BERKSHIRE Old and New

Berkshire Local History Association

1990 No 7

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 area of Berkshire, pre - and post - 1974.

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BERKSHIRE Old and New

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The Committee would be very pleased if authors of articles and reports for the forthcoming issues of the journal would contact the Editor, or any member of the Editorial Committee, for guidance as to length and presentation. Copies of, or notes about, books or journals for inclusion in the bibliographical section should be sent to the Editor. Note of such publications will also be included in the Association's *Newsletter*.

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An Exhibition of

The Royal Borough Treasures

will be held at The Guildhall, Windsor
25th June to 7th July 1990 inc

An opportunity to view items from the Royal Borough Collection, other Royal Museums, Civic Regalia and Borough and Parish Archives

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

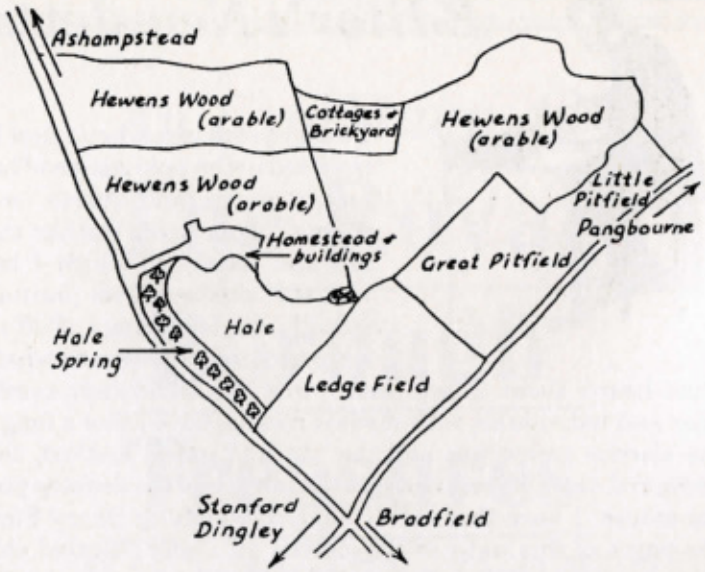
Editor's Newsletter

Twenty years ago, when I first became involved in the publication of local history, foolscap, and quarto were the normal paper sizes (rather than A4) and the society to which I belonged was still producing its journal using stencils. Photocopying and off-set litho were exciting innovations which I had only just heard about. Since then I, and the technology available to societies and individuals with modest means, have come a long way — via the electric typewriter and the 'cut and paste' method, the word processor and daisy wheel printer to the miracle of the desktop publisher and its mouse. I have thoroughly enjoyed watching Henry Farrar lay out the pages of this issue of the journal on a sophisticated computor and the Association is very grateful for his time, expertise and equipment.

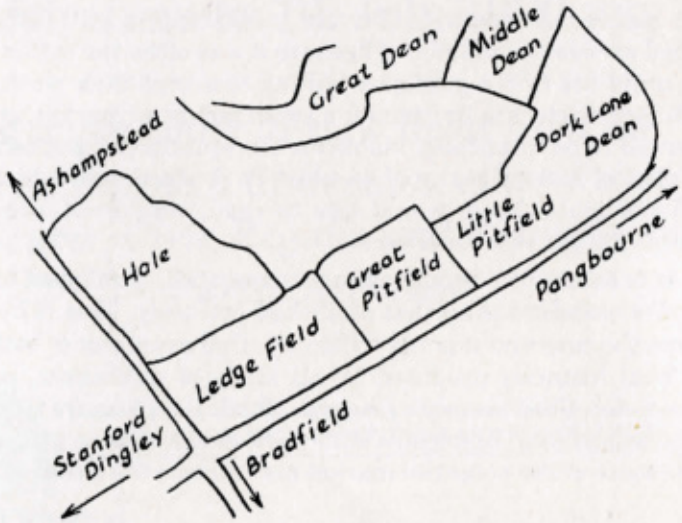
Interest in publishing local history continues to increase and our day school on the subject of being your own publisher was one of our most successful meetings. Private publishing is still sometimes described as 'vanity publishing' because it was often the action of authors who could not find a publisher willing to accept their work. However, much local history is written for a small potential market, one which is too small to be financially viable for the commercial publisher. Indeed the kind of history many of us want to produce, and which the local residents and schools would like to read, would not necessarily be suitable for the wider marker.

It is sometimes thought that commercially published history is of a higher standard than that published privately. This is by no means always the case and it is not difficult to find examples of both good and bad local histories produced by all kinds of publishers, private and commercial. Good accurate research which is a pleasure to read should be the aim of local historians who want to see their work published — but the size of the potential market may dictate the choice of publisher.

JUDITH HUNTER



Area of Hewens Wood, 1847
Taken From the Tithe Map of Bradfield Parish



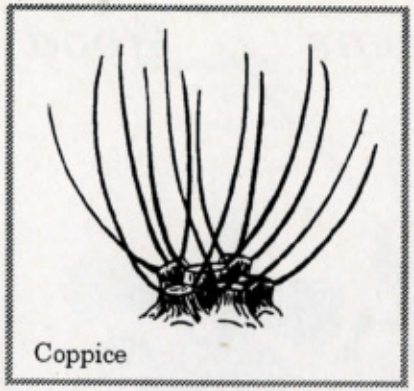
Map showing the area once covered by Ewins Wood
Taken from an estate map of 1796
The unnamed area lay outside the estate

Ewins alias Hewens Wood

Descriptions of 16th century woodlands are rare. Indeed there are few records of any kind pertaining to them, and certainly no woodland accounts for Berkshire and Oxfordshire. When one single document came to light, a statement made to the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England in the Court of Chancery, it became possible to attempt a reconstruction of one particular wood, and to describe the wood landscape, its trees and their type, the products and their value. This wood was Ewins at Bradfield of which only a few remnants survive and whose name even has changed.

In January 1568 three entrepreneurs leased for four years a wood called 'Ewins Coppice' in Bradfield; this was for the 'fyllinge, hewing, cutting down & carrying away of trees & underwood'. We know about this because one of the partners, Richard West, took another, Walter Bigges, to court in 1575 for £56 still owing to him.[1] The third partner, Thomas West, son of Richard, had died in 1573. It is the statements made to the court that provide our only information about Ewins Wood as it was in the 16th century.

In the 16th century London was expanding and firewood, amongst other commodities, was in great demand for the city. The River Thames formed an efficient highway to London for the carriage of goods such as wood and timber, including firewood.[2] Thomas West was part owner of a barge, with his father possibly the other owner. The barge was trading regularly from Wallingford to London, stopping at various small wharves in between to pick up loads; West would therefore have been able to transport wood from Ewins to London. That he did actually do so is suggested by references to wood being sent from Pangbourne in the account attached to Thomas West's inventory on his death.[3] Pangbourne, only two to three miles from Bradfield, is on the Thames and had a wharf.



Coppice

In the statement made to the court Richard West said that Ewins Coppice was a hundred acres and then went on to list the products of the wood and the amount of money each fetched. By examining his account, later maps of the area and information on Berkshire woodlands from more recent centuries, including the present one, it may be possible to reconstruct the wood as it was when managed by Richard West.

The hundred acres of woodland forming Hewens Wood may have been divided into separate coppices all with their own names; these names have all been lost with the exception of Hales or Halls Coppice. These coppices would have been cut in rotation and would have been divided by banks and ditches. In Bucklebury, the next parish to Bradfield, a bank topped by a hedge surrounded the whole wood and the internal banks dividing the coppices were fenced, and it is probable that this was also the custom in Bradfield. Where a wood survives it is possible to work out the divisions of the coppices from the surviving banks, but unfortunately in this case, very little woodland is left. However, it can be seen on the Tithe Map of 1847 that the former area of woodland is divided into three (four if we include Hales) fields which may have had their origin in the separate coppices.[4] If the original areas were retained there would have been no need to remove the banks.

The partners paid £104 for the four year lease which works out at approximately 5s 2d (26p) an acre annually. Whether they got a bargain or not will never be known, but compared with other leases of woodland around the Thames Valley this seems to be quite a low rent. Although no records have yet been found of the amount paid for leases of coppice in the 16th century in this area, there are figures available for earlier and later centuries. In 1368 a two year lease for eleven acres of woodland cost £11 3s 4d on the other side of the river at Goring - roughly 10s an acre per annum.[5] In 1623 twenty four acres were let in Nettlebed at £10 annually - approximately 8s 3d per acre;[6] but this was for cutting of the coppice only with all standard trees to be left. The agreement with the partners for Ewins Coppice for 'fyllinge, hewing, cutting down & carrying away of trees & underwood', however, seems to have involved all the trees of whatever sort. This leads one to think that it may have been a neglected wood, so only fetching a low rent.

What kind of wood was it? There is no mention of tall or great timber or of any being taken out. Tall or great timber was the name applied to trees grown closely together so they are drawn up towards the light - thereby producing long straight trunks suitable for beams or planks. There is mention of ash, a tree which propagates very easily and it is likely that there were small stands of young ash. There is also mention of oak, which can also be coppiced, but these are the only types of trees known to be present in Ewins, so it is probable that the coppice was mixed (since this was the normal practice) with a predominance of oak and ash. Hazel would certainly have been present as it is so easy to grow and very useful. The surviving woodland has oak, ash and beech trees with some wild cherry, but the few old stools are of ash and oak.

The main product of Ewins Wood as stated by Richard West was 3,220 loads of billet. A billet was a log of firewood 3ft 4ins long with a minimum circumference of 10ins. A load was approximately one ton of wood, that is the amount that could be drawn by two horses and according to Samuel Pepys a load consisted of 500 pieces or billets.[7] Billet was usually cut from coppice shoots which were between 7 and 10 years old, according to the type of wood and the fertility of the soil. It could also be cut from pollards or branches from standard trees. The trunks of smaller trees could be split or 'slit' into billet. Since Ewins Coppice yielded so much billet it was probably an overgrown coppice with small standards and few pollards.

Pollard

Pollards are found extensively in Bucklebury Woods where general grazing of beasts or right of common has been allowed for many centuries. It may be that there was no right of common in Ewins, so pollards if they existed would have been very few.

Oak and ash poles, according to the statement, were sold for £5. These would have been cut from the smaller shoots of the coppice stools and this may indicate that the stools were neglected and overgrown and thus suitable for poles as well as splitting for billet. Alternatively the variety of products may suggest that areas of coppice were at different stages of growth as might be expected from four coppice areas. £5's worth of poles, although not sounding very much, may have been a large quantity. In 1707 a hundred loads of poles

were worth this amount[8] and even in the woods where there was not a great variation of prices through the centuries (except for timber) inflation almost certainly will have affected prices. Various accounts indicate that three loads of poles were the minimum from an acre of coppice, which would seem to imply that there were only some thirty three acres of coppice in Ewins - or that it was a wood consisting of overgrown coppice with standards, in which case the hundred acres would not yield as many poles as it otherwise could. According to a modern woodman, who works the coppices, one ton (or a load) would have been approximately fifty bundles, each containing twenty poles. Thus by his modern estimate five thousand poles may have been taken from Ewins. These were probably sold to local woodmen for making into hurdles, hop poles and fencing.

'Lopp' was another important product; according to Richard West's statement £45's worth was sold. Lopp is usually the branches or twiggy bits from trees and these can be made into faggots of various sizes; in some wood accounts 'lopping faggots' are mentioned. The lopp was probably sold to local woodmen for various uses. The amount is puzzling as it implies a great deal of trimming from standard trees. If these trees had been a size suitable for timber they would have been sold. Since none were sold, it suggests that they were small and of poor quality or non-existent. The lopp mentioned may have been 'tops', a term usually applied to the tops of coppice shoots.

It seems possible that the entrepreneurs clear felled the wood as 'felled' is a term usually applied to standards, and 'cutting' to coppice. The partners did both of these. It is also possible that after the wood was cleared, the owner then grubbed up the roots and converted it to arable. Certainly by 1752 Ewins Wood consisted of twenty two acres only[9] and by 1796[10] there were only scraps of wood left.

The name was originally Ewins and the wood was called this in various deeds up to the end of the century, although the name varied in spelling - Ewens, Ewins and Ewings.[11] The Tithe Award map of 1847 appears to be the first to call it 'Hewens Wood' and one can imagine the mapmakers asking the local people the name of the wood and they replying in the Berkshire dialect and adding an aitch! A narrow strip of woodland bears the name on the modern Ordnance Survey map and there is a Hewens Wood House.

To attempt to find the original site and extent of the wood, we turn to the tithe award map which shows three pieces of arable land, totalling eighty two acres, called Hewens Wood. These together with the Hale Field and Hale Spring of twelve acres and three acres respectively, make

an area of ninety seven acres, which allowing for the difficulties of measurement in the 16th century and the possible use of customary acres[12] makes up a wood of one hundred acres. This would give an error of three acres against the original one hundred acres of the statement. Without Hales, the error would be eighteen acres and as land was very valuable it is unlikely that such a mistake would be made. In 1845 forty three acres were termed Ewins Wood Estate and described as having small coppices and land 'long since converted to arable land'.[13]

PATRICIA PREECE

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8. Private Papers.
9. Berkshire Record Office (hereafter BRO) D/EBy T138.
10. BRO D/EBy P22.
11. BRO D/EBy T120.
12. BRO D/EHY E10 This refers to customary acres at Bucklebury. These were slightly larger than the statute acres.
13. BRO D/EBy T122.

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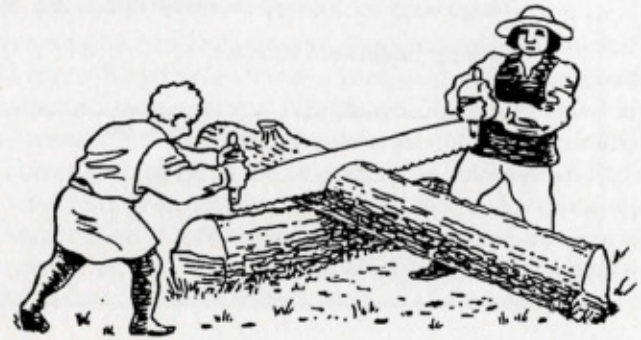

Eton Wick Maternity Nurse.

c/o Mrs. Burfoot,
"The Red House,"
New Boveney.

Telephone No. 56.

Scale of Charges for Attendance.

(A.) Patients in receipt of a weekly wage, 12*s.* 6*d.* paid in advance.

(B.) Others, 1 Guinea.

BABIES' WELCOME.

It is proposed to hold a Babies' Welcome at the Eton Wick Institute, on Friday Afternoons at 3 o'clock, beginning on Friday, February 19th. All Mothers and young Infants are welcome.

G. New, Printer, Eton.

A Baby Clinic for Eton Wick

Eton Wick is a large village on the northern bank of the Thames in east Berkshire, but until 1974 it was in south Buckinghamshire. The village is about a mile west of Eton College and is, as it has always been, part of the ecclesiastical parish of Eton. For many centuries the College Chapel was also the parish church and for about a century after the reform of Eton College, which began about 1840, the College took a pastoral interest in Eton Wick. The work of the church and influence of the College took many forms and much of it is poorly documented. The story told below comes almost entirely from the pages of the parish magazine.[1]

On Friday, 19th February, 1915 one of the first baby clinics in Buckinghamshire, known as the Babies' Welcome, was opened in Eton Wick Village Hall. It was started by Nurse Orchard who was the certified midwife provided by the Eton Wick Nursing Association which was run by a committee of ladies, including masters' wives from Eton College, and funded by donations and subscriptions. The work of the Association in Eton Wick as well as in the town of Eton, was at that time (1915) part of the Church of England's ministry to the working class.

By 1917 the Babies' Welcome was well established, meeting twice a month. The Eton doctor attended the first meeting of each month and would give a free consultation to any mother who wished to ask his advice concerning herself or her children. The nurse had many willing helpers. She was assisted by two ladies from Eton College, who did all the organising and kept the records, and two mothers from the village whose children had already started school.

The babies were weighed and advice was given (not merely offered) as to their diet and care. Short talks were arranged on many subjects of interest in the home: on the feeding of infants, children and invalids; on first aid and the treatment of children's ailments. At first the talks were given by the doctor, Nurse Orchard or one of the ladies from Eton College, but later, when the Welcome became affiliated to the Buckinghamshire County Association of Infant Welfares and received an annual grant from the county, then the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Holden, and the County Organiser, Miss Turnbull, visited the meeting about

twice a year to speak to the mothers. The talks by the Eton College masters' wives, however, continued and sometimes a college master would 'give a lecture'. In 1925 there was also a lecture by the National Milk Publicity Council.

Mothers were able to buy milk foods and Virol (a proprietary brand of malt extract) at wholesale prices. Materials for garments and wool for knitting could be obtained in a good quality at reduced prices. Patterns were provided and garments cut out for those who needed them. At some meetings there would be dripping for sale; this was brought from the kitchens at the Eton College boys' houses on the morning of the Welcome to a helper's home where it was cut and weighted into 4 oz pieces and wrapped in greaseproof paper. A sale of secondhand clothes took place at the Welcome periodically, the proceeds of which went to the Welcome funds. There was a social atmosphere to the afternoon too, as mothers enjoyed a cup of tea and chat with their friends while the toddlers played.

These descriptions in the parish magazine, of a village activity by women for women, provided a valuable insight into an area of the life of mothers and children that has previously received little attention. Considered in a wider context, the account of the Babies' Welcome adds significantly what is known of the improving health of the nation's children at this time. Although adult death rates had begun to decline in the late nineteenth century, infant mortality figures did not begin their decline until the twentieth century. In 1840 the rate of infant death had been 153 per 1,000 live births; in 1896-1900 it was 156, but by 1905-1910 it had fallen to 117 per 1,000 and it continued to fall.[2] There has been much debate as to the relative importance of the contributory causes, but undoubtedly improved nutrition, better housing and sanitation, supply of water and gas, the manufacture of good powdered milk feeds, vaccination and the first cheap antibacterial drugs all played their part.[3] Here though is something else: access to medical and maternity care for women and the education of mothers in child care in a pleasant social atmosphere.

The educational standard of the Babies' Welcome at Eton Wick must have been high and its influence extended beyond the mother and baby to include the whole family.

Mothers were encouraged to enter the National Mothercraft competitions held each year in conjunction with Baby Week at which time the Bucks County Infant Welfare Association also sponsored competitions for knitting and sewing. Papers were set on such subjects as mothercraft, health knowledge, the healthy baby and home nursing and

letter writing. There were also opportunities for fathers to take part with certificates awarded to things like shoe mending and simple carpentry, and there was also a section for brothers and sisters. The keeping of the clinic records was also judged. Eton Wick always seemed to do well, usually gaining several certificates and being placed third in the County Competitions of 1928 and 1931 and second in 1930.

The highlight of the Annual Picnic tea, held in the garden of one of the boys' houses at Eton College, was the exhibition of competition work and the presentation of prizes and certificates. The College masters' wives put a lot of work into making these picnics enjoyable and memorable occasions.

At Christmas time there was always a party (or Treat as it was known) with a Christmas tree and presents. In 1920 each baby and infant was presented with a pair of woollen slippers and a soap baby, and prizes were awarded to the mothers with the best records of attendance. By 1926 the Babies' Welcome had become known as the 'Welfare', this being the name commonly used up and down the country where Infant Welfare Centres were now well established. However, the pattern of the meetings and social events continued until the National Health Service came into being in 1948.

Parish magazines have been a largely ignored source, but are now at last recognised as useful for providing details of the work of the church within its parish.[4] Eton and Eton Wick are fortunate in that an almost complete run of the *Eton Parish Magazine* has been preserved from its foundation in 1878 until the Second World War. This was the result of the efforts of members of the Women's Institute who saved the collection formerly owned by a village resident from being destroyed.

JOAN BALLHATCHET

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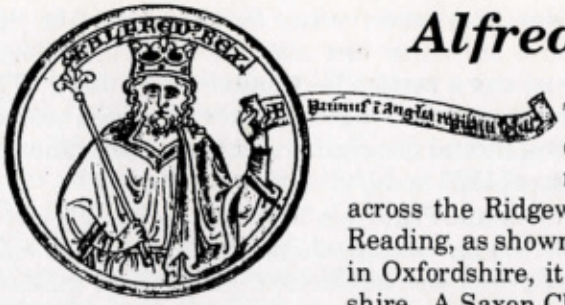
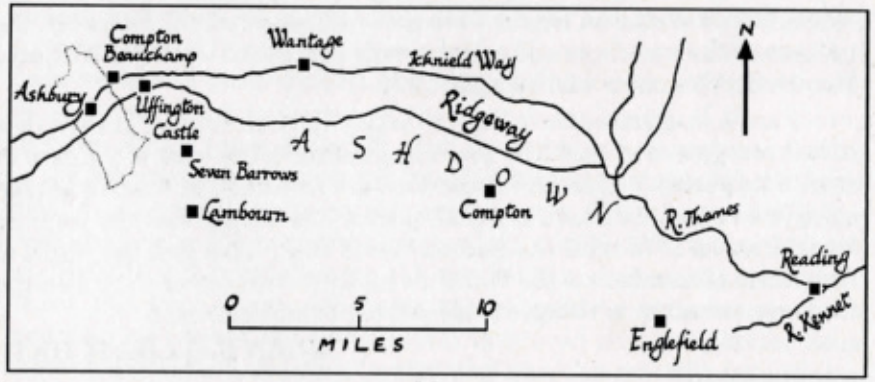
Alfred's Wayte



King Alfred from a portrait by Mathew Paris

The parish of Ashbury is one of a string, each lying roughly north-south across the Ridgeway to the north-west of Reading, as shown in map 1; although now in Oxfordshire, it was originally in Berkshire. A Saxon Charter of 947[1] tells us in a footnote that the manor was given to Saint Dunstan, who was then abbot of Glastonbury, and it remained with the abbey as its only Berkshire land until the dissolution in 1539. The abbots were jealous lords who kept good records of their possessions; they have left Ashbury with a very detailed terrier of the manor for 1519[2] and a less detailed one for the 13th century.[3]



Map 1

The 1519 terrier contains, in Latin, a record of the arable land of the manor, showing it under twenty six names (the abbot's demesne farmer and twenty five tenants), each holding subdivided into the East Field pieces and the West Field pieces, making a total of fifty two lists. There are 693 items, containing 1000 pieces using some 140 different field names; many names are listed more than once, and many items are multiple entries, for example '2 acres and a half in 4 pieces'. The items are sometimes straightforward, such as 'in Dark's Field', and sometimes descriptive, such as 'super (above the) Ridgeway', 'juxta (next to) Quarryfurlong'. The prefixes are significant: 'sub (below the) Ridgeway' could well be a good mile north of 'desuper (far above the) Ridgeway'.

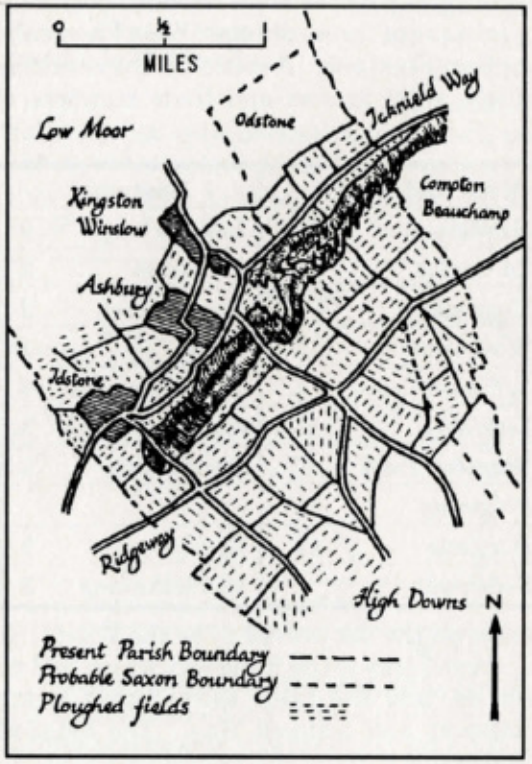
Although most of the old field names listed in the terriers had disappeared by 1770, some, like the Ridgeway, Berrycroft and Dark's Field, together with their prefixes south of, above, below, etc., showed that each of the fifty two basic lists was generally arranged in a fairly logical order, fifty from north to south and two from south to north. It was therefore possible to combine all the lists and arrange all the items — and hence all the different field names — in one long table north to south. Almost all the names mentioned more than once could be positioned with certainty relative to the others in the north-south order; those mentioned only once were given rather more doubtful positions. Each name could also be put into one of three columns; West Field only, both West and East Fields, or East Field only. A section of the resulting table (giving only the multiple entry names and their numbers of entries) is shown below:

West only		West and East			East only	
4	Marwell	5	Graffecomb	12	Lakefurlong	9
8	Sydeldowne	3	La Combs	4	Fiveacres	2
5	Whytecrosse	9	Heggeend	7	Rose Ayshe	2
5	Edcomb	5	Whytelond	3	Plotts	2
4	Meryfurlong	1	Kingston Comb	1	Bytwynewayes	6
5	Ebcomb	16	Le Wayte	17	Buttelerescomb	3
2	Cobbelfurlong	6	Kingston Field	7	Barethorne	2
		36	Ridgeway	36		
2	Lockelond	9	Horslade	12	Breche	5
6	Idston Field	8	Redelond	1	Middelfurlong	3

The most interesting name on the list proved to be the Wayte. It was listed thirty three times, second only to the Ridgeway which had no fewer than seventy two entries, and the table showed that it lay somewhere between the Ridgeway and Icknield Way. The detailed entries were distributed as follows:

	West Field	East Field
In the Wayte	0	2
Upon the Wayte	0	1
At/Near the Wayte	6	2
Above the Wayte	9	12
Far above the Wayte	1	0

The Wayte is no longer in use as a field name, nor does the name appear on any map, but it clearly related to a large feature stretching across both the East and the West Fields. However, it was not itself an arable field: with only two arable pieces actually in the Wayte, and most pieces being above or near, it must have been almost entirely non-arable. Eventually the answer was found on the John Rocque map published in 1760.[4] This map of Berkshire, at an approximate scale of two inches to the mile, not only shows roads and buildings, but also indicates ploughed fields.



Map 2

A sketch of the relevant part of the parish between the Ridgeway and Icknield Way (based on Rocque's map) is shown in map 2; Odstone, on the east side, became part of the parish in the sixteenth century, but was not part of it at the time of Domesday and was very likely not part of it when the boundaries were defined in 947. The dark mass of unploughed land stretching across the parish coincides with ground rising steeply from north to south towards the Ridgeway, much of it cut by coombes; it is clear that, at least until the middle of the eighteenth century, farmers were not capable of ploughing this area, and it would have contained only scrub, bushes and trees. It is the only area of non-arable land between the Ridgeway and Icknield Way, and it - or a large part of it - must therefore be the Wayte, used time after time as a reference feature in the terrier, but with hardly any arable land of its own.

Nowadays the Wayte has been turned into arable land or pasture apart from a few of the steepest slopes which are still wooded. Margaret Gelling, in *The Place Names of Berkshire*[5] gives the meaning of the

Wayte as 'look out place', but an alternative meaning given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'an ambush', and this seems a more likely meaning now that the large size of the feature is known. Indeed much of the Wayte consists of coombes from which lookouts could see nothing. The proposed meaning is still used today in the phrase 'lying in wait'.

The name, Wayte, also appears four times in the shorter thirteenth century terrier. The proposed meaning therefore requires some form of incident involving an ambush to have taken place during or before the thirteenth century.

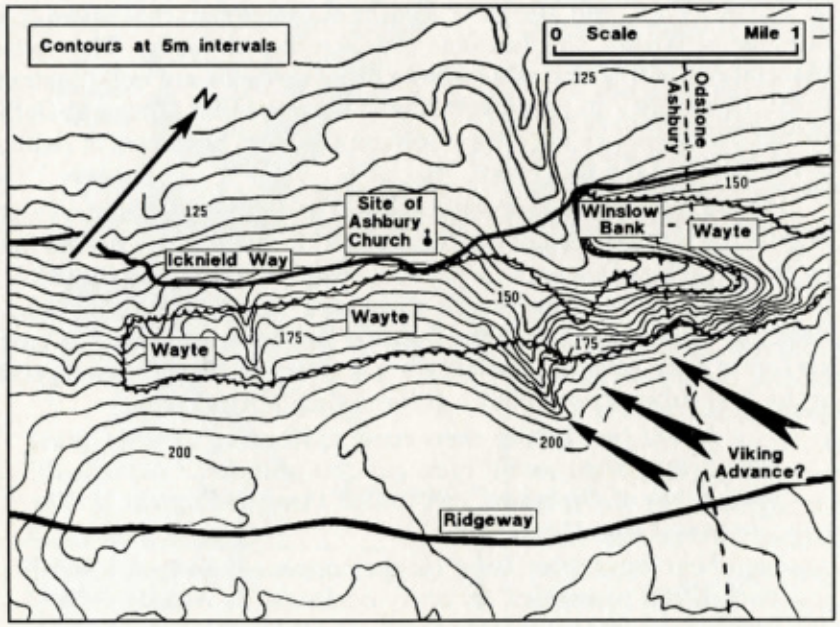
In the Saxon Charter of 947, referred to earlier, the boundaries of Ashbury in 947 are defined. One of the boundary points is Rammesburi, or 'Raven's Fort', and Margaret Gelling suggests that this raven is 'the familiar of Woden, the Teutonic god of war and death. The sinister associations of this bird as a haunter of battle-fields are well illustrated in OE literature'. In passing, it should be noted that Margaret Gelling thinks Rammesburi 'may have been on the East boundary of Ashbury to the South of the Ridgeway'.

There is a battle which could account for both Rammesburi and the Wayte: the Battle of Ashdown, fought in 871. Ashdown is the old name for the Berkshire Downs, with the Ridgeway running along the top. The battle might have been fought anywhere along that route west of Reading. Asser's account of the Battle of Ashdown still exists as part of his *Life of King Alfred*.[6] The following is a very much shortened version of the first three actions of 871, culminating in Ashdown:

> *In 871 the Viking army came to Reading. On the third day two of their earls rode out for plunder. Aethelwulf, ealdorman of Berkshire, confronted them at Englefield. The Christians won the victory.*
>
> *Four days after these things happened, King Aethelred and Alfred assembled an army and went to Reading. They reached the gate of the stronghold. The Vikings burst out. Both sides fought fiercely but the Christians eventually turned their backs and the Vikings won the victory. Aethelwulf fell there. (The Vikings, after a short rest, started to advance westwards from Reading).*
>
> *The Christians, four days later, advanced against the Viking army at Ashdown. The Vikings, splitting into two divisions, organised shield walls. The Christians too split up into two divisions. But Alfred and his men reached the battlefield sooner (than King Aethelred who) was still hearing Mass.*

Since the king was lingering still longer in prayer, and the Vikings had reached the battlefield more quickly, Alfred could not oppose the enemy battle-lines any longer without either retreating or attacking, and he moved his army against the enemy.

But the Vikings had taken the higher position, and the Christians were deploying from a lower position. A rather small and solitary thorn tree grew there, around which the opposing armies clashed violently. The Vikings took to ignominious flight, and many thousands were slain over the whole broad expanse of Ashdown.



Map 3

Note that Asser wrote his account in 893, twenty two years after the battle, and everything is coloured by old memories, Asser's hero-worship and Alfred's subsequent greatness. Writing of Alfred becoming king a couple of months after Ashdown in 871, Asser says he 'could easily have taken it over (the kingdom) while Aethelred was still alive, ... in particular because he was a great warrior and victorious in virtually all battles'. Yet not even Asser could quote an example of Alfred actually winning a battle up to that point apart from Ashdown. Asser needs to

be read with some caution. The following paragraphs show how the Ashbury hypothesis fits Asser's account.

Ealdorman Aethelwulf beat the Vikings in what appears to be a fairly small engagement at Englefield. He will have reported his success to Aethelred and Alfred before the assault on Reading.

Four days later, full of confidence, the Saxons were soundly defeated while attempting a frontal attack on the Reading stronghold, apparently leaving Wessex defenceless. Ashdown, the name given to the next engagement, is assumed by all authorities to have been on or near the Ridgeway, the main route west from Reading across Ashdown, and the Vikings were able to reach it in four days.

Although Alfred had accompanied Aethelred to Nottingham three years earlier, there is nothing to indicate that he had done any actual fighting prior to Reading; so he came to Ashdown with a record of one stalemate (Nottingham) and one defeat, yet according to Asser the experienced Saxon fighters were apparently persuaded by this twenty three year old to attack uphill with only half their potential force. However, it becomes an entirely rational event if Aethelred and Alfred had planned the action as an ambush in the Wayte. The coombes could well have divided the Saxon force into two halves, and could certainly have similarly divided the advancing Vikings into two columns. The Wayte is half way down the steep slope from the Ridgeway; since the Vikings started on the higher ground the Saxons were inevitably forced to attack uphill. Furthermore, the almost inexplicable decision on Alfred's part to attack before Aethelred was there becomes unavoidable. An ambush is one of the few military engagements in which the timings are left almost entirely to chance: battle is joined when the advancing force reaches the predetermined point for the ambush, and if successive waves reach their respective points at different times, each part of the ambushing force starts to fight at a different time. Once the decision had been taken to use the Wayte as an ambush site, everything was subordinated to the achievement of surprise, and to catching the Vikings in a poor formation. And the decision to set an ambush was a logical result of Aethelwulf's success against a moving column at Englefield and Aethelred's failure in his set piece confrontation at Reading. The pursuit and slaughter would have been south and east from the Wayte, the natural directions for flight, which fits in with the belief that Rammesburi was in the south east part of the parish.

Asser's account therefore seems to do nothing to harm the Ashbury theory, and indeed becomes more rational when based on an ambush.

And what of the name Ashbury itself? In 1086 Domesday used it to refer to the whole manor; the 947 Charter also contains the name, but not in the original text, only in a footnote added some time later. King Eadred presented the land to one Edrig who, in turn, '... gave the manor, which is now called Ashbury ... to Saint Dunstan then Abbot of Glastonbury'. So it was given to him some time during the period 947-957, but the 'Saint' Dunstan means the note was probably added after Dunstan's death in 988. (Even that is not certain: the title might be simply a confusing insertion by a later copyist, not present in the footnote when first written.)

The name therefore appears to have come into general use between 947 and 1086, probably after 988. It was likely to have been used initially for a small feature before being extended, because of its relative importance, to refer to the whole parish, just as a ford for oxen now refers to a city. The original spelling for Ashbury is not known. Another quotation from Margaret Gelling: 'The (Charter) bounds ... have been modernised by the 14th-century copyist, as have the forms Aysheberi, Aysshebury and Asshedoune, Aysshedun'. Ashbury is usually taken to mean 'the fort by the ash trees' but it can come from burg, burh, byrig, beorg and so on, and can have a variety of meanings.

Perhaps '-bury' referred originally to the parish's long barrow (now Wayland's Smithy); but, if so, it is surprising that the Saxons waited until the tenth or eleventh century to use a large mound of earth and stones over 4000 years old as a name for the manor. (And in fact the barrow is in Odstone which, as has been noted, was probably not part of the manor in the tenth century.)

Perhaps '-bury' referred originally to the Iron Age fortified farm (now Alfred's Castle); but, if so, it is astonishing that the Saxons waited until the tenth century to use an unremarkable mound of earth at least 1000 years old as a name for the manor.

And perhaps '-bury' referred originally to a spot where a large number of bodies were buried, the full name meaning 'the Ashdown burial place'; and, if so, it is entirely logical that this name, new in 871, should have seemed important enough to be extended to apply to the whole manor a hundred years later, and to be officially recognised as such before 1086. Perhaps Ashbury's connection with Ashdown has been staring everyone in the face the whole time.

It is pertinent to look at the claims of other places along the Ridgeway to be the battle site. Uffington has been a popular choice, yet seems to be one of the least likely. This Iron Age fort was well known in Saxon times, and the White Horse was probably in existence also; if

it had been the battle site, it seems very strange that Asser did not mention it by name, as he mentioned other battle locations by name. And one could hardly find a site easier to defend by those on the higher ground; the Saxons really would have been militarily moronic to choose to attack uphill at that point.

Compton, fifteen miles east of Uffington, has also claimed the honour. The main argument is the fact that the area used to be called Nachededorne Hundred - the naked or bare thorn. This connects with the 'rather small and solitary thorn tree' of Asser's account, and it is postulated that the thorn was chosen as the Hundred name and meeting place because of its importance to Alfred. The fact is that probably every parish along the Ridgeway has, or had, thorns of some distinction; the Ashbury terriers list Barethorn, Stubbthorne, Rewthorne, Threthorne, gurgit (drowned?) thorn and Marethorn. (And in fact Asser writes of the '*unica spinosa arbor, brevis admodum*', which might be literally translated as a 'solitary thorn tree, short in the extreme', so Stubbthorne seems to be more appropriate than Nachededorne). Clearly, the thorn tree cannot be used to support any particular claim.

One modern writer suggests that the site may have been 'on the lower land to the west of Uffington'; he seems to be mistaking Compton Beauchamp for Compton. Lambourn has been proposed as the Saxon rendezvous before the battle, chiefly because it was a royal demesne, and this would have resulted in battle being joined not far from the Seven Barrows on the way to White Horse Hill. This could be right, but there is no supporting evidence.

The only point of any substance made against Ashbury seems to be that the battle took place four days after Reading, and it has been said that this is rather too short a time for the Vikings to recover from a battle, have a celebratory revel, and then move a war column thirty odd miles. But surely they would have managed that with the spur of a defenceless Wessex open to plunder.

The evidence favouring Ashbury's claim, although circumstantial, is perhaps the only evidence with significant documentary support and, on the assumption that the claim is sound, it may be possible to squeeze a little more information out of another local name. Only half a mile to the north east of the village of Ashbury lies Kingston Winslow. Nothing has been found to indicate that it was ever owned by the Crown (beyond King Eadred's ownership of the parish shown by the Charter), and certainly there was no royal connection after it was given to Glastonbury Abbey, so the first part of the name possibly commemorates its occupation by Aethelred or Alfred before or after the battle. The second part

of the name invites even more imaginative interpretation. It appears in many different forms, but it started as something like Wendesclive, Wendelesclif or Wendlescliffe. Wend is consistently present, as is some version of cliff; the middle part, if it is not a meaningless later addition, may be les or le, as in les Combs or les Gores, or even the possessive as in Orton-is-hegge (Orton's hedge). There are too many variants to be sure of the true original. Margaret Gelling says that the origin is generally taken to be the personal name Wendel; the author suggests that it could have come from the Old English 'wend', still used in the phrase 'to wend one's way'. An old meaning of this in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is 'to turn (something) round'; to wend down is to overthrow or destroy. This fits in well with the postulated scenario. Kingston Winslow now becomes 'The King's farm with the cliff near where (the enemy?) were turned round'. It would be natural for such an important event to be commemorated in the name of a noticeable local feature. If valid, this places the main battle at the east end of the parish.

There is one further point of at least local interest. No satisfactory reason has ever been put forward for Saint Dunstan being given the manor. But if at that time it had been remembered as the site of one of Alfred's crucial victories, the spark which kept Saxon hopes alive during a further five years of defeats, it might have been imbued with an almost religious importance (partly due to Asser's advocacy!) and King Eadred might have arranged to have it given to Dunstan, his favourite, to show him particular honour. Domesday tells us that Ashbury had a Saxon church, and it is generally assumed to have been on the same spot as the present church founded in the twelfth century; the site is on the northern edge of the Wayte and might indeed have been chosen because it was where Aethelred prayed for and was granted his victory.

In summary, therefore, the points which support the choice of Ashbury as the battle site, and an ambush as the plan, are:

1. Ashdown is the only known battle to explain the Wayte
2. It explains the name Rammesburi in the 947 Charter
3. An ambush is a logical plan after Englefield and Reading
4. It explains the split into two divisions
5. It explains the initial positioning of the Vikings on higher ground, and why the Saxons had to attack uphill
6. It explains the extraordinary timing of Alfred's attack
7. It fits in with the suggested site for Rammesburi
8. It offers a meaning for the name Kingston Winslow
9. It explains the gift to Dunstan
10. It offers a meaning for the name Ashbury

It may encourage other amateur local historians to note that all this stemmed from a rather optimistic attempt to reconstruct the pre-enclosure parish map from a 1519 terrier. Proof of the hypothesis could come only with the discovery of traces of the 'many thousands' of bodies, and regrettably no such mass grave has so far been discovered. The search continues ...

PETER KNOTT

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Saxon sword found at Reading

The Turner Returns.

'Did you know that a history of Mortimer was written before the war?' said Esme, one of our members. 'It was by Frederic Turner, the father-in-law of Mr Trevor.' Mr Trevor was our village curate at that time.

It was a year or two after the formation of our local history group, but the first I had heard of this previous work. Esme's remark was fairly casual and was not picked up, but it came back into my head later on and I decided to find out more.

'It was not the first village history which he had written,' said Esme. 'A book on where he had lived previously had been published, then he did one on Mortimer, but I don't know what became of it.'

It seemed to me that if someone had spent many hours of research it was a shame to waste it, but some detective work was needed on my part. Everyone who had known our curate remembered him, but he had died many years ago. He had a son who was also a clergyman; however no-one knew where he lived, although it seemed that his great friend, who was also a vicar, was probably living locally. I tried the telephone book: Salt, Rev D, Checkendon. Here it was - would I be on to anything?

David Salt was surprised, but very helpful. Yes, he was still in touch with his friend who now lived in North Yorkshire. He gave me his address. So I wrote to the Rev Trevor at last, and a letter came back quickly, full of information. He said that his grandfather had sent his history of Mortimer to an interested publisher in 1938, but it had been lost. However, he had an incomplete typescript which he was prepared to pass on to Berkshire Record Office, and he would like us to have it on permanent loan. He was not prepared to trust the post, but parishioners of his occasionally visited their daughter in Tadley and they had promised to bring it next time they came. A few months later the daughter arrived in her little three-wheeler car with the bulky document, which I took to Shire Hall the next day. It was seven months after my first letter.

Was it worth it? There was an introduction together with sixteen chapters and six appendices, two hundred and eighty pages of typescript altogether. It was a scholarly work, with sources quoted. The main part covered the 18th and earlier centuries, which suited our members well because most of our previous work had been done on the 19th and 20th centuries, so there was little duplication. The Record Office were very pleased with it, so much so that they were reluctant to part with it, and

at my hesitant suggestion they photocopied the lot, bound it, and we have had the copy on loan since 1975. It has proved invaluable.

So, dear Mr Turner, your efforts were not in vain. We hope you and your much loved son-in-law look down and approve the pleasure and help your work has given us.

JUNE WOODWARD
Mortimer Local History Group

To mark the ninetieth birthday of
H M The Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother,
there will be an Exhibition

90 Glorious Years

Tracing the Life and Work of the Queen Mother
at
The Guildhall, Windsor
During the month of
August 1990

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

The Borough Surveyor's Year

It was to be an important day for Percy Johns, newly appointed Surveyor for the Borough of Maidenhead, when he made his first report to the General Purposes Committee on Monday 10th May 1897, and he prepared for it carefully. He opened a new leatherbound ledger embossed in gold *'Borough Surveyors Report Book'* and in his best hand wrote: 'Gentlemen, I beg to report as follows ...'.

The Report Book which he used for his first municipal year, 1897-8, contains draft reports to the General Purposes, Drainage, Pleasure Grounds and Lighting Committees of the Council. These give in considerable detail the responsibilities and problems of the Borough Surveyor and are particularly valuable because other borough records for that period are not available. The speeches of Aldermen and Councillors were reported almost verbatim by the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, but little was said about the efforts of the Town Hall staff. However, like many documentary sources, the reports are one-sided in that there is no record of the comments and decisions the committees made. There were presumably similar books kept for 1898-1900 which have not survived, but the original book was then re-used with entries for 1900-1.

The appointment of Percy Jones had taken place against a background of considerable controversy, not least because there was already a Borough Surveyor. Mr T Nash had held this position for some years acting also as Inspector of Nuisances. Mr J H Barford, from a local family of ironworkers, took over the latter duties in 1892, spending four nights a week as Superintendent of Cesspool Emptying as well as also being Public Lighting Supervisor, Cab Inspector and Captain of the Fire Brigade. For these efforts he was rewarded with a corporation bicycle and a gratuity. Nash meanwhile was subjected to constant criticisms from councillors concerning the state of the roads and was involved in continuing disputes with the contractors who were installing the main drainage sewers. As the sewage works approached completion, it was realised that someone would have to run them.

A sub-committee was set up to rearrange the duties of the Surveyor and the Inspector of Nuisances, but it went beyond its brief. The sub-committee's report recommended that a new Surveyor be appointed 'at a salary that will be likely to secure a good man' with Nash as his assistant at a reduced salary, leaving Barford 'almost exclusively' as Sanitary Inspector and Superintendent of the Outfall Works. This was not what the General Purposes Committee had expected. They put forward the alternative proposal that Barford should be made the

Surveyor with Nash as his assistant and a new Sanitary Inspector found. The Committee divided and the Chairman gave his casting vote in favour of Barford and Nash virtually exchanging positions. Despite the meeting having been held in camera, the decision leaked out and caused immediate outcry. The opponents called a ratepayers' meeting at the Town Hall 'to protest against the action of the Town Council and to insist on the appointment of a thoroughly trained and properly qualified Surveyor'. The full Council reconsidered the situation, but again there was an even division with the Mayor giving his casting vote against the appointment of a new Surveyor. The situation was resolved when Barford announced that he was withdrawing from the contest, not that he had ever formally been consulted. The Council was now forced to advertise for a new Surveyor and out of 110 applicants they chose Percy Johns, then twenty six years old, and Assistant Surveyor at Eastbourne.

Johns had been appointed to be responsible for the provision of main drainage in Maidenhead. The progress of this provision is seen in the lists of applications for properties to be connected to the public sewers that Johns submitted to the Drainage Committee. These applications were in the names of owners of the properties and they are, therefore, an insight in various patterns of ownership, such as the way in which the many public houses were divided between the six breweries operating in Maidenhead. They also show the way in which money was being invested in property. Some people owned dozens of houses, suggesting that property ownership was, at that time, regarded as good investment.

In some premises and for some owners the timing of the actual 'laying in' of the sewer was important. The Riverside Club wanted the work done after the summer season had finished, although it would have been better to do the work during the summer while the river was at its lowest. Trying to complete the job after the end of the summer and before the river levels rose again would not leave much time margin if any problems arose. The job was estimated to cost £171, but the lowest tender received was £201. It was probably because of this that it was decided that Johns' workmen should do the work. It was a good decision since, even although the first length of sewer had to be laid under a trench which drained the Riviera Hotel and the second length 'followed with annoying persistency the track of a 4 inch gas main', the work was completed on time at a cost of only £154.

Sewers not only had to be installed, they had to be maintained. When, on one occasion, Johns went to investigate what he thought was

a broken sewer he found instead a broken gas main which had saturated with gas the ground under St Luke's Road. Today such a situation would be regarded as a major emergency but Johns just went back to his office and wrote a letter to the Gas Company whose office was just down the High Street. The Gas Company went out and repaired two leaks.

Then, as now, the efficiency of the Borough Surveyor was judged by the ratepayers on the state of the roads. This was a time of horse transport when roads were either cobbled or metalled with rolled flints or gravel. Autumn was the road making 'season' during which a steam roller was hired from Burnham. Some asphalt was being used, probably for pavements, as is shown by a reference to a consignment from the Great Western Railway being 10% underweight. Johns soon started to take over the making up of roads when they were adopted, employing his own workmen for this. He reported of one road that 'the work has been thoroughly done and will I think bear favourable comparison with the other roads carried out by the various contractors'. Nothing was wasted and when the Rev Nash asked for the footpath along Brock Lane to the Parish Room to be repaired, Johns reported that he had seventy yards of second hand kerb which could be used.

Roads were of course extremely dusty in the summer and water carts were used regularly, not just to lay the dust, but also to maintain the surface of the road. As the number of dedicated roads grew, more stand pipes with meters had to be provided by the Water Company and extra carts, with rotary sprinklers operated by the wheels, were purchased from the local ironworks. This was a period when the river was very popular and crowds walked or rode from Taplow Station to Boulters Lock. Both these places were outside the borough boundary but residents along the route gladly paid to have the roads watered to reduce the dust.

Streets had to be cleaned as well as watered. Johns reorganised the sweeping so that the principal streets, High Street, King Street, Queen Street and Market Street, were all swept before breakfast and the other roads at least twice a week. He ordered larger barrows and dust carts fitted with tarpaulin covers. The County Surveyor was responsible for the main roads and accounts had to be kept in a form which allowed costs incurred on behalf of the county to be reclaimed by the Borough.

Not all roads were adopted. Those on the Reform Road estate were described as 'almost impassable in wet weather ... muddy, neglected, uncared for and untidy' which, with lack of scavenging, caused 'great discomfort to the residents of the houses adjoining'. An indication that

times were changing was the assumption by Johns of the office of Petroleum Tester, responsible for checking that samples had flash points above 73°F.

One of the most serious problems which Johns had to face in connection with road maintenance was that of flooding after heavy rain. Apart from the inconvenience and damage to property, the rain water also washed away the metalling from the roads. On one occasion he was called out by the vicar in the middle of a heavy shower to see 200 feet of St Lukes Road under water. He was able to prevent a recurrence by fitting larger drain gratings and by adding kerbside inlets which were less likely to become blocked by leaves. Much of the town's drainage was to the small stream at Chapel Arches. When nearby garden cottages were flooded he found that the stream had been blocked by a wooden door and other timber at the point where it passed under the stables of the Bear Inn.

Although some immediate relief from flooding could be obtained by preventing or removing obstructions he felt it his duty 'to call the immediate attention of the (General Purposes) Committee to the absolute want of a system of surface water drainage throughout the Borough'.

Some drain pipes intended for a scheme planned before Johns took office had been left by the road near the Thames Hotel for eighteen months. When a councillor brought this to Johns' attention he promised 'If the works had been ordered to be done he would be pleased to do it on the first opportunity'. As the *Maidenhead Advertiser* reported that Mr Johns' words were followed by 'Hear, Hear' in the Council Chamber, it would appear that Johns had his supporters.

On one occasion a thunderstorm led to conflict with the Royal Mail, who complained that one of their horses had fallen into an unprotected hole dug in the road. The excavated soil had blocked the gutter and storm water had washed away the edge of the trench. It seems the Head Postmaster had over-reacted as the foreman of the road gang reported that the horse was being led at the time, had immediately recovered and was later seen being driven.

The streets were lit by 324 gas lamps, all of which had to be lighted and extinguished by the lamplighters at times varying not only with the hours of daylight, but also with the phases of the moon. The gas lamp which illuminated the Town Hall clock was out of reach and so was left to burn night and day until Johns devised a means of making it come on and go off automatically in order to save gas. Only nineteen lamps were fitted with meters and their average consumption was calculated

and this was then multiplied by 324, as the basis of the charge to the Council by the Gas Company.

Within a few weeks of his appointment, Johns asked for a bicycle instead of the Surveyor's pony and trap, or 'horse and cart' as he termed it. He argued that it would cost less to maintain, but one councillor doubted whether it would last more than three years. A sub-committee was formed and after trials and inspections they chose a 'Premier' cycle, complete with lamp, at a cost of £16.

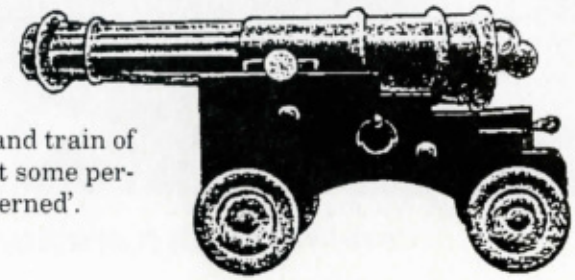
Johns had a relatively large staff and soon after his appointment he received a 'Memorial' from the council's carters asking for 'a small increase' in their wages. He asked for clarification as to the payment of employees who were laid up from accident or ill health. One ash scavenger injured his arm. Another became more seriously ill with a form of blood-poisoning and had to go into the cottage hospital; as he had a wife and three small children to support, Johns asked permission to continue to pay his wages of 'only 15/9 per week'. It was ten weeks before the man could return to work and rumours reached the Town Hall that his wife had applied for relief in addition to the sick pay. Johns went to investigate and reported that 'she most emphatically and with tears denies any such payment'. There were other staff problems too. When a lamplighter left his lamp unlit one and a half hours after time he was ordered to give an explanation. A carman, who was twice found drunk in charge of his horse and cart, and was still not sober when he appeared at the pay table was dismissed.

Even in the days before prepacked goods and take-away foods, great difficulty was experienced in keeping the streets in anything like clean order and tidy appearance 'due to the amount of waste paper which gets deposited from various sources'. He employed a 'little old man' to pick up the paper from the streets and when sadly he died of bronchitis, another old man was engaged on trial. The Surveyor suggested that the council should send out a circular to traders and others asking for their assistance in reducing the problem.

A census was to be taken in 1901 and to facilitate the collection of data, the Registrar General wrote to all local authorities requesting that the name of each street be plainly marked at each end and that the number of each house be affixed to the door. Johns reminded the council that soon after his appointment he had arranged for each street to have cast-iron name plates. He suggested that this would be a good time to have them repainted, and that the names could also be painted on coloured glass plates on the street lamps so that they could be read after dark. Although the town was well ahead with street numbering there

was still much to be done regards the numbering of houses. Johns pointed out that 'apparent as the good must be to unprejudiced observers ... the renumbering of streets is seldom received with any favours by the owners'. Residents preferred to have their house referred to by name, and if they lived in a terraced house, they preferred an address such as No.5 Portland Place to one like 25 West Street. Johns made an interesting observation on the attitudes of the owners of the new Italianate villas being built when he commented 'and of course in such a road as Ray Park Avenue the objection to the display of a number would be even more decided'. Some tradesmen had large stocks of headed stationery which would be made obsolete by an address change. The policy of the council had been not to impose numbering in the face of opposition, but Johns suggested that the present request was an excellent excuse for the firm administration of the Council's powers. He proposed that they adopted the approach which had been successfully followed in Queen Street the previous year. Before the street had been fully developed the numbers had run up one side of the street and down the other in sequence. The Council had offered 'simple but plain china number plates' free of charge as an inducement to property owners to conform to a different numbering system. The Registrar General had advised that all streets be numbered outwards from a well known centre, such as the town hall.

Public open spaces were Johns' responsibility and these gave him some very different problems to solve. On one occasion he had to use the corporation horses to move gypsies camping on the moor onto the highway, with the police on hand to prevent a breach of the peace. On a lighter note, he asked the Pleasure Ground Committee for instructions regarding a two foot square opening which a resident had cut in his fence bordering Grenfell Park, presumably for his large dog. In Grenfell Park were a bandstand and swings which had to be painted and a gun which had to be fired on special occasions. When the gun was first fired to celebrate the relief of Mafeking, it and the operator were somewhat shaken. Johns asked if he could order charges from a proper firm rather than use the home made cartridges and train of powder 'lit by a taper at some personal risk to those concerned'.



The 'Mafeking' canon

Maidenhead War Memorial

The Bathing Pool, Maidenhead

Mr Edwards whose tent works (with the slogan 'Hunt Balls Furnished') stood until a few years ago in Station Yard at Maidenhead, provided the decorations for that memorable jollification for the relief of Mafeking.

At the end of 1897, the *Maidenhead Advertiser* reported 'The new Surveyor has been doing his best since his arrival to improve the state of our roads and paths ... considering the short time he has been with us, Mr Johns has done good work'. He continued to do good work for the town until he retired in 1936, save for a period of service in the First World War when he rose to become Lieutenant-Colonel. When he came back he designed and had built the Town War Memorial, in remembrance of those others who did not return. He was Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade, and in this capacity used his axe to open the new fire station which he had designed and built. He also built the outdoor swimming pool, (only recently demolished), and would have built the new Town Hall had not the Second World War delayed its commencement. During that war he acted as Billeting Officer and after it he became a County Councillor.

He died in 1959 at the age of 88 and his obituary paid tribute to two particular aspects of his long service to the town. One was his immense personal popularity ('Revered by his men and respected by his colleagues'); the other was his economical approach to his work which was stated to have saved the town thousands of pounds.

BRIAN BOULTER
Maidenhead Archaeological and Historical Society

REFERENCE NOTE

The *Borough Surveyor's Report Book* was found by the author amongst items from the old Town Museum stored under the stage of the Town Hall. He arranged for it to be transferred to the Local Collection of Maidenhead Library. The contents are somewhat confusing. For 1897-8, the right hand pages only were used. Entries recommenced in 1900 but towards the end of the book, both pages were used. Finally Johns began at the front of the book again, but using the left hand pages.

Additional material for this article came from the *Maidenhead Advertiser*, available on microfilm in Maidenhead Library.

The Later Lollards of West Berkshire

'Later Lollards' is a term used by Professor John A F Thomson to describe those perpetuating the Lollard tradition in England from the defeat and execution of Sir John Oldcastle in 1414 until the emergence of Martin Luther in Germany in the 1520s.[1]

This tradition in England covered much ground. First, there was a sense that the established church had become corrupted by the wealth of its temporal possessions: from this grew an opposition to tithes and a sense that spiritual and temporal functions should be clearly separate. There was a feeling too that the priesthood made use of rites and signs which were not sanctioned by the Scriptures. Then there was the law of priestly celibacy which Lollard followers considered led to sexual vice and perversions. They opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation (that is, the doctrine of Christ's carnal body being present in the sacrament). They objected to special prayers for dead men's souls where the deceased had granted obits and alms, as giving preference to one person rather than another merely on grounds of wealth. They objected to pilgrimages, and the adoration of effigies of the saints; and they insisted on their right to read and study the Scriptures in their own tongue.[2]

As soon as these principles were put into practice they led into the domain of political action, where they merged with grievances arising from economic discontent. One such instance, in Berkshire, may have occurred in the mid-15th century convulsion known as Jack Cade's Rebellion. In the year 1450 there were risings at Newbury, Hungerford and Salisbury in the course of which William Aiscough, Bishop of Salisbury, was murdered by the rebels.[3] Ramsey, a confederate of Jack Cade, was executed and quartered and one quarter publicly exposed at Newbury - a sure sign that Newbury was felt to need a warning by terror because of the support for the rebels in its area.[4]

The registers of the Bishops of Sarum in the 15th century contain regular evidence of the inquisition of Lollard heretics. In 1443 Bishop Aiscough had dealt with a batch of them.[5] After the shock of Aiscough's murder, however, future bishops of Sarum soft-pedalled, and there is no further record of heretics until the register of Bishop John Blythe which contains a lengthy 'abjuration' in 1498 by Thomas Boughton of Hungerford.[6] In 1499 there were others from Berkshire - Hughlet of Hanney, Clark of Buscot, Grey of West Hendred, Martin and Edwards of Wantage[7] and in 1504 Godwyn of Fifield and Barley of Newbury.[8] On

the whole the policy of the late 15th century bishops seems to have been to contain the heresy by dealing with it only where they were forced to make a response. Few had the stomach for undertaking a wholesale persecution, until in May 1521 the notorious John Longland was consecrated Bishop of Lincoln. A vigorous and ambitious man who had been tutor to the young Henry VIII, he immediately asserted his authority over his diocese by instituting a vast 'heretic hunt'. Lincoln was then a diocese much more extensive than now, stretching into Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire, in which counties Longland discovered a sizeable network of heresy.

The authority for the detailed account of the later Lollards' persecutions is John Foxe who, some forty six years later, became a canon of Lincoln Cathedral and was able to draw upon its ecclesiastical registers to provide a roll call of early English dissent in a Reformation best-seller entitled *The Acts and Monuments Of John Foxe* — popularly known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.[9]

It seems that Longland busied himself in person with the drive to root out heresy from his diocese. Setting out from Lincoln he made first for Amersham in Buckinghamshire where he began by examining on oath some of those who had abjured (that is, had formally renounced their beliefs) in the time of his predecessor. Since these were liable to the death penalty 'on pain of relapse', he was able to pressurise sufficient of them to detect a whole group or cell of 'known men' centred on Amersham. One of this group, Robert Pope, incriminated no less than eighty seven persons, including his own father, his wife and his brother. From him the detection followed of a further group which came from Berkshire and West Oxfordshire and which met for Bible readings in Burford and Upton.[10]

In Berkshire Pope named a cell at East Hendred consisting of William Gray, the miller; Edward Gray and his wife; Margery Young, widow and her sister Isabel More; Richard Nobes and his wife; William Haliday; together with Thomas Gray of West Hendred. From East Ginge he named William House and his wife Margaret; also Thomas Colins and his sons Richard and William and Richard's wife Alice; another was John Colins of Betterton; from Steventon, Pope named John Sympson, Robert Lyvord, William Lyvord, Smart the miller and 'father Amershaw'; from Charney (Bassett) Thomas Steventon and his daughter Matilda; from Hanney, John and Walter Kember; from Wantage, Thomas New; from Bisham, Joan Taylor and her mother; from Reading, Thomas Quick; from Shaw, William Squire and his brother; from Newbury, Humfrey Shoemaker, John Semand, Robert Geydon and his wife; and from Hungerford, John Eden, Thomas Hall and John Ludlow.[11]

The burning of Mr Julius Palmer, Mr John Givin and Mr Thomas Askiw in 1556 near Newbury from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*

A consideration of the social background of these 1,521 heretics reveals that they were not all the 'simple labourers and artificers' that Foxe describes. Of the three men named from the parish of Hungerford, for example, John Eden alias Clydesdale farmed the manor of Hidden and had various land and householdings in Hungerford, adequate for him to be described in an era very conscious of social distinction as 'gent'; Thomas Hall farmed the neighbouring manor of Leverton and Heywood and, like Clydesdale, had other lands in the area. John Ludlow does not appear in Hungerford records, but in 1476 was 'of Hydden' and said to be the son and heir of John Ludlow of Hampstead Norris,[12] a branch of the distinguished family of Ludlow of Hill Deverill in Wiltshire. The social status of these three is that of minor gentry. There were many others who were at the least substantial yeomen. Colins of Betterton, the Lyvords of Steventon, John Harris of Upton in Oxfordshire, for example, also appear as substantial landholders in the 1517 *Domesday of Enclosures*.[13] Confirmation is given of the comfortable yeoman status of some of these men in the Lay Subsidy of 1522.[14]

Another group who were neither labourers nor artificers were either priests (Sir John Booth, rector of Brightwell Baldwin, Sir John Drury, vicar of Windrush, John Barber of Amersham) or associated with

a priory (John Through of Burford priory, John Clempson servant to the prior, John Boyes and his brother, a monk of Burford) or had other clerical connections (Edward Red, schoolmaster of Burford, Roger Dods servant to Sir John Drury). Of the skilled artisan or tradesman class there were two millers, two fishmongers, four weavers, a tanner, a thatcher, a mason, a brickmaker, a fowler, a tinker and a painter.[15] The occupations of the remainder are not described. Most, if not all, of these artisans or tradesmen are likely to have been urban yeomen, that is self-employed men with a house or shop which they owned or enjoyed on a long lease. Millers, tanners, masons, brickmakers, for example, were not mere casual labourers; nor were the other tradesmen likely to have been so.

The method of detection employed almost certainly resulted in those of high social status escaping the net, for it seems clear that some fairly influential landed gentry whose names do not appear in Foxe gave the movement their discreet backing and encouragement. In an age when reading and writing were uncommon accomplishments, it is notable that many of these men and women could read, one of the charges brought against them being that of reading the Bible or the lives of saints or other books with a theological basis. Thus one of the Burford men accused John Clydesdale of Hungerford 'for reading of the Bible in Robert Burges's house at Burford upon Holyrood day, with Colins, Lyvord, Thomas Hall and others.'[16]

Holy Rood day was the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14th. This meeting in Burford, like those held there in other houses, was attended by followers from a wide spread of villages in West Oxfordshire and North Berkshire. It is likely that, to disguise the influx of so many strangers into the little town, the gatherings would be arranged on suitable 'cover' dates - the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross would be one which always brought into town villagers from miles around. Similarly, the meeting at a house following the marriage of Robert and Joan Burges would be given a legitimate explanation by the marriage itself. A notable feature of these rallies was the presence of the London preacher and bookseller, John Hacker, who organised a broad swathe of Lollard country from Norfolk and Suffolk in the east through Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire to Berkshire and Oxfordshire in the west.[17] Hacker was instructor to the group, and described by one of his adherents as 'very expert in the gospels and all other things belonging to divine service, and could express and declare it and the Paternoster in English as well as any priest'.[18] Together with other itinerant preacher/booksellers Hacker knit together the various dissenting cells. The whole organisation bears a remarkable likeness to the

general structure of later 19th and 20th century subversive/liberation political groups. His investigation having proved so successful, Longland obtained the king's authority to proceed 'in the executing of justice'. Those who had abjured in a previous witch-hunt conducted under his predecessor, but who had since relapsed, he handed over to the secular authorities to be burnt. There were four of these, Thomas Bernard, John Scrivener, Thomas Holmes and Robert Rave, all (it would seem) from the Amersham area. On those 'who had but newly been taken, and had not before abjured, he enjoined most strait and rigorous penance'. There were some fifty of these first-timers who were sentenced to harsh punishment. They were separated and sent to various local monasteries or abbeys, including Osney, St Frideswide, Abingdon, Thame, Bicester, Dorchester, Netley, Ashridge and 'divers others more'.[19] In a letter dated 19 December, 1521, Bishop Longland instructed the abbot of Eynsham as to the nature of the penance:

> *In primis, that every one of them shall, upon a market day, such as shall be limited to them, in the market time, go thrice about the market at Burford, and then to stand upon the highest greece* [step] *of the cross there a quarter of an hour, with a faggot of wood every one of them upon his shoulder, and every one of them to bear a faggot of wood upon their shoulders before their procession upon a Sunday ... from the choir-door going out to the church-door going in; and all the high mass time to hold the same faggot upon their shoulders, kneeling upon the greece afore the high altar there ...' They were to fast 'bread and ale only, Fridays during their life; and every Eve of Corpus Christi everyone of them to fast bread and water during their life, unless sickness unfeigned let* [prevent] *the same'. Most striking in the injunction is the paragraph which follows that 'neither they nor any of them shall hide their mark upon their cheek, neither with hat, cap, hood, kerchief, napkin or none otherwise; nor shall suffer their beards to grow past fourteen days; nor ever haunt again together with any suspected person or persons, unless it be in the open market, fair, church, or common inn or alehouse, where other people might see their conversation.'*[20]
>
> *The 'mark upon their cheeks' which they were forbidden to hide, was from branding with a hot iron on their right cheek, described as follows: 'their necks were tied fast to a post or stay with towels, and their hands holden fast that they might not stir; and so, the iron being hot, was put to their cheeks'.*[21]

Longland's penance may have been fierce on paper and no doubt in intention. It depended for its enforcement, however, upon local authorities - the parish priest, the prior of the monastery to which the offenders were sent. In the first place many of these in 1521, as in the earlier history of Lollardry, were sympathetic to some of the ideas classed as heretical. In the second place there might be awkward problems when a monastery's rentals (or those of the parish church) involved a so-called heretic. Take the case of John Clydesdale for instance. He was in 1519 a feoffee of the lands of the chantry of St Mary, attached to the parish church of Hungerford.[22] His consent was needed in the case of a lease of any of the chantry's lands. He was one of the leading burgesses of the town, a man whom many had chosen to act as overseer of their wills. It is difficult to see his parish priest treating his penance with strict literalness. As to being sent to a monastery, he would no more have objected to going to St Frideswide, of whose manor of Hidden he was farmer, than Thomas Hall might have objected (had he been sentenced) to going to the priory of Littlemore, under whom he farmed their manor of Haywood and Leverton; nor would John Colins, we may be sure, have minded a token stay at the priory of Poughley, some of whose lands he farmed at Betterton. In any case some of these monasteries, such as St Frideswide and Littlemore, were themselves in hot water with the ecclesiastical authorities because of their own slack internal discipline, probably the result of 'progressive' social and theological views.[23]

That this leniency is not a fanciful view is substantiated by the fact that John Clydesdale's sentence seemed to make no difference whatever to his local activities. He is listed as a freeholder in the 1522 muster and the lay subsidies of 1523-4. He appears in the 1525 rental of Cardinal Wolsey's College; and in 1526 he is acting as Cromwell's bailiff of the newly-dissolved Poughley priory. In 1527 he takes a case to Cardinal Wolsey on behalf of his sister, who was herself a fervent neo-Lollard supporter.[24] It is true that during this time the tide had begun to turn, but it was not until 1527 that the question of Queen Katharine's divorce was raised, and not until 1531 that Henry VIII finally cast off the links with Rome and proclaimed himself Supreme Head of the Church of England.

A more striking instance of gentry who suffered no punishment is to be found in the case of John Clydesdale's sister Alice, who was married to William Cottesmore. One pedigree has her descended from Hall of Shalbourne and so possibly related to Thomas Hall of Hungerford (who also escaped punishment).[25] Foxe describes her detection thus:

Sir John, a priest, and also Robert Robinson, detected Master Cotismore, of Brightwell [Brightwell Baldwin, Oxon]. *Also Mistress Cotismore, otherwise called Mistress Dolly, for speaking these words to one John Bainton, her servant; that if she went to her chamber and prayed there, she should have as much merit as though she went to Walsingham on pilgrimage. Item, when the said Sir John came to her after the death of Master Cotismore his master, requiring her to send one John Stainer, her servant, to our Lady of Walsingham, for Master Cotismore, who in his lifetime, being sick, promised in his own person to visit that place, she would not consent thereto, nor let her servant go. Item, for saying that when women go to offer to images or saints, they did it to show their new gay gear: that images were but carpenters' chips; and that folks go on pilgrimages more for the green way than for any devotion.*[26]

Alice Cottismore (Willmot)

Dolly is a variant spelling for Doyley, Alice Cottesmore's husband following the death in 1519 of William Cottesmore. Since her late husband had vowed to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham, it seems that he may have been less committed to Lollard principles than his wife, of whose determination and commitment there can have been no doubt.

The Cottesmores were important Oxfordshire gentry, with lands in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.[27] William's great grandfather had been Lord Chief Justice. Alice, therefore, held a position of some social significance and it may be this which caused her case to be investigated separately from the others. An account of her inquisition occurs some 350 pages later in Foxe's narrative[28] and it is noteworthy that she was examined not by the dreaded Bishop Longland, but by his Dean, Dr John London, who had local connections. It took place in the more friendly parsonage of Stanton Harcourt, a church of which William Cottesmore's friend Sir William Barrantyne was patron, in the parish where he was lord of the manor. Alice's statements were particularly defiant. However, it was not part of Longland's plan to stir up any who might have influence and, despite Alice's open defiance, no further action seems to have been taken against her. The report remained on the record but discreetly got 'lost' until Foxe discovered it forty-six years later.

In this case at least and in the west and northern parts of Berkshire the indications are clear that the later Lollards had active support from some of the country gentry and from yeoman farmers. Foxe underrates this support in so far as the ecclesiastical registers on which he based his account ascribe occupations only to those of lower class; where country gentry and yeoman farmers are concerned no ascription is provided. The role of the gentry has been obscured still further by the reluctance of the church to prosecute cases against them. Those who did suffer in the persecution were clearly the lower class activists - the independently-minded 'labourers and artificers' as Foxe calls them. It is they therefore who, quite rightly, are seen by Foxe as the ultimate heroes of the movement.

NORMAN HIDDEN

The opening of the recantation of Thomas Boughton.
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