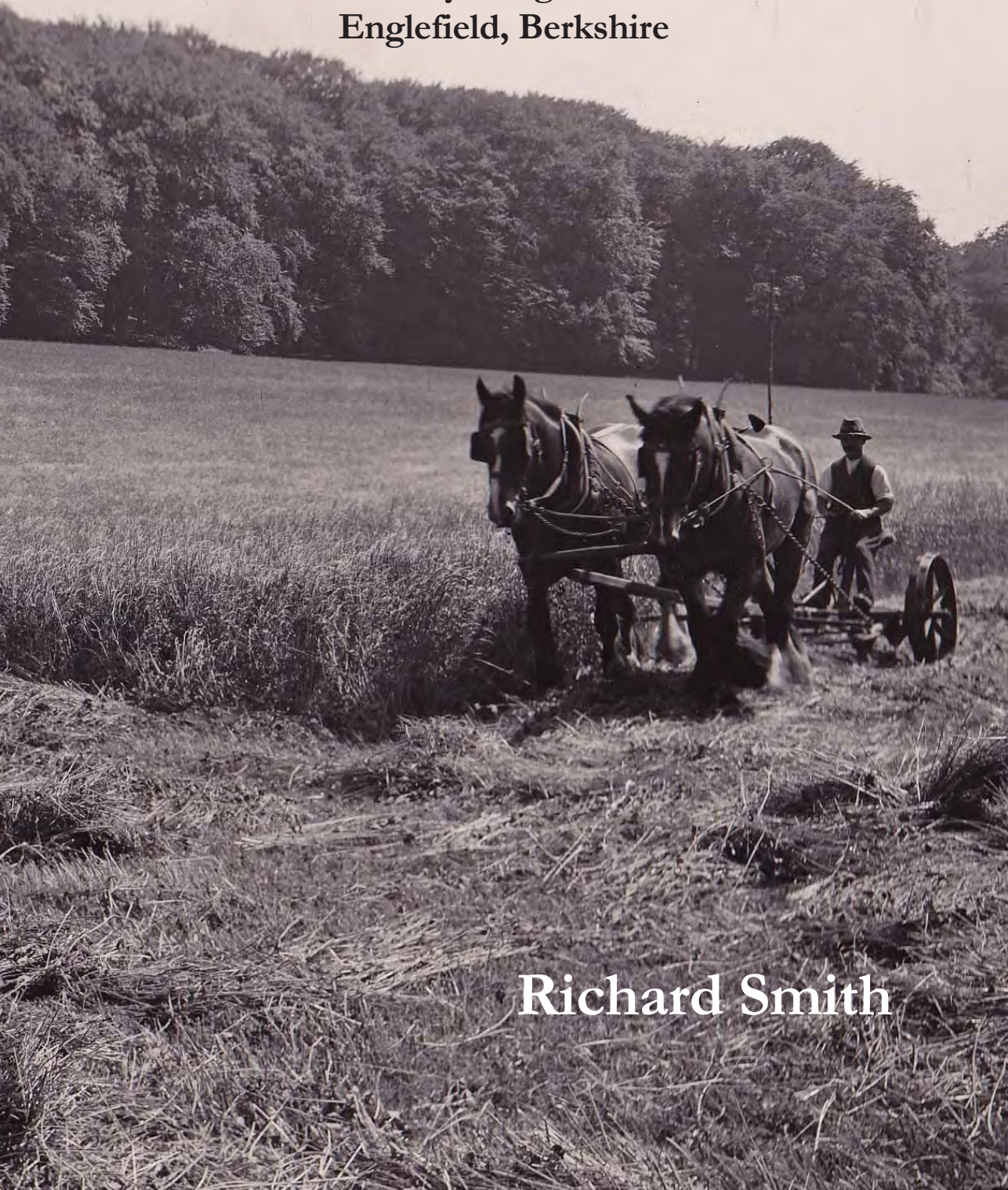


And Be A Farmer's Boy

The history of agriculture in
Englefield, Berkshire



Richard Smith

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The sun had set beyond yon hill
Across the dreary moor
When weary and lame, a boy there came
Up to a farmer's door
Can you tell me wher'ere I be
And one that will me employ
To plough and sow, to reap and mow
And be a farmer's boy
and be a farmer's boy?

The farmer's boy grew up a man
The good old couple died
They left the lad the farm they had
And the daughter for a bride
Now the lad that was the farm now has
Oft he thinks and smiles with joy
And will bless the day he came that way
To be a farmer's boy
to be a farmer's boy.

Trad: *The Farmer's Boy*

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Who Owns This Land?

Such was the question posed by Scottish poet Norman McCaig in his 1969 poem *A Man in Assynt*; a question to which Kipling had already supplied an unequivocal answer in an earlier poem *The Land*, the same sort of answer that McCaig had in mind perhaps.

Englefield, like most of the rest of settled lowland England, was always based on agriculture. When the early hunter-gatherers started to consider abandoning their nomadic lifestyle and settling in one place, those two flat intersecting valleys with their fertile alluvial soil must have seemed to be a pretty good place to do it, as abundant archaeological evidence from palaeolithic to Roman times attests. The Anglo-Saxons certainly thought so and gave the place a name to suit - *Englafelda*.

For a thousand years farming and farmers have shaped the characteristic English landscape: celebrated in song, pictured in books and on chocolate boxes and, through the words of Ross Parker and Hughie Charles delivered by Vera Lynn, used in 1939 as the epitome of what we were fighting for:

*“There’ll always be an England
While there’s a country lane
Wherever there’s a cottage small
Beside a field of grain...”*

Country lane; cottage small; field of grain: all owed their origins to the farmers. The cottages were their homes, the fields their workplace and the lanes, a mixture of ancient tracks into the deepest furlongs of the common fields and 19th century enclosure roads, the means of moving between the two.

The story of how agriculture developed in Englefield might, at first sight, support the sort of sentiments expressed by John Clare :

*“Inclosure, thou’rt a curse upon the land,
And tasteless was the wretch who thy existence plann’d.”*

At the start of the 19th century the land in Englefield was still held in a variety of ways: much by the lord of the manor for himself with a bailiff in charge, some by tenants and lessees of the lord of the manor but some by other freeholders in their own right. The strips in the open fields that still just about existed were, of course, owned by the individual villagers who also had rights of common over certain other land but a proportion of what was already enclosed land had been acquired by individuals over more than 100 years. These many smaller landowners we see in

the 17th and 18th centuries had all gone, though, by the end of the 19th in what might seem to be a “riches to rags” story with some becoming tenant farmers and some ending up employed as labourers on land they once owned - the exact opposite of the farmer’s boy in the traditional song quoted on the title page.

Whatever the case elsewhere though, it appears that, in Englefield at least, the smaller landowners were not unwillingly dispossessed as is the common view, but seem to have realised the wisdom of the changes as a necessary part of the national economic and social development coming about through the industrial revolution which was only made possible by the agricultural revolution, represented in part by enclosure.

The farmer (with the gamekeeper and the forester) and a wise Squire who took their advice made the English countryside and they continue to maintain it as they always have, most successfully through the partnership that Kipling recognised. *“Whoever pays the taxes old Mus Hobden owns the land.”*. Hobden whose *“...dead are in the churchyard - thirty generations laid. Their names were old in history when Domesday Book was made ”* and it was *“... the passion and the piety and prowess of his line that seeded, rooted, fruited in some land the Law calls mine.”*. The English countryside and all the people who belong there form a closely-woven tapestry and if you’re going to start picking at the threads you’d better be very sure you know what you are doing because the one you pull could just be the one that holds it all together.



Winter work. Bundles of birch cut in the old way by a man with a billhook from the coppice behind, allowing light and air in to promote biodiversity of both flora and fauna. The renewable crop goes to make the hurdles used in National Hunt horse racing.

Early Agriculture in Englefield

Englefield has been farmed ever since the nomadic hunter-gatherers first settled down for remains from Neolithic and Palaeolithic times have been found in the area.

Saxon Englefield

The Domesday Survey of 1086 tells us that *Inglesfelle*, as it was then named, was in the largest 40% of settlements recorded and quite valuable. There were two separate holdings.

The larger one, held for the King in 1066 by Alwin Horne, had 17 villagers, 3 smallholders, 4 slaves and a mill. There was arable land for 13 ploughs, 60 acres of meadow and the taxable value was 10 geld (tax) units.

The smaller estate, with just 2 smallholders, land for 1 plough and 4 acres of meadow, valued at 1 geld unit, was held by one Wulfmer, possibly a kinsman of Alwin.

Agriculture would have been conducted on the open field system. Large flat areas of land a thousand acres or more in size with few trees and no hedges (*felda* in Anglo-Saxon, hence *Englafelda* - “fields of the English”) were divided into strips and each strip had an individual owner. It is sometimes believed that these strips were all an acre in size (one furlong by one chain) but in fact, as the plans show, they were in a variety of sizes, some larger and some smaller, even merely three or even only one yard wide rather than 22 yards. There would have been at least two of these fields, usually one on each side of the village, in order to be able to maintain crop rotation and soil fertility and an individual’s total holding was spread across a number of individual strips scattered over both fields. The location of one of the fields in Englefield (the “Great Field”) we know exactly because it was still in use in 1762 when Josiah Ballard mapped it, but there must have been another if proper crop rotation was followed and a glance at the landscape and a consideration of the facts suggests that it may well have been in at least part of that area between the modern village street and the River Pang, where the mill was. There were also common hay meadows along a branch off the River Kennet in the south of the parish.

From Domesday to Ballard

The Domesday survey gives us something of an idea of Englefield at the very end of the Anglo-Saxon era but between then and 1762 we have little or no idea of

what the village or the pattern of agriculture looked like. In the latter year, however, Josiah Ballard completed a survey of the lands of Powlett Wrighte that gives us a very good picture.

After the Norman Conquest, all land belonged to the Crown and under the feudal system parcels, or Manors, were given to certain feudal overlords, loyal supporters, in return for their service. These “Lords of the Manor” in turn gave or leased parts of their holding to their own supporters or underlords and both gave land to the people, who paid rent either in cash or by working for the lord on specified tasks on certain days. Ultimate ownership of the land, however, remained with the Crown and would revert to it on the death of the overlord.

While we know nothing of how Englefield progressed through the Middle Ages, we can assume that it would have been much the same as the rest of the country. The need to feed a steadily growing population and the development of towns caused more and more land to be brought under cultivation but this need was rendered less pressing by the repeated ravages of the Black Death during the period from the first pandemic in 1348 until the last outbreak until 1375. By the end of this time the population of the country had been reduced by between one third and one half and this meant that not only was more cultivated land not needed but some of the more marginal land was abandoned and the area under cultivation actually shrank.

The population generally was slow to recover from the Black Death and great areas of land were left to the wastes. These were vast areas of rough scrub and trees, without people or habitation, and criss-crossed by rough tracks where travellers feared to become benighted. In the year 1500 it is estimated that there were some 60,000 acres of waste in Berkshire alone.

The feudal system went into decline in Tudor times and land began to be accumulated by individuals in their own right. They might already have done so during and after the Black Death by simply moving onto land where the previous occupant had died.

Individual ownership of land was also given a boost when Henry VIII sold for cash the land seized from the monasteries after their dissolution in the 1530s. The situation in Englefield was also particularly confused during the 100 years or so between the flight of Sir Francis Englefield in 1559 and the release of John Paulet from prison in about 1650. During this period the control of the manor passed



through many hands and sometimes none and this may have presented a second opportunity for encroachment. Land was certainly being privately bought and sold in Englefield by the time of the Restoration for indentures exist for the purchase of land there in 1660 (stated as the twelfth year of the reign of King Charles II, - Cromwell apparently being “cancelled”) by Richard Horn, a merchant with a shop in the village, and in 1669 and 1679 by Robert Horn, a farmer from North Street and a churchwarden of St Mark’s.

From the end of the Black Death and into Tudor times forced enclosure did take place in some parts of England when many lords of the manor sought to enrich themselves from the wool boom and created great sheep pastures so that in the year 1500 it is estimated that there were three sheep for every person.

In some places land was also forcibly enclosed in Tudor times to create a park surrounding a fine new house for a noble but this wasn’t the case at Englefield for Englefield House was not built until almost the end of Elizabeth’s reign and the new deer park was not finally created until well into the 19th century.

Forced enclosure generally diminished by about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reign and by the end of it enclosure was largely by agreement of all the freeholders. Englefield is thought to have been about 30% enclosed by 1600 and a Glebe Terrier of 1534 mentions 34 acres of enclosed land.

There is in the county archives an undated plan of all the open fields, showing the ownership of the individual allotments. The plan is unusual in that it is drawn “upside down”, that is with the south at the top, as if looking from Englefield House. This plan clearly pre-dates Ballard’s survey for the names, and even the arrangement of some of the strips, is slightly different from those shown in 1762. A tentative date of somewhere about 1690 can be attributed to it by comparing the names of the allotment holders with two lists of the inhabitants of Englefield in 1680 and 1695. Perhaps the plan was drawn when the younger Francis Powlett succeeded his father in 1696. There is also another undated but apparently contemporaneous set of plans showing the boundaries and dimensions of a number of enclosed fields surrounding Chalkpit Farm, so it is possible that this was the time that the farm came into being, created by enclosing the second Great Field that covered this area.

The 17th Century Farmers

Those named on the plan of the open fields include the following.

John Hains is shown on the plan and (as John Haines) listed as an inhabitant of Englefield in 1680 and 1695. He was a blacksmith and a kinsman of Robert

Goode, Rector of Ufton. On his death in 1707 the Rector left legacies to the value of around £1 million at today's values, including to William Haynes, (yet another spelling) "*all my freehold messuage or tenement farm and the lands, hereditaments and appurtenances situated in Caversham*".

Thomas Blyth (or Blithe), described as a yeoman of Englefield, conveyed the ownership of The Holt at Wargrave to John Sadler of Shinfield in 1680. A later member of the same family had a house and land on the south side of Common Hill (then called Blyth's Hill) just above Parker's Corner.

Wimbleton is another name of long standing in the village, indeed persists today. "Wimbleton's", just to the north of the church, was the site of Wimbleton's Farm in 1712, and though the farm is called Park Farm in Ballard's survey, it is again shown as Wimbleton's Farm in maps of the 19th century.

The **Powell** family were clearly well established as farmers in and around Englefield in the 17th century, perhaps earlier, and B Powell is shown with a small amount of land on the Great Field plan of 1690 although other land is allocated to "Cranmer" and John Powell lived at a house called "Cranmer" at the time of his death in 1756. This was certainly the one called Cranmoor Farm, mapped by Ballard, and Cranmoor House by William Bedding in 1779, when it formed part of the lands of Powell's sons-in-law Richard Carter and William Toovey and was probably the old manor house of the Englefields.

John Horn is also shown on the plan, though he is not listed as an inhabitant of the village (Richard Horn is named in both 1680 and 1695). This is because John Horn's main property was at North Street, then in Tilehurst parish, passed to him by his father Robert. The Horn family features in the history of agriculture in Englefield from at least the 17th century up to the modern time, first as freeholders, then as tenants and later as employees. Frank William ("Jim") Smith, born in 1911, worked at Chalkpit Farm and lived all of his adult life at Englefield until his death in 1994.

Roger Attlee is listed as an inhabitant of Englefield in 1680 and died in 1692. He had a son, James Atlee born in 1677. James Atlee is not listed as an inhabitant in 1695, probably because he was still a minor at that time, but may be the James Acley in Ballard's survey.

John Justice was an inhabitant of Englefield in 1695 and G Justice had land in the Great Field around that time.

All of these families, and later ones, were inter-connected by marriage to a large extent. Thomas Powell married Mary Haynes, whose mother Mary was the daughter of Robert Goode, in 1678 and James Atlee married their daughter Margaret. Margaret Atlee and her sister Elizabeth Powell were left leasehold land in Englefield in Goode's will. Elizabeth Powell married Thomas Draper of Ufton in 1715 and a later Thomas Draper married Anna Justice in 1785. Elizabeth Haines married John Horn at Reading Minster in 1692 and their grandson married Anne Justice in 1746.

These were Kipling's "Hobdens" and what is clear is that these people were not the peasants usually said to be the victims of enclosures but were yeoman freeholders from a number of families of considerable and long standing in the village, whose prominent tombstones line the path to the church door. For at least 200 years these related families: Haynes, Horn, Welch, Powell and later, May and Draper; occupied a social position in the village between the Squire and labourers. With the Rector and the Squire they helped maintain the parish and its institutions by filling various administrative positions: serving as churchwardens, sidesmen, constables, school managers, surveyors of roads and overseers of the poor. From late Victorian times many of these sorts of roles would increasingly be removed from local control and become the preserve of a new urban and suburban middle class with no direct connection to, and less understanding of, the land, the people and the situations they were managing.

Ballard's Englefield

Ballard's survey of 1762 gives us our first real look at the whole of Englefield and it shows a countryside undergoing a gradual transformation. There is a mixture of enclosed fields, some enclosed early, some later, and still some common fields with their multiple strips shared among many owners.

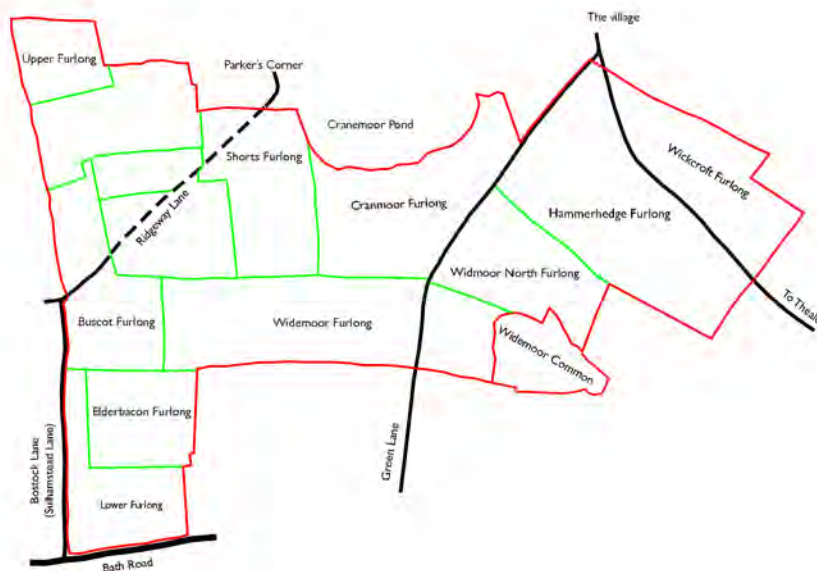


Early enclosures were often small in size, such those between North Street and Hogmoor (at the right of the map) and also along the south side of Mare Ridge (top left). By their position on the lower slopes of heavily wooded ridges we may deduce that these smaller enclosures at Englefield were probably land claimed direct from the wastes and the description of some of these parcels as being "*in the widemoors*" supports that. They may well have been enclosed by the local people, perhaps acting on their own initiative, during or after the ravages of the Black Death or during the time in the 16th century when there was no settled lord of the manor.

The larger fields around Chalkpit Farm (top centre) are later enclosures, possibly made in the latter part of the 17th century by the enclosure of a second Great Field. The area still in open fields as shown by Ballard is outlined in red on the aerial image below.

The Great Field

The Great Field was the largest of the three areas of open field and the closest to the village, coming right up to one end of what was then the main street. It was divided into furlongs with the strips in each furlong running in a different direction. Not all of the furlongs appear to have had names and were identified by a description such as “*a furlong shooting east to west*”.

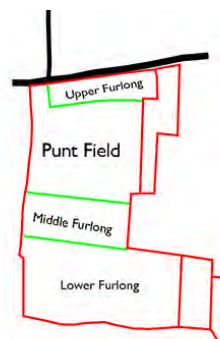


The road from Englefield to Theale (now the private drive to Englefield House but on a slightly different course) forms the boundary between Wickcroft and Hammerhedge Furlongs. Another road, called Green Lane, branching from the Theale road at a point where the pound was situated and running on to join the Bath Road where the A340 now does, also acts as a furlong boundary for part of its course and where it runs across Widemoor Furlong does so between the strips. Ridgeway Lane, running from Bostock Lane to Parker's Corner runs along the headland between furlongs at the southern end but then cuts clean through the middle of the strips for the rest of its course, although that section is more faintly drawn. The earlier plan of the Great Field has what is clearly the later addition of a red, dashed line here running from what is identified by its modern name of Bostock Lane (rather than Sulhamstead Lane as used on the 1829 parliamentary enclosure map) to Parker's Corner, so maybe Ridgeway Lane only came into (or came back into) use after the time when that plan was first drawn and before Ballard's.

The Punt Field

The Punt Field lay to the south of the Bath Road. On the eastern edge were some blocks of enclosed land in Sulhamstead parish.

To the southeast of the Punt Field on the banks of a small offshoot from the River Kennet lay an area of osier beds where the willows were coppiced to provide material for baskets and other products and downstream of that was the Fishery.



The Englefield Meadow

The Englefield Meadow lay further downstream of the Fishery and the whole area now mostly consists of lakes made from restored gravel workings, which together with Hayward's Farm, created after the final parliamentary enclosure, are now appropriately run as a game fishery.

The meadows were used for grazing animals or growing hay and sometimes both in seasonal rotation. While most furlongs were divided into strips, part of Theale Mead and the Ten Acres were single large enclosures.



The Hides was operated on a different system. Instead of each strip being permanently owned by an individual, each person concerned was entitled to a certain amount of land expressed in eighths and the allocation changed periodically so that although the person retained the same area of land, it moved around the field from time to time. A similar system operated in nearby Sulhamstead and Ufton where the rotation was determined by drawing lots, hence the fields were known as "Lot Meadows".

Enclosure

The commonly-taught view of enclosure is in agreement with John Clare and an anonymous writer:

*“The law locks up the man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common
But leaves the greater felon loose
Who steals the common from the goose.”*

While that may or may not be the case elsewhere, it doesn't appear to be so in Englefield.

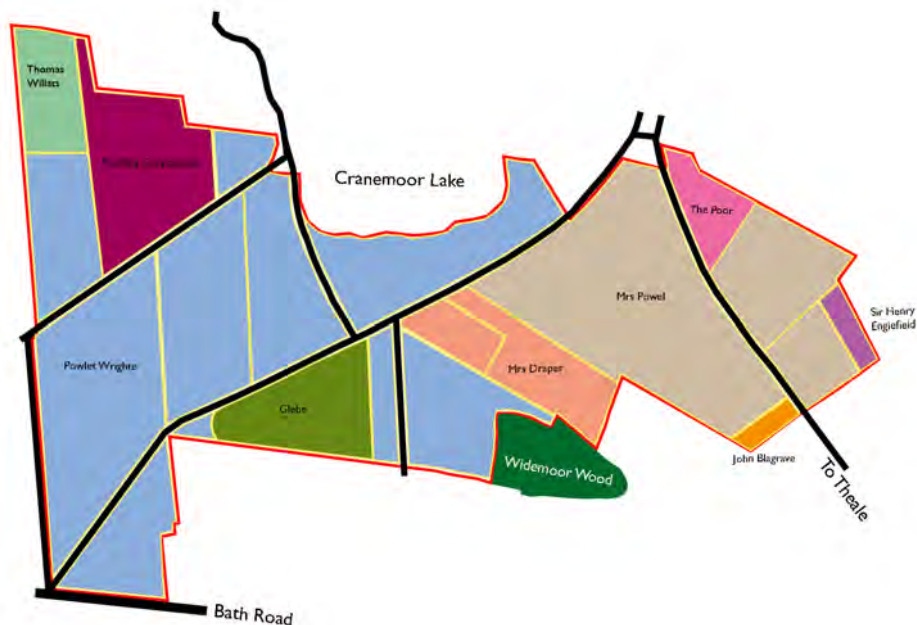
Under the open field system each strip of land had its owner but exclusive rights applied only during the growing and harvest seasons. For the remainder of the time the entire field became common land available to all for the grazing of animals, thus improving the fertility. The strips were scattered around a wide area so everybody got a share of good and bad land but in the years between Ballard's survey and the end of the century the open field system was abandoned, with single blocks of land being allocated permanently to the various owners in place of a multitude of small scattered strips. This action was entirely initiated and carried through by agreement between the individuals themselves, with the lord of the manor, Powlett Wrighte, being merely one of the parties involved.

Even by the time Ballard's survey was completed, change was coming about: in the same year tenants and landowners in the Great Field agreed to suspend the custom of farming in common for seven years - perhaps they had already done this informally to some extent since Ballard's map shows Ridgeway Lane cutting through the middle of some of the individual strips. Although Powlett Wrighte owned much of the land he was not a signatory to this agreement, leaving things to the smaller owners and tenants - to Hobden.

Then in 1774 the arrangement in the Great Field was made permanent by the reallocation of holdings from a number of scattered individual strips into single blocks of land. The text of the agreement clearly shows that the various small landowners were well aware of the necessity for change and that the holding of land in “*small parcels*” could not continue, declaring that they had “*found by experience that such situation...is very inconvenient*”.

By the time of this agreement the 1771 turnpike from Bostock linking up with Green Lane was already cutting straight across the middle of many of the strips, most but not all owned by Powlett Wrighte, in addition to Ridgeway Lane so again

some degree of rearrangement may already have been in effect. The plan of the reallocation of lands also shows a road from Parker's Corner down to link with this turnpike. There had always been an access track into the Widemoor Furlong here so this seems to be a formalisation of that. There is also a remnant of Green Lane from the turnpike towards the Bath Road.



Several of the owners who had land here before the enclosure do indeed appear to have been dispossessed for they are not shown after the enclosure. But that is not the case. John Horn (now the son of the John Horn in Ballard's survey) was instead given a piece of land contiguous with his main block of land at North Street in exchange for his former holding in the Great Field - a great convenience since it avoided constant journeying back and forth just to tend a few scattered acres

If James Acley was James Attlee, son of Roger Attlee and born in 1677, he must be presumed to have died by this time with his land perhaps subsumed into that of his relation Mrs Powell. Thomas Draper and Thomas Powell may likewise have died, with their holdings now in the hands of their widows.

At the same time as the Great Field rearrangement, the Punt Field was also enclosed as a single block. In the earliest plan (tentatively dated to about 1690) only seven parcels of land totalling nine acres were allocated to Francis Paulet but by 1774 his successor Powlett Wrighte already owned 25 of the 31 acres. The other landowners were Mrs Powell (2 acres), Thomas Powell (2 acres), Timothy Pearce (2 rods) and

Thomas Draper (2 rods) These received land elsewhere and the Punt Field became the exclusive property of Powlett Wrighte.

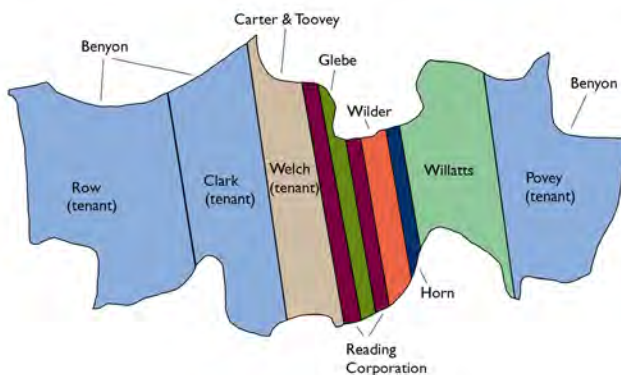
In 1791, by which time Richard Benyon owned the estate, the holdings in the River Furlong of the Englefield Meadow were similarly rearranged. Prior to the agreement of 28 October 1791 it was divided into 31 strips with seven owners:

Richard Benyon
 William Toovey and Richard Carter
 The Rector of Sulham
 Mrs Elizabeth Willatts
 The Rector for the Glebe
 The Corporation of Reading
 John Horn of North Street



By the 1791 agreement the 31 holdings in the River Furlong were reallocated between the existing owners to form just 10 separate holdings of the same total area. However, this process was not taken to the ultimate conclusion and the holdings of Richard Benyon and Reading Corporation remained distributed across the Meadow.

The figure below shows the new arrangement with the owners' names and the same colour coding is applied to the diagram above it showing the situation before re-allotment. Richard Benyon and Carter and Toovey rented their holdings to the tenants shown.



The other fields in the Englefield Meadow appear not to have been affected by this rearrangement and the Hides were still being farmed in the old manner as late as 1806 because a note on a scrap of paper gives the allocation in that year, although only for six pieces rather than the earlier nine. Each of the six pieces is allocated to a number of people in terms of eighths as shown below.

Daffham	4/8	May	4/8
May	1/8	Daffham	2/8
Wild	1/8	Shilton	2/8
Glebe	2/8		

Welch	1/8	May	2/8
Daffham	1/8	Wyatt	2/8
Shilton	1/8	Daffham	4/8
Daffham	1/8		
May	1/8		
Stone	3/8		

May	3/8	Beanshaw Farm	4/8
Daffham	1/8	Corporation of Reading	4/8
May for Denty Croft	4/8		

The Final Act

The final enclosure of Englefield by Act of Parliament came in 1829, although by then it was really just a formalisation of sales and exchanges that had taken place over the previous 20 years. In 1809 Richard Benyon and other major landowners decided to finish what had already been started by enclosing the Englefield Meadow and abolishing the remaining rights of common. Notices were posted on the door of the church and in the local newspapers and the process of arranging for a private bill to be presented to parliament began.

Anyone with a holding in the common fields was also entitled to certain rights of common such as grazing of animals on stubble and these rights would be lost when the bill was passed through parliament. Those who held such rights therefore petitioned the appointed Enclosure Commissioners, John Trumper and William Bushnell, for appropriate compensation, usually by way of a small piece of land elsewhere. Among those who made such claims were brothers William and John Horn, and Isabella May on behalf of her son James who was then not quite of age being only 19, his father having died in 1805.

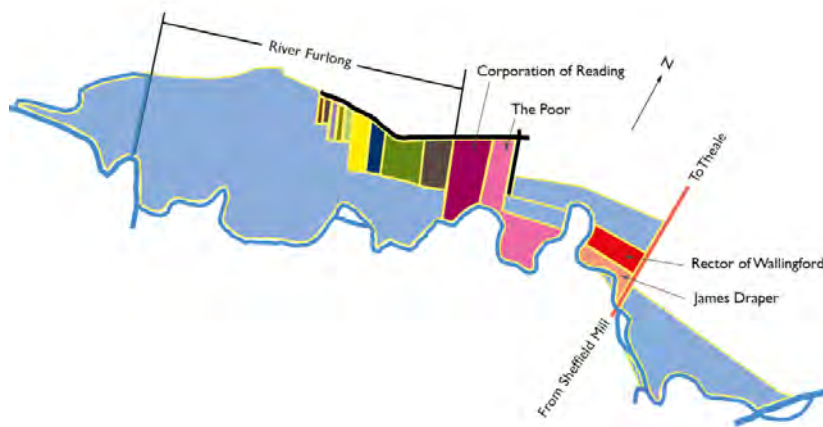
The full enclosure process was not confined to these exchanges, however, for in some cases having had land elsewhere given to them in exchange, some of the landowners, among them John and William Horn and James May, subsequently sold

all their land to Richard Benyon. So the complete enclosure agreement passed by parliament is effectively in two stages, the earlier part dealing with the exchanges and the later part with the subsequent sales.

As far as the former common fields were concerned, Richard Benyon in succession to Powlette Wrighte already owned the whole of the Punt Field and by the parliamentary enclosure acquired almost the whole of the Great Field as well, the exception being some parts of the former Wickcroft Furlong that belonged to Robert Hopkins and "*the devisees of T Clark*".

The result of all these exchanges and sales was that Richard Benyon, as by far the major landowner was able to consolidate the majority of the land within the village and around Englefield House into a single block, including the piece just outside the east front of the House, where the Rectory stood alongside the church. This he exchanged for another piece of land with a house on it that then became the Rectory, the other one being demolished.

Although the holdings in the River Furlong of the Englefield Meadow had been rearranged and consolidated in 1791, there had clearly been further changes since then for the enclosure map of 1829 shows a different layout with the major part of the River Furlong already owned by Richard Benyon and only a few small individual parcels of land, many with new owners, along the north side. Adjacent to the access road along the north side of the River Furlong, but not stretching right across to what was called the Burghfield Brook at this time, as they had in 1791, were nine small parcels of land, some very small.



From right to left on the image these small parcels belonged to:

Francis Webb (deceased)	The Rector of Englefield
John Horn	Robert Hopkins
James May	Mary Ann and Thomas Welch
William Horn	William Stone
Elizabeth and William Keep, inherited from Richard Keep	

Of the owners at the time of enclosure, only the Rector and John Horn had land here in 1791. All of these plots were either exchanged for other land in Englefield belonging to Richard Benyon or sold to him so that the entire former River Furlong became the property of Richard Benyon.

Both John Horn and his brother William, who had also acquired some land there since 1791, exchanged this for small pieces of land contiguous with what they already owned elsewhere so again this process actually represented a benefit to the Horns, rather than the curse that Clare and others claimed, because it meant that they lost no actual acreage and had a far more compact holding around their main homestead.

At the western end of the River Furlong was Garrets, including the Fishery, and at opposite end, on the other side of the road from Theale to Sheffield Mill, was the Ten Acres. Both of these were always owned by Richard Benyon and were re-allocated to him in the enclosure agreement.

The area between the road from Theale to Sheffield Mill and the boundary of the old River Furlong, previously consisting of the Hides and Claper Acre Furlong, is allocated by the Commissioners to a number of people, including Richard Benyon, as shown. James Draper had no land here in 1791 but by this time may well have inherited the entitlement of Richard Carter and William Toovey in the River Furlong for the Drapers were related to them by marriage.

Even with the sales of land that took place after the re-allotment, there still remained eight landowners other than Richard Benyon shown on the definitive enclosure map, though three of them were what we might call “corporate landowners” being the Corporation of Reading, and the Glebe belonging to Rector of Wallingford and the Rector of Englefield. The other five were: William Keep, Robert Hopkins, J Keen, Thomas Price and the heirs of T Clarke.

Into Modern Times

The formal enclosure by Act of Parliament between 1809 and 1829 had not left any of the smaller landowners worse off, in fact some at least, like John Horn, saw more compact holdings with less time and effort spent travelling to a small piece of land

some miles off. Still, however, some of them chose to sell to Richard Benyon, as John Horn's heirs did in 1819, despite the fact that they had, with additional rented land, a reasonable acreage in a consolidated block, though still with some outlying fields at considerable distance resulting from the enclosure of Tilehurst parish. The reasons why these farmers or their heirs decided to sell may be varied but it is probable that economic reality played a large part.

In 1793 Britain had gone to war with France, a war that would last for over 20 years. This made import of food from Europe difficult and the price of bread rose. There was also a series of poor harvests to make matters worse. The Berkshire Magistrates devised a system of poor relief, known as the Speenhamland System, that was widely copied across much of the country. Unfortunately, the scheme had many disadvantages and may well have led to some smaller farmers giving up.

The situation did not improve after 1815 when the war with France ended, in fact it got worse. Interest on the national debt was a heavy burden on taxpayers and when, in 1816, Income Tax was repealed that burden shifted to indirect taxation which relatively benefited the rich and penalised the poorer people. Harvests in 1816 and 1819 were poor but after the war corn prices fell by almost a half due to the renewed import of foreign grain, leading to the imposition of the Corn Laws. These kept the price of wheat artificially high but led to fluctuations in food prices at a high level and led to distress among the working people.

While all of this did not much affect those large landowners who still received rents from their tenants and also had income from other sources, the smaller landowners and tenant farmers (many, like John Horn, being a combination of both) were seriously affected and it must be no surprise that they opted to become workers on the landlord's farms rather than suffer the problems and hardships of trying to scrape a living on their own account. This would especially be the case in places like Englefield where, certainly after 1854 when Richard Fellowes inherited, the landowner provided security, good housing, an effective local welfare system and alternative jobs as carpenters, bricklayers and so on for those of their children who did not want to work in agriculture. We note that in 1830/31 when the Swing Riots were causing disturbances and machine breaking in the nearby parishes of Bradfield, Bucklebury, Stanford Dingley, Yattendon, Basildon and Thatcham, Englefield seems to have escaped any such unrest.

Another factor against the smaller freeholders may have been their tendency to bequeath shares in their holdings to several of their descendants. While the upper classes stuck fairly rigidly to a policy of primogeniture with everything left to a single person (and we note that in Englefield that was often through the female

line), the yeomen tended to practise a form of gavelkind which divided the estate, though not necessarily equally, between all sons. This meant that generation by generation individual holdings got smaller until becoming too small to support a family. Something of this can be seen in the case of the Horn family.

The survey of rents and tithes from 1844 shows us that while most of the land was then owned by Richard Benyon, there were still some portions to which others owned the freehold. As was the usual case two maps were produced, one for the lord of the manor and one for the Church. The one for the church shows only the ecclesiastical parish but the lord of the manor's map (below) also shows those parts of the estate that were outwith the parish boundaries, such as John Horn's former farm at North Street and the six acres in Theale Meadow.



Map courtesy Berkshire Records Office

Coloured areas on the map show how the land was divided between the estate farms of Chalkpit (blue), Mare Ridge (pink), Wickcroft (peach) and Malthouse (orange), with the parks and woodland in green. The uncoloured areas show land the freehold of which was held by others, including a sizeable block within the village itself, as seen in the image below.

The majority of this land (outlined in purple) was still owned by the Rector of Englefield, then Edward Berens (although Francis Eyre acted as Vicar in the parish) with the Rectory of the time that Richard Benyon had exchanged for the previous one by the church. Caroline Hopkins also had a large amount (in red), including the shop and the Crown Inn, now number 1 in The Street and there was a small



amount belonging to George Appleton, a retired farmer from Sulhamstead, with his house at the corner now named after him. George Appleton occupied his land himself but Caroline Hopkins rented the Crown Inn and the central block of land to the widow Mildenhall and the remainder, including the shop, to Charles Webb. Caroline Hopkins was the widow of Robert Hopkins of Tidmarsh Grange and by 1851 living in Hove.

Other freeholders of land around the outskirts of the village were: the Rector of Wallingford, the Corporation of Reading (including the piece that still bears the name “Corporation Field” today), John Price, Sophia Sheppard, John Blagrove, Sophia Draper, Edward Atkins, William Stone (of Mile House Farm), John Welch, John Hall’s Charity and the trustees of the Englefield poor. Of these only Sophia Draper occupied the land herself, the remainder rented their land to others.

Whether the former freeholders ended the century as tenants or labourers, they seem to have been treated well, with good quality accommodation and even a rudimentary health service provided by a landowner who was also enthusiastic to try out all the latest agricultural improvements at his own in-hand Home Farm (Chalkpit Farm) and to support like-minded tenants such as Jenkin Davies at Wickcroft Farm. Large new farmhouses were built all over the greater estate in the 1860s and 70s with sufficient room to accommodate the unmarried farm workers living-in as well as the tenant farmer or the bailiff and his family. In October 1860, Richard Benyon

postponed the annual rent audit from its normal date in January until April because the harvest season had been particularly wet. He considered that the extra four months would give the tenant farmers more opportunity to bring their crops and animals into good condition and so get a better price than they would do if they had to sell them sooner in poor condition in order to pay next year's rent.

Speenhamland

In order to prevent civil unrest due to food shortages and high bread prices, on 6 May 1795 The Berkshire Court of Quarter Sessions, among them John Blagrove who had some land at Englefield, met at the Pelican Inn at Speen near Newbury to approve a scheme to provide a minimum wage for agricultural labourers. The system adopted had much in common with modern tax and welfare system - including some of the invidious consequences. Agricultural labourers were to receive a guaranteed wage based on how many children they had and the price of a standard loaf of bread. However, laws passed under Queen Elizabeth and King James I did not allow the Court to impose a minimum wage on employers so any difference between the guaranteed wage and the actual wage received from the employer was made up from the parish rates.

However benevolent the intentions of the Magistrates, the scheme was unsatisfactory as it provided a positive disincentive to pay good wages when employers knew that they were also paying, through the rates, to make up for the poor wages paid by others. It was also said that it would encourage the labouring classes to breed and there was certainly an increase in population of 50% between 1802 and 1831. Despite the problems with the scheme it remained in force until 1834.

The Farms

Farms are a feature of the landscape that arose as part of the enclosure system when the holders of the enclosed land moved out from the villages and built new farmhouses surrounded by their fields. It is estimated that Englefield was already 30% enclosed by the year 1600 and Ballard's survey in 1762 lists a number of farms, some owned by the lord of the manor with a bailiff in charge but some owned by other individuals. Many farms are mentioned in various deeds and indentures but a large number of the early ones were probably no more than smallholdings providing just sufficient for a family to live on. Many are named after people, so presumably changed their name over time, perhaps several times. Of the farms detailed by Ballard, only two remained into the 20th century: Chalkpit Farm and Sulhamstead Farm, although the latter became Mareridge and then Mayridge Farm. A third, Wickcroft Farm, came into being early in the 19th century. The land occupied by the early farms was rarely consolidated in a single block but had many small parcels, both enclosed land and strips in the common fields, scattered over a sometimes wide area as shown in the case of John Horn's farm.

Chalkpit Farm

Chalkpit Farm was occupied by Philip Wyatt in 1762, as was Cranmore Farm. It may have been created around 75-100 years earlier by the enclosure of a second common field in the north of the parish. A set of plans showing the boundaries and dimensions of the fields in the county archives appears to be of about the same date as a plan of the Great Field, Puntfield and Englefield Meadow judged to be from about 1690.

Unlike the other farms in the early years, which were either owned freehold by the occupants or leased to them, Chalkpit always seems to have been farmed in-hand as the estate Home Farm and run by a bailiff rather than a tenant. In particular Richard Fellowes Benyon, the owner from 1854, was a keen agricultural innovator and used Chalkpit Farm to test the latest agricultural improvements, though in his self-deprecating style he did not claim any celebrity on that (or any other) account.

The Berkshire Chronicle in November 1860 was of the view that Chalkpit Farm was *"noticeable as being part of experiment in practical agriculture undertaken by the worthy 'squire' not so much, we presume, in the expectation of profit, as with a view to test any agricultural improvement which may arise, and so to give the tenant farmers of the neighbourhood the opportunity of watching with their own eyes the progress and result of experiments which it would hardly be worth their while individually to attempt. There is moreover another advantage which arises to landlords from such undertakings as these. In this way they become practically*

acquainted with the feelings and condition of their tenants. It is very different matter where a landlord 'bears' it a bad season, and where he 'knows' the fact from his practical experience. In the latter case he is much more likely to do acts of kind consideration to his tenants, such as that on the part of Mr. Benyon himself, which we last week had the gratification to mention". This opinion was particularly occasioned by the report from the previous week that Mr Benyon had postponed the usual rent collection from January until April because of the poor season.

The fields belonging to Chalkpit Farm ran down to the River Pang where there was a mill mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and there still was one there in 1749. The water-meadows known as the Dairies were also there and village boys and men used to swim in the river.

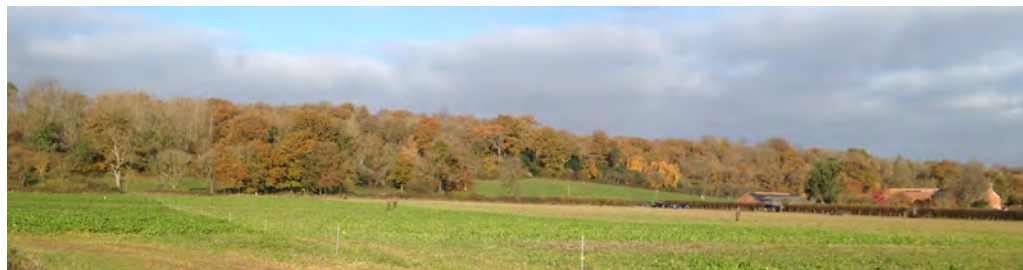


Farming in the old style. Aloft are FW (Jim) Smith (1911-1994) at the front and William "Billy" Cooper (1915-1986) towards the rear. Both worked at Chalkpit Farm. This picture is said to be from 1929 but could well have been taken in the 1940s or even the 50s.

Mayridge Farm

With Chalkpit, Mayridge Farm was the other of the modern farms to be included in Ballard's survey of 1762. The farm lay then in the parish of Sulhamstead Bannister and was called Sulhamstead Farm but is clearly part of Powlett Wrighte's estate with Thomas Clarke as tenant. The name was originally "Mare Ridge" and until very recently (certainly in the 1950s and 60s) was pronounced that way - as it still

is among the few remaining older people born in the village. The name comes from the ridge of high ground, to the south east of the farm, named Mare Ridge on maps from the 18th century up to and including the Ordnance Survey map produced between 1896 and 1904. While the old form was still being used on maps at that time it was being written as “Mayridge” in the 1890s by the Reverend Arthur Heigham in the parish magazine.



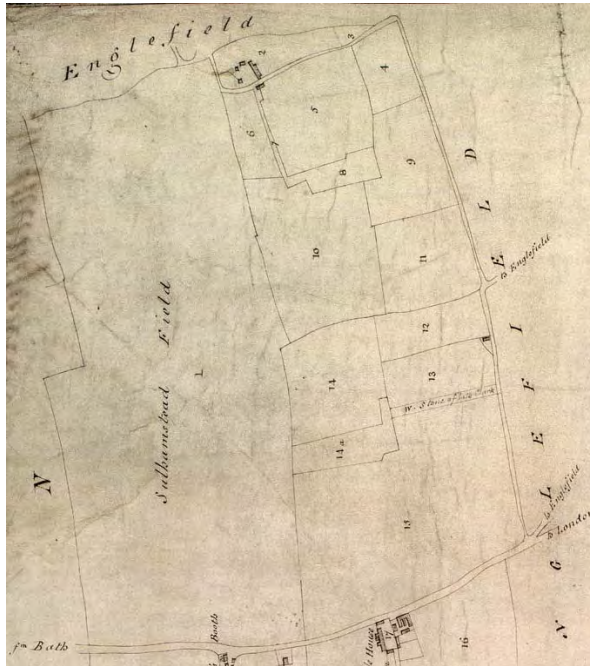
Mare Ridge with the farm at the right hand side of the picture

In her 1892 history of Ufton Court, Mary Sharp says that in early days this high ground was called “marrugge” or “marrige”; possibly deriving from “mere-ridge”, a local term for the low turf ridges or banks dividing the different portions of the common meadows. Ballard’s map shows the farm in the same place as now but the original farmhouse was in the place now occupied by the farm buildings and the road that runs through the farm was on a slightly different course (as also shown on the 1811 enclosure plan).

Immediately to the south of the farm are, in 1762, some already enclosed fields down as far as the road leading to Englefield but beyond that, down to the Bath Road, is blank on Ballard’s plan indicating that this did not belong to Powlett Wrighte.

To the west of this enclosed land was the common field of Sulhamstead Abbotts, still laid out in strips in 1762 but enclosed in 1811 as a single parcel as seen on the enclosure map on the next page. To the west again was the common field of Ufton Nervet and the wood along this part of the ridge overlooking it, although now usually called Mayridge Wood, is properly called Ufton Wood and was formerly the common woodland of that parish.

Sulhamstead Field along with the land in the lower half of the section to the east of it and all the land on the other side of the Bath Road down to the river, were allotted in the Sulhamstead enclosures of 1811 to William Stone of Mile House Farm, just on the opposite side of the Bath Road.



By the end of the century the whole Mile House estate including Tyle Mill, then a working flour mill, and some land to the east of the section of Englefield south of the Bath Road was owned by William Jeffreys Strange - hence the initials on the front of Mile House Cottages and Gravel Pit Cottages. After he died on St George's Day 1900 it was offered for sale at auction in several lots on 1st November but only two lots, those comprising Tyle Mill, were sold. It was then offered for sale privately and in January 1901 was bought by James Herbert Benyon.

In the estate survey of 1844, when it is called "Mearidge" Farm, Mr Hart is the tenant of Mayridge Farm, confirmed by a notice in the Reading Mercury of the marriage of his son in February 1850. Stephen Hart was still tenant of Mearidge Farm in 1851 but he had been succeeded by Mr John Harris within three years and again the farm is Mearidge Farm in the newspaper advertisement of a sale of sheep. John Harris died suddenly aged 64, probably from a stroke, on the way home from Reading Market in January 1856. He left Reading in his gig at half past four in the afternoon and called at the Sun Inn where he picked up Abraham Parsons. Turning from the Bath Road towards Englefield he complained of a "*curious pain*" in his head but continued to talk to Mr Parsons until he left him, presumably at Parker's Corner. Shortly afterwards some men met the gig with the horse "*going at a foot pace*" and Mr Harris lying unconscious on the left hand side. In the newspaper report and the advertisements for the subsequent sale of the farm stock and other effects the farm is still called Mearidge Farm.

In the 1861 census the old farmhouse (written now as “Mayridge”) is occupied by George King, a farmer, although it is also noted that his tenancy had ceased at Michaelmas - some six months earlier. There is now a second property, also listed as Mayridge Farm, in which lives John Turner, Mr Benyon’s agent. This was the current farmhouse, then newly-built and said to be originally intended as a dower house. It was never used as such and became home and office to the agent before the Agency was built in the Englefield Road. Both the new and old houses seem to have continued in existence together until at least 1871, with the old house still the farmhouse and the new one the Agency occupied by John Turner. By 1881 the new house had become the farmhouse with George Levoy, a farmer, in situ, the new Agency having by then been built. The old farmhouse continued to house various estate workers until in the 1891 census it is shown as uninhabited and by 1901 it must have been demolished.



Farming in the old style. Horse-drawn mowing of a hay meadow. This looks to be just to the north of Mayridge Farm with Mare Ridge in the background

Goff’s Farm

Goff’s Farm is not recorded as such by Ballard but it is shown on his map, on the Beenham Lane a little west of its junction with Blyth’s Hill (now Common Hill). The land belonging to it runs west from the farmhouse to the parish boundary and

down to the River Bourne to the north, with fields on either side of the Englefield common wood. In 1844 Stephen Hart was the tenant of both Goff's Farm and Mayridge Farm so the two had obviously been amalgamated, as shown by the estate map of that year, though more of the land had by then been put to the woodland it is today. The Goff's farmhouse had been divided into two houses lived in by Edward Allen and Thomas Allen with their families. On 24 April 1888 Richard Benyon wrote to his Agent saying he wanted to "*pull down Goff's*", though it is clear from the letter that he was happy to wait until the best time for the existing tenants. This finally came in 1892 when the new Wimbleton's Cottages had been built and Edward Lamperd, a brickmaker at the nearby brickyard, and his family moved there from Goff's Farm.

Wimbleton Farm

Now simply Wimbleton's, this occupied the slopes between the village and the old deer park on the top of the ridge to the north-west. Deeds of 1749 convey the farm to Mrs Sarah Prince and her son-in-law James May but the farm is also mentioned in papers from 1712. In 1762 James May was still in possession, although the farm is then referred to as Park Farm. His son James sold the farm to Richard Benyon during the final enclosure process. The plan of the common fields, undated but probably from the later 17th century, show that a Mr Wimbleton had holdings there and plans from about the same date show the fields of Chalkpit Farm so it is possible that Chalkpit Farm and Wimbleton's Farm were created from the enclosure of a second common field at that time. In the 19th century estate and Ordnance Survey maps the name is given as "Wimbledon" but in 1913 the Ordnance Survey has reverted to "Wimbleton".

Cranemoor Farm

Cranemoor Farm is shown by Ballard in 1762 with Philip Wyatt in occupation along with Chalkpit Farm. There have been several different spellings over time including Cranmoor, Cranmere and Cranmer. On the plan of the common fields dated to about 1690 there is a Cranmer stile indicated at the southern edge of the land surrounding the house and many strips allocated to "Cranmer", which appears to refer to the farm in documents dating back to 1594.

The Cranemoor Farm lands in 1762 were, as usual, spread around with a mixture of enclosures and holdings in the common fields. As well as Pound Close on the edge of the then village street the enclosed land included the Row Park, Great Crawley, Middle Crawley and Little Crawley, a large block of land that now forms much of the new deer park to the south and west of Englefield House, as well as

fields further away such as Jennett's Field (the big field alongside The Street and the Pangbourne Road), and Blackeymoor alongside the old Tidmarsh Road near Hogmoor Bridge. All these were part of John Powell's land at the time of his death in 1759.

Englefield Farm

In 1725 a farm called Englefield Farm was leased by Anne Wrighte, sister of Francis Paulet and the wife of the Rev Nathan Wrighte, to Thomas Powell. In 1678 and 1687 Powell's father, also Thomas, was holder of land at Dilhams and Blyths (the area on the south slope of the hill above Parker's Corner) and this may have included nearby Cranemoor Piddle with a very large house on it, Cranemoor House, where the younger Thomas's son John lived at the time of his death in 1756 when it was all left to his widow Elizabeth and then to their sons-in-law Richard Carter and William Toovey. Cranemoor Piddle and the house were part of Chantry Farm, also owned by Carter and Toovey in 1779.

Dunt's Farm

Also written in some places as Dunts's or Dunces, this was on the road from Englefield to North Street. A plan of 1728 shows the lands of Dunce's Farm surrounding the farmhouse, just on the North Street side of the modern A340 Pangbourne Road and this is clearly the same place shown as Dunt's Farm on the Tilehurst enclosure map of 1817 and as Dunts's on the plan for the new Pangbourne Road in 1822. There were also some holdings in Langley Mead and Theale Mead, the common meadows of Tilehurst.

There is a record of a Robert Dunt (father also Robert) being baptised in the parish church of Sulhamstead Bannister (which parish then included the area north of the Bath Road where Mayridge Farm is) in 1665 and a record of probate for Robert Dunt, a husbandman, of Sulhamstead Bannister in 1681. Robert Dunt, a husbandman of Tilehurst parish (in which Dunt's Farm lies) married Mary Poley of Englefield in 1697 and children



Mary, Dinah, John and Robert were baptised between 1697 and 1709. The first three of these were baptised in St Michael's, the parish church of Tilehurst, but Robert was baptised in Englefield church. It seems possible, therefore, that the Robert Dunt born in 1665 established Dunt's Farm (as it should therefore be called) at some time in the late 17th century.

In 1771 Dunt's Farm was offered for sale (along with Parker's Farm) when the owner, Edward Clarke, was declared bankrupt at his death. In 1794 Dunces was conveyed to Richard Benyon by Johnstone Vanden Bempde, owner of the Beenham manor, and a title deed of 1824 refers to a messuage and 36 acres called Dunces in Tilehurst so it obviously continued as a separate farm at that point in time. In the enclosure settlement John Horn gained some land "*formerly part of Dunt's Farm*", from Richard Benyon in exchange for some land in the Englefield Meadow though this land is not shown as part of the farm in 1728. The tithe map of 1844 shows the land as part of Wickcroft Farm.

Parker's Farm

Parker's Farm is not mentioned by name in any estate survey or census but a farm of that name was part of the bankruptcy sale on the death of Edward Clark in 1771. There is a plan of the lands of Parker's Farm in 1806, amounting to some 101 acres as shown below.



As was common at that time, the farm consisted of a number of contiguous fields, in this case around Mareridge Farm, and some other land spread over the wider area. Most of the land is outside the parish of Englefield: in Sulhamstead, Ufton and Tilehurst.

Thomas Parker was one of those listed as parishioners in 1695 and the name Parker appears on the supposed 1690 plan of the Great Field. Ballard's map shows a collection of buildings on Blyth's Hill where a track ran off the hill towards Mare Ridge. There was a "Farm House" at Parker's Corner in the 1861 census and in 1844 this was owned by John Welch and tenanted by Charlotte May; an adjoining seven acres was also owned by John Welch but let to James Harding a "*Farmer of 21 acres*". In 1861 the house was occupied by Abraham Parsons a "*Farmer of 30 acres*". Abraham Parsons was at Piper's in 1851 but had possibly moved by 1856 because it was he who accompanied John Harris of Mayridge Farm on his last and fatal journey home from Reading in that year. Ten years later he had acquired an extra 10 acres but by 1881 Lavinia Gold, widow of Edward Gold (or Gould) and formerly at the Fishery, was the tenant and the farm was reduced to a smallholding of 5 acres. In 1891 Mrs Gold gave up the tenancy and moved in with her daughter, at which point any sort of separate farm seems to have ceased to exist.

Chantry Farm

Chantry Farm (also Chauntry or Chantrey) has certainly some connection with the source of revenue for the Englefield Chantry prior to its dissolution in 1535 and there are in existence several leases to various people dating back to 1598. There is land allocated to "Chantry" in the Englefield Meadow on both the 1690 and 1762 plans, despite all chantries having been dissolved by law in 1547 so this must refer to Chantry Farm rather than the chantry itself. In 1779 the joint owners were William Toovey and Richard Carter and a map of February that year shows the extent of the lands at the time, five years after the reallocation of the holdings in the Great Field and before the enclosure of the Englefield Meadow.

The farm house was clearly Cranemoor House (here "Cranemore"). The approximate location of this is shown on the map (next page) by the red circle. The main farmyard with two fields seems to have been where the estate yard now is. This yard was separated from the main block of land by a short distance and the two were connected by a lane that is now called Chantry Lane, so this is probably the origin of the name of that thoroughfare.

A further block of land was let to a Mr Simmons as tenant. This is in two separate parts, amounting to seven acres in all, with a small single enclosure immediately

to the north west of Englefield House at the junction of the Bradfield Road and Beenham Lane, now part of Daintylands, and the remainder further along Beenham Lane with two cottages on it.

The other lands making up the 1779 farm were shown in 1762 as belonging to *“the two Mrs Powels”*, and *“the widow Powel, now Carter and Toovey”*. The large field to the east of Cranemoor Lake was the land allocated to the widow Powell in 1774 when the Great Field was reorganised so Elizabeth Powell had clearly passed on her inheritance to her sons-in-law.



Chantry Farm had disappeared by the time of the final parliamentary enclosures but the field to the north of the timber yard called Long Ground on the 1779 map was called Chantry Field at that time.

North Street Farm

North Street Farm was originally sited near the junction with Piper's Lane (the house is now The Grange) where it is still shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1883, surveyed in 1877. At the other end of the hamlet what is now known as

North Street Farm was then shown as Charity Farm and was owned by the John Kendrick Charity that supported the school of the same name in Reading.

The census of 1851 shows Francis Chillingworth as the farmer at the old North Street Farm with 200 acres. He sold up in 1859 and the next owner was James Stevens with only 128 acres. He was still farming there in 1881 but by 1891 the farm had become “The Grange”.

There is a collection of buildings shown on the site of Charity Farm on the Tilehurst enclosure map of 1817. In 1871 Richard Chillingworth (brother to Francis) was a farmer at Charity Farm with 108 acres but a newspaper notice in 1873 announces that this farm (now calling it North Street Farm) is to be sold by the charity and advertises the suitability of the land adjacent to the Englefield Road for housing development. The farm tenants at that time were



Richard Chillingworth and J H Blagrove. However the farm was not sold and it was again advertised in 1877 when the occupier was Thomas Grace. It was still owned by the charity and occupied by Thomas Grace in 1881 when it was yet again advertised for sale, with a somewhat diminished amount of land, at a price of £2,600. The farm was then bought by Mr Benyon who certainly owned it in 1886 and caused the current house to be built.

John Horn's Farm

The John Horn referred to in Ballard's survey was at least the third of that name in direct succession. John Horn(1) was born in 1665 and married Elizabeth Haines, by whom he had a son John(2) born in 1694. This second John Horn married Sarah Keywell and their sons John(3), born in 1719, and Thomas, born 1725, both feature in Ballard's survey, despite the fact that John(3) had actually died in 1759. He had married Ann Justice in 1746 and by his will, proved in 1760, he left all his lands to his wife Ann for her lifetime and then to be split between their three sons John(4), William and Thomas, who were all less than 12 years old when their father died.

Much of John Horn's land was in Tilehurst parish so is not covered by Ballard and is blank on his map. The name “Horn” is, however, written in pencil on this space

(which includes Horn's Copse) and the land outlined in red on the photograph below is the land owned in Tilehurst by John Horn(3) which passed to John Horn(4) and is shown on the Tilehurst enclosure map of 1817. The piece in the bottom left corner was owned by John(4) at the time of his death but is not mentioned in the will of John(3).

As well as the main block of land in Tilehurst outlined in red, John(4) inherited from his father the areas in Englefield outlined in orange, consisting of a small block near Chalkpit Farm (including a field known as Horn's Ground), two holdings in the Englefield Great Field and one in the Englefield Meadow. These latter three plots are shown in the plan believed from about 1690 as belonging to John's grandfather. There was also a house known as "New House", thought to have been the one on the western edge of the main block of land close to Chalkpit Farm. Miss Winchcomb (1893-1986), a descendant of the Hornes, said that her mother's ancestors occupied a farmhouse here, the foundations of which were still visible at the start of the 20th century.



The small area filled in light blue is the land that John Horn(4) received in 1774 in exchange for his holding in the Great Field and the two small blocks filled in dark blue are those given in 1810 in exchange for his holding in the Englefield Meadow and his rights of common. The much larger area outlined in yellow was being rented by him in 1803, as was part of the Dairies on the River Pang.

John Horn(4) died in 1813 and the Tilehurst enclosure map of four years later shows that in addition to the land outlined in red, *“the heirs and devisees of John Horn”* acquired the two areas in solid red fill, one in the Theale Meadow and one far away at Kentwood in Tilehurst, as part of the enclosure agreement. We know from the will of John Horn(3) in 1759 that he had six acres in Theale Meadow *“butting and joining to the Handitch on the left hand of the path leading from Theale to Sheffield Shivill Mill”*.

The land outlined in green is that in Englefield which John(3) left to his son William Horn. This was Bucklesmoor, though Ballard incorrectly calls this enclosure Busheymoore in his listing; Busheymoore is in fact the piece of land immediately next to Bucklesmoor and is marked as such by Ballard on the map. William was also left *“that messuage and tenement and land appurtenances thereon belonging and being and known by the name of Knapps”* which may have been the *“house, yard and hop garden”* shown by Ballard as belonging to John Horn just on the other side of the old Tidmarsh Road from Bucklesmoor. However, although still shown on a map in 1822, that house had gone by 1829 so it may have been the house within a separate enclosure in Bucklesmoor because Miss Winchcomb recalled that her grandfather’s uncle William had a house and smallholding on the right hand side of the Pangbourne Road a little before Hogmoor Bridge and the entrance to Piper’s Lane from where her mother (born 1856) would later fetch eggs and butter when she was a child. There is a reference in a later document to Knapps as being lately divided into two tenements and in 1844 Mary Horne held the tenancy of Bucklesmoor, Busheymoore and Hogmoor Bridge Meadow (husband William having died in 1837) and lived in one half of that house on Bucklesmoor. Their son Thomas continued to live there until at least 1861 but it was demolished within the next ten years.

By 1809 William Horn had also acquired two small pieces of land in the Englefield Meadow and a small block butting against the north side of Bucklesmoor was given to him in exchange for these and his common rights in 1810.

The third son, Thomas, was left a house called “Bunce’s” in Tilehurst. The location of Bunce’s is unknown but there was also a house in North Street, known to Miss Winchcomb as the “Timbered Cottage”, where her mother was born, at the junction with Piper’s Lane and on the main block of John Horn’s land. In 1817 there was a collection of buildings on this site and in 1844 there were three separate dwellings there, one of them occupied by Sarah Horne. The site was cleared in 1860 and the

New Inn built there. Thomas married Sarah Pither from Pither's Farm, Bradfield and they had a son Thomas and daughter Sarah but nothing further is known of them.

Thomas Horn, the brother of John Horn(3), had houses, a hop garden, orchard and two other pieces of land in the centre of Englefield, straddling The Street, outlined in pink on the image, as well as five plots in the Great Field, one in the Puntfield and one eighth of two sections in the Hides. These are outlined in the sand colour and the plots in the Great Field and Puntfield are exactly the same as those shown belonging to John Horn in the plan believed to be from about 1690, so presumably came down to Thomas, as did perhaps the property in Englefield Street. Nothing further is known of Thomas Horn and perhaps like his brother he also died shortly before 1762 for Ballard's survey has some land as "*Thomas Horn's now Thomas Draper's*". He was not part of the agreement on farming in the Great Field made in that year and his holdings in the common fields were certainly in the hands of others by 1774.

Ballard's survey of 1762 and the continued enclosure process over the next 50 years illustrates the sort of position the small yeoman farmers found themselves in, where "*The late John Horn*" has in addition to the biggest block around the farmhouse small blocks of land scattered round the common fields of two parishes several miles apart.

Wickcroft Farm

Wickcroft Farm was a late creation that only came into being during the final enclosure process early in the 19th century, perhaps in 1808 when 204 acres of land, formerly part of Chantry Farm, and a cottage were leased as Wickcroft Farm. It is shown on a plan of 1822 and by 1844 had also subsumed the lands of the former Dunt's Farm and John Horn's farm as well.

The tenant farmer in 1844 was William Clark, who moved on in 1856 and was succeeded by Jenkin Davies who remained until his death in 1893. Many of the farm buildings were destroyed in the disastrous fire of 20th December 1873, when only the house and one granary were saved. The fire started when the men were clearing out the firebox of the steam engine, used to power a threshing machine, at the end of the day's work. They raked the hot embers onto a wet stone (as was the usual practice) but the stone split and the embers fell on to some dry chaff, which immediately ignited. The cows and horses at the farm were all led to safety but the barns, a number of grain ricks, a quantity of grain and a store of feed were all destroyed. The machinery was also damaged and the cost in all was put at £5,000. The manual fire pump bought for Englefield House only a few months earlier and

the one from Chalkpit Farm, together with three fire engines from Reading, were used in putting out the fire and the ruins smouldered all the next day. Three men were injured fighting the fire.

Jenkin Davies was succeeded briefly as tenant by Thomas Grace and then by James Bucknell. At the start of the First World War Mr J Osmond was the tenant but James Strang took the farm in 1921/2 and it remained in his family for several generations until 2024.

Piper's Farm

Piper's Farm, usually referred to just as "Pipers", lay along Piper's Lane (in yellow on this image) about half way between Hogmoor and North Street and consisted of a small number of pre-1762 enclosures. It was part of the Glebe Land owned by the Rector of Wallingford, shown outlined in red on the image below. In 1844 this land, including the house (shown by the red circle), was let to James Batten who also rented the area outlined in blue from Sophia Sheppard.



Batten doesn't seem to have lived in the house, apparently living in Purley in 1841 and Pangbourne by 1851, in which year there seem to have been no fewer than four families living at "Piper's". These were Abraham Parsons (a shepherd who shortly after was at Parker's Farm), Joseph Allen (farm labourer), James Wickens (farm labourer) and George Parsons (baker). In 1861 there were only two: George Parsons at Piper's and William Case at Piper's Cottage but ten years later it was back to three families with Frederick Lewis (also a baker,) Charles Reeves (agricultural labourer) and Charlotte Barker (laundress). In 1881 Pipers was unoccupied although Piper's Farm was still shown on the Ordnance Survey map drawn in 1877 but in 1891 had disappeared from the census listing and was not shown on the OS map of 1913.



Make do and mend. The wagon shown here was probably from Chalkpit Farm and the signwriting shows that this picture must have been taken after 1935; to judge from the faded letters, some years after at that. The metal drawbar replacing the original wooden shafts show that it is clearly a former horse-drawn wagon that has been converted to be pulled by a tractor during the Second World War or shortly after.

The Dairies

The Dairies were the water-meadows, probably created in about 1710, on either side of the River Pang just upstream of Hogmoor Bridge. The meadows lay on both sides of the river and today the M4 motorway cuts through the southern part. The rental value of the meadows was about £30 a year in 1749 and the tenant in 1802 was John Horn.

Water-meadows work by maintaining a shallow, flowing sheet of water over the ground during the winter months, keeping off the frost and encouraging an early growth of fresh grass for the cattle in the spring.

By closing a barrier across the river and opening a hatch in the side of the bank, water could be diverted into a side channel, called a “leat”, “top carrier” or “main”. Water from the top carrier supplied many smaller carriers (shallow grooves) running along the tops of ridges across the field and from these carriers water overflowed down the side of the ridges into drains at the bottom. These drains joined into a “bottom carrier” or “tail drain” that returned the water to the river further downstream. This constant flow of oxygenated water is vital to the health of the grass in the water-meadow as a permanent cover of stagnant water would simply kill the grass. The pattern of these various channels can still be seen in the image below.



The photo on the next page shows the same part of the Dairies with the river in the bottom left corner and a water-filled tail drain edged with brown reeds. The side drains can be identified in both images by the darker green growth in the bottom.



There have been several mills on the river here, including, no doubt, the one recorded in the Domesday survey. A track runs from Chalkpit Farm to the river and the two fields on either side of it are shown as Great Mill Ground and Little Mill Ground on the enclosure map. There was certainly a mill here called Farley Mill, pulled down in about 1700, and downstream of that another old mill, Tidmarsh Mill, demolished a few years later. There had also been for a time a third mill downstream from that.

In about 1700 a Captain Wilson, who owned some land there, built a new mill downstream of the Dairies and raised the river banks at this point. There were problems with a lack of water for this mill in the winter due to the holding-up of the water at the Dairies and in 1749 Hogmoor Wood, also owned by Capt Wilson, upstream of where the top carrier rejoined the main river, flooded. Wilson's bailiff damaged the sluice gates at the Dairies to let the water flow freely and legal action by Powlett Wrighte followed.

The river here was a popular spot for swimming both before and after the bathing pool was built along Chantry Lane and in the 1890s the Chalkpit Farm bailiff, Mr Hand, would close the barrier across the river to maintain the level in the summer for that purpose, even though at that time of year the river would normally be left to flow freely. By 1891, however, the side gates were falling into disrepair and he was sometimes forced to lower the river level to avoid flooding the meadows where the cattle were then grazing. In 1892 the level was raised for swimming on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only, the river being left to run freely the rest of the time.

The Fishery

As well as having rights of fishing in the River Kennet, the Englefield manor originally had two other fisheries in man-made lakes. These were intended to provide fish for meals on Fridays and other special days when the Englefields, as prominent Roman Catholics, would certainly have observed the custom of abstaining from eating meat.

One of these fisheries was the Cranmere Fishery, which became the ornamental lake in front of Englefield House. It was shown by Ballard (right) in 1762 in a form more resembling an airfield than anything and it is not known whether this was its original shape as a fishery or perhaps the fishery in the process of being converted to an ornamental lake.



The other fishery was at a place called Garretts, which apparently remained until well into the 19th century for the 1861 census shows Edward Gould, a fisherman, in the Fishery Cottage there. Gould had also been the occupier in 1844 and was still in residence in 1871, aged 70. Ten years later the Fishery Cottage was inhabited by Abraham Hodges, a “rod dealer”, the rods being the osier rods from the adjacent Draper’s osier bed. The house was still listed in the 1911 census though uninhabited, as it had been in 1891.

Garrett’s and the Fishery were reached from the Bath Road by a lane known then as Garret’s Lane. In 1851 James Wigmore, a local builder, lived in the only house in Garrett’s Lane (Bath Cottage, marked on the map left) near the Fishery and it was probably he who built it some time in the preceding decade. His son James lived there after him and grandson Earnest lived there in 1911. Earnest founded the company ECR Wigmore that was still in business in the 1980s.

The lane was still called Garret’s Lane in the 1891 census but the 1911 census return completed by Earnest Wigmore gives the address as “Bath Road”. The OS six-inch map of 1913 (revised in 1909-10) shows three detached houses and a semi-detached pair further along the lane towards the Bath Road. A pair of “*well-built cottages situated in Wigmore Lane, Theale*” were advertised for sale in the Reading Standard in July 1914 by J Wicks, a builder from Tilehurst, and he again advertised

a “*convenient cottage, six rooms, large garden and shed*” to let there in January 1917. The modern name of the road presumable came about because of the association with the Wigmore family and the business at Bath Cottage. Bath Cottage is still there, though now derelict.

As the old map shows, the Fishery Cottage was originally completely surrounded by a double moat system fed with running water from the Kennet. The Fishery is still shown in this form at least up to the OS 1:50 000 second series map of 1976, but with the gravel extraction that subsequently took place has now become a horseshoe-shaped lake with the site of Fishery Cottage under water and only the eastern part of the outer moat remaining.



Harvest Home and the Produce Show

The safe gathering-in of the year's harvest is a just cause for celebration in communities that depend on agriculture and Englefield was no exception. This was always celebrated as a major event in the village but from 1865 things were done on a much more lavish scale. The importance attached to it may be judged from the fact that it was justification enough for a holiday from work and a full day of celebration and entertainment. There were lengthy reports in the Reading newspapers and even short notices were frequently included in other papers from as far away as Manchester, Nottingham, Dundee and Guernsey.

The date was always flexible depending as it did on the weather (which around the turn of the century was very variable) and state of the crops for this was quite literally a celebration of "the last load home" and sometimes less than a month's notice was given. It was as early as September 1st in 1892 and in 1907 the weather appears to have been very poor and only a Harvest Festival service in the church took place, the other celebrations being cancelled. In 1870 the Harvest Home took place on Thursday 29th September, having been put off until the arrival home of Mr and Mrs Benyon. They had been in Switzerland for several months and were delayed on their journey home by the Franco-Prussian War which necessitated taking a longer route through Prussia and Belgium. The celebrations were again cancelled in 1897 after the death of Mr Benyon.

The 1865 celebration, on Wednesday 20th September, started with a service in the church decorated for the occasion: *"Brilliant bouquets of flowers adorned the window sills, the curves of the arches were traced in evergreens, corn and flowers, over the doors were placed crosses formed of dahlias and other flowers; and the font was chastely decorated with graceful ferns, intermingled with choice flowers. On the communion table were sheaves of wheat, oats and barley and the chancel was in other parts decorated with plants of rare foliage. Every pillar of the church, too, was tastefully entwined with wild hops"*.

After the service the men formed into a procession and were led to lunch by a brass band under Mr Davis from Reading to a large new tent in the park where they sat down to a hearty meal of roast beef and plum pudding. After the meal Mr Benyon made a speech and proposed the loyal toast. The Rev ALC Heigham, then the Vicar of Totternhoe in Bedfordshire but who had been Curate at Englefield until the previous year and would become Rector in 1885, called on the company to give three cheers for Mr and Mrs Benyon and to drink their health. At four o'clock the children from the Sunday and day schools, with those from the Bradfield Union Workhouse, formed a procession and marched to the terrace of Englefield House for tea, headed by the band of the Union Workhouse *"...which is composed of a number*

of very small urchins who play very cleverly on penny whistles". While the children had their tea the men again assembled in the tent where they were treated to bread, cheese and beer in liberal quantities and after tea all assembled in the park for sports. In the evening a dance was held in the Long Gallery, where Mr and Mrs Benyon joined in *"...mingling freely amongst the company and taking partners indiscriminately"*.

From 1868 lunch was taken in the Long Gallery and in 1869, learning that Mr King from the home farm at Chalkpit had been in the habit of giving prizes in his part of the parish for well-cultivated gardens and for root crops, Mr Benyon undertook to do the same for the whole village. The produce show was therefore added to the day's programme in 1870. For some years in the early 1890s the Harvest Festival service took place on Sunday with the rest of the celebrations following later in the week.

The garden produce show was rather more restricted in scope than now, being limited to classes for the best cottage garden and various vegetables. Prizes were awarded in two divisions: Labourers and Mechanics, and later there was also a separate class for Garden Labourers. The criteria for these divisions seems to have been a little obscure for in 1893 the Rector noted *"George Allen who in 1886 received a prize for the Best Cultivated Garden as a labourer, and in 1889 for the Best Collection of Vegetables as a mechanic, and for the Best Garden in 1891 as a mechanic, has again become a labourer in 1893; like some things which are neither fish, flesh, fowl, or good red herring we shall scarcely know where the Judges will place him next..."*.

Classes for children were usually limited to wild flowers and collecting queen wasps, and there was a single cookery class for cooked potatoes. There was a rule that anyone who won the prize for the best garden or best collection of vegetables could not also win any other prize although this was sometimes forgotten.

The Harvest Home celebrations and the produce show continued in the same format until the outbreak of war in 1914 and from then there was only the Harvest Festival Sunday service in the church. Neither the lavish harvest home celebrations nor the produce show were reinstated after the war but the produce show was revived in the 1960s and continues today as part of the village fete.

Englefield Farming Families

Jenkin Davies of Wickcroft Farm



Jenkin Davies, it will be no surprise to learn, was a Welshman. He was born in 1824 to a farming family in Ystradyfodwg, Glamorgan. He arrived at Wickcroft Farm in May 1857 with, ostensibly, his wife Martha and young son Ebenezer.

In fact, he had married Martha's sister, Anne Wiltshire, a servant girl in his village but originally from Studley in Wiltshire, and in 1855 Anne gave birth to twin boys, Ebenezer and Ezra. Anne died a fortnight later and Ezra followed her six weeks after. Martha had gone from home in Wiltshire to be with her sister at the end and stayed to help with the surviving child. Jenkin and Martha became close and wished to marry. However, this was unacceptable to the Church, based on a flexible interpretation of the ruling in Leviticus prohibiting a man from uncovering the nakedness of his brother's wife - although Henry VIII had done exactly that with the permission of Pope Julius II in 1509 when he married Catherine of Aragon, widow of his brother Arthur, at the instigation of her parents, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. When Henry later tried to use Leviticus as grounds for an annulment of the marriage the then Pope, Leo X, would have none of it. Although not contrary to civil law, such a marriage was always considered to be "voidable". Nevertheless, inventor Matthew Boulton married his sister-in-law in 1760 and Charles Austen, brother of Jane, did so in 1820 but the practice was explicitly forbidden by a law passed in 1835 that was not repealed until 1907, despite which it remained contrary to Canon Law until 1946.

Jenkin and Martha remained at Wickcroft, where they were regarded as man and wife and had 14 children together, until his death. Although the census returns say they were married it is clear from the grant of probate to "*Martha Wiltshire (commonly known as Martha Wiltshire Davies)*" and referred to as a spinster, that they were not. All of their 14 children (though not Ebenezer) had the middle name Wiltshire.

Jenkin Davies was an innovative farmer and an early adopter of machinery. He was practically the first in Glamorgan to adopt the four-course system of farming and bought the first seed drill in the county. In 1865 he designed and patented a sack holder, which sold well. His enthusiasm for modern practices would have struck a chord with Richard Benyon who was also a keen proponent of all the latest equipment and methods, which he tried out at the home farm, Chalkpit. Both men

held office with the South Berks Agricultural Society and won many prizes at their shows.

As well as being a farmer Davies was also an auctioneer and the firm of Jenkin Davies and Sons had a stand at the Reading Cattle Market. He was also a Guardian of the Bradfield Union of Workhouses and Overseer of the Poor and Overseer of Highways for the parish of Englefield. With Mr Benyon he was elected a County Councillor for Berkshire when the County Councils were introduced in 1888.

Jenkin Davies died on 14 September 1893 following an attack of rheumatic fever. Martha died on 5 February 1898 at Wallingford but was buried at Englefield as Martha Davies on 10 February with Jenkin and three of their children who had died in infancy.

The Powells

The Powells were certainly at Englefield by 1611 when Thomas Powell, son of Thomas, was born and another Thomas, son of that Thomas, was born in 1655. He was presumably the one who married Mary Haynes of Ufton in 1678 and yet another Thomas was born in 1686.

John and Elizabeth Powell had two daughters, Elizabeth and Alice. Elizabeth had married William Toovey in 1755, the year before John Powell died and Alice would marry Richard Carter the year after. The executors of John Powell's will, made shortly before his death when he was "*weak in body but of sound and disposing mind*", were his brother Thomas Powell and his nephew Thomas Carter, raising the possibility that Alice and Richard Carter were cousins. In this will John Powell left £1,800 (almost £274,000 real value today) to his daughter Alice on reaching her 23rd birthday, or on the day of her marriage, but is at great pains to ensure that such a marriage must meet with the approval of his executors. It may be, therefore, that he might have been trying either to ensure or to delay Alice's marriage to Richard Carter, which took place a few months short of her 23rd birthday.

John Powell's elder brother Thomas was certainly still alive in 1762 for he had then a small amount of land at Englefield in his own right. Catherine Powell, Thomas's wife, had died in 1761 though and has a large ledger stone just inside what was then the north entrance to Englefield church, since 1907 the door to the choir vestry. This is a unique honour for she is the only person thus still commemorated in the body of the church other than John Paulet, Marquis of Winchester and his second wife, son and daughter.

The Powells and their sons-in-law owned a large amount of land around Englefield that was at one time or another part of Englefield Farm, Cranemoor Farm and Chantry Farm.

The Horns

The Horn, or Horne, family (the “e” seems to have been a later and initially fairly random addition) were very long established in Englefield, the family’s length of residence there possibly equalled only by the Englefields themselves, with whom the Horns overlapped. The family was certainly in Englefield around the time when the keeping of parish records was first ordered by Thomas Cromwell, chief minister to Henry VIII, in 1538 for there is a record of the birth of John Horn in the village in 1544. Another John Horn is recorded as born in 1576 (probably son of the first John Horn) and a John Horn is also recorded as buried there in 1583.

In the next century, Richard Horn, probably from Burghfield, married Elizabeth Longley (or Langley) of Englefield at St Mark’s church in 1633. A son Robert was born at Burghfield a year later and another son, Richard, in Englefield in 1640.

In 1677 Robert Horn, a Yeoman of North Street, was elected as Churchwarden at St Mark’s, Englefield and together with fellow warden William Kent presented in 1679 a set of church plate engraved with their initials. This seems to have been in pewter and perhaps replaced that lost during the Commonwealth. A tankard was still in the church in 1924 but is no longer to be found. These men also collected the sum of £3-18-10 from the parishioners in 1678 towards the gilding of the new St Paul’s after the Great Fire. Robert’s grandson John was also a churchwarden between 1717 and 1721.

Richard Horne, a mercer, was named with 62 others in a list of inhabitants in the parish records for 1680 and when he died in 1692 an inventory of his goods and chattels in the shop and his living quarters over it totalled £228 3s 6d. He died intestate owing certain sums of money to several people, which his father Robert undertook to pay. In return for the sum of £30 cash Richard’s widow Margaret assigned to her father-in-law all rights to the business premises and any credits due. There were two sons, Robert and Richard, from this marriage and this Richard was listed as one of 55 inhabitants of Englefield in 1696.

In 1660 Richard Horn bought some land from James Watts and Robert Horn also bought land in Englefield and North Street in 1669 and 1677, the nucleus of the farm that would pass through three generations of John Horns between 1684 and 1813. When the last one died in 1813, following his wife Elizabeth the previous

year (they both have substantial gravestones in the favoured area of the parish churchyard just to the right of the church door) all his lands were sold by his successors to Richard Benyon in about 1819 and from then on the Horns became tenants or workers on the Englefield Estate but the former Horn ownership is still evident today in Horn's Copse, formerly part of the family farm.

The Hornes (the "e" by now seemingly firmly established) were plentiful in Englefield during the 19th century and the 1851 census shows 5 separate Horne households in Englefield. By the Second World War the only person with the Horne name left in Englefield was Henry Horne, a Blacksmith, at 39 Chalkpit Cottages who had been a member of the first Englefield Parish Council in 1894. But there were some large families, with many girls born to Horne parents and these girls married local men so a number of other well-known local families had Horne ancestry. These included the Cox, Parsons and Vince families and their descendants. Another such were the Winchcombs, for the mother of Miss Bertha Winchcomb and May Van Veen was Mary Elizabeth Horne.

The last people to live in the village having been born as Hornes were sisters Emily Smith and Ethel Parsons, daughters of William George Horne of Englefield and Fanny Pusey from Bradfield, born in 1887 and 1889 respectively.

As children they lived first in the old Wimbledon's Cottages then in number 7, The Street and finally just across the road in number 10. Ethel married George Parsons, a carpenter on the estate, in 1910 and they lived first in Tidmarsh. He died in 1933 and Ethel then lived at number 19 in Englefield Street with their children until she died in 1982.



Sisters Ethel (left) and Emily at number 10 in about 1980

Emily went out to service in Henley where she met and married William Percy Smith, from Remenham, at the time a furniture salesman. He became a farmworker and they moved around a good deal as farm labourers used to do and they had four children between 1907 and 1913, each of them born in a different place. William Percy enlisted in 1915 and Emily returned with the four children to live with her widowed mother at number 10. When William Percy came home in 1919 they lived first at Rose Cottage in North Street, where a fifth child was born, and then at Thatcham. William Percy died in 1925 in the Military Pensions Hospital at Orpington in Kent from conditions said to be related to his wartime service in Mesopotamia. Emily and the children returned again to number 10 and she

remained there as a widow for the next 56 years until her death in 1981. While her eldest son and her only daughter moved away, the three younger children all remained at Englefield where two of them married sisters from the village.

The Mays

James May was born at Long Sutton in Hampshire in 1728 and was a miller at Burghfield Mill in partnership with his brother William. He bought property in Englefield from another brother Thomas and lived at Park Farm, just behind the church, now called Wimbleton's, although his will of 1772 mentions "*the several farms in my occupation*". He married Ann Lucy Prince from the village and they had nine children, all born in Englefield.

His son James was born in Englefield in 1760 and married Isabella Catherina Lovegrove by licence in St Giles, Reading on 7 April 1790. Isabella was born in 1769 at Benson where her father Robert was tenant of a substantial farm at Crowmarsh with 656 acres and an annual rent of £420. She brought with her a dowry consisting of some 52 acres of land at Long Wittenham mortgaged to her by a family member for £1,000. Unusually, the income was to go to her and not to her husband.

James and Isabella had three sons and a daughter, all born in Englefield and the eldest was James, born in 1790. When his father died in 1805, at the time when the parish was undergoing the final stages of enclosure, young James had a claim by right of common made to the Commissioners on his behalf by his mother (he not yet being of age) in respect of two houses, gardens, orchards and three already enclosed fields amounting in all to just over 9 acres. Isabella May died on 2 March 1835 and is buried in the May family vault beneath a chest tomb in St Mark's churchyard

There seem to have been two James Mays in Englefield at the same time because one married Charlotte Dodd in 1815 at Englefield and the other married Sophia Strange in 1816 at Tilehurst with the other James May as a witness. Both couples gave birth to sons in Englefield, one in 1819 and the other in 1820, and both were baptised James! A similar thing happened with the Hornes at exactly the same time for there were two Thomas Hornes; one born in 1814 and the other in 1815. James, the son of James and Isabella seems to have been the only one to remain in Englefield and when he died in 1840 that was the last of the line as far as Englefield is concerned.

And Be A Farmer's Boy

The History of Agriculture in Englefield, Berkshire

As with most English rural villages, agriculture was probably the reason for Englefield's existence and continues to play a major role today, although employing only a tiny fraction of the local population that it once did. The way that agriculture developed from a subsistence level, in which everyone played a part, to today's advanced agronomics necessary to feed a population predominantly otherwise occupied runs counter, in Englefield at least, to the common view of the iniquities of the enclosure process. This book explains how Englefield made that transition.



Richard Smith was born in Englefield where his father's family had lived for at least 400 years. In the 17th and 18th century they were yeoman farmers but sold their land early in the 19th century and became tenant farmers and farm labourers or other estate workers, the last of whom (an uncle seen in the centre of the picture above) died in 1994.