects of farming and farm organisation on which the inventories are silent, such as enclosure by agreement and convertible husbandry. Statistically speaking, wills are an imperfect source, even more so than the inventories. Nevertheless, since there are no accurate national statistics for agriculture before the 1860s it behoves us to make full use of the sources available, and it is mainly through their wills that we hear the authentic voice of the peasant farmers of Berkshire.

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(18) Cottis, thesis, loc cit pp 110-11.

(19) Will proved in Berkshire Archdeaconry Court; Berkshire Record Office, D/A 1, 109/149.

(20) Ibid D/A 1, 138/38.

(21) Diocese of Salisbury glebe terriers for Berkshire, East Hendred; Wiltshire Record Offive. Peculiar Court of Dean and Canons of Windsor, will proved 9 Jan 1730/1; Wiltshire Record Office.

(22) Will of James Coombe of Milton, proved 29 April 1732; Wiltshire Record Office, wills proved in the Consistory Court of Sarum.

(23) Wills proved in Berkshire Archdeaconry Court; Berkshire Record Office, D/A 1, 80/103; 107/126.





# Local History Theses in Reading University Library

One of the ways of earning a higher degree (Doctor or Master of Philosophy) is to produce a thesis. This is a book-length report of original research pursued over two, three or more years. The British system is for about three typescript copies to be submitted to the examiners, one of which is permanently retained in the university library. Until recently many theses have been inaccessible, and they are still protected by rather more stringent copyright restrictions than are published works.

Some of the work incorporated in theses is later published eitehr in book form or as journal articles, but much of it just gathers dust. For this reason it seemed worth publishing a list of University of Reading theses relating to Berkshire. They may be consulted in the University Library at Whiteknights. During term-time the Library is open in the evenings and some weekend periods, but note that theses can only be fetched during weekday 'office hours' so call or telephone (874331) them if you want to consult them out of office hours.

While compiling the list it became very noticeable that Reading students did research on many out-county areas. The corollary is that postgraduates at other universities have chosen Berkshire as their subject. Their theses can often be borrowed through the interlibrary loans system for use in the borrowing library, but not for use at home. In recent years many doctoral theses have been microfilmed and are available from the British Library Lending Division rather than from the originating university.

Two lists are available for locating non-Reading theses. In the University Library these lists are shelved at Reference 013.378. For older work there is the Retrospective Index to Theses of Great Britain and Ireland 1716-1950. Vol. 1, Social Sciences and Humanities (1975) Editor, Roger R. Bilboul. Recent work is listed in the Index to Theses Accepted for Higher Degrees. Aslib, 1950/51 to date. This was published annually and then biannually from 1976. It includes BLLD microfilm accession numbers. The latest volume contains abstracts as well as the thesis title. These were previously in a separate microfiche publication entitled Abstracts of Theses (1978-19 ).

In the list below, the 'R' number identifies each thesis. The degree is given, since PhD theses are much more substantial than those for Master degrees. The MPhil degree replaced the MA/MSc research degree in about 1967. The theses are listed in the order they are given in the library catalogue which is indicated by their reference (R) numbers.

R.W. Daltry, A HISTORY OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF THE BOROUGH OF READING UP TO 1872. (MA 1933) Includes a list of alleys and 'courts'. R79

R.C.J. Baily, THE PARLIAMENTARY HISTORY OF READING BETWEEN 1750 AND 1850. (MA 1944) R200

C.P. Rawson, SOME ASPECTS OF EVACUATION. (PhD 1943) Wartime evacuation of schoolchildren to Reading. R203

R. Jessop, THE GEOMORPHOLOGY OF BERKSHIRE. (MA 1947) R234

K.G. Burton, THE EARLY NEWSPAPER PRESS IN BERKSHIRE (1723-1855). (MA 1954) R337

G.R. Lucas, BERKSHIRE: SOME STUDIES BASED ON THE CENSUS RETURNS. (MA 1954) R412

F.M. Taylor, AN INQUIRY INTO THE LEISURE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE OF READING. (PhD 1955) R414

M. Parry, LOCAL CLIMATIC STUDIES IN THE READING AREA. (MSc 1952) R495

D.G.M. Cheshire, WIND AND RIVER GAPS IN THE READING AREA. (MA 1956) R653

M.F. Thomas, RIVER TERRACES AND DRAINAGE PATTERNS IN THE READING AREA. (MA 1957) R754

M.T. Clanchy, THE ROLL AND WRIT FILE OF THE BERKSHIRE EYRE OF 1248. Edited. (PhD 1966) R1050

B.R. Kemp, THE FOUNDATION OF READING ABBEY AND THE GROWTH OF ITS POSSESSIONS AND PRIVILEGES IN ENGLAND IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY. (PhD 1966) R1154

M. Staveley, PRE-DOMESDAY GEOGRAPHY IN NORTHERN BERKSHIRE. (MA 1965) R1218

H.S. Davies, THE THAMES NAVIGATION COMMISSION, 1771-1867. (MA 1967) R1312

N.M. Herbert, THE BOROUGH OF WALLINGFORD, 1155-1400. (PhD 1971) R 1376

T.V.B. Morrison, SOME ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN NEWBURY IN THE 19th CENTURY. (MPhil 1967) R1426

A.R. de Souza, THE STRUCTURE OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS, AND HOUSEHOLD MOBILITY WITHIN THEM: A PILOT INVESTIGATION IN READING, BERKSHIRE. (PhD 1968) R1604

A.F. Cook, READING, 1835-1930: A COMMUNITY POWER STUDY. (PhD 1970) R2000

S.C. Coombs, THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IN READING, 1945-1970. (MPhil 1970) R2373

P.J. Jefferies, A CONSIDERATION OF SOME ASPECTS OF LAND-HOLDING IN MEDIEVAL BERKSHIRE. (PhD 1972) R2686



K. Parsons, ATTITUDES, BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOUR: ELITES AND POLITICS IN DERBY AND READING. (PhD 1972) R2699

R.F. Palmer, THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN THE BOROUGH OF READING, 1825-1939. (MPhil 1975) R3026

C.J. Chartres, SOIL DEVELOPMENT ON THE TERRACES OF THE RIVER KENNET. (PhD 1975) R3073

D.M. McLaren, STUART CAVERSHAM: A THAMES-SIDE COMMUNITY IN OXFORDSHIRE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. (PhD 1975) R3086

R.C. Prentice, POWER, INFLUENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: AN EXPERIENTIAL (sic) SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING IN THAMES COUNTY COUNCIL AND THAMES TOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL. (PhD 1976) On Berkshire and Reading Councils. R3240

S.T. Blake, THE PHYSICAL EXPANSION OF THE BOROUGH OF READING, 1800-1862. (PhD 1976) R3259

C.G. Durston, BERKSHIRE AND ITS COUNTY GENTRY, 1625-1649. (PhD 1977) R3331

C.M. Guy, LOCAL SHOPS IN A CHANGING RETAIL ENVIRONMENT: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION FOR LOCAL PLANNING, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE READING AREA. (PhD 1978) R3445

M.I. Connolly, THE GODLY IN BERKSHIRE FROM THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH TO c. 1642. (MPhil 1977) R3560

J. Cheshire, GRAMMATICAL VARIATION IN THE ENGLISH SPOKEN IN READING, BERKSHIRE. (PhD 1979) R3683

E. Cater, THE IMPACT ON THE M4 ON RESIDENTIAL LOCATION IN THE READING SUB-REGION. (PhD 1981) R4039

J. Brooks, THE DESERTED MEDIEVAL VILLAGES OF NORTH BERKSHIRE. (PhD 1983) R4320

D.S. Stafford, A GILBERT ACT PARISH: THE RELIEF AND TREATMENT OF THE POOR IN THE TOWN AND PARISH OF HUNGERFORD, BERKS, 1783-1834. (MPhil 1983) R4438

J. Cottis, AGRARIAN CHANGE IN THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE, 1660-1760. (PhD 1985) R4683

J. Hurst, DEVELOPMENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION 1944-65 EXEMPLIFIED IN THE COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE. (MPhil 1985) R4708

R.J. Williams, CRIME AND THE RURAL COMMUNITY IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BERKSHIRE, 1740-1789. (PhD 1986) R4943

S.W. Taylor, ASPECTS OF THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF SEVEN BERKSHIRE PARISHES IN THE 18th CENTURY. (PhD 1987) R5234

DIARMUID O'ROURKE

# The Book of Wargrave: Local History in Hardback

The Book of Wargrave was originally planned by members of the Wargrave Local History Society as a modest paperback. It was designed to give newcomers some information about the history of the village, in a popular, interesting and accessible form, as the earlier histories by Ernest Pope and Herbert Reid were both out of print. This book was eventually published as a hard-backed volume of some 260 pages, illustrated with over 100 photographs, maps and drawings and printed by Oxford University Printing House. The first print run of 1,000 copies was sold within a month and the reprint of 500 books is selling steadily, but more slowly.

There is a growing general interest in local history, but it is not always easy to find the resources, editorial and financial, to present the work of years of dedicated private research to an interested public. The story of how the Wargrave Local History Society conceived, produced, published and sold a rather unusual book should encourage other groups. There may be elements in our own experience that contributed to the success of the venture which can be adapted to different conditions. Some of these were deliberate policy decisions; many more were the results of particular circumstances or happy chance.

It was the newcomers to the village, wanting to know something about the history of their adopted community, who encouraged the longer established families to see the value of their memories, mementoes and research into the village past. This kind of cross fertilisation was shown in the success of the 'Old Wargrave' exhibition organised by Judith Stephenson at the 1981 Wargrave Festival, which led directly to the establishment of the local history society. Two years later, she and other members of the society, under the chairmanship of Derek Bird, successfully persuaded the 1983 Festival Committee that there was a demand for a popular history of the village and the committee lent the society £250 towards production costs. Thus a definite commitment to produce a book for the festival in 1985 was a useful spur to action.

Considerable material was available in Reid's and Pope's histories of Wargrave; in special studies which individuals had already carried out on their own initiative and for talks to the society; in the parish magazines which began in the 1870s; and in



family memories and records. An informal book committee was established to investigate the problems of how to tap the material and organise it into some kind of coherent pattern and how to develop a strategy for financing publication. The editors of the 'Wargrave News', a monthly village paper organised on a voluntary basis, were asked to help. Two of us agreed to act as editors of the proposed book. Neither of us had been directly involved in the history society committee, nor were we 'old' Wargrave residents so we were, perhaps, able to take a detached view of what was possible. Neither of us had edited a book before though the possession of a history degree and experience in printing through a public relations job, were both to prove useful.

The editors' aim was to produce a book which would be bought, read and enjoyed by a large number of people in the village, would appeal to visitors and, if possible, have some lasting value as a historical record. Neither the time nor the resources were available to attempt a new chronological history of the village. We could, however, use the existing information to describe various topics in village life which demonstrated change over the centuries. We could produce a general outline of the history of the manor, church and schools, institutions which influenced the development of the village. Farming and the River Thames have formed the basis of the community life for over a thousand years; we could describe some of the changes which have taken place in their use. There were also all sorts of interesting people who enriched the life of the village through their benefactions and those whose lives and talents were of wide national importance as well as others whose stories were just good entertainment. We did not just want to concentrate on those who lived in the grand houses. Changes have taken place so fast during the last fifty years that we thought it was important to find people to describe something of the flavour of village life in the early part of this century. We were only just in time. Sadly four of the authors, among them Derek Bird, died during the four years it took us to complete the book.

Members of the society, most of whom were not professional writers or historians, were asked to find out as much as possible about the topics that interested them and the committee approached other local people to fill in the gaps in the general framework. At the last minute we found two professional people, not connected with the village, who were able to write much needed articles on the geology, landscape and village buildings. The editors decided that, rather than write the book themselves from others' research, it would be more interesting just to edit the various contributions and to try to retain each author's enthusiasm and 'voice'. The book is uneven in style and content, but that may have widened its general appeal.

It was not ready as intended for the 1985 Festival; only about three quarters of the scripts had been received. The local history society's exhibition did, however, offer us the opportunity to do some 'product research'. We displayed type-set excerpts, the introduction, table of contents and photographs, together with a possible price range for available options, to gauge public reaction. By July we knew there was enough interest for us to ask for specific quotations for printing.

Much time was spent on discussing methods of marketing, including pricing, publicity and sales. If this was not right, the enormous effort that went into writing and producing the book would have been wasted. Almost before a word had been written, general plans had been discussed for financing publication. The book had to be sold by subscription before it was published because even with our loan we could not do this out of our own resources. Early estimates were for a retail price of £5 each for a modest paperback with a print run of 1,000 copies. However, we decided if we were to attract enough subscribers to underwrite costs, we would need to offer a hardback to them. Two print runs for hardback and paperback versions would have been uneconomic. Thus we eventually decided to offer one standard hardbacked book at a pre-publication price of £8.95 and a full retail price of £9.95, and a de luxe version, available only to order before publication, at £16.80. This special edition had special binding, slip case, extra photographs and a book plate, and because there were so many we were able to supply a special type of leather binding. Both versions of the books seem to have been considered good value for money. The names of all subscribers are listed in the book.

Publicity was important. A major campaign was designed in June 1986 when most of the writing was complete. We appealed for subscriptions through the 'Wargrave News' and other papers. There were press releases, press conferences, paid advertisements, posters and leaflets throughout the surrounding area. By early September we had enough money from orders to almost cover the cost of 1,000 copies. Publicity for the launch party in January 1987, including coverage on Radio Oxford, helped the sale of 200 extra copies in one morning and the unexpected burst of bookshop sales in local villages and towns caused the decision to reprint.

We chose Oxford University Printing House partly because one of our production team knew the staff, but also because their quotation was competitive and they had plenty of experience of short runs for specialist publications and were backed by the resources of a large company. Their expertise was invaluable and the staff were delightful people who seemed as interested in the success of the venture as we were ourselves. They took great care with reproducing photographs and made a considerable contribution to the appearance of the book.

We made use of a committee member's computer programme for typing scripts. This made correction and rewriting easier. Most contributions went through several versions. Printing costs were reduced by type setting from our discs; however we did run into some problems when the printer's computer was not entirely compatible with ours and there were the inevitable mechanical breakdowns.

The history society benefitted financially from acting as its own publisher. The book production team, however, took responsibility for every aspect of the book; from the widths of paper and size of type, to dust-cover and the colour of the binding. Any mistakes that appear in the final version were our own! The distinctive outward appearance, the attractive interior layout and price have attracted the casual bookshop buyer. This



was partly due to the printer's skill, but there was also a wide range of artistic ability and practical advice available in the village.

'The Book of Wargrave' was planned by a group of enthusiasts but it developed into a community project. Thirty authors are listed, but over a hundred people must have been involved one way or another - telling us stories, lending or reproducing photographs, making drawings, maps or family trees, typing, proof reading, offering specialist advice and organising finance and sales. People in Wargrave are used to working together; a vast array of clubs and organisations join forces every two years to produce the village festival. The 'Wargrave News', another community enterprise, had already given the editors valuable experience in working as part of a team and organising contributions from a large number of people. The paper was also invaluable for publicity and securing subscriptions.

Publication of 'The Book of Wargrave' was a success for several reasons. It was written for the general public, it was well designed and it was properly marketed. All this would have been impossible without the enthusiasm of those who conceived the idea. This generated an enormous amount of voluntary assistance from many who were not even members of the local history society. A community project is not the easiest thing to organise, but when it works it can be very rewarding. We hope our book has made a contribution to the study of local history and we have opened up new areas for more thorough investigation.

ROSEMARY GRAY
Joint Editor of the Book of Wargrave
Wargrave Local History Society

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MARGARET SMITH
Local Studies Librarian Berkshire Library



# Berkshire Local History Association

**BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION** was formed in 1976
Membership is open to individuals, societies and corporate bodies such as libraries, schools, colleges, etc. The Association covers the whole of Berkshire, pre- and post-1974.

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| BRIAN BOULTER | MRS GWEN PARKER |
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