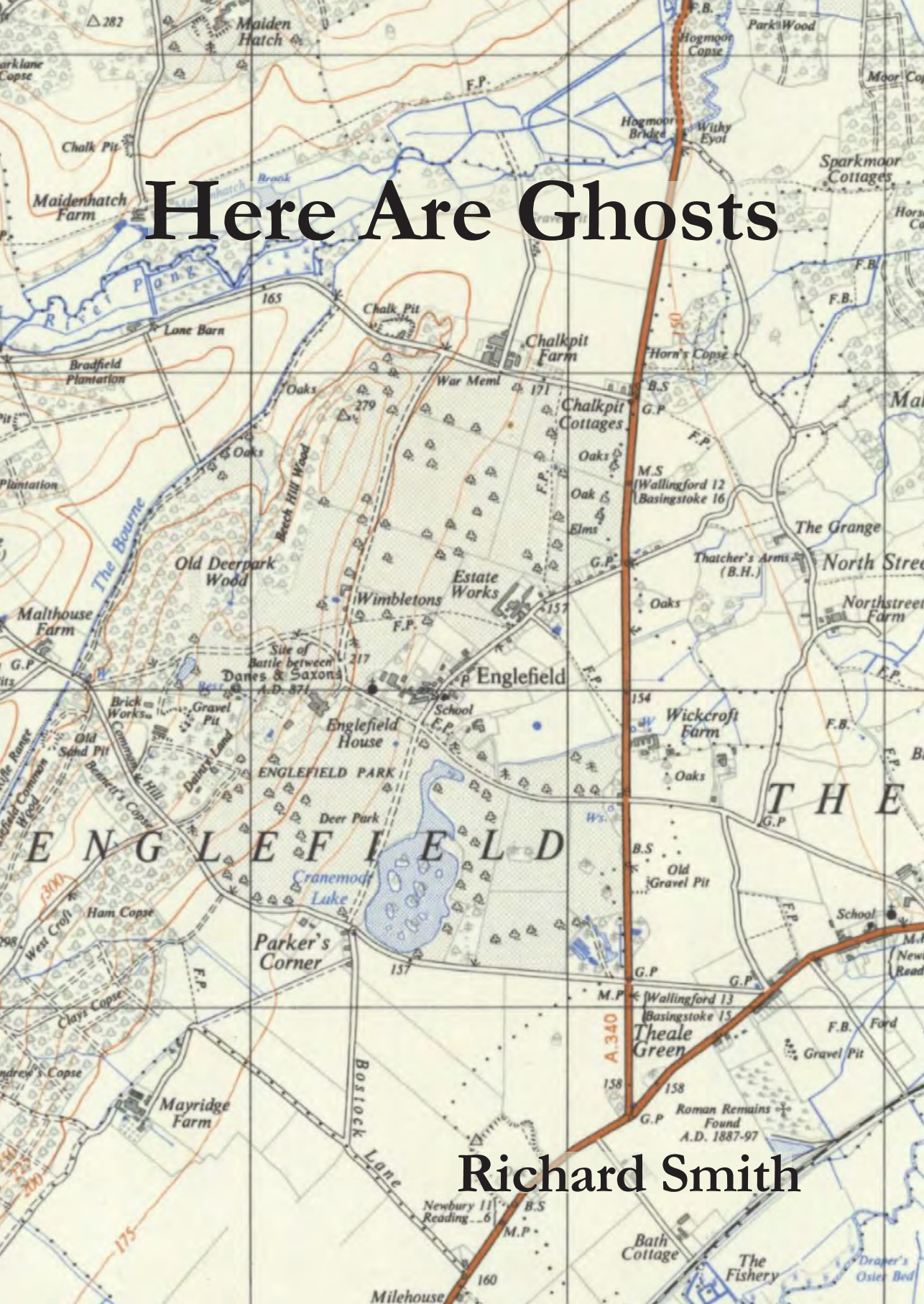




Here Are Ghosts

Richard Smith

Here Are Ghosts

The ancient map-makers wrote across unexplored regions, 'Here are lions.' Across the villages of fishermen and turners of the earth, so different are these from us, we can write but one line that is certain, 'Here are ghosts'.

W B Yeates, *The Celtic Twilight: Faerie and Folklore*

© 2024 Richard Smith

The right of Richard Smith to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

All rights reserved

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by photocopying or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage or retrieval systems without permission in writing from the copyright owners and publishers.

Contents

Foreword	1
The Fire at Wickcroft	3
The Produce Show	5
We Will Remember Them	7
The Workmen's Club	11
The Post Office	13
Why is it Called Englefield?	15
The Way We Lived Then	17
Sgt Graham Fisher	19
What's in a Name?	21
The Second World War	23
The Churchyard Cross	27
Englefield People	29
After The Englefields	33
Englefield Land Ownership in the 18 th Century	35
The Creation of Modern Englefield	37
Chantry Farm	39
The Agency	43
The Moving Schoolhouse	45
The Clerk of Works	49
The Pangbourne Turnpike	53
The Parish Council	55
Come in Number 13	57
Not Cricket?	59
An Historical Coincidence	61
More on Place Names	63
Not So Common	65
Old Village Houses	67
The First New Village Houses - and one more old one	69
The Lodge Gates	71
Curiosities in the Chapel	75
Cranemoor House	79
The Consecration Cross	81
The Dairies	83
Jenkin Davies of Wickcroft Farm	85

Other Books About Englefield

Something Retreated From an Unacceptable Present - the story of Englefield, Berkshire

Proper To Grow Wise In - a history of the parish church of Englefield, Berkshire

And Be A Farmer's Boy - the history of agriculture in Englefield, Berkshire

There Was Once A Road - the lost highways and byways of Englefield

The Mettle Of Their Pasture - Englefield in the two World Wars

The Lines In Pleasant Places - a village community

The Cover Illustration

The cover illustration is an extract from the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 map published in 1947. A close inspection shows that opposite Chalkpit Farm is marked a "War Memorial" (as "War Meml") where none exists today, is recorded anywhere else or is known about by the oldest inhabitants. This may therefore be the subject of some speculation. On the earlier 1:10,560 scale maps of 1913 and 1900 this spot is simply marked with the initials "WM" so one wonders which war this memorial commemorates. Obviously too early for the First World War and, in 1900, too early for the second Boer War in which it is known that two Englefield men participated - and returned. The first Boer War was a short lived thing (December 1880-March 1881) and was not really a war at all but a series of skirmishes and no participation by local individuals or units is known. In July 1881 the 66th Regiment, that was even at that moment being amalgamated with the 49th to form the Royal Berkshire Regiment, was all but wiped out by the Afghans at Maiwand, as commemorated by the huge statue of a lion in the Forbury Gardens at Reading, so that might be a possibility.

However, as an example of the sort of traps that unwary historians may be led into by historical coincidence, the 1883 OS map explains all. This one does not resort to abbreviation but states quite plainly "Weighbridge", no doubt used to weigh-in the harvest, and this was obviously abbreviated to WM to stand for "Weighing Machine" on later maps, as is suggested by Dr Richard Oliver in *Ordnance Survey Maps: a concise guide for historians*. The initials were then re-expanded in 1947, but incorrectly.

Foreword

The pieces collected here were all originally published in the Englefield parish magazine between August 2018 and February 2024. Many of them, as with the first, are on subjects that had some particular topical relevance to the village at the time so the dates of publication are shown for each one. Some of them have been edited and expanded for publication here. Most summarise material already published in one or more of the six books listed opposite but some have new information that was not known when the earlier book was printed. As these pieces were originally intended for local consumption some of the references to places and people may be obscure to those from further afield; more about these people and places will be found in the other books. The cover illustration may also be helpful with place names.

Englefield certainly has no Celtic connection, being a Saxon creation, but the appositeness of the quotation from W B Yeates on the title page only goes to underline a certain affinity between all long-established rural societies fortunate enough to have remained substantially unchanged, whatever their origin. It is the nature of the place, the people themselves, and the community they created that establishes the common character, and makes such places so little understood today by those who do not experience them at first hand. In England such places are now few, but where they remain, as with similar places elsewhere, it is perhaps in some strange way not now the people who define the place but the place that defines the people.

The ways of such places, created as they were over centuries by an harmonious alliance of landlord and tenant, of master and servant, both of “...whose dead are in the churchyard, 30 generations laid...” are entirely foreign to modern generations of urban dwellers so it is essential to preserve what they truly were and continue to be.

But Englefield is rarer than most; it is one of the country’s few remaining intact estate villages. The estate village goes largely unrecognised by social historians and when mention is given at all it is generally disparaging and largely confined to some supposed iniquities connected with the replacement of an old settlement by a new one, tied cottages or the later enclosure process. By contrast, the sense of community in pit villages and the urban creations of the industrial philanthropists like Salt, Lever and Cadbury for their factory workers are invariably celebrated.

The creation of modern Englefield is contemporary with Saltaire and pre-dates Lever’s Port Sunlight and Cadbury’s Bourneville by more than 20 years. True the old village was demolished and the new one built round the corner, out of sight of the Squire looking from the windows of his house over his new landscaped

park but what the villagers got in return were new houses set in their own ample gardens and comfortably spaced from one another, jobs, a school, recreation, a workmen's club and a church all set in one agreeably and harmoniously-styled place and surrounded by well-managed and productive countryside - an ideal the post-war planners have signally failed to emulate. The benefits were particularly notable where, like Englefield, the generous Squire went out of his way to foster a sense of community by actively involving himself and his family in it and sponsoring many public facilities and entertainments. It was all this that made it a "...*well-run example of benevolent private ownership*", as John Betjeman wrote in 1949, and were he to return today Betjeman would be agreeably surprised to see that two generations of Squire later it remains much the same.

For some there certainly are ghosts at large in Englefield today and in quiet moments of solitude we feel them near. But these are friendly ghosts, ones we recognise and greet as friends; who in life trod where we tread and saw what we see, all much the same except for some inevitable marks of time. They, and the ghosts who wander through these pages, will be spirits at ease, happy in the knowledge that their little world, unknown and unappreciated by most, envied by some and despised by others, remains in a form recognisable to them "*most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know*".

The Fire at Wickcroft

August/September 2018

The buildings being renovated at Wickcroft will be the second lot of farm buildings on the site. The first ones were built at the turn of the 18th/19th century after the Great Field was enclosed but 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. The tenant farmer at the time was Mr Jenkin Davies, a renowned local figure, and he and his 'wife' (thereby hangs a tale) with three of their children are buried in the same plot in the churchyard.

The Produce Show

October/November 2018

The produce show now takes place in early summer, as reported in the last issue, but from the time it was first held in 1870 until it went into a somewhat lengthy abeyance at the start of the First World War it was always an autumn show, in September, and incorporated into a long day of celebration for Harvest Home.

Mr King from Chalkpit Farm had been in the habit of giving prizes to people from that part of the parish for the best cultivated gardens and vegetables and at the Harvest Home in 1869 Mr Benyon announced his intention to extend this practice to the whole parish. So the first produce show was held on Thursday 29th September the following year. This was somewhat later than had been intended because Mr and Mrs Benyon had been delayed in their return from holiday in Switzerland by the need to take a longer route home in consequence of the Franco-Prussian War then raging. The show was, in Mr Benyon's opinion *"a capital show, and all the more meritorious remembering the extreme drought during the summer"*.

The pattern for the day's events had been set in 1865 when for the first time the Harvest Home celebrations were conducted on a much more lavish scale than previously. In 1870 the day started with a service in the church, appropriately decorated for the occasion, after which Mrs Benyon distributed clothes and packets of tea to the labourers and their wives. At twelve o'clock a procession, headed by a brass band, made its way to the Long Gallery where a hearty meal of roast and boiled mutton and beef, followed by plum pudding, was served.

Tea was served to the children at three o'clock while the men had beer and tobacco in a marquee, the vegetables being exhibited in an adjacent tent. Afterwards there were games and sports in the park presided over by Mrs Benyon, who distributed prizes to the winners, and directed by Mr Benyon assisted by Mr King. At five o'clock the wives of the estate tenants were entertained to tea by Mr Blake, the butler, and Mrs Clark, the housekeeper and the day concluded with a dance in the Long Gallery.

The show remained exclusively for vegetables and the best kept garden up to the last, in 1913, with prizes awarded in three divisions: labourers, mechanics and garden labourers. In the later years children had classes for wild flowers and a collection of queen wasps, with separate prizes for boys and girls, and there was a single household class for cooked potatoes.

The date seems never to have been set too far in advance, dependent as it was on the harvest, and sometimes less than a month's notice was given. As in the first year,

reports often mention the good showing despite the weather of varying sorts. In 1907 the harvest home celebrations and produce show were cancelled on account of the very poor harvest and only the church service was held. In some years the church service was held on Sunday and the Harvest Home and Show on a day later in the week. In 1897 after the death of Mr Benyon all but the church service was cancelled and would be again from September 1914 onwards.

We Will Remember Them

An address given at the Remembrance Day service in church on 11th November 2018 and reprinted in the magazine for December 2018/January 2019

“We will remember them” we say on this day and indeed at British Legion meetings throughout the year, but there is a danger that such a frequently repeated phrase becomes more of a conditioned response than a serious expression of intent. Laurence Binyon’s words, incidentally, were written not in victory at the end of the war but at the beginning, in September 1914, when the BEF looked to be facing certain defeat. So they were never intended to carry any suggestion of triumph or glorification of war but, as anyone who takes the trouble to read the whole piece will see, as an elegy for our friends.



The first so-called “Remembrance Sunday” service was actually held before the end of the war, on the 4th of August 1918, the 4th anniversary of its start, which happened that year to fall on a Sunday. Observed in Englefield and throughout the Empire as a united act of intercession on behalf of the success of the Allies it was, as today, attended by many not accustomed to regular church going. Special services were also held in Englefield on Sunday 17th of November that year, too, at the end of the first week of peace.

The fourth of August continued to be marked with drum-head services in King’s Meadow at Reading for the next two or three years, but it was the 11th of November with its two-minutes silence that became, at the request of the King, the focus for remembering the victory of right and freedom and those who laid down their lives to achieve it.

Needs must we have had to expand our remembered community considerably since then, something that the people who kept that first Remembrance Day proper, in a solemn and funereal manner, on Tuesday 11th November 1919, hoped that the “war to end war” just ended would prevent.

While it’s also right that we spare a thought for all who have suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of conflict, that’s not what today is about. Such wholesale remembrance only compounds the problem we already have, of how we can really remember people we never actually knew in the first place. So the task gets just all too big for us and remembrance, an essentially personal thing, is apt to become, at

best, an abstract routine observance. Today then, perhaps we might return to the original intent for this ceremony and focus on the local and personal.

In 1919 remembering them as individuals would have been painfully easy, with the spaces around the table all too obvious every day, but now 99 years later how can we truly remember people we never actually knew?

We are perhaps better placed to get close to doing that in Englefield than anywhere, for its continuity and sense of place, of being our somewhere, certainly for those with deep roots here, is remarkable. We can walk on the same ground, worship in the same church, learn in the same school, buy our groceries in the same shop and drink in the same club that they did. Some also work in the same jobs and live in the same houses.

So here we can be as close as it's possible to get to those whose names we can read on our memorial. Like young Albert Freemantle, who never really knew his mother because she died two months after giving birth to him; nor, probably, his father who leaves no apparent trace in his life other than a name on a birth certificate. Albert was adopted by his aunt and uncle, Charlotte and James Martin at 44 Chalkpit Cottages, and was known as Bertie Martin in the village. He was taught in the same school classroom that some of us were, he sat in the same choir stalls on Sundays where some of you from time to time sit, and where I sat when I was his age. Albert was called-up three months after his 18th birthday and succumbed to his wounds two weeks before the end of the war and two months before his 20th.

Sidney Willcox was a baker living with his parents and two brothers next door but one to Albert Freemantle, so we can imagine him in the early morning making his way along the footpath that then followed the line of the old road across the fields to the pound and up the street past the yard to the bakery to make the bread for the rest of the village. Like Albert Freemantle he too sang in the choir and his death was confirmed only in the last month of war although he had been listed as missing since May.

Harold Willcox was a gardener, so he followed the same route to his daily work as his elder brother, just a little later in the day.

William Seymour was another gardener, but he had a slightly longer journey to work from the top of Mayridge Hill along the old Beenham Lane, which I drove along yesterday, through Daintylands where his brickmaker father had probably made the bricks that built their house, and down the road out there. William was posted missing in March 1915 and over a year went by before he was confirmed as killed, although he has no known grave.

But there were others too, there were 13 in all, equal to the number of small poppy crosses you will have seen as you came into church. The others came from just outside the parish and so are not named on our memorial but were still very much part of Englefield. Thomas and Leonard Nash worked on the farm at Mayridge with their father, so they all had a short journey to work from just down the road at number 59. Both volunteered in the first month of the war and Leonard disappeared on the first day of the Somme battle. Thomas almost made it through but died of influenza in France just four days short of the Armistice and two months after his wedding to Daisy Hazell from North Street.

Daisy was the sister of Arthur Hazell, who had left the village for Australia in 1901 but returned in early 1917 with the Australian Army, in which he had only successfully enlisted at the second attempt, being rejected on medical grounds the first time. He was killed at Ypres before the year was out.

Herbert Marshall lived next door to the Thatcher's Arms in North Street with his wife and young daughter and was a carpenter at the yard, as his father had been. He too was killed in 1917.

Herbert Parsons was also from North Street and had joined the Navy before the war. He was killed along with all but six of his crewmates in HMS FLIRT in October 1916 while defending Dover against an attack by the German Navy.

We can perhaps more truly remember some of those who came back because happily they lived on in the village for many years afterwards and touched our lives. I can remember particularly Arthur Dance, awarded the Military Medal, wounded in 1916 and taken prisoner in 1918 alongside my grandfather, on his Fordson Major tractor from Chalkpit Farm. And Arthur Claydon, wounded at Gallipoli, our organist here for 30 years. His photograph hangs in the vestry. He married Mabel Reid on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war. As infant teacher at the school Mrs Claydon will be remembered by many to whom she gave a good start in life over the course of 40 years.

We can remember, too, those who served in other ways. Edith Benyon and her husband James Herbert opened their home, at their own expense, as a hospital in the first month of the war. The hospital staff included people from the village Volunteer Aid Detachment and Mrs Benyon, assisted by her daughter Winifred and Housekeeper Miss Dobbie, acted as Commandant until official demobilisation in February 1919 despite serious illness. Mrs Benyon was made a Dame in recognition of her efforts but survived for little more than a month after demobilisation.

Henry, the son of Edith and James Herbert at least survived his service with the Berkshire Yeomanry to become the Squire of my childhood and with his wife Violet would run the hospital again in the next war.

So we can remember those of them we knew, and perhaps through them know a little of those we couldn't have know. But then that leads me to wonder how these placid, undemonstrative ordinary people found the fortitude to go on standing up for what they knew, what they learned here, to be true and just and right, to stand like Kipling's ox in the furrow and show the resilience of the poppy that flourished even though the fields had been destroyed.

Their immediate tactical engagements were against other men, but as we have heard St Paul remind us, the real strategic struggle was and is *"not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"*. Those words are taken from the Authorised Version of the Bible that Mrs Claydon gave me on my 6th birthday.

How then, against all that, to be, in Binyon's words, *"staunch to the end against odds uncounted"*?

Some years ago, with my pal Ken, I was conducting firing practice on a rifle range up in Yorkshire. One day we had visitors to the range: the CO of the regiment we were training and the Padre, Alex. At the end of firing everyone has to parade and declare that they don't have any ammunition on their person and because they had been involved on the range, the CO and Alex had to as well. With everybody lined up Ken gave them the order to lay their rifle magazines and maintenance kits on the ground in front of them. The CO and Alex hadn't been issued with them, of course, but Alex reached inside his jacket, took out a book and laid it on the ground. I moved closer, looked down at the book and saw two words on the cover: "Holy Bible". I looked at Alex. *"My maintenance kit"*, he said.

Alex obviously knew his St Paul: he says, *"Put on the whole armour of God", that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"*.

The Workmen's Club

February/March 2019



The Workmen's Club was built in 1884 and opened in January of the following year. Its original purpose was simply as a Reading Room, but it was not popular and on 16th June 1886 it was reopened as somewhere the men of the village could go to socialise, smoke, drink and indulge in various games and entertainments. There had previously been two public houses in the village: the Crown (now number 1, The Street) and the Three Daggers (number 26/27) but both of these had closed during the 1860s. John Woods, the publican from the Three Daggers, moved to the appropriately-named New Inn in North Street at the junction with Piper's Lane but that had closed by 1891 and was demolished by 1913. There was also the Thatcher's Arms just down the road and the many alternatives in Theale. It was the dubious attractions of these that the Rector hoped that the opening of the Club would overcome: *"In the public house there a risk of noise, bad company and excess of drink, dangers which the Committee hope to avoid in the social gatherings in the Club"*, he wrote.

Originally just a single, large room (with the gable end facing in the photograph) the Club had the billiard room (to the right) added in 1894 and in keeping with the original intent this room also housed a lending library, with the books held on tall shelves along the left-hand side. By 1896 the collection numbered almost 1,000 books with annual lending amounting to 1,200 titles a year. In addition to the books, newspapers and magazines were provided as the gift of Mr Benyon and both books and periodicals continued to be available into the 1960s.

The first Caretaker and Steward was James Claydon who also worked as a garden labourer but ceased that occupation after 1895 when the Post Office was opened

in an extension to the Caretaker's house and he became Sub-postmaster as well as Club Caretaker. As Club Caretaker he was paid £4 a year, rising to £6 in 1893, and Mrs Claydon received a gratuity of £1. James Claydon continued in these roles until 1930 when W G Cook took over (until 1964) as both Caretaker and Sub-postmaster on retirement from the Army after 26 years' service. He was recommended for the post by Capt Dempsey (later General Sir Miles Dempsey) and took it in preference to an alternative recommendation for the job of Gatekeeper at Blenheim Palace. He was initially paid £1 a week with additional payments determined by the Committee for catering for functions. By 1949 the salary had doubled to £104 a year but there was then no mention of extra duty payment. The following year the annual flat rate was replaced by an hourly one of two shillings and threepence. House, coal and light were all provided.

In addition to snooker and billiards, the usual range of pub games was provided, and games tournaments were often held against neighbouring villages, with snooker and darts matches and whist drives continuing up to the 1960s. Annual dances started in 1891 and admission was free for Club Members, with tickets for their lady partners at threepence each. During the time of James Herbert Benyon (1897-1935) the New Year's Eve "Squire's Dance" gave free entry for both members and their guests (although the lady's name had to be notified to the Caretaker beforehand) with food and the first drink also free. Regular smoking concerts were also held, where the members entertained each other with songs and dramatic recitations. For many years Club members also formed a troupe of "Englefield Minstrels" who performed to great acclaim at many village entertainments in the Long Gallery. In these more "enlightened" times it is sadly not possible to publish the only known photograph of the troupe in full make-up, taken in the Long Gallery not long before the First World War.

The Post Office

April/May 2019



A sub-post office was opened in Englefield in 1895. It was the decision of the Post Office authorities that the post office should be at the Club rather than the shop and a small building was constructed for the purpose; this was the left-hand square single-storey extension on the front of the caretaker's house when viewed from the road. It is very small and inside was divided across the middle by a counter so there was only room for about two customers at a time. James Claydon, caretaker of the Club, also became sub-postmaster.

At the start the Club committee formed an association to sell certain household items from the new post office, presumably things that were not sold by James Webb the baker and grocer. This was intended to keep any profit in the village rather than it go to itinerant traders from Reading *"whose carts are perpetually coming through the village"*. Items sold were newspapers and magazines, stationery, tobacco, lamp oil and wicks, soft drinks, tea, biscuits, sweets and garden seeds. In the words of the Rector, *"...the whole little undertaking is not set on foot with the idea of making much gain, but to give men an interest in trade, in home efforts, and in the desire to help ourselves..."*.

A new post box was incorporated into the wall of the post office, to the right of the door, when it was built but before that there was a post box in the high wall surrounding the Gardens. This was emptied at seven o'clock each evening and the children were sent to wait for the postman who sold them stamps. The postman had a pony pulling a red cart and came through the park from Bradfield by way of the Bradfield Lodge gates.

In 1930 when Mr Claydon retired and went to live in Burghfield Common the new Club steward, Mr Cook, also took on the job of sub-postmaster. The salary for this was quoted as about £40-£45 per year at the time, almost the same as that for looking after the Club. Running the post office became very much a family affair with Mrs Cook and their three children all taking a hand, especially when Mr Cook was busy with his Club duties.

Local mail deliveries were made from the Englefield post office until the Second World War. In those days post office duties began at 6am with the arrival of the

mail from Reading. This had then to be sorted into the rounds ready for the postman - if there was one. If not, the family had to make the deliveries. One round extended to Parker's Corner, Bostock Lodges, Daintylands, Beenham Lane, Englefield House and Wimbleton's and the other one covered The Street, Chalkpit Farm and Tidmarsh Moors. Mr Cook would do one and his son James the other. The second delivery would arrive at 1130 and this would be delivered by Mr Cook's elder daughter Renée. This was a shorter round comprising The Street, North Street, Blossom Lane and Blossom End. This was later taken on by the younger daughter Emily after Renée started work as a children's nurse.

The post office opened for business at 8am and for many years stayed open until 7 at night. After closing, all the letters had to be removed from the post box, stamped, tied into bundles and put into the mail bag. The bag was then tied with string and the knot sealed with sealing-wax and stamped with a special seal. The mail van from Reading came at 7.30 and after cashing-up the day was over - provided there was no function at the Club to cater for.

Mr Cook retired in 1964 and by 1968 the post office had been moved to the village shop. Services were withdrawn in 2008. A return of business conducted in 1960 shows that then over-the-counter pension payments formed a large part of the business but much larger were the sales of Postal Orders and National Insurance Stamps - none of which applies today.

Why is it Called Englefield?

August/September 2019

There are differing versions of several aspects of Englefield's history and the very name itself is one of these. Much of the confusion no doubt arose in the later 18th and the 19th centuries when gentlemen scholars became interested in history but lacked the easy access to the wide variety of sources that is provided today by the internet. As a result, being short of actual evidence, they were forced to make assumptions and draw conclusions that can nowadays be seen to be completely wrong. Unfortunately, their work is often simply reproduced unquestioned down the years, even though more information is now readily available.

One account says that the modern name of the village derives from "Inglefield" and supposed to be a reference to the fires lit in the area as a warning of the approaching Danish army in 870. This does actually appear as the name on 18th century maps and in written documents, and even as late as 1915 in the record of William Percy Smith's enlistment in the Army. This idea comes from precisely that time mentioned above, and the Rector, the Reverend Arthur Clutterbuck, hosting a visit from the Newbury Field Club on behalf of his brother-in-law Richard Benyon in 1873 put forward this suggestion but it was rebutted by a Mr Godwin. The "ingle" is supposed to refer to a Saxon word for fire (as in every country cottage's must-have feature, the tautologous "ingle-nook fireplace") but such a derivation is entirely mythical. The Saxons used many different, apparently unrelated, words for a single thing, depending on the exact nature and context, and wrapped both noun and adjective into a single word. We still use most of the words today, but less discriminately and with added descriptive words that are not strictly necessary. Thus, the generic Saxon word for fire is *fyr* but a fireplace in a house is *heorþ* (hearth) and a fire beacon is *béacen*. Actually, "ingle" is not a Saxon word at all but derives from a Scots Gaelic word, meaning a fireplace in a house, and is not recorded in use in England before the 16th century

Another version says that the name arises from the battle itself (really more a skirmish or ambush than a pitched battle) between the Saxons and Danes in 870 – or was it 871? Dating events that took place hundreds of years ago to a particular day in 21st century terms is difficult, especially around the turn of the year. There is, of course, the matter of the "11 lost days" owing to the change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 to contend with, but also the fact that the Christianised Saxons (entirely logically) celebrated their new year on 25th December. So, as the skirmish is reckoned to have taken place on 31st December,

the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has it on the sixth day of 871 but we should place it (just) in 870 by our calendar.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle clearly puts the skirmish at a place it calls “Englafelda”, the earliest known use of that name, though exactly when the place acquired it is uncertain. The literal meaning is “Englishman’s field” and there is a view that the name derives from that skirmish with “field” in this sense meaning “battlefield”, so the name translates as something like “the field of battle on which the English were victorious” and therefore dating only from 870. Alternatively, it could simply refer to a place where some Anglo-Saxons settled and so could have been in use before it. From the Chronicle (itself written some 20 years after the skirmish) either reading is possible.

However, as with “fire”, the Saxons had many different words for field depending on what sort of field it was. So a small field would be a *croft*, a field fenced to keep animals in was a *fold* and a cultivated field was an *æcer*. Battlefield is *beadunwang* and a field of victory was *sigewang*. While *herefeld* (army field) did indeed refer to an actual site where a battle took place, on its own “feld” just means a level piece of open land, as opposed to forest or hills, and is, of course, found in many other place names where it always has this meaning. Englafelda (which, by the way, is the plural form of feld - so it’s fields not field and there’s no suggestion of more than one battlefield) therefore, means the open land settled by the Angles and refers to this particular part of the Kennet valley between two ridges of high ground. As such, it almost certainly pre-dates 870.

The Way We Lived Then

October/November 2019

Now that the Workmen's Club is being reverted, at least partially, to its earlier state it is to be hoped that the reversion doesn't go too far back.

Emily Cook came to Englefield in 1930 having spent all her eleven years up until then living in Army married quarters with her parents, first in Brock Barracks at Reading then in Plymouth, then Germany and finally Aldershot. Her father obtained the job as steward at the Club when he retired after 27 years with the Royal Berkshire Regiment. Mr Cook started his new job on November the first and Emily and her sister stayed at their grandparent's home, the Old Bull inn at Watlington for a week while he, his wife and son spent a week at Englefield being shown the ropes by Mr and Mrs James Claydon, the retiring steward and his wife. When she got to Englefield, Emily was impressed by the large, imposing mansion set in lovely parkland with deer roaming and a large lake with mysterious islands and waterfowl of every description including beautiful swans and many Canada geese. This to her seemed like paradise. However...

Not so the cottage and the amenities, which she thought very primitive, to say the least. There were oil lamps, about twenty in all with eight above the billiard table alone. All had to be filled, have their wicks trimmed and the glasses washed and polished each day.

The lavatory in 1930 was a wooden seat with large bucket beneath, situated in a boarded-off corner of one of the sheds. A slight improvement on the two-seater thunderbox at Watlington, she supposed. But, *"should one be unwise enough to want to pay a visit after dark it meant putting on an overcoat, lighting the hurricane lamp and setting forth like Scott into the Antarctic. The real nightmare began when once enthroned, there would be all sorts of scuffles and squeaks and if the lamp happened to shine into the corners it would light-up the horrible red eyes of rats"*.

Another hardship was the lack of a sink and water indoors; the water had to be fetched from an outside pump and the washing-up was done in a bowl on the table. This was a particular problem when there was a big function in the club. The New Year's Eve Squire's Dance, being free food and one free drink per person, attracted gate-crashers from miles around and the room would be packed solid. Therefore, it meant keeping a steady flow of clean glasses and crockery. The kitchen range would be covered with pots and kettles and each bowl of dirty water had to be taken outside and emptied on the garden. If it was frosty the pump would freeze up and each trip for clean water would mean taking a kettle of boiling water to

throw on the pump first. Then the next time the thing would be solid again in spite of copious lagging and wrapping up.

Having a bath meant carrying buckets from the pump to fill the copper in the wash house, lighting the fire underneath and waiting for the water to warm. In the winter the galvanised iron bath, which normally hung on the wall of the shed, would be carried in and placed in front of the kitchen range, so it was more trips with the bucket to transfer the hot water. In the summer, baths were taken in the washhouse and this was a less arduous task as it was a simple matter of bailing from the copper straight into the bath. In any event, the relaxing effect of the bath was immediately undone by the need to bail out the water onto the garden afterwards.

The oil lamps were later scrapped in favour of acetylene gas, made in an outhouse by a very large contraption into which troughs of carbide were inserted. Each morning the troughs would be full of a great mass of white sludge, which gave off an extremely nasty smell and had to be emptied out and the troughs refilled with fresh lumps of carbide. The late 30s also saw the advent of the Elsan chemical closet - luxury indeed! It was installed in a small shed nearer to the house, which seemed to have been an outside larder at some time. It had a concrete floor, a small window and not so much as a mouse hole. Another plus was a lock and key to ensure privacy, sadly lacking before. Yet another improvement was a sink in the kitchen with an indoor pump. The sink was about 3 inches deep and the water was continually slopping over but on the plus side there was a waste pipe and drain outside.

The next step forward was electricity and the allowance was three lights and one power socket. As there were three rooms downstairs this would mean that candles were still needed upstairs, so Mr Cook paid the electrician to put a socket in each bedroom so they could have bedside lamps. He also bought a Baby Belling cooker for use in the summer, but the kitchen range was still used in the winter for warmth.

At the end of the war, using Italian POWs to dig the trenches, water was laid-on to all the cottages in the village and a tap replaced the hand pump in the kitchen. Some cottages, including number 10, had until then still relied on a well for their water. The other houses in the village had flush toilets and baths installed and a small annexe to the club was built, providing a ladies' cloakroom with flush toilet and a hand basin with cold tap. Men's toilet facilities were installed in the passage between the furnace and the coke store. However, this improvement didn't extend to the club living quarters until 1963.

Sgt Graham Fisher

December 2019/January 2020

This year in the run of wartime anniversaries we have commemorated 75 years since both the D-Day landings in June and the somewhat less successful expedition to Arnhem in September. In this season of Remembrance before we close this year prior to celebrating the 75th anniversaries of VE Day and VJ Day in 2020 it is fitting that we also recognise the 75th anniversary of the death of the only man named on our war memorial from the Second World War.

Frederick Graham Fisher was born (according to the 1939 Register) on 22nd November 1923, although the birth was not officially registered until early 1924. He was the son of Frederick Charles and Margaret Kathleen Fisher. In 1908 Frederick Charles (then living at number 16 in The Street with his parents) had been one of the first volunteers to join the newly created Territorial Force and was apparently a good shot. With the other Territorials he was embodied in August 1914 and served throughout the War, being promoted to Corporal and wounded.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Graham, his parents and brother John lived at No 20, The Street, just four doors down from where his grandparents were still living. Graham attended the village school and appears in the centre of the back row in a school photograph (right) from 1933. In 1935 he won a scholarship for a special free place at Newbury Grammar School and was still at the school when war was declared.



After leaving school he enlisted in the RAFVR and volunteered for aircrew duties – all aircrew were volunteers – on bomber aircraft. As a grammar-school boy he qualified for one of the three roles in the aircraft that were usually confined to those with such an education, presumably because of the science and mathematics involved. These were pilot, navigator and bomb aimer and he became a bomb aimer. The specialist training took two years after the completion of initial training and was usually conducted in Canada or South Africa.

On completion of this training he was sent to No 1 Lancaster Finishing School at RAF Hemswell in Lincolnshire where he joined the rest of his crew. “Crewing-up”

was a somewhat haphazard business: all the newly trained aircrew, most of whom had never met before, gathered in one big room and sorted themselves out into crews consisting of pilot, navigator, flight engineer, wireless operator, bomb aimer, mid-upper gunner and tail gunner. Not at all in line with modern diversity directives but a highly effective method of building a team nevertheless. On 18th November 1944 he and his new crew-mates were posted into 103 Squadron RAFVR at Elsham Wolds in north Lincolnshire.

They flew their first operational sortie to Karlsruhe on 4th December 1944 and two nights later on Wednesday 6th December their Avro Lancaster NG276 (code PM-E), delivered brand new in early November and on only its seventh operation, was one of 10 from 103 Sqn that took part in an attack on the I G Farben synthetic oil plant near Leipzig in eastern Germany - the most heavily defended target in Europe. It was exactly two weeks since Graham's 21st birthday.

The squadron took off at 1645 in poor weather and one aircraft was forced to return early with unserviceable navigation aids. The remainder followed a long and indirect route that involved a huge loop to the south to avoid the heavily-defended industrial heartland of the Ruhr Valley. From Lincolnshire they flew south, passing over Reading on the way to cross the Channel between Newhaven and the French coast at Etaples. After their loop round the Ruhr they headed north-east to Goslar then back to the south-east, beginning the final approach to the target some four hours after take-off. The target was completely obscured by cloud up to around 6000 feet but the H2S radar enabled the aircraft to drop their bombs from a height of between 17,000 and 20,000 feet.

It was on the final run in, with Sgt Fisher effectively controlling the aircraft, that NG276 received a direct hit from anti-aircraft fire and, with its bomb load still on board, exploded in mid-air over the town of Merseberg, about two or three miles short of the target. The other eight aircraft from the squadron all dropped their bombs and arrived home safely between midnight and one o'clock.

What's in a Name?

February/March 2020

The origin of place names makes for a fascinating study that is often complicated by changes in received spelling and pronunciation over the years, resulting in many a red herring like “Inglefield”. The blame for this we might lay at the door of educated middle-class people unfamiliar with the local traditions and dialect, particularly in the 19th century, who thought they were merely correcting the defective pronunciation and spelling of the yokels. In early days the peasants didn't go in much for writing things down, so names, and everything else, were passed on by word of mouth in the locally-distinctive dialect and accent and when their educated betters came to write things down that education told against them and led them to make all sorts of unjustified assumptions. The peasant poet John Clare (1793-1864) even though he did manage to get his poems published, nevertheless suffered from editors who “corrected” his idiosyncratic spelling. The Ordnance Survey map makers and census enumerators also helped the “educated” versions gain official recognition.

“Mayridge” (and sometimes “May Ridge” these days) was certainly being written that way by the Rector in the parish magazines of the 1890s although the Ordnance Survey map of 1883 still has the original form “Mare Ridge” (and “Mareridge” for the farm). Mary Sharp in her 1892 history of the parish of Ufton says this area of high ground *“bore in the early days the name of Marrugge or Marrige”* and suggests that it may come from a local word “mere-ridge” still then used locally to describe the low turf banks that used to divide the different portions of the common meadows – the farm is named as “Mearidge” in the tithe survey of 1844. The 1900 edition of the OS map, however, has “May Ridge” (and “Mayridge” for the farm) despite the fact that the local pronunciation “Merridge” was common in the 1960s, and still hasn't completely died out.

The name of Mareridge for the farm in any case dates only from the 19th century, for the original farm here was called Sulhamstead Farm and was apparently enclosed from part of the Sulhamstead common field in the late 17th or early 18th century, certainly before 1762. So names do change anyway, even without the “corrective” efforts of those who know better, particularly when landowners or other circumstances change.

Nearby Wigmore Lane is an example. It was previously called Garrett's Lane and led to the Fishery situated within an area of osier beds known as “Garrett's”. The change from Garrett's to Wigmore for the lane may be attributed to the fact that

sometime in the 1880s James Wigmore, a local builder, built himself a house called Bath Cottage in Garrett's Lane (still so called in 1891) at the end nearest the Fishery and founded the eponymous company that had its yard there until relatively recently. House and yard are still there, actually, though both now derelict.

This name change probably had a knock-on effect, for the small wood not far away became known as "Bushy Wigmore". This, at the junction of the road from Parker's Corner with the A340 Pangbourne Road, was originally "Widemoor Wood", as on the OS map of 1883, but was sometimes given as "Widmoor Wood". From this it was but a short journey to "Wigmore Wood" on the map of 1913 and this is probably another example of somebody knowing better and erroneously associating the name of this wood with the nearby road because of the proximity and the almost identical spelling and pronunciation.

"Wimbleton's" at least is an example of the original name still in use, or rather returned to use having been given as "Wimbledon" in the past. The translation from Wimbleton to Wimbledon probably followed the same process that affected the London suburb where the tennis is played and, until they were moved to Bisley in 1890, the rifle matches (Wombling activities suspended for the duration, presumably) used to take place. Newspaper reports of the rifle meetings in the 1860s have the venue as "Wimbleton Common". A Mr Wimbleton owned land in the Englefield common field towards the end of the 17th century and there exist leases of Wimbletons (sic) dating back to 1670, though the name seems to have been changed to Park Farm by 1737. "Wimbledon" seems to have been the common spelling throughout the 19th century but the census of 1911 has "Wimbleton" and the OS map of 1913 "Wimbletons".

Parker's Corner has suffered no such liberties with spelling or pronunciation, but it has changed its location, albeit only by a couple of hundred yards. The original corner was probably not the junction of Bostock Lane and Common Hill where we now place it but further up the hill where there was a sharp double bend, now straightened but marked by the edge of the small copse. The name "Parker's" is often supposed to derive from the occupation of park keeper and has been associated with the house of one who looked after the deer park. That is unlikely in this case because there was a Parker's Farm with land in the vicinity in 1771 and Thomas Parker was listed as an inhabitant of the parish in 1695 long before the new deer park south of Englefield House was created after about 1802. In the mid to late 19th century there was a farmhouse listed here, unfortunately not named but tenanted from at least 1856 until his death in 1875 by Abraham Parsons, a farmer of between 30 and 40 acres.

The Second World War

April/May 2020

We have one more war-related anniversary to mark officially: the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day on 8th May. It looks as though the corresponding VJ-Day will play its usual bridesmaid role and the Forgotten Army, who on 8th May 1945 still had three more months of war to endure, will be forgotten again (although in the current situation 15th August might be a better time for the focus of public commemoration). Both Regular battalions of our county regiment served in India throughout the war against Japan and the 1st Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment lost over 300 men between April and June 1944 in the defence of the Kohima ridge that ended Japanese ambitions in the direction of India.

The words on the memorial to the 2nd British Division at Kohima nowadays close our act of remembrance:

*“When you go home, tell them of us and say
for your tomorrow, we gave our today.”*

VE and VJ-Day are important anniversaries, but 2020 will also be the 80th anniversary of the one year that more than any other proved crucial to enabling them to come about. The year when Britain stood fast, and alone; when Hitler knew “...*he must defeat us in these islands or lose the war*” and the US Ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, told his government that the RAF would be obliterated by the Luftwaffe and British surrender was inevitable. Had that been so, as some in parliament and in the country then wanted, there could have been no D-Day and no VE-Day.

Like its predecessor, the Second World War was seen coming from a long way off. Preparations for air raids started in 1937 with the introduction of the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) system. In Englefield Mr Cook, caretaker at the Club and Sub-postmaster, became the Chief ARP Warden with, as his assistants, the schoolmaster Mr Turnbull, the Head Gardener Mr Bath, and Mr Briant and Mr Bushell. The Warden's Post was at the Post Office, one of the few places in the village at that time with a telephone. In 1939, before war was declared, anti-gas respirators were issued to everyone in anticipation of the coming aerial bombardment and the use of poison gas by the Germans. The Air Raid Wardens were responsible for issuing the masks and Mr Cook's record of the issues, duly signed by the recipients, still exists. Well, he was an ex-Quartermaster Sergeant.

Lessons had been learned from the previous war when there had been a critical shortage of civilian labour in some areas in 1914/15 owing the great numbers of

men who volunteered to fight. The reserved occupations list was published in 1939 and contained a very large number of occupations, covering some five million men, that were considered vital to the war effort in their civilian jobs. Many of the men in Englefield were listed in reserved occupations but when in 1940 the call did go out for volunteers to form the Local Defence Volunteers (later the Home Guard), some 28 men (including some veterans of the earlier war) came forward and, with men from Theale, formed a company of the 4th (Pangbourne) Battalion. Unlike Captain Mainwaring, James Strang was properly commissioned as an officer in the Home Guard in February 1941. James Cook (aged 17, the son of the Club caretaker) and his great pal Harry Day (son of the blacksmith from Mayridge Farm) had pre-empted the situation by joining the Royal Engineers Territorial Army in 1938 and were mobilised in 1939. Victor Smith enlisted, also in the Royal Engineers, in 1940 as did Frank Lamperd, later awarded the Commander-in-Chief's Certificate for Good Service by Field Marshal Montgomery. Victor Smith's brother Jack, after initially signing-on with the Home Guard, joined the RAF just before Christmas that year. Vic Briant is also known to have re-enlisted in the RAF, having already served in the last months of the First World War

It is somewhat disturbing to speculate on what part Englefield might have played had the Royal Air Force, contrary to the opinion of US Ambassador Kennedy, not successfully resisted the Luftwaffe through the summer of 1940. At that time, although far inland from any seaborne invasion, Englefield found itself at a focal point in the land defences of the country. In June 1940 there began the hurried construction of a series of "stop lines": defensive lines dividing the country into compartments and intended to fix an invader long enough to allow a counter-attack to be concentrated on him.

The most important of these lines was the General Headquarters line (GHQ line), in fact a network of defensive lines, protecting London. GHQ Line Blue followed the Kennet and Avon Canal from Theale to Bradford on Avon (artillery on May Ridge would have had an excellent field of fire over part of Line Blue) and GHQ Line Red ran from Theale through the Sulham Valley to Pangbourne and then along the river Thames to Abingdon and beyond. The area of the intersection of the two lines formed a vital "hinge" to be forced open to allow an assault on London and would have been a particularly important target for an invader. Hurried the construction may have been, but the concrete "pill boxes" that still mark these lines were extremely robust. Apparently, the authorities did try to remove them after the war but they proved impervious to all but the highest of high explosive so they were left in place.

There was a searchlight battery and locator station near Milehouse Farm and heavy anti-aircraft guns at Amner's Farm and Norcot in Tilehurst. At Moor Copse near

Hogmoor Bridge was a “Starfish” decoy site where trays of fuel could be set alight to mimic a burning town in the hope that bombers would drop their bombs on the fires rather than the correct target. The Woolwich Arsenal was evacuated to the newly-built tobacco factory at Theale, a factor that led to more than one second generation marriage in the village years later.

As it was, the only “kinetic” (as we now call it) activity to affect Englefield seems to have been two sticks of bombs dropped, probably dumped from aircraft returning home having been unable to find their targets. The first of these was at five minutes past one on the night of 1st October 1940 when two bombs landed on the top of May Ridge 600 yards from the farm and the other was on the night of 21-22 October that year when what was reported as 11 high explosive bombs (probably “only” 10) were dropped in a line across the field behind Bournefield Farm. From neither of these did any damage or casualty result, though in the second case it must have been a close-run thing since Bradfield Lodges were effectively “bracketed”, with bombs in Bennet’s Copse on the opposite side of the road and two more falling in the Deer Park just behind the houses.

In the summer of 1940, Mr and Mrs Benyon again opened Englefield House as a Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital and voluntary helpers were called for. Several girls from the village volunteered as general duties members of the Red Cross. People in local towns and villages were also engaged in making supplies of clothing and bandages for the Bradfield Rural centre of the County Hospital Supply Dept, run by Miss Benyon.



The view from Common Hill across the flat “killing zone” towards
GHQ Line Blue along the Kennet and Avon Canal

The Churchyard Cross

June/July 2020



In this time of tribulation [the COVID-19 pandemic] our attention is drawn to the cross in the churchyard, prominent to the left of the doorway. Many churchyards have crosses, often war memorials, but this one was erected in 1894 to *“commemorate the outbreak of illness last year ... to commemorate the memory of some called to rest, as well as our thankfulness to God for many merciful recoveries and spared lives”*.

The illness was measles, followed by scarlet fever, which broke out amongst the village children in October 1893, ironically coinciding with a series of six lectures on “sick nursing” arranged by Mrs Benyon. The final lecture was on children’s diseases, including measles, and the number of people attending was reduced from the usual 50 to about 30 owing to the start of the epidemic.

With 36 children absent and four others evidently sickening, the school was closed on 12th October, initially for 10 days in the hope that this would prevent any further spread of the disease. However, when the children returned on October 23rd it was found that seven fresh cases had occurred during the two previous days so the closure was extended until October 26th, at which point the school was closed by order of the sanitary authority. The school remained closed for a total of three months and did not reopen until the start of the new term on 3rd January.

Four of the schoolchildren died from the disease: Margaret and William Eyles from number 3 in the Street and Jesse and Cecil Povey from Malthouse Farm. James Winchcomb* from the Lodge Gates, father of Bertha and gardener to the Hon Lodovick Bligh MFH who was at that time renting the Rectory, also died, said by his daughter to be from the same cause. The Rector, a bachelor, was residing at the recently built “Parsonage” (number 8/9 in the Street).

The inscription on the cross also mentions an earlier outbreak of disease in 1890. This was influenza, which ran through the village in the winter of that year. Although no deaths are known to have been attributed to the disease many were laid low by it, including Mr and Mrs Benyon.

The cross was designed by Edward Swinfen Harris FRIBA, a distinguished architect from Stony Stratford and the cost was met from special collections taken at both services in church on Sunday 4th March 1894. These raised a total of £131-10-2½ (nearly £11,000 today and in 1890 representing over a year's wage for a skilled worker according to the National Archives). Early in 1893 Mr Harris had decorated the interior walls of the church and designed a new super-frontal for the altar. In 1896 he added a new vestry to St Mary's, Mortimer for Mr Benyon. The great majority of Harris's work was in north Buckinghamshire and it may be that the commissions at Englefield came because he was personally known to the Rector, the Rev Arthur Heigham, who had previously had the living at Newport Pagnell.

After paying £110 for the cross and £16-14-2 to Mr Harris for the design, the balance of £4-16-1 was handed to Mr Benyon who used it in part payment for a new oak gate (also designed by Mr Harris) for the west entrance to the churchyard; the remaining cost he met himself. This gate has since been replaced by another new one.

The lych gate was also designed by Harris and paid for by Mr Benyon. Both cross and lych gate were dedicated at morning service on Sunday 4th November 1894.

As further evidence that the present (at time of writing) school closures are by no means unprecedented, Englefield school was also closed twice in the winter of 1917/18: between 19th November and 10th December 1917 and 30th January to 4th March 1918, owing to epidemics of chicken pox, measles and whooping cough. There is, however, no apparent evidence that the famous Spanish 'flu pandemic later in 1918 affected Englefield, other than the death of Tom Nash in France four days before the Armistice. He had been home on leave to marry Daisy Hazell in September.

* More evidence of "editorial gentrification" (Feb/Mar Parish News): the name is often given an unwarranted final "e", including on Bertha Winchcomb's headstone. All the official birth, marriage and death records show it as it is here; as does the 1911 census return, the first to be completed by the head of household personally rather than by a district census enumerator. Bertha Winchcomb's mother was née Horne, another local name that seems to get a final "e", or not, on an apparently random basis, including in two separate records of the same event: the marriage of Mary Horn(e) to William Edwards at St Mark's in 1665, one with an "e" and one without.

Englefield People

Originally published as two pieces in August and October 2020

Englefield people, as elsewhere, were always a mixture. Some like William Cox, Egbert Allen and William Horne, were born, married, lived their whole lives, died and are buried there; many of them with ancestors in the village at least back to the beginning of parish records in the 16th century and probably beyond. Others came on marriage or for work; some stayed and some moved on again. Some of those born in the village moved away too, but for a long time Englefield seemed largely to hold on to its own.

In the census of 1851, the fourteenth year of Victoria's reign, of the 73 households recorded in Englefield, 32 had a head of household who had been born in the village. In five of those 32 households both husband and wife had been born in Englefield and in a further seven households, although the (male) head had not been born in Englefield his wife had been. There were five separate Horn households, four Coxes and five Allens. Of the total population of 359, just under a quarter had one of those three surnames - and the three families were also interrelated by marriage.

The professionals, like the Agent, the farm bailiffs, Clerks of the Works at the Timber Yard and the clergy usually did move around over a wide area. In the last quarter of the 19th century William Rhind who was Clerk of Works at Englefield was from Scotland; his successor, George Roake, from London; Jenkin Davies, tenant at Wickcroft Farm came from Wales; Richard Todd, the Agent, was from Yorkshire as was his predecessor John Turner; Thomas Hand, bailiff at Chalkpit Farm, was from Warwickshire and the Rev Charles Travers from Ireland. Some served in their offices for a time and then moved on in the course of their careers, but some stayed for many years and ended their days in the churchyard, as did George Roake and Jenkin Davies. Charles Travers did too, though after only four years in the village, succumbing to pleurisy said to have been initiated when, after returning home from Reading with his clothes soaked by a storm on the way, he immediately went out again without changing to visit some sick parishioners.

Some of the workers did move around too. Oliver Hopley, a joiner at the Yard, was another one of those who came and stayed. Born in Cholmondley in Cheshire in 1871 he came to Englefield when in his twenties and remained until his death at the age of 89 in 1960, playing a full part in the church choir, cricket and football teams, fire brigade and the Club Committee. Agricultural workers were particularly prone to moving jobs regularly at Michaelmas: Emily Horne married William Percy

Smith in 1907 and over the next seven years they had four children, each born in a different place - and a fifth after the War in yet another place.

There was a general propensity in country villages for people to marry the first eligible person of the opposite sex that they met when they left the house in the morning so that village society came to be every bit as much a network of families related by marriage as did the aristocracy. Perhaps Englefield maintained the practice for longer than many places. Caroline Horne and Charles Cox were both born in Englefield and living close to each other at Malpas in North Street when they married in 1848. Esther Horne lived at number 10 and married Frederick Vince from just across the road at number 7 in 1903, again both were born in Englefield. Frederick's mother was also born in Englefield as was Esther's father. Frederick's sister Mary (Kitty) later married Arthur Dance also from the village (though born at Hurst) and Esther's sister Ethel married George Parsons from 51 Parker's Corner.

Throughout Victoria's reign and after, mobility increased dramatically for a number of reasons, one certainly being the possibilities opened up by new industries. Soon after their marriage Frederick and Esther Vince moved away to East Anglia with his job on the railway, an option not open to Charles Cox in 1848, although he did move with the times, becoming an agricultural engine driver at Little Heath in the 1870s. In the census of 1901, the first year of the 20th century and the first of the Edwardian era, only 13 of the 67 houses in Englefield had a head of household born in the village. In only two of those cases were both man and wife born in Englefield, and only two male heads not born in Englefield had a wife who had been.

Englefield tended to keep itself, and its people, to itself for perhaps much longer than many places and people from outside were still a noticeable rarity even into the middle of the 20th century. Nevertheless, the origin of its population changed a good deal during the time of Queen Victoria. In addition to the general increase in mobility at that time Englefield had one particular factor: even in 1851 the Englefield estate covered a greater area than just the immediate surrounds of the village. There was therefore more interaction between these surrounding parishes for work or social reasons than might otherwise have been the case and many a marriage resulted. Of the 41 instances in the 1851 census where the birthplace of the head of household was not Englefield, in 23 of them it was in one of the immediately surrounding villages. By 1901 the estate took in at least parts of the parishes of Ufton, Sulhamstead, Burghfield, Mortimer, Theale, Bradfield and even further afield and although the number of households where either husband or wife had been born in Englefield had fallen considerably, the number of heads of household not born in the village but born in the associated villages nearby was

nearly the same as in 1851 at 20. These figures may be skewed somewhat by the tendency of women to return to their mother's home as the birth of a child drew near, as witness the number of children shown as born in the same (neighbouring) village as their mother although she and her husband were resident in Englefield at the time.

Sometimes, too, there was no house available in the village for workers at the Yard, the Gardens or on one of the Englefield farms when they married and they were forced to commute from an estate property elsewhere until a house nearer their work became available, leading to at least some of the next generation being born outside Englefield but then becoming very much part of the village later. Alfred Lamperd, living with his parents at Wimbleton's before his marriage in 1908, lived afterwards in Church Terrace at Theale until 33 North Street became available. "Jim" Smith lived at number 10 with his mother until he married Renée Cook in 1951 when the only house vacant was 60 Mayridge Farm Cottages (at least still on the main estate) although he worked at Chalkpit. They were later able to move into 31 North Street.

Perhaps the main thing that created movement of people in the 19th century, in Englefield as elsewhere, was the practice of sending young men and women to be domestic servants in households distant from their home village. Of the 18 servants living-in at Englefield House in 1901, three were born in other parts of Berkshire with the remainder coming from a wide variety of places across the country: from Scotland to Devon; Westmorland to Norfolk. To this must be added some of the more senior servants who were married and lived-out: butlers Edgar Worth (born in Sussex) at number 5 in 1901 and Donald Large (born Norfolk) at Wimbleton's Cottages in 1939, for example. Similarly, chauffeurs, coachmen and grooms, married or not, generally lived over the Stables, as did Percy Garton in 1939 and Frederick Reid in 1901.

In 1851 two maids had Englefield House to themselves on census night, the family being at their London house, 34 Grosvenor Square, with 19 servants, including coachman James Smales from Cumberland. His wife, Mary Ann Smales also from Cumberland, was at number 4 in The Street. Most of the servants no doubt had travelled from Englefield but their places of birth, showed the same spread as in 1901. The only example found of a living-in servant born in Englefield was in 1881 when Caroline Cox was a stillroom maid at 17 Grosvenor Square, to which Richard Benyon had moved from number 34 in 1869.

Given the propensity of country people for next-door marriages, the presence of servants in the village community usefully stirred up the gene pool by "out-

crosses”, both between servants or their children and villagers and between servants in the same or associated households. May Winchcomb (granddaughter of Thomas Horn and Matilda May, itself representing the union of two long-time Englefield families) married Shropshire groom Ted Van Veen (whose father was Dutch); Arthur Claydon, son of James and Clara Claydon at the Club, married Mabel Reid, daughter of Mr Benyon’s coachman Frederick Reid and wife Hannah, from Blackheath and Scotland respectively. Annie Claydon, Arthur’s sister, didn’t go far for service herself, being cook to the Rector, the Reverend Granville Gore Skipwith, but she married William Milne (originally from Kent) who was chauffeur to the Rector’s father-in-law George Tyser at Oakfield near Mortimer and after the First World War (during which William was twice awarded the MM) they lived in the village until he died in 1938. Emily Horne, from number 10 in The Street, was in service at Henley when she married William Percy Smith from Remenham and after the years of moving around with him came back to Englefield to be with her widowed mother in 1915 when he enlisted. After William Percy came home in 1919 she moved around with him for another six years, until he died in 1925 and she finally settled back in number 10 until her death in 1981. Renée Cook, whose father William took over the Club from James Claydon, was a children’s nanny at a nursery in Newbury during Second World War and in 1942 married John Hayward, originally from Corsham but then a chauffeur at Speen. Sadly, the marriage lasted but six months before he was killed in the Mediterranean and Renée later reverted to type by marrying her sister’s husband’s brother from six doors down The Street.

Despite all the changes during and since the War, a few descendants of the old families cling on, if not exactly in Englefield then not far away.

After The Englefields

December 2020/January 2021

Writing in 1949, John Betjeman described the village of Englefield as “*the last of its kind in the county and worth seeing as a compact, well-run example of benevolent private ownership*”. It had, he went on to say, “*the overwhelming and firmly established atmosphere of the great country house of Trollope’s novels, which continued into good King Edward’s reign*”. The Englefield that Betjeman described only really came into being from the middle of the 19th century (at exactly the same time as Trollope’s Barsetshire) and had changed very little since 1892, when the last new houses had been built at Wimbleton’s and an old pair that stood opposite the entrance to the Yard were demolished. Bread was even still delivered by a horse-drawn van by Percy Gundry and there were only about three or four cars in the village.

Englefield was relatively late to the Tudor fashion of new country house building, with Englefield House dated by Pevsner to the last decade of the 16th century. This was, no doubt, due to the prolonged period during Elizabeth’s reign when there was no settled tenure of the main estate. This lasted from 1559, when Sir Francis Englefield decamped to France, until 1589 when it was leased to trustees for the Earl of Essex, though he was so busy with fighting the Spanish that it is unlikely he spent any time there. Even then the stability was short-lived, for from being the Queen’s favourite in 1589 it didn’t take Essex long to fall out with her, leading to his execution in 1601 and the return of the estate to the Crown until 1611.

During Elizabeth’s reign, as well as the main estate there were two separate, smaller ones. One of these was that retained by the Englefield family having been given to Sir Francis’s brother John by their father and consequently not seized by the Crown. The other was the one bought by Lord Norreys in 1597 for his son, Sir Henry. This was bought from Sir Thomas Sherley (about to be imprisoned for embezzlement of the funds he was sent while Treasurer at War in the Netherlands), though how he came by it is not known. The Norreys estate is believed to have included the old manor house of the Englefields, probably Cranemoor House situated on the edge of the lake near Parker’s Corner.

Two of these parts came together in 1611 when Thomas Erskine, Viscount Fenton bought the main estate, having already acquired the Norreys one from Sir Edward’s heir in 1608 after marrying his widow. Fenton, by then the Earl of Kelly, sold to his creditors in 1622 and they passed it on to Sir John Davis whose wife was Kelly’s step-daughter. When Sir John died in 1625 the manor was settled on his daughter Lucy who had married Ferdinando, Lord Hastings at Englefield in August 1623,

the record in the parish register giving the bride's father as "*Sir John Davis, lord of the manor of Englefield*". At the time Hastings was 17 and his bride just 10. This was, in fact, their second wedding, hurriedly arranged after Archbishop Abbott threatened all concerned in the first one a month earlier with excommunication because it was apparently conducted without licence or clergyman. The third part, that retained by the Englefields, was not amalgamated with the rest until 1792 when the seventh and last baronet, Sir Henry Englefield, sold it to Richard Benyon.

There were certainly other landowners in the parish during the 17th century, for in 1660 (described in the indenture of the sale as the twelfth year of the reign of King Charles II, so Cromwell was obviously officially "cancelled") Richard Horn, a merchant with a shop in the village, bought land there from James Watts. Robert Horn, a farmer from North Street and a churchwarden of St Mark's also bought land in Englefield and North Street in 1669 and 1677. Another significant landowner was the church, of course, in the shape of the glebe land that went with the appointment of Rector, and then there were the many villagers and others who owned numbers of individual strips in the common fields and some enclosed land.

Englefield Land Ownership in the 18th Century

February/March 2021

By the time of the Restoration, the main manor of Englefield was firmly established in the hands of John Paulet, 5th Marquess of Winchester, who had actually acquired it from Lucy Hastings in about 1635, although he was imprisoned after his failure to defend Basing House from the Parliamentarians in 1645 and didn't actually settle in Englefield until he was released some time in the 1650s. The Englefield family still retained their house and some land in the village but there were still many other freeholders of land in the common fields and other, enclosed, land. Near the end of the 17th century, in addition to the Rector's glebe lands some 28 different people owned strips in the common fields and several of these certainly owned enclosed land elsewhere about the village.

By 1762 the common fields consisted of the Great Field, the Punt (or Pont) Field and the Englefield Meadow. The Great Field covered roughly the area bounded now by Bostock Lodges, Mayridge Farm Cottages, Parker's Corner and Wickcroft Farm and the Punt Field was an extension of it across the Bath Road between Gravel Pit Cottages and Mile House Farm Cottages down to where the railway now is. The Englefield Meadow was a separate area south of Theale along the north bank of the Holybrook, much of which is now under water. There must, though, have originally been another Great Field somewhere because over the long term this type of cultivation demanded at least two such areas to allow proper crop rotation. It seems probable that this second field occupied at least some of the area between the modern village and the River Pang, where the mill was situated. It may well have been enclosed around 1690 to create Chalkpit Farm.

Among the freeholders of that time were the notable names of Wimbleton, Blyth and Parker. The significance of Wimbleton needs no explanation and Wimbleton's Farm is mentioned in 1712, although the family no longer seem to be around then and by 1762 when the farm was owned by James May, the miller from Burghfield Mill, it was called Park Farm. The name Blyth may be unfamiliar now but in the early 19th century Mr Blyth owned land and a house on the south side of Common Hill, which was then called Blyth's Hill. When in about 1802 Richard Benyon straightened the dog-legs on the road up the hill he inadvertently went through Mr Blyth's land. He wrote to apologise, giving in mitigation the fact that there was already a track there that the carters took in good weather. Blyth's Cottage stood where the small copse at the top of the strip of miscanthus now is. Parker is almost certainly he of the eponymous corner, which was actually one of the dog-legs straightened by Richard Benyon. Parker's Farm is mentioned in 1771 but in 1806

none of its land was at Parker's Corner, though there was an unnamed "farmhouse" there in 1861.

Other names of note from this time are Powel, Haines, Horn and Draper. In 1762 John Powel lived in Cranemoor House, probably the old manor house of the Englefields, and all these families (seemingly inter-related by marriage) remained important figures throughout the 18th century as fairly prosperous yeoman farmers who formed some sort of third rank in local society below the Squire and the Rector and are commemorated by some notable gravestones and tombs in the churchyard.

Enclosure is often presented as something foisted on the peasants by the aristocracy but that is not necessarily true, certainly not in this case. The smaller freeholders and tenants had already made an agreement in 1762, of which the Lord of the Manor, Powlett Wrighte, was not even a part, to suspend the individual strip system of farming, having *"found by experience that such situation...is very inconvenient"*, and allocated blocks of land to certain crops in rotation. They converted this to a permanent enclosure of the Great Field and Punt Field by further agreement amongst all those concerned in 1774. Although Powlett Wright gained the largest part, Mrs Powel had the next biggest allocation and Mrs Draper had some too. A sizeable block belonged to the Corporation of Reading, which explains the name of that triangular field alongside Bostock Lane between Parker's Corner and Mayridge Farm. A small part was retained by Sir Henry Englefield.

Although John Horn did not receive any land in the enclosed Great Field in compensation for that which he had formerly owned there, he did, more conveniently, gain additional land adjacent to his existing farm at North Street. The farm no doubt originated with the land bought by Robert Horn in 1669 and 1677, which he passed to John Horn in 1684 and by 1760 this farm occupied more or less all that land between North Street and Hogmoor bridge, including the wood that is still called Horn's Copse. There were also three houses: New House, situated on the old Tidmarsh Road between the present Chalkpit Cottages and the farm; Knapp's, a little further along the old road towards Hogmoor just about where the M4 crosses the A340; and Bunces, location unknown though this might be a mis-transcription of Dunces, one version of the name of the farmhouse that formerly occupied the site just across the A340 at the bottom of The Street. Somewhat less conveniently he also owned parcels of land near Wigmore Lane, on the now Brunel Road Industrial estate at Theale and at Kentwood Hill in Tilehurst.

Thus the situation stood at the opening of the 19th century.

The Creation of Modern Englefield

April/May 2021

As the 19th century dawned Richard Benyon, the third of that name in succession, inherited the Englefield estate and in 1802 sold Gidea Hall, bought by his grandfather on his return from India, becoming the first Benyon to make Englefield his primary residence.

The great majority of the open fields had been enclosed by agreement in 1774 and only the Englefield Meadow (at Theale) remained in common ownership at this time. In 1809 Richard Benyon sought to enclose this by Act of Parliament. The process was long drawn out and wasn't formally completed until 1829 although for all practical purposes it was settled long before that. The Enclosure Commissioners saw to it that all those with land in the Englefield Meadow received other land elsewhere in compensation and the meadow became the sole property of Richard Benyon. There were also other exchanges of land as part of the overall agreement, one example being the exchange of land and a house for use as a rectory (now the site of Rectory Cottage) for that just behind the church on which the old rectory stood. This was apparently completed, and the old rectory demolished, before 1822.

A second stage to the enclosure process, also documented in the 1829 Act, came when many of the people who had been given land in exchange for their holding in the Englefield Meadow then sold that newly acquired land back to Richard Benyon. Outside of the enclosure process some, like the May and Horn families, also sold their entire holding to Richard Benyon.

This time was also when the old village, spread along the road to Theale between St Mark's church and a point where the Old Rectory now is, was mostly demolished. This was rather later than most places for the same thing had happened at Nuneham Courtenay on the road to Oxford (immortalised in William Goldsmith's poem "The Deserted Village") some 50 years earlier. Powlett Wrighte may have had such an aspiration in the 1770s but he overspent on remodelling Englefield House and after he died the house had to be let by his uncle to Lady Clive in 1781 at a rent of 300 guineas a year to refill the coffers.

Unfortunately, there are no details for the census in Englefield in 1801 but the one in 1811 shows that in the parish there were 68 inhabited houses and 70 uninhabited ones. Ten years later there were 78 inhabited and four uninhabited. This period looks, therefore, very much like the turning point between the old and new villages,

although in 1822 fewer than 20 of those houses seem to have been along the new village street and about 12 of those were already there in 1762. There were, however, many houses scattered around the wider area that have now disappeared: at Parker's Corner, along Beenham Lane and Piper's Lane, and 18 around the Bourne bridge where only the two Bradfield Lodges now stand.

Although by 1844 most of the land had been acquired by Richard Benyon, the Tithe Map of that year shows there were still some 13 others owning land in the parish. The Englefield Meadow, Punt Field and most of the Great Field were owned by Richard Benyon but the Wickcroft Furlong (alongside what is now the private drive to Englefield House) was mostly Glebe land owned by the Rector, with some parts owned by George Appleton and Caroline Hopkins. George Appleton was a retired farmer from Sulhamstead who also owned a house at the eponymous corner (a last remnant, along with a house situated in the dip in front of the Old Rectory, of the old village) and Caroline Hopkins also owned (in modern terms) number 1 (then the Crown Inn), the land between it and number 10, the school field, the shop and the land on which St Mark's Close is built. The shop was let to Charles Webb and the rest to the Harriet Mildenhall, a widow (husband James, the Parish Clerk, died in 1843) who kept the Crown Inn. The Corporation of Reading, for John Hall's Charity, still had a fair amount of land between Parker's Corner and Mayridge Farm and John Welch also had some seven acres there, let to Charlotte May.

It was not until past the middle of the century under Richard Benyon's successor, yet another Richard, that complete ownership was finally achieved.

Chantry Farm

June/July 2021

Chantry Farm although no longer extant may be one of the oldest Englefield farms for deeds exist as far back as 1598 and, if the name is anything to go by, it may be much older than that. The farm was certainly still in existence in 1779 for a map drawn that year shows the location of the lands then belonging to it when it was in the occupation of William Toovey and Richard Carter.

The name of the farm suggests an origin several hundred earlier even than 1598 because a chantry was actually a fund to enable a private Mass to be celebrated regularly for the soul of one departed in order to speed it through the period of penance spent in purgatory until eventual redemption meant it could be released into paradise, a concept that originated in the 12th century but reached its height in the 13th. These Masses were celebrated at a “privileged altar” within a church by a priest specially employed for the purpose. There was certainly a chantry of St Mary in Englefield church before 1386 and the presence of the image bracket and squint at the east end of the aisle of St Mark’s suggest that one such privileged altar was located there. From the dating of the male effigy in the niche in the south wall it is thought to be of Sir Roger Englefield who died in about 1317 so he may have been the founder of the chantry. The chantry was dissolved in 1535/6 but another was formed in about 1543, only to be dissolved along with all other such provisions when the fiercely Protestant Edward VI came to the throne in 1547.

A common means of providing funds for a chantry was by allocating the rent from a particular piece of land and Chantry Field at Englefield is believed to have been a source of funds for the Chantry of St Mary in the parish church. There is a field of that name shown on the enclosure map of 1829 and it was certainly part of Chantry Farm in 1779, though it was then known as Long Close. It formed part of a block of land along with Home Close and an orchard (on which Elmfields now stands) totalling about nine or ten acres adjacent to the farmyard, which was on the site that later became the timber yard, perhaps using some of the original farm buildings.

The main block of arable land lay a little distance away from the yard, surrounded by other land and accessible only by means of a lane that linked it to the yard, this providing the origin of the name by which that lane is now known - Chantry Lane. Originally Chantry Lane went no further than this (to where the old bathing pool is) but in 1822 the plan for the new Pangbourne Road shows the track continuing on to join the road from Theale to Englefield at nearly the same point as the permissive

extension to the present footpath now does. Later, perhaps in 1862 when the Lodge Gates were built and the road closed to become a private drive, it was truncated to follow the line of the official footpath ending on the Pangbourne Road opposite Wickcroft Farm.

Some of this land was already enclosed before 1762 but some of it (35 acres from a total of 72 – much of the present polo fields) was land that had been allotted to Mrs Powel when the Great Field was enclosed in 1774. There were also seven acres in the Englefield Meadow, then still unenclosed. Another seven acres was let to a Mr Simmonds and this comprised an acre and a half of Daintylands at the junction of the Bradfield Road and Beenham Lane just to the north of Englefield House and a further 3½ acres further along on the south side of the Beenham Lane, including two cottages and gardens.

The farmhouse was Cranemore House (called Cranemoor Farm in 1762) with seven acres of adjacent land, situated on the edge of the lake near to Parker's Corner. Up to his death in 1755 John Powel lived there and he left it with some land in the Great Field to his widow Elizabeth. John and Elizabeth Powell had two daughters, Elizabeth and Alice. Elizabeth married William Toovey in 1754 and Alice married Richard Carter in 1756, so Carter and Toovey therefore inherited at least some of Chantry Farm from their mother-in-law. The executors of John Powel'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. In this will John Powell left £1,800 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. Whether he might have been trying to ensure or trying to prevent Alice's marriage to (her cousin?) Richard Carter, which took place a year later, a few months short of her 23rd birthday, is unknown.

In 1667-8 a portion of the original Chantry House lands had been purchased and allocated by deed of 20th February 1668 for use by the poor. The price was £48, part of a total of £100 belonging to the poor of the parish, and this is probably the *"Antient Gift of 100 pounds: 50 of it being in Land and the other 50 in Money: the Interest and income to Apprentice poor Children"* that is mentioned on the board in the church dating from 1731. By 1889 the funds for apprenticing were being provided in part by the rent paid by Mr Benyon for the use of the land in the Englefield Meadow.

Cranemore House was demolished early in the 19th century when Richard Benyon removed the old village and created the new deer park and lake. In 1844 some of the main block of arable land was owned by the Rector, some by Caroline Hopkins and George Appleton and some was part of Wickcroft Farm. The 35 acres in the former

Great Field were part of Chalkpit Farm. The other parts along the Beenham Lane were then mainly the woodland they are today but the two cottages remained, along with a small field, called “Simmond’s Piddle” (“piddle” is a corruption of “pightle” which means a small, odd-shaped piece of land left over when the surrounding fields were enclosed as rectangular shapes to facilitate mechanical cultivation). All was owned by Mr Benyon and the cottages were occupied by gamekeeper Thomas Farley and underkeeper William Cox. These cottages were pulled down in 1892 after the new house at Daintylands was built for the head keeper and the underkeeper was housed in a new building at Parker’s Corner.

The Agency

August/September 2021

The plan to site a new estate office within the timber yard will presumably mean the existing Agency building being repurposed nearly 150 years after it was first built. This will not be the first time it has been subject to change for the existing arrangement is a late 20th century one, by which time the demands of running a modern estate required a considerably enlarged staff, so the building ceased to be a home for the Agent and became solely an office building.

John Betjeman wrote in 1949 of “...a Georgian House (*probably for the Agent...*)” in Englefield village. The only house that seems to fit this description would be number 1, though we know that was the Crown Inn at least between 1841 and 1861. The first Agent, as such, seems to have been John Turner, a Yorkshireman appointed in the 1850s presumably to assist Richard Fellowes Benyon in carrying out his plans for the estate after he inherited in 1854 but a tombstone in the churchyard tells of Richard Crockford “*Steward for sixty five years of the estates of four successive proprietors of Englefield*”. It goes on to say that he “*discharged his duty with the strictest integrity and fidelity*”. He was born at Nuffield in about 1743 and died at Englefield in 1831. His wife Eleanor lies with him.

In 1861 Turner lived in what is now Mayridge Farmhouse, then newly built and originally intended, Miss Winchcomb said, as a dower house but never used for that purpose. The earlier farmhouse then still stood alongside it, where the farm buildings now are, and was still inhabited by farmer George King, although the census in April that year notes that his tenancy had expired at Michaelmas, some six months earlier. King had presumably only been at the farm for not more than four years, since the previous tenant, John Harris, had died (probably of a stroke) while driving his gig home from Reading market in January 1856. The farm at that time was called Mearidge Farm.

Turner was still at Mayridge as the Agent in 1871 when he had as a clerk Richard Todd, another Yorkshireman, who shared one of the new cottages nearby with Joseph Spearing (probably, the handwriting on the census return is unclear) the new farm bailiff. Todd married Mary Cook at Bradfield in 1875 and by 1877 had moved to Mapledurham as Agent. By April 1881 the new Agency had been built in the Englefield Road and John Turner moved there but Richard Todd was soon back, this time as Agent himself. In fact, he must have been back at Englefield before the end of 1881 for his son Leslie was born there in the last quarter of that year. Sadly within a few years Todd would be a widower, his wife having died in 1884, the death being registered in the same quarter as the birth of their youngest son, Charles.

By 1911 Richard Todd's eldest son Leslie was his Assistant Agent and he, his elder sister and youngest brother all lived at the Agency, catered for by a live-in cook and housemaid. Later in the year Leslie married Maud Rendell, daughter of Reading Solicitor John Walrond Rendell, and a son Richard Walrond Todd was baptised at St Mark's on 6th February 1914. Leslie, who had been Captain of Englefield cricket team for some years, died suddenly later that same year and was buried at St Mark's on 15th October. The repeated use of "Walrond" as a second Christian name indicates that there may well have been an ancestor in common with Mrs Benyon, whose maiden name was Walrond and whose father was born in Tiverton, where Maud's father was also born.

Richard Todd remained at the Agency until he retired in April 1915. He was presented with a gold cigarette case inscribed "*With best wishes for your health and happiness from the Works Department, Englefield estate*" and went to live in Kendrick Road, Reading but before the end of the year he died suddenly while at Folkstone visiting his youngest son. He was buried alongside his wife and son in the churchyard at Englefield on 11th November. His successor was Charles Carter, son of Colonel Carter the Agent at Lockinge. Captain Gilbert Paul, son of a former Rector of Bearwood and educated at Bradfield College, was the Agent from 1926 until his death in August 1938. He was buried at Leek Wooten, Warwickshire, where he formerly had lived but a memorial service was held in St Mark's at which over 200 people were present.

Captain Paul was succeeded by Henry Barber who served until 1960 when he retired to live in Silver Lane at Padworth. At a gathering of 50-60 employees of the estate in the Workmen's Club in the presence of Lady (Violet) Benyon he was presented, by the Assistant Agent Mr A E Fishleigh, with a pair of oak gates subscribed for by the employees. Mrs Barber was given a bouquet of flowers by Sally Plumb, whose father, Arthur, worked at the Agency, his cycle commute to and from number 9 in The Street always accompanied by merry whistling.

Colonel D A Campell then became the Agent. Unsurprisingly, Col Campell (described by the Evening Post in May 1970 as "burly") was a Scot but he had come to this area, coincidentally to Padworth, with his family in 1930 from South Wales. He commanded the Berkshire Yeomanry between 1952 and 1955 and before Englefield he was Agent to the Marquess of Salisbury at Hatfield. He was Chairman of Bradfield Rural District Council for two years from 1968 but declined a third term in 1970 owing to the amount of work involved in managing the effects of the M4 motorway then cutting its way across the estate. He was also for some time Chairman of the Forestry Safety Council and was appointed CBE in 1986 on that account. Col Campbell retired to Bucklebury in 1979 and was the last agent to live in the Agency, his successors being housed in Elmfields in The Street, formerly occupied by the Clerk of Works.

The Moving Schoolhouse

October/November 2021

The Moving Toyshop was a crime novel from 1946, written by Edmund Crispin (real name Bruce Montgomery), in which a toyshop mysteriously appears to move, for nefarious purposes, from one side of Oxford to the other and then back again in the course of one night. In Englefield, the schoolhouse also appears to have undergone a similar translocation somewhere between 1844 and 1851 only to be back in its original place by 1861, though not with any apparently malign intent.

Ecclesiastical records show that there was a parish school in Englefield from as early as 1540 until at least 1835 and in 1721 the Reverend Michael Kirby was schoolmaster. Nothing further is known of this but in 1762 the house and schoolroom identified in 1844 was the property of Thomas Horn, along with the land alongside as far as number 10, the land on the opposite side of The Street up to where St Mark's Close now is and "Horn's Pightle", now the site of the modern school building and the school field.

The 1841 census was the first to give any details that can tie named individuals to properties. However, it can be difficult to say exactly which people lived where for no address details are given. Fortunately, we also have the Tithe Survey of Englefield only three years later which provides not only a list of the names of the freeholders and occupiers of individual properties but also a map keyed to the list so we can identify exactly who lived where.

From the census we know that Elizabeth Giles, aged 70, was a schoolmistress and Robert aged 40, living in the same house and presumably her son – relationships were not recorded until 1851 – was a schoolmaster. The Tithe Survey confirms that Elizabeth Giles was the occupant at what is now numbers 11 and 12 in The Street, owned by Richard Benyon and described as "Schoolhouse and garden". At that time the schoolhouse was the central portion of the present building that is parallel to the road and the schoolroom was the part that extends from it at a right angle towards the road. This part was then only a single storey and the rear portion of the current house had not yet been built.

The mystery now begins. The 1851 census has more detail than in 1841 and although much in the way of address detail is still not usually given, it is possible to place at least some of the properties. Using those that can be so placed as a guide we can follow the census enumerator on his route around the village and interpolate the rest, assisted by the 1844 survey. In this way we can see that in

1851 the schoolhouse of 1844 is now listed as “one house void”. The tithe survey shows us that still remaining from the old village were three properties: George Appleton’s house at the eponymous corner, the Rectory of the time (situated about where Rectory Cottage is now) and a pair of cottages occupied by Daniel Harris and George Swadling in front of today’s Old Rectory.

In the 1851 census return we can follow the enumerator from Englefield House to Wimbleton’s Cottages (three of them then rather than the modern two) and then to George Appleton’s house. From there the order goes a little awry for next, in the “Englefield Road”, come Daniel Harris and George Swadling, then back to the Rectory, followed by another unsuspected pair of cottages, location unknown but also in Englefield Road, inhabited by tailor William Varndell and farm labourer Thomas Cox. After that comes the lodge that we know stood in the fork where Richard Benyon’s private coach road up to the front of Englefield House deviated from the public road just beyond the Harris/Swadling cottages and then comes the “Englefield School House”. The next entry after that is the Fishery Cottage at the far end of Garrett’s Lane (nowadays Wigmore Lane) and that is followed by Bostock Lodges and the houses at Parker’s Corner.

Leaving aside the Varndell/Cox mystery for now, and neither of them is listed anywhere local in the 1861 census though both pop up in Theale later in the century, there were no other known buildings in the parish in this area so we must assume from the sequencing that this new schoolhouse was somewhere between the lodge and the Bath Road. This gives us a fairly wide area for speculation, but a possible answer may be found in the dip that lies on the edge of the polo field 100 yards or so from the site of the lodge. When this field was cultivated in the 1950s the plough would turn up bricks in this hollow so although no map from any time ever shows a building there it may well have been the site of the short-lived school. The schoolmistress in 1851 was 21-year-old Henrietta Percy (or Povey, the handwriting is unclear), originally from Bermondsey, who appears to have lived there alone for the only other occupant on census night was a visitor, Sarah Gallop from Islington.

In 1861 the school is very clearly back in its old place in the sequence: the shop, number 10, school, the pair of cottages that stood opposite the entrance to the timber yard and Chantry Cottage. The schoolmistress is now spinster Emiline Vick, aged 35 from Cheltenham, living with her widowed mother, her sister (married to a bookseller of whom there is no trace) and two nieces. The mystery schoolhouse and the cottages of Varndell and Cox have disappeared again and there is only Appleton’s, the Rectory, Swadling and Harris, and the lodge, just as in 1844.

By the next census in 1871, as we know, the new school and schoolhouse had been built on a part of Loring's Meadow opposite the Gardens and the Schoolmaster was John Eastman from Middlesex, assisted by his wife Jane. They had a son and a daughter, aged 3 and 4 respectively and a 14-year-old live-in servant Sarah Weller. In the old schoolhouse was George Swadling, moved from his former home which had been demolished when the new Rectory (now the Old Rectory) was built just behind it, with a new wife Sarah, his former wife Elizabeth having died in 1862.

The Clerk of Works

December 2021/January 2022

As we have seen, a key appointment made by Richard Benyon when he came to his new estate was that of Agent but an equally vital post, perhaps even more so given the amount of building that was to take place, was that of Clerk of Works. A Clerk of Works today is one who is responsible for ensuring that all work on a construction site is carried out in accordance with the plans and to the correct specifications and all legal, safety and environmental standards but in those days he might also draw up the plans, removing the need for a separate architect.

The first Clerk seems to have been William Rhind, a Scotsman, who came to the estate in the early 1860s when he acted as Clerk of Works on the rebuilding of St Mary's church at Stratfield Mortimer. The old church, possibly the fourth on the site, was pulled down in 1866 at a cost of £55 2s 8d. The new one is said by Historic England to have been designed by Richard Armstrong, also from Scotland, who was the architect involved in making changes to Englefield House from 1855 and may even have acted as Clerk of Works for Gilbert Scott in the rebuilding of St Mark's church at the same time. He was also responsible for rebuilding St Peter's Church at Upton in 1862 and all three churches are of very similar style. However, the Berkshire Chronicle of 4th September 1869 in recording the completion of St Mary's church and the presentation of a testimonial to William Rhind says that "*the architectural designs of the church were entrusted to and successfully carried out by him*". It is also possible that the distinctive "H-plan" style of "Englefield Estate house" seen all around the wider area and built between about 1870 and 1892 was his work.

Rhind kept meticulous weekly records of the work at St Mary's, detailing all the expenditure and showing that over the three years it took to build the church, a total of more than 340 named individuals were employed in different trades, often with 40-45 at work at any one time. Rhind's accounts show that St Mary's cost Richard Benyon almost £10,000 in direct costs although the true cost was much more as some things like aggregate, bricks, scaffolding and cartage were supplied uncharged from the Estate's resources. The nearby presence of the Great Western Railway line and Mortimer station (then with a goods yard) was of huge benefit and stone and ironwork could be easily brought from across the country and even abroad.

Rhind lived in Mortimer while St Mary's was being built and his first three children (of 13 by 1891) were born there between 1867 and the first quarter of 1871, the third of them being named William Mortimer. By April 1871, however, the family had moved to Englefield for they appear there in the census that year. They were

the first to live in “Elmfields”, the new house built for the Clerk of Works between the village pound and the timber yard.

In 1881/2 William Rhind acted as Clerk of Works for Richard Armstrong’s son (also Richard) on the building of a completely new church, St John’s at Mortimer Common, needed to cope with the local population growth. The church was classified as a “Chapel of Ease” because it saved people the mile trip to St Mary’s, which remained as the parish church. In 1896 St John’s was enlarged to cope with an even larger congregation and a new vestry was added at St Mary’s. The architect for both was Swinfen Harris, who had already designed the churchyard cross and lych gate at Englefield in 1894.

William Rhind moved on in 1892 and by the end of November that year, working on his own account as W Rhind and Son, Builders, of 111 Fulham Road, London had completed the restoration of St Simon’s church in Bethnal Green.



Londoner George Roake (left) was certainly in post by February 1894 but it appears that a Mr Alfred Clarke filled the position between 1892 and 1894. In June 1894 when the fire brigade was formed George Roake became Chief Officer and in December was elected as a member of the first Englefield Civil Parish Council, created by Act of Parliament that year. He was also a Churchwarden and member of the Working Men’s Club committee where he was instrumental in the addition of the billiard room and the library in 1894. It was George Roake who in 1907 suggested using the old Norman font (found the previous year in a shed on the estate, where it had probably been since 1855) as the central pillar of a table and supervised the work involving the addition of a top and base of oak. The table was placed in the centre of the new choir vestry dedicated in October that year. Only two months later George Roake died and was buried in the churchyard on December 9th.

After the death of George Roake, Harry Stanley Davis, another Yorkshireman, was appointed as Clerk of Works in 1908. In 1911, the Clerk’s household, like the Agent’s, ran to two live-in servants one a “general servant” and the other a “nursemaid-domestic” to look after the couple’s four sons. Tragically the four were reduced to one by the end of 1915, four-year-old Edward dying at Englefield of meningitis in 1912 and George and Roland, aged ten and five, from diphtheria in Prestwich, Lancashire in October 1915, Harry Davis having moved to a new job here earlier that year.

Harry Davis was succeeded by John Bevan, who continued in the post until at least September 1937 but about whom little else is known. In 1921, 60-year-old John Bevan and his wife lived in Elmfields alone whereas 40-year old Charles Carter and his wife in the Agency now had four live-in servants.

Frederick Dry (servantless while Henry Barber the Agent still had one or possibly two) was Clerk of Works by July 1939 when he was congratulated by the King and Queen who particularly admired the fine exhibit, including a panelled fireplace, staged by the estate at the Centenary Show of the Royal Agricultural Society in Windsor Great Park. During the Second World War he was a member of the Englefield Home Guard. He was the last Clerks of Works, as such, for the estate and when he died in 1967 although his assistant, Mr Cork, stayed for a short while, the job has subsequently been carried out under contract and Elmfields became home to the Agent when the Agency was converted to an office building.

The Pangbourne Turnpike

February/March 2022

As the guns and beaters regrouped at the end of the drive in an unaccustomed spot, for it had been one of those surprise drives the Head Keeper likes to throw in for variety in at the beginning and end of the season, the thought occurred that we must be very close to the line of the old Pangbourne turnpike, one of the few old roads in Englefield that has left no visible trace on the ground, so a quick check of the surrounding landmarks was needed to confirm that we were indeed very close to where it ran.

An Act of 1714 established a turnpike from Castle Hill in Reading to the Puntfield, an extension of the Englefield common field on the south side of the Bath Road at Bostock and this was extended to Speenhamland in 1747. The powers of the trust were renewed in 1771 at which time the trust proposed a new turnpike from that road at Bostock to Pangbourne. The route of this turnpike was to be “... *through Englefield Common Field to or near a house in Englefield Street known by sign of The Daggers and thence along Englefield Street into the Highway leading out of Englefield Street through Tidmarsh by and through a place called Hog Moore...*”. The road then ran on to the Elephant and Castle Inn at Pangbourne.



The route from Bostock to Pangbourne at this time ran along Bostock Lane to Parker's Corner then across what would become the deer park in front of Englefield House to Appleton's Corner and down the modern village street as far as Elmfields, where it branched off across the fields to Hogmoor. Much of this route already existed, therefore, and the trust merely took over the maintenance of it in return for a toll, but a completely new length of road was required from the junction of Bostock Lane with the Bath Road across the Great Field. The main part of the village at that time lay around Appleton's Corner and along the Theale-Bradfield road between the church and today's Old Rectory (not built until 1870) with a few scattered houses along the road now known as The Street. The “*house...known by the sign of The Daggers*” was the Three Daggers Inn and its sign was the arms of the Marquis of Winchester as seen on the family ledger stones in the church.

Powlett Wrighte, a turnpike trustee who owned most of the land involved, gave his consent to the road and allowed the builders to take materials for the road from his

land without charge. He did however make two conditions. The first was that “...a highway leading out of the SW side of Englefield Street on NW side of a Blacksmith Shop and from thence to NW side of Cranmore Pond to a gate leading into common field shall be shut up”. This was the road that ran in front of Englefield House between Appleton’s Corner and Parker’s Corner, so he was able to remove the traffic from his view.



The second condition was that there should be no toll gate between the southern end of Bostock Lane and Chalkpit Farm and this meant that traffic was at least able to move from one side of the estate to the other without payment. The Act of 1771 duly authorised the erection of “One Toll-gate and One Toll-house between the south end of Bostock Lane and Pangborne” and this must have been the one that still stands in Tidmarsh, although there is no record of that before 1815 and the style of it is consistent with the early 19th century.

While Powlett Wrighte got the advantage of having the traffic removed from in front of Englefield House, the situation for the village was made slightly worse because that part of it that lay between the Old Rectory and Appleton’s Corner now got not only the Theale-Bradfield traffic but also the Pangbourne traffic as well. Powlett’s successor, Richard Benyon, sought to remove all the through traffic from the village so he created a new direct route from the Bath Road to Pangbourne – today’s A340 – to replace the turnpike. The new road was opened in 1825 and an order of February 1826 closed the turnpike between Bostock and Hogmoor and returned the land to Richard Benyon.

While the whole distance from Bostock to Hogmoor was shorter by the new road, that between the Bath Road and Englefield village was greater, as was the distance to the church for some parishioners. In particular, the distance to Tyle Mill at Sulhamstead, where inhabitants of Englefield had their corn ground, was increased for some and on 10th March 1826 John Welch and another man trespassed on the route of the old road and destroyed gates and fences, claiming that the trustees had no right to close the road on the grounds of the increased distance by the replacement road. The Berkshire Assizes found in favour of Richard Benyon against the trespassers and that was supported by the King’s Bench on appeal the following year. By 1829 the road was definitely closed by the building of Bostock Lodges, squarely across the line of the turnpike at the point where it had turned off the Bath Road.

The Parish Council

April/May 2022

The parish council is the lowest tier of local government in England, although there is actually no legal necessity for any parish to have a parish council. Perhaps this is why, as Bernard Wooley explains to new Prime Minister Jim Hacker in *Yes, Prime Minister*, there are things it *can* do and things it *should* do, but really very little that it *must* do. The list of “can-dos” is actually quite long and the main thing, as with all authorities, is to know the difference between making things better and just interfering for the sake of it.

The forerunner of the parish council, from about the time of the Reformation, was the Vestry Meeting, so called because at least nominally it took place in the vestry of the church. The minutes of a Vestry meeting in 1854 note that the meeting took place “*in the Vestry Room*” but later meetings merely say “*at the church*” until in 1887 the vestry is specified once more. This supports the idea that the western end of the aisle was originally partitioned as a vestry until the rebuilding and then when the tower was rebuilt in 1868 the vestry was accommodated there, as it is today. The meetings were chaired by the parish priest and all rate-payers were eligible to attend, although in later years at least few did. At the meeting on 28th March 1887, recorded as present were the Rev Heigham, Mr Benyon, Mr Rhind and Mr Shrimpton and the meeting was held “*...at the Vestry and by adjournment at Englefield House*”. As well as being responsible for the upkeep of the church and graveyard the Vestry also covered other civic functions such as care of the poor, maintenance of the roads and law enforcement.

Maintenance of the poor was one of the few legal duties of the Vestry from 1601 until 1834 when “Poor Law Unions” of parishes were formed and instead of the poor being looked after in their own homes by their own neighbours they were housed all together in a single workhouse which served the needs of several parishes. The Bradfield Union Workhouse was erected in 1835 and in 1841 it housed 150 people with a further 55 in a Poor-house at Tilehurst.

Civil, as distinct from ecclesiastical, parishes and civil Parish Councils were created by the Local Government Act of 1894 and they took over the secular duties from what then became the Parochial Church Council. The Englefield Vestry continued to discharge its secular duties up to the end and at a meeting on 25th January 1894 there was unanimous consent to an application by the Tilehurst, Pangbourne and District Water Company Ltd for a Provisional Order to construct and maintain waterworks and supply water in part of the parish of Englefield. The company

also undertook to apply for a further Order to supply the whole parish with water within 21 years. There was no Lady Day Vestry that year because Easter Day was also on March 25th but at a meeting the next day only the usual church business was dealt with.

In Englefield the composition of the first parish council was arrived at by arrangement without a poll. In advance of the official nomination date a special parish meeting was held on Wednesday 28th November 1894 to consider the question of candidates and after the names of Mr Benyon and George Roake (the new Clerk of Works) had been approved it was suggested that the necessary number of five councillors should be made up by a representative from each of the three large centres of labour in the village: the gardens, the timber yard and Chalkpit Farm. Accordingly, Daniel Harris (timber yard), Thomas Dixon (gardens) and Henry Horne (Chalkpit Farm) were nominated. At the official nomination meeting held on Tuesday 4th December 1894 with the Rector in the chair and 27 of the 54 parochial electors present no other nominations were made and so these five were duly declared as the first parish councillors for the new civil parish of Englefield.

Come in Number 13

June/July 2022

To see rows of houses missing a number 13 is quite common and is usually down to triskaidekaphobia, the morbid fear of the number 13 and its supposed connection with bad luck. That's not the case with Englefield Street, though, for there was a 13 until it was pulled down in about 1892. Number 13 was one of a pair of cottages (with the original number 12) that stood opposite the Timber Yard entrance where there is now a shed, and both were certainly there on April 5th 1891, for the census return of that year numbers the houses in Englefield village for the first time and has them both, numbered as such, with the old schoolroom and schoolhouse, now two separate dwellings, numbered 11 and 11a, just up The Street and numbers 14 and 15 (then a fairly recent replacement for the old Chantry Cottage) further down, immediately before Elmfields, home of Clerk of Works William Rhind.

When the houses were first numbered is unclear, but it was certainly before 1881 for the census enumerator for Sulhamstead Bannister in that year has numbered two of the Mayridge Farm cottages as 61 and 62. The other two appear, un-numbered, in the Englefield census so there was clearly some confusion as to where the parish boundary ran as all four were actually in Sulhamstead Bannister at that time. Ten years later all four appear correctly under Sulhamstead and are numbered, as today, 59 to 61.

The new school opened in 1863 but in 1871, although there are no numbers given in that census, it is clear that the old school was still then a single dwelling occupied by gardener George Swadling, his wife Sarah and their two children, with William Horne (also a gardener) as a lodger. Ten years later in 1881, George and Sarah Swadling were still in part of it (and still with William Horne as a lodger) but the building had been divided and was shown as two properties for the first time, though one of them listed as unoccupied. The Ordnance Survey six inch to the mile map surveyed in 1877/78 shows the garden to be divided into two so it would appear that the numbering of the houses must have been carried out before then but probably only very shortly before because number 8/9 appears to have been built after the 1871 census but before the map was surveyed and without it the numbers in 1891 would not work out.

The upper floor was probably added to the schoolroom, therefore, between 1871 and 1877 and the house then divided in two to produce a classic "L-plan" Englefield house in the style of the new ones built during the early part of Richard Fellowes's time as Squire.

From the road, the later addition of this upper floor is clearly visible by the change in brickwork.

By the time of the 1891 census, William Horne had moved to lodge at the old number 12 with Edward Leavy, who looked after the steam engine in the Timber Yard, and his wife Hannah. Next door at 13, carpenter and joiner John Chamberlain also lodged with widow Martha Trinder, a garden labourer. In number 11 in that year was David Horne, a painter and decorator, with his third wife Mary and two children but 11a was shown as unoccupied.

Less than a month after the 1891 census date, the Rector noted in the parish magazine that *“David Horne has removed to No 11a and George Fisher will shortly be in the old ‘Mission Cottage’ which really is No 11”*. It was about this time that the new “wing” was added across the back of the property. In the 1901 census David and Mary Horne (now with six children) are listed in number 12 and Parish Nurse Jane Fair is in 11 with her daughter and niece. There is also a note that there is now no number 13, it having been demolished soon after the 1891 census along with the original number 12.

Not Cricket?

August/September 2022

Readers of a certain newspaper may have noticed a couple of months ago an item about the propriety of county, indeed international, standard players turning out to play for village teams. This is, of course, the stuff of comic fiction and even featured on TV in an episode of *Dad's Army* but it is certainly not new.

For three years in the 1890s the Englefield cricket team included L E Bligh (in full, Major The Honourable Lodovick Edward Bligh MFH) who had played for Kent between 1878 and 1884. At least it wasn't his cousin Ivo who not only played for Kent but also captained England in Australia in the winter of 1882/83 - the first ever Ashes series (England won, two matches to one in a three-match series).

Lodovick Bligh came with his wife and children to live at the Rectory in early 1891 when he became Master of the South Berks Hunt, the Rector having moved into "The Parsonage" (number 9, The Street). He doesn't appear to have played in that year but was captain of the side in 1892 and topped the batting averages. Bligh continued to play cricket for Englefield the next year and again captained the side and topped the batting averages, although at the AGM in October he declined to accept the bat awarded for that achievement and it went instead to Tom Harris who was runner-up. Ex-county player he may have been but at least he did have a bona-fide residence in the village, unlike some. In June that year after the side suffered a heavy defeat by Bradfield the Rector commented that "...when first-rate players are brought to play against a village team, the results are not very uncertain."

In March 1894 Bligh was appointed Master of the East Kent Foxhounds so relinquished his role as Master of the South Berks and left the village soon after.

1893 seems to have been a fractious year for sharp practice of a different sort was alleged in July when the Rector, writing from Bad Homburg where he was taking the waters, writes that "*The intelligence of some little difficulties connected more or less with the cricket club has reached Homburg...*". Reading between the lines it seems to have been a dispute over an umpiring decision. To prove further that nothing changes, the Rector comments on the team's hard luck in not winning a match against Bucklebury Fireside in June 1896 when "time" was called with Englefield needing 3 runs to win with 3 wickets in hand: "*one of the opposing team going on to bowl about a quarter of an hour from 'time' robbed our team of a certain victory by wilfully wasting time*".

The first recorded participation in a cricket match by a team from Englefield was in August 1858 when they played against a team from Aldermaston Wharf in a

meadow near the Three Kings, Jack's Booth (presumably the present cricket ground) and lost by the heavy margin of an innings and 72 runs. The first recorded match by an Englefield Cricket Club as such was on 8th June 1864 against Bradfield when the Reading Mercury commented "*The game of cricket was somewhat of a novelty to many of the Englefield players, yet they proved too strong for their experienced opponents.*".

In the 1914 season the coming war seems to have affected people all round for after a "*very pleasant game*" against Bucklebury Fireside on May 9th (Englefield won) there was a "*little unpleasantness*" at the end of the next match, against Mortimer (a tie), although it was "*amicably overcome*". Things got worse, however, for the next match, against Basildon, was played in very bad weather with the Englefield team waiting nearly an hour at the ground before the home side turned up. The Rev Phillips, playing for Basildon, told the Englefield captain that "*Englefield were no sportsmen; and after being bowled by Vince, he walked off the field without even saying good-day*".

Pleasant matches followed against Sulhamstead, Aldermaston, Bucklebury Fireside and Mortimer although there was a little home-grown tension when Englefield were sorry to lose the match against Mortimer "*...especially as one who wished to be put in early did not score, although the night before he was good enough for 75*". The penultimate completed match of peacetime on August 1st (one against Whitchurch the following day had to be abandoned because of rain) was against Mr Tyser's team at Oakfield near Mortimer and was a "*very pleasant*" one, although the match report hints at a little friction at the end when Englefield captain Mr H A Benyon "*...did his very best to hurry up the Oakfield team as it only wanted one minute to the time for drawing stumps, the Oakfield team not recognising any allowance for the twenty minutes our team was out in the field in the wet.*".

The First World War in Englefield was bookended by cricket matches. The one on the literal eve of the War, August Bank Holiday 1914, with several of the players no doubt already under notice for mobilisation, was very much a family affair being the annual fixture between a side from the House and Gardens and one from the Timber Yard but the next match to be played, on Whit Monday 1919, was a very different matter. This was against the "old enemy" Theale and the result was expected to be a foregone conclusion, Theale having scoured the area to put together a seemingly invincible team. Nevertheless, Englefield won when the Theale side (with 5 wickets in hand) was still 16 runs short of the required total of 143 when the time came for stumps to be drawn.

An Historical Coincidence

October/November 2022

On 11th September to St Mark's for a special service of Evening Prayer, the occasion an unhappy one.

We gathered in the aisle in front of the small altar that was made by the estate carpenters at a cost to Richard Fellowes Benyon of £18 in 1857. It was placed here in 1891 when the present altar was installed. This was an appropriate spot for our service given that it seems most likely that this was where the chantry chapel of St Mary was located. The Reverend Julia sat just about where the chantry priest would have stood in order to say Mass for the soul of the founder of the chantry while looking through the squint which would enable him to see the parish priest at the high altar and coordinate his actions with him.

When the chantry originated is not known, but it was certainly before 1386 for there is reference to it in a document from that year. That is over a hundred years after the aisle was built, of course, but we know that this chantry endured for another 150 years after that date before being dissolved, only to be replaced soon after by another. It is possible then that there was another even earlier chantry from the early 13th century that was dissolved and replaced about a hundred years later. The supposed date of building of the aisle does accord with the first formal definition from the Catholic Church, at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, on purgatory and the benefit of prayers in reducing the time spent by the soul in it. So the aisle might have been always intended as a chantry chapel and the presence of the squint and 13th century image bracket do support that. The aisle in its entirety is perhaps a little large for such a chapel but while the footprint of the building remains the same as it originally was and we know what the church looked like on the outside before it was rebuilt, we cannot know what the inside was like so there may have been internal walls, or at least partitions, within the aisle. It is also possible that the part where the font now stands might have been partitioned-off from the rest, perhaps as a vestry. The western-most arch of the arcade was not opened-up until the rebuilding and there is a small 13th century door in the west wall that would have provided an entrance for the Rector coming from the Rectory that until the 1820s stood just behind the church.

The presence of the two recumbent effigies in the aisle might also suggest some connection with a chantry. W Fletcher in 1841 supposed that the male one was meant "*to represent Alvin, a Crusader, who, according to domesday-book, was lord of the manor in the 11th century, and is not unlikely to have been the founder of the Church*". The

historical confusion exhibited in this illustrates the danger of taking at face value unsubstantiated statements and importing them into local history. We now know from the Domesday Book that Alwin Horne was indeed lord of the manor in the 11th century, but only up to the Norman Conquest, after which he was supplanted by William Fitz Ansulf, so he could neither have been the founder of the church in the 12th century nor a Crusader.

The Crusader supposition is founded on the fact that he has the left leg crossed over the right, which historically was taken to mean the person took part in the Crusades. This is no longer believed by historians but persists in folk lore. His feet rest against a lion, taken to be a symbol of nobility and valour, although Fletcher says a dog which was a symbol of loyalty usually reserved for female figures. He is usually described as in the act of drawing his sword although from the position of his hand he seems more likely to be sheathing it, perhaps a metaphor for the end of his earthly endeavours.

The date appears to be late in the 13th or early in the 14th century and Elias Ashmole in 1665 said he had a "*loose Coate girt close to him*" on which were painted the arms of Englefield, so we may assume that he was the chief representative of the Englefield family at that time. The Englefield of that time was Sir Roger Englefield, who succeeded in about 1280 and died in about 1317. This date is perhaps just a little late for him to have been the builder of the aisle (let alone the church) but perhaps his presence here indicates a slightly later endowment of a chantry to his soul's benefit.

The effigy has suffered some damage, perhaps from the Puritans because Ashmole noted it. The lower part of his sword is broken away and marks on the effigy indicate that there was formerly a shield which Ashmole notes "*is tore away*".

The effigy under the second arch is a of a lady and carved from oak. She wears the wimple, the sign of widowhood, under the chin. There was colouring on this effigy too, though not now discernible. This effigy is thought to be Joan Englefield, widow of Sir Roger, who died in 1340.

More on Place Names

December 2022/January 2023

Local place names usually have some descriptive basis which may be lost in the mists of time, but the origin is often not as old as we might think. Camp Road in Ufton may be thought to have some deep historical origin from Roman times or earlier but it probably references the Canadian Forestry Corps camp during the First World War and the road name (along with Island Farm Road – origin obvious) was only formally adopted in 1964, as the minutes of Ufton Parish Council for 9th June that year record.

Names also changed from time to time, sometimes with the original name being lost (Widmoor Wood) but sometimes with it being regained later (as with Wimbleton's).

Names also move around over time, sometimes a long way and sometimes not so far. Parker's Corner, for example, was not the road junction where we place it today but a sharp double bend further up the hill that was straightened in 1802. The perimeter of a small copse today marks the line of the old road and was still known as Parker's Corner Copse in 1883. The wood called Strawberry Copse locally today was Mount View in 1844 but the Hill Plantation ten years later in the description of the course of the new road from Bradfield to Chalkpit. In 1883 it was Bradfield Plantation, the name by which the Ordnance Survey still know it today. The modern Hill Plantation is close to it and was known as Middle Plantation in 1883 but was Great Picked Piece and Little Picked Piece in 1844, when it was in two separate parts with an arable field (Middle Picked Piece) between them. The Larches too has moved around and has been in three different places since 1844.

Dainty Land was originally "Great Denty Land" which in 1762 was just one part of the larger area at the top of Common Hill in the angle between the old roads to Bradfield and Beenham. Adjacent to it was "Little Denty Copse" and when the new road was put down the north side of the hill in 1802 it followed the boundary between Great Denty and Little Denty with the latter later becoming known as Bennett's Copse, as it still is. By 1844 Great Denty had become the brick works and plantations, including Stone Park and The Larches with the southern part of it absorbed into "The Lawn", as the new Deer Park was then called. In the 1870s when the new house for the Head Keeper was built on this piece it was fenced-off from the park and called Dainty Land.

Appleton's Corner presumably originated in about the 1830s or 40s when George Appleton, a farmer from Sulhamstead, owned a "*house, garden and yard*" in the area at the top of The Street just to the right of the gate into the park.

The Corporation Field is the piece of land that lies between Bostock Lane and the road from Parker's Corner to Mayridge Farm. The origin of this name lies in the fact that the Corporation of Reading had ownership of some strips scattered across the Great Field before enclosure and when the open field was enclosed in 1774 this total holding was consolidated into a single block covering part of the present Corporation Field.

Loring's Meadow is not a name in common use today but it certainly was up to the end of the 19th century. In 1844 (when it was written as "Loarins") it comprised two adjacent pieces of land that were part of the Glebe land belonging to the Rector and situated between the old Rectory walled garden and The Street. In 1863 the new school was built on one part of it and in 1884 the Workmen's Club was built on another, but the rest remains to this day, now as the "5-A-Day" garden. In 1941 as part of the Dig For Victory campaign part of the Meadow became the school garden, measuring some 800 square yards. There were then 60 children on the roll but by 1953 there were only nine boys taking gardening (oldest 12) and the garden was greatly reduced in size to the strip alongside the road. It was discontinued altogether in 1956 when the new Willink secondary school opened in Burghfield Common and the older children were transferred there. In the 1960s the meadow was used by Head Gardener Bill Partridge to grow dahlias and there was for a time a grass tennis court for use by the villagers alongside the Rectory garden wall.

The name probably originates from the 1780s when Joshua Loring, a significant figure in the American War of Independence, came to live in Englefield, perhaps in the old manor house that stood where Rectory Cottage now is and later served as Rectory until the new one was built in 1870.

The origin of the name Lone Barn appears to be obvious: a barn on its own at a distance from any other building. The barn is first seen on the Estate tithe map of 1844, when it was called "Bradfield Barn". In the description of the course of the new road in the Reading Chronicle in 1854 it is called Lone Barn but the pair of cottages next to it first appear in the census of 1861, when they are listed as "Long Barn" (an equally accurate description) and are occupied by agricultural labourers James Cox and James Woodley. Ten years later, still with James Cox (now also a Primitive Methodist Lay Preacher) but Thomas Tame in place of James Woodley, the name is given as "Longbarn Cottage" and then in 1881 (with Thomas Tame and shepherd James Allen) as "Lower Barn". The name Lone Barn reappears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1883 and then in the census of 1891.

It is now a single dwelling but that is relatively recent and its earlier form is evident from the two bricked-up front doors replaced by a single door between them.

Not So Common

February/March 2023

It is a widespread misconception that there is such a thing as “common land” that is owned by nobody and there is therefore a “right to roam” on it so that anybody may come and go as they please and do what they will on it. This is not entirely true, for all land in England is owned by somebody and always has been since feudal times. Some land may nowadays be classed as “open access land” and marked as such on official maps, in which case there is what is called a legal “right to roam” but that simply means the right to go on foot anywhere on the designated land but very little else. There is also such a thing as “permissive access” to designated areas of private land on conditions set by the landowner.

The old concept of common land ceased to exist at the time of the enclosures, at the latest in the early 19th century, but even when it did exist it did not mean a complete free-for-all. “Rights of common” as they were called were restricted to only some people and even then, the rights themselves were strictly limited. The exact rights that applied to any piece of land were determined and enforced by agreement among the commoners and this system still exists today in the New Forest with the Verderers’ Court.

In Englefield the biggest area of common land was the common woodland that lay on the north slope of Common Hill alongside the River Bourne between the modern road and a point approximately opposite Bournefield Farm. Here the particular right of common would almost certainly have been the right of “estover”, that is the right to take limited amounts of specific timber products from the land, for example firewood or whole trees for building purposes. In view of the large number of oak trees, there may also have been a right of “pannage” (also called “mast”), that is the right to put pigs out to feed on fallen acorns.

There was also common land in the Theale Meadow. The Meadow occupied the area that is now the Theale Fishery at Haywards’ Farm. Most of this land was divided into individually owned strips like the main part of the open fields but part of it was a single large block. As the individual strips were not separately fenced, they would presumably have been used by their individual owners for a hay crop to provide winter forage for their own animals, but the large single block would probably have been for the common grazing of animals under the right of pasturage.

Rights of common such as pannage and pasturage were clearly seasonal so the commoners would have determined exactly when they applied by agreement amongst themselves. The seasonal right of common pasturage generally also

extended to all the strips in open field so that while in the growing and harvest seasons each strip was for the exclusive use of its owner, once crops were gathered and until the time came again for sowing the whole of the open field became common pasture for cattle which put back fertility into the soil.

By 1762 the whole system of farming in common was largely being discontinued elsewhere, often through agreement but sometimes by Act of Parliament. In some places an earlier set of enclosures during the 16th and 17th centuries had been largely forced on the smaller landowners by powerful lords of the manor. In Englefield there must have been a second cultivated area in addition to the Great Field that was still in use in 1762 because there always had to be two separate such fields (sometimes three) in order to achieve proper crop rotation. This second field probably occupied the area between the village and the River Pang where the mill was and it may have been enclosed in the late 17th century to create Chalkpit Farm. What mechanism was used to do this is unknown but in 1762 the tenants and landowners who farmed strips in the remaining Great Field agreed amongst themselves to suspend the practice of common pasture for seven years. Then in 1774 they went the whole way and reallocated all the scattered holdings across the Great Field into consolidated and enclosed blocks. In 1791 the Englefield Meadow was similarly rearranged, again by agreement.

Finally, in 1809 it was decided to complete the enclosure process and end all rights of common in the parish and a private bill was introduced into Parliament for the purpose. All those with rights of common had to lay a claim with the Enclosure Commissioners. Three of those who did so were William Horn at Hogmoor, his brother John at North Street and James May at Park Farm (Wimbleton's). James May's claim was lodged on his behalf by his mother Isabella because his father had died in 1805 and he was not yet of age.

The parliamentary enclosure was a protracted process and was not completed until 1829, perhaps because there were two stages. In the first stage all the claims were considered, and freehold land allocated elsewhere in exchange for the loss of common rights. In Englefield this was often to the advantage of the small landowners, for example both William and John Horn exchanged their rights of common in Englefield and Theale for additional land that was contiguous with the land they already owned so they gained the advantage of not having to travel miles to cultivate a small piece of land somewhere else. Then in a second stage, not really part of the enclosure process, many of the smaller landowners subsequently sold their land to Richard Benyon. According to life-long village resident Miss Winchcomb, a descendent of the Hornes, her great-grandfather "sold all the land and the farm and went off and had a good time", which she thought "really rather annoying".

Old Village Houses

April/May 2023

Even before 1800 when the main part of the village of Englefield still lay along what is now the private drive to Englefield House there were a few scattered houses on the what is now the village street. These houses still remain and some are listed by Historic England.

One of these early houses is number 10 in The Street, sometimes said to be the earliest house still standing in the village and supposedly dating from 1760 because of that date on a plaque on the front of the house in what looks like a blocked-up window. The presence of an apparent bricked-up window opening is popularly taken to indicate a window blocked up to avoid Window Tax, which came into force in 1696. Initially, the tax came into effect when there were more than ten windows, but this “window” would only have been a seventh in 1760 so would not have been taxed anyway, although the threshold was reduced to six windows in 1766. This supposition is demonstrably not necessarily true anyway because the next-door number 9, which until 2017 had just such a feature, was not built until some 30 years after the tax was repealed in 1851.

Actually, there are several clues to suggest an even earlier date than 1760. The side wall facing the road is constructed with brickwork having alternate courses of bricks all laid as “headers” (bricks laid with the end outwards) and those all laid as “stretchers” (with the side outwards), called “English bond”. The front of the building, including the apparently bricked-up window where the 1760 plaque is situated, is constructed with “Flemish bond” brickwork (alternate headers and stretchers in each course), which is supposed to have superseded English bond in the late 17th century.

The catslide roof down over the single-storey larder at the rear and the low ceiling height of the other ground floor rooms might well indicate that the original building was entirely single-storey, as many pre-18th century cottages were, and it had an upper storey added later, at which time the house had a new front built, perhaps that was in 1760.

Both English and Flemish bond gave solid walls of two leaves tied together by the headers but (as many will know) these were prone to penetration of damp and near the end of the 19th century cavity walls were introduced with two separate leaves all as stretchers with an air space between them and the linking provided by metal ties. The style of brickwork might therefore be used to date houses very roughly but appearances can be deceptive. For example, the vestry under the church tower

(built in 1868) is in English bond inside and Partridge Gardens, built in the 21st century long after cavity walls became a legal requirement, appears to be in Flemish bond – a deception achieved by the use of “snapped headers”, ie half bricks laid to give the appearance of a full header while maintaining the air gap.

Number 1 is another of the early houses and is listed as “early 18th century” so would be older than number 10 if that indeed dated from only 1760. It is perhaps the house featured in a newspaper advertisement in 1782: a “*modern-built sashed house with coach house and stables for four horses*” in the Street and standing in half an acre of ground with two and a half acres of pasture adjoining. The accommodation then consisted of “*...two parlours, kitchen, stores, servants’ hall, pantry, brew house, cellars, six bedrooms, lobby and four garrets*”. It may also be the “*Georgian house (probably for the Agent)*” referred to by Betjeman in 1949. In the middle decades of the 19th century, at least, it was the Crown Inn.

Like number 10 it is built sideways on to the road, a characteristic of early houses, and also like number 10 shows different styles of brickwork. In this case the bricks to the left of the chimney breast in the wall facing the road are laid in Flemish bond while on the right of the chimney and on the front of the house the bricks are laid in header bond with rusticated quoins. A plan of 1822 appears to show the house to have a considerably larger footprint than it does now, so perhaps it was later reduced in size and re-fronted. Header bond seems to have been the popular style for houses built around the outskirts of the estate in the 1830s and 40s.

Number 4/5 dates from the mid-18th century too, according to the listing. Interestingly, the front is in header bond, apparently the style copied for many of the early “new-builds” outside the village thought to date from the 1820s to 40s, such as Parker’s Corner Lodge, Bostock Lodges and some houses in Ufton. Sometimes the side and rear walls that are not normally seen are in Flemish Bond, which used fewer bricks and hence was cheaper. Aaron Grey, a shoemaker (or cordwainer), originally from Yattendon, was trading at number 5 by 1841 and until his death in 1883.

One building from the old village days, although unlike the others it is not listed by Historic England, is what became the old school at what is now No 11/12 The Street. In 1762 before it became a school it was owned by Thomas Horne and consisted only of the two-storey middle section of the modern house, parallel to the road, and a single-storey projection towards the road that later became the schoolroom. It remained in this form until after the new school was opened in 1863 but then before the end of the century it was divided into two houses with an upper storey added to the school room (rather obvious from the different styles of brickwork on the gable facing the road) and a whole new wing built at the back.

The First New Village Houses - and one more old one

June/July 2023

The first new houses to be built were three of the five identical pairs standing on what was then a new straight length of road towards North Street from the junction where that road diverged from the Tidmarsh turnpike. The course of the old road can still be seen by the line of the wall that runs along the back of these houses. These were labelled on the 1822 plan for the new Pangbourne Road as “The New Village”. However, before talking about new houses, we must first consider the last one of the old houses and that is the shop, parts of which are from the 18th century or perhaps earlier. It was a bakery as well and Charles Webb was the baker and grocer, certainly from 1844. In April 1871 his son James was missing for four days before being found unconscious in the river at Twyford. He was resuscitated and charged with attempting suicide (a criminal offence until 1961). Despite that, when his father retired he took over the business and ran it for about 20 years.

James Webb remained unmarried and died in February 1901 after which Frederick Pocock became the grocer and baker until his death in 1915. Sidney Wilcox from 42 Chalk Pit Cottages was also a baker by trade so probably did, or assisted with, the baking until he joined the Army, also in 1915, and was killed at Hamel on 24th May 1918 while serving with 5th Battalion the Royal Berkshire Regiment. After Frederick died his widow Alice Emily Pocock carried on running the shop. In 1921 her elder son, Frederick, and his new wife Kathleen (née Morton) whom he had married the previous year were also living at the shop but although his occupation is described as “Baker” and his employer as “A E Pocock” there is a note “Out of work” so presumably baking had by then ceased. Alice’s younger son Albert was also still living with her, but he was employed as a motor engineer at Vincents garage in Reading.

In 1924 Sylvester Gosling, listed as a Master Baker in the 1939 Register, with his wife Elsie, took over the shop and remained there through the 1950s and into the 60s, with bread being supplied in the 1950s by Percy Gundry with a horse and cart. In 1939 Percy Gundry was a baker living in Bloomfield Terrace in Theale and there is evidence of some sort of connection to the Goslings because in the late 1920s a Hilda Gundry was living with them at the shop. Also living in the same house in Bloomfield Terrace in 1939 was another baker, Alf Kent, who also had a connection to Englefield.

The “New Village” was clearly Richard Benyon’s aspiration for a replacement for the old village which, if not demolished by 1821, was at least uninhabited. When

they were originally built the three houses that constituted it were simply rectangular in plan; the “wings” across the ends are a later addition. Exactly when these were added is unclear, but it must have been before 1914 for a photograph showing the members of the village Fire Brigade loading William Cox’s coffin onto the bier outside his home, number 19 in The Street, prior to his funeral in that year clearly shows the houses as they are today. Probably the additions were made in, or shortly before, 1891 when in his Harvest Home speech the Rector commended Mr Benyon for the standard of houses he provided, all with three bedrooms. It is unlikely to have been much earlier for they are all built with stretcher bond which was only introduced about that time.

The fifth house (counting from the Pangbourne Road) has similar brickwork to the original three, so it is possible that it was built shortly after 1822 and before the fourth which has a different style of brickwork. All five pairs were in place by 1829 though. The second pair (now 24/25) had a small addition to the side of 24 which was the blacksmith’s shop of George Read who lived there. Number 22 also had an addition at the rear in 1844 and this house was occupied in 1851 by widow Pricilla Whitburn, her 30-year-old widowed daughter Elizabeth Read and her three children. Elizabeth was a dressmaker so the addition may have been her workroom.

The house nearest the Pangbourne Road (27) was the replacement Three Daggers Inn, kept by Edward May and after he died by his widow Kitty, it was also the venue for auction sales and Coroner’s inquests including the inquest into the death of Kitty May herself when she died, of a stroke, in the garden of the Daggers in December 1850. The Three Daggers, named from the arms of the Paulet family, had been an old Englefield inn since at least the time of William and Mary when it was kept by William and Elizabeth Chamberlayne. At that time the inn was situated somewhere around where the front drive to the Old Rectory meets the road up to Englefield House from the lodge gates. It was presumably demolished with the rest of the old village in the early years of the 19th century. In Edward and Kitty May’s time the inn occupied only number 27 but when John Woods kept it in the 1850s it seems to have been the whole of 27 and 26. Even then it must have been a squeeze, for in addition to the inn John Woods and his wife Caroline had eight children and a lodger living in the house. The Three Daggers ceased to operate in the 1860s when John Woods moved to the newly-built New Inn in North Street at the junction with Piper’s Lane.

The new Pangbourne Road was opened in 1825 and the old road running from Bostock to Hogmoor Bridge was blocked up, irrevocably at the Bostock end for Bostock Lodges were built squarely across it soon after, and certainly by 1829. At the same time Chalkpit Lodge, called Awberry’s Lodge in 1855, was also built at the junction of the new road and the road to Chalkpit Farm.

The Lodge Gates

August/September 2023

The recent assault by an errant motorist on the gates standing on the Pangbourne Road at the start the private road to Englefield House is a sad occasion. We learn from one with first-hand experience that this is far from the first time the gates have been run into though and they have been remade at least once before.

The gate screen with its two lodges was built in 1862 to commemorate the marriage of Richard Fellowes Benyon to Elizabeth Clutterbuck four years earlier. The architect was Richard Armstrong who had already been engaged on making major changes to Englefield House and rebuilding St Peter's church, Ufton Nervet, the latter reopening in the same year that the gate screen was built.

Until 1855 the present private road was part of the public highway between Theale and Bradfield, which ran through the arch at the side of Englefield House, turned sharp right in the pleasure grounds and ran across the deer park down to the river Bourne. The closing of the road was understandably a goal pursued by Richard Benyon, starting in 1802 when he made Englefield his principal residence. In order to be able to do that he had to provide satisfactory alternative routes for all journeys that might use the road.

His first act was to extend the road that ran between Parker's Corner and a tee-junction with the Beenham Lane up what was then called Blyth's Hill. The road to Beenham turned off the old Bradfield Road just above Englefield House and ran along the top of the hill. The course of most of the road remains visible although the part on the Englefield side of the junction was closed by 1829. The part on the Beenham side remained in public use until it was closed for gravel extraction in the 1970s after which it was diverted at the Beenham end and reopened as a bridleway. The new road down the north side of the hill to the river Bourne ran through the Englefield common wood which presumably accounts for the modern name of Common Hill.

A new connection was also made from Parker's Corner to the Bath Road at Theale. This followed an existing track into the Great Field past the south-west end of Cranemoor Pond as far as Powlett Wrighte's turnpike from Bostock to Tidmarsh. Beyond the turnpike there seem to have been a number of different routes at one time or another until the present one was established much later, though the staggered cross-roads at Bushy Wigmore is a late 20th century attempt (not entirely successful) to prevent road accidents here.

This provided a satisfactory replacement for the old road between Theale and Bradfield but closing the road would mean that traffic coming from the Tidmarsh direction would have faced a much longer route than the existing one from Hogmoor Bridge, along The Street, and up the hill past the church. In fact in 1825 that journey was made slightly longer by the closure of the old turnpike from Hogmoor to Bostock when the new Tidmarsh Road (now the A340) was built.

The Bradfield Road could not be closed until the year after Richard Benyon de Beauvoir died, when another new road (appropriately officially called New Road though usually known as Chalkpit Road) between the Chalkpit and Bradfield College was opened. This road used the existing “occupation road” (a private road for the use of the landowner) that already ran as far as Lone Barn. An application to close the old road past Englefield House was made on 1st January 1855 by the new Squire Richard Fellowes Benyon and when New Road was opened some six months later this ambition could finally be realised although the part from Appleton’s Corner to the southwest gate of the churchyard remained open to the public *“on foot and with horses and carriages for access to the church and churchyard and no other purpose”*.

Richard Benyon de Beauvoir had already made himself a private coach road, diverging from the public one at a lodge near the Old Rectory, that ran up to the front of Englefield House then across the park to Parker’s Corner. The public road at that time followed the line of the fence and wall in front of the Old Rectory, Rectory Cottage, St Mark’s house and the Five-a-Day garden. When he closed the road to the public Richard Fellowes Benyon realigned it, initially following the private coach road but then taking a course somewhere between the two roads as far as Appleton’s Corner.

Although the gates were left open most of the time in the 20th century, they were sometimes closed to preserve the post-1855 status of the road as private. Villagers from the part of the village at the top of The Street used the road on foot or by bicycle to get to and from the bus stop at the top of the Englefield Road (given on the timetable as “Englefield Park Gates”) or to get to Theale. There was until relatively recently no pedestrian gate so this meant that when getting off the number 11 bus from Reading and finding the gates closed it was necessary to climb over the low brick garden wall just beyond the end of the screen wall on the right and go through the garden of Egbert Allen who lived in that lodge. He also allowed people catching a bus to leave their bicycles in an open lean-to at the back of the house, an especial convenience for a boy and girl who used the bus to get to and from school every day and seemed to take more time than strictly necessary to collect their bicycles.

Egbert Allen was born in the village in 1872 and worked as a gardener at Englefield House. He was living in the Lodge with his wife by 1911 and died there in 1969. Those who lived in the other Lodge include James Winchcomb, another gardener who was the only adult to die in the measles epidemic of 1893/4. His daughter Bertha was born there in 1893 and like Egbert Allen lived in the village all her life until her death in 1986. William Yarlett, a carpenter on the Estate, who joined the Army on 28th August 1914 and returned home a year to the day after the declaration of war with a gunshot wound to the head, also lived there with his parents. Others who lived at the Lodges included Francis (Frank) Lamperd who worked from leaving school until retirement at Theale Motor Works and the Bryant family. Ronald Bryant came from Beech Hill where his parents kept the Elm Tree pub but his wife Joan was the daughter of Ted and Kate Cottrell from the Bradfield Lodges and Ronald and Joan were married at St Mark's in December 1939. Ted Cottrell, another gardener, was one of those named on the plaque in the gardens as having served in World War 1, although his surname is misspelled.



Taken in about 1955 before the pedestrian gate was inserted.
Egbert Allen's house is on the right; the one on the left was
the home of the Bryant family at about this time.

Curiosities in the Chapel

October/November 2023

The Englefield Chapel is the only part of the church for which we have a definite date because when he came down from London in the year of the Great Plague and visited the church on 12th July 1665 the antiquary Elias Ashmole noted that engraved on the glass of the north window was *"This Chapell was builded in the year of our Lord M^VCXIII"*, this being translated as 1514, the year that Sir Thomas Englefield, Speaker of the House of Commons, whose large canopied tomb lies between the chancel and the chapel, died.

It is also the only part of the church that today retains its original architectural style for when he completely rebuilt the rest of the church in 1855 George Gilbert Scott in a letter to Richard Benyon defended his decision to *"...repair rather than rebuild..."* the chapel as *"...it would be like falsifying history to change the style to that of the church to which it was added"* and *"a pity to destroy the authenticity of a monument, locally historical, unless its taste was so outrageous as to demand it"*. He obviously thought the rest of the church was in outrageous taste for he clearly didn't mind falsifying history to rebuild that in the style he thought it should have been built rather than how it actually was.

A focal point in the Chapel now that the organ no longer almost completely fills it is the coloured alabaster monument on the north wall. But this provides something of an enigma, for in 1665 Ashmole wrote *"...against the north wall is erected a faire monument having thereon the portraitures of a knight in armour and his lady both kneeling at a deske; behind him kneeles four sons and behind her one daughter. Upon the side of the Deske are the Armes of Englefield and Browne empaled"*. This describes only the lower part of what we see now.

The remainder of the present monument, the figures of a man in armour and a woman lying side by side with the arms and crest of Englefield above, Ashmole describes as being engraved on a brass plate, also on the north wall. This brass also had an inscription on it, the words of which are reproduced exactly on the black tablet at the bottom of the monument. This explains that the recumbent figures are those of John Englefield (died 1567) and his wife Margaret Fitton by whom he had just one child, Francis, who married Jane Browne and had four sons and one daughter by her. It also said that Margaret caused the brass to be



placed in 1605. Ashmole also described a brass plate fixed to a ledger stone in the floor beneath the monument telling that here was buried Francis Englefield who married Jane Browne by whom he had ten children and died in 1631.

John Englefield was the younger son of Sir Thomas Englefield, and grandson of Sir Thomas the Commons Speaker. His elder brother was Sir Francis who inherited the main estate at Englefield from their father in 1538 and lost it after he decamped in 1559 following the accession of Elizabeth I. John was given part of the estate at Englefield by his father but his seat was at Wootton Bassett in Wiltshire and his only son Francis was created 1st Baronet of Wootton Bassett in 1611.

So it looks like the present monument is a later creation, uniting father and son in a single monument by incorporating what was originally on the brass wall plate. A possibility is that it was created by Scott who removed all the brasses from the Chapel when he restored it in 1855. The kneeling figures of Francis and Jane may be the originals but the two recumbent figures and the arms and crest are obviously later three-dimensional representations of what was engraved on the brass. In his letter to Richard Benyon, Scott does mention a design for “the monument” which may refer to this, though it may equally refer to the monument to Richard Benyon de Beauvoir behind the pulpit, which uses the same material.

There remains a puzzle over the “*four sons and one daughter*” of Francis and Jane as seen on the monument and the inscription, for the brass plate on Francis’s ledger stone (also no trace now remaining) said they had ten children and named them all. However, this plate also said that three died before their father so a partial explanation of this discrepancy is that at the time the brass to John Englefield was engraved in 1605 although Jane had already given birth to six children (two girls and four boys) by 1604 one of the girls had already died. Another daughter was born in 1605 but that must have been after the brass was engraved. What this doesn’t explain, though, is why the monument to Francis and Jane, as described by Ashmole in 1666 long before Scott got busy, has only the four sons and one daughter unless it was sculpted at the same time as the plate was engraved and nearly 30 years before the death of Francis.

In a chapel supposedly dedicated to the Englefields it is perhaps odd to see an inexplicable plethora of tablets to members of the Knapp family occupying the east and west walls and among them a white marble tablet to another apparent interloper, Milburg Allpress (though the name is usually given as Milborough) who died in 1803. Milburg was born at Kingston, Jamaica in 1765 and married Maj Gen Richard Crewe of Crewe Hall in Cheshire, by whom she had four children. She died in 1803 and according to the tablet is buried in the chapel.

That unstated reason for the presence of this memorial, and its subject, is that from about 1794 she was the mistress of Sir Henry Englefield the 7th Baronet of Wootton Bassett in direct succession to Sir Francis, although the family had by then moved to Whiteknights in Earley and he was living in his London house in Tilney Street. Sir Henry was the last of the family to own property in Englefield having inherited the land that Sir Thomas Englefield gave to his son John before 1514. Henry sold the land to Richard Benyon in 1792.

General Crewe obtained a divorce *a mensa et thoro* (literally “from bed and board” and really just a legal separation) from the Consistory Court in 1800 but a full divorce *a vincula matrimonii* (“from the bond of marriage”) could only be effected at that time by an Act of Parliament, which Gen Crewe obtained in 1801. Gen Crewe also sued Sir Henry for trespass, assault and criminal conversation in the Court of Common Pleas and was awarded £3,000 damages. In 1802 a son was born to Henry and Milburg but Milburg died the following year. When Sir Henry died in 1822 with his only child the son by Milburg the baronetcy became extinct because being illegitimate he could not succeed to the title.

Cranemoor House

December 2023/January 2024

One of the problems when researching the history of Englefield during and immediately after the reign of Elizabeth I is the fact that at that time there were actually three different estates and there is often confusion over the various owners – even without the odd red herring thrown in. There was, of course the main estate that Sir Francis Englefield Kt forfeited when he absconded to Spain and plotted the death of the Queen and as we have seen there was also a second Englefield estate that had been given to Francis's brother John by their father and inherited by John's son Francis, who became Sir Francis Bt - even more confusion with two Sir Francis (though note the difference in rank) around the same time.

The origin of the third estate is unknown and it really only pops up in 1597 when it was bought by Lord and Lady Norreys for £1,500 from Sir Thomas Sherley. In 1596 "*Certeayne landes in Inglefield and Tydmarshe...*" appeared on a list of property to be sold for Sir Thomas with a note that these particular lands actually belonged to his son Anthony but had been allocated for sale to the benefit of Sir Thomas, and Sir Thomas was certainly in need of all the benefit he could get just then as he was about to be declared bankrupt and imprisoned. His hobby was property speculation but unfortunately he funded this hobby by embezzling the funds he was sent by the Crown in his day job as Treasurer-at-War in the Netherlands and this had just been found out.

Where Anthony Sherley got the estate from isn't clear but it was very small, consisting of "*a messuage, toft, dovecot, two gardens, two orchards, 44 acres of pasture and 4 acres of wood*". It's possible that when Sir Francis Englefield was dispossessed, this property was sold or given to Anthony Sherley. It is also possible that this was the second, much smaller, manor detailed in the Domesday Survey of 1086 that somehow continued alongside the bigger one and escaped notice by historians until 1596 but that is perhaps less likely as the estate bought by Lord Norreys included Cranemoor House, now thought by most authorities to have been the manor house of the Englefield family up to the point when Sir Francis fled. The main estate was leased to Robert Devereaux, 2nd Earl of Essex, between 1589 and his execution in 1601.

Cranemoor House with its gardens and orchards was shown by Josiah Ballard on his map of 1762, on the shore of the lake near Parker's Corner, just on the other side of the road running from Appleton's Corner. From the 16th century at least this lake was a fishery, called Cranmere, 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. The proximity of the house to the fishery would make sense for fishponds were usually sited close to the manor house, as at Ufton Court and the site of the former Ufton Robert manor house near to it. Ballard shows the lake as a horseshoe of ponds around the outer edge of that part of the modern lake that is sadly now only filled with water in wet winters, with two straight intersecting canals in the centre of the shoe, more resembling the crossing runways of an airfield than anything.



Lord and Lady Norreys gave the property to their son Sir Edward in 1599 when he was recalled by the Queen from his duties as Deputy Governor of Ostend to comfort his parents after the loss of their three other soldier sons in the Dutch War of Independence when England was helping the Dutch to secure independence from Spain – thus anticipating the plot of the film *Saving Private Ryan* by some 400 years. Sir Edward Norreys claimed to have enlarged the house, “...*the halfe as much as old Englefield’s building...*”, which supports the view that this house had been the seat of the Englefield family.

The records of Queen Elizabeth’s annual Progresses show that she visited Sir Edward Norreys at Englefield in 1601 when she knighted his father-in-law John Norris (who was also his uncle) and Reade Stafford of Bradfield. Sir Edward died in the same year as the Queen, 1603, and his heir was a nephew, Francis, but Cranemoor House was left to Sir Edward’s widow Elizabeth for her life. Elizabeth subsequently married Thomas Erskine, Viscount Fenton (later the 1st Earl of Kelly), and Francis sold the property to him in 1608. Erskine subsequently acquired the main Englefield estate, which had reverted to the Crown on Essex’s death, from King James I in 1611 so the separate Cranemoor estate then became amalgamated with it.

John Powell, from a family established in Englefield before 1611, was, at the time of his death in 1756, residing in a house called “Cranmer” with a mixture of enclosed land and holdings in the common fields spread around. As well as Pound Close on the edge of the then village street, now the drive to Englefield House, the enclosed land included the Row Park, Great Crawley, Middle Crawley and Little Crawley. This formed a large block of land behind Cranemoor House that now makes up

much of the new deer park to the south and west of Englefield House. There were also fields further away such as Jennett's Field (the big field alongside The Street and the Pangbourne Road), and Blackeymoor alongside the Pangbourne Road near Hogmoor Bridge.

By 1762 these lands, though not Cranemoor House itself, which was still the residence of John Powell's widow, were part of Cranemoor Farm owned or tenanted by Philip Wyatt, as was Chalkpit Farm. In 1779 Cranemoor House was the farmhouse of Chantry Farm then owned by Richard Carter and William Toovey, sons-in-law of John Powell. Cranemoor House was presumably demolished along with the old village by Richard Benyon when he created his new park at the beginning of the 19th century.

The Consecration Cross

We have been asked about the reason for the cross on the south-west corner buttress of the church (to the left of the main door). This cross is not strictly a "Maltese cross" as it's often mis-called, but a form of "Greek cross" called a "*cross pattée*", a symbol associated with the Knights Templar although that is of no relevance here.

This appears to be one of the set of consecration crosses that were placed on church walls in the Middle Ages as visible evidence of the dedication of a newly-funded church to the exclusive service of God, symbolising the victory of Christ and providing a defence against demoniacal powers. It must have been cut out from the original church wall and placed here by George Gilbert Scott when the church was rebuilt in 1855, though it is actually placed too low down as it would originally have been about eight feet above the ground to protect it from defilement. Consecration crosses were enclosed in an incised circle that isn't present here but the rounded corners of the stone suggest that it may have been lost in the removal from the old wall.



The full set of consecration crosses numbered 24: 12 around the outside walls and three on each of the inside walls. These were either carved in stone or cast in metal and all were painted red. At the consecration the Bishop would anoint each cross with Chrism, saying the words, "*Santificetur hoc templum*" (blessed be this church). Each of the interior crosses was provided with a candle bracket, the twelve crosses with illuminated candles symbolising the world's enlightenment through the twelve apostles.

The Dairies

February/March 2024

A casual comment, made on a shoot day in the very wet season just ended, concerning the difficulties of “picking-up” in The Ovens was well founded for that particular copse, alongside the road from the chalkpit to Lone Barn at the corner where it crosses the river Bourne, was once part of the Englefield water meadows called the Dairies, perhaps created in about 1710.

The Dairies lay on either side of the River Pang behind Chalkpit Farm and stretched all the way from Hogmoor Bridge to just beyond Lone Barn. They are also criss-crossed by other streams that were an essential part of water meadow management. The quite small area of The Ovens (origin of the name unknown) is particularly well watered as it has the river Bourne for one boundary, the river Pang for an adjacent one and the confluence of the two at one corner. It also has other streams running through it.

Water-meadows are very different from a simple flood plain, which since water meadows have long fallen into disuse is what many have become – hence the difficulties in The Ovens. Simply flooding an area of grass with standing water does not achieve the aim of keeping off the winter frost and encouraging an early growth of fresh grass in the spring, the reverse in fact since the stagnant water actually kills the grass. Rather, the aim of a water meadow is to maintain a shallow, constant flow of oxygenated fresh water over the ground and this requires a good deal of management by a man called a “drowner”. Hatches in the side of the riverbank would be opened and a barrier raised across the main stream so that water would be directed into side channels, called a “leats”, “top carriers” or “mains” that reconnected with the river downstream of the water meadows. Water from the top carrier fed into many shallow grooves running along the tops of ridges across the field and from these grooves the 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 via another hatch. Only the part of the Dairies laying to the north of the motorway near Hogmoor Bridge still shows this arrangement and can be seen clearly (if not without risk) from the Pangbourne Road flyover where it crosses the Pang. An aerial photograph (as here) provides a safer option.



That part of the Dairies nearer to Hogmoor Bridge were called “feeding dairies” and used to provide the early grazing for the cattle while those towards the Lone Barn end were “mowing dairies” allocated for hay making. Nearly all the parts at the Lone Barn end are now wooded but even in 1844 when the Dairies were still in use there were some coppices there, including The Ovens.

If the old field names Great Mill Ground and Little Mill Ground are anything to go by, the mill first recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086 stood on the Pang in the Dairies, probably at the end of track that runs through Chalkpit Farm to the river with Great Mill Ground on one side of it and Little Mill Ground on the other. There was also another mill near here called Farley Mill, pulled down in about 1700, and downstream of that another old mill, Tidmarsh Mill – not the present one made famous by Dora Carrington, Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury Set - but an older one pulled down a few years after Farley Mill. 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 riverbanks at this point. The barrier at the Dairies that when raised in winter directed the water from the river into the top leat and through the water meadows held up the flow to Wilson’s new mill downstream and furthermore in 1749 Hogmoor Wood, upstream of where the top carrier rejoined the main river, also owned by Capt Wilson, flooded. Wilson’s bailiff broke down the barrier at the Dairies to let the water flow freely to the mill and legal action by Powlett Wrighte followed.

The river here was a popular spot for swimming both before the swimming bath was built by Richard Fellowes Benyon along Chantry Lane, and even afterwards by the men and older boys as the use of the bath was restricted to those at school or who had recently left (boys only until 1917 when the Girl Guides were formed and had use of it at certain times). The Rector notes the availability of the Dairies with some relief as “...with 36 boys constantly bathing the swimming bath must be emptied rather frequently”. The Dairies were available every day except Sunday but boys were cautioned against trespassing in the woods and fishing. They were also reminded of the need to wear bathing drawers, a pair of which could be borrowed for the season from the Workmen’s Club. Some 20 lads and young men took advantage of the swimming there in 1891. At that time the Chalkpit Farm bailiff, Mr Hand, would close the barrier across the river to maintain the level upstream in the summer for swimming, even though at that time of year the river would normally be left to flow freely. By 1891, however, the side hatches were falling into disrepair and the level was raised for swimming on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only, the river being left to run freely the rest of the time again to avoid flooding the fields.

Jenkin Davies of Wickcroft Farm

The first of these pieces suggested a story connected with Jenkin Davies, tenant farmer at Wickcroft for nearly half a century. Although this piece has yet to appear in the magazine it would be remiss not to satisfy any curiosity thus aroused before we close.

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 his brother 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 remaining child, a not uncommon thing at the time. Also not uncommon was for the widower and his sister-in-law then to become close, as did Jenkin and Martha, and wish to marry. However, marriage to a dead brother's wife was at that time forbidden by the Church - although Henry VIII had done exactly that with the permission of Pope Julius II in 1509, based on a flexible interpretation of Leviticus 20:21 and Deuteronomy 25:5, 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 Pope Clement VIII would have none of it, perhaps not willing to admit his predecessor's fallibility. Although marriage to a dead wife's sister was not actually against the civil law, it 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. The practice was explicitly forbidden by a law passed in 1835 and not repealed until 1907. Even then 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)" referred to as a spinster, that they were not. All of their 14 children (though not Ebenezer) had the middle name Wiltshire.

Within days of arriving at Wickcroft, on 7th May 1857, Davies was involved with the law after he mislaid his knife in the rick-yard. One of his workers, Charles Horne, found the knife and kept it. A few days later he sold it to a man named Liddiard for a short smock and sixpence. Accused of stealing by finding, Charles Horne was found guilty by the magistrates and sentenced to 10 days imprisonment with hard labour. In 1885 Joseph Fay, a boy employed at Wickcroft, was before the Summer Assizes accused of maliciously setting fire to a hay rick belonging to Davies but Davies spoke for him and gave him a good character so that the jury returned a verdict of “not guilty”.

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 for he 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. Davies was a member of the Royal Agricultural Society and the Berks and Oxon Chamber of Agriculture, and a committee member of the Reading Fat Stock Association.

As well as being a farmer Davies was as an auctioneer and the firm of Jenkin Davies and Sons had a stand at the Reading Cattle Market where he conducted stock sales twice a week as well as general sales of property around the area. In 1896 after his death it was Jenkin Davies and Sons who conducted the sale of their own farm stock at Wickcroft, the sons having decided to pursue other avenues. One of the sons, William Wiltshire Davies, continued as an auctioneer and valuer and in 1900 opened an office in Friar Street, Reading under his own name, the title Jenkin Davies and Sons being discontinued. Jenkin Davies 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 when the County Councils were introduced in 1888.

Jenkin Davies had an attack of rheumatic fever in early 1893 from which he was not expected to recover. Although he did get better he suffered afterwards from angina pectoris and died suddenly on 14th September 1893 from such an attack. Martha died on 5th February 1898 at Wallingford but was buried at Englefield five days later in the same grave as Jenkin and three of their children who had died in infancy.

Here are Ghosts

These ghosts were raised in articles written for the parish magazine between 2018 and 2024 and like Yeates's fishermen and turners of the earth their ways will be strange to modern generations. But all the modern appurtenances notwithstanding, the ways of their successors in the village they inhabited are not markedly different from theirs and if these ghosts return now and then for a look round the old place they will surely feel themselves very much at home - and welcomed by those who remember.



Richard Smith was born in Englefield where his father's family had lived for over 400 years and his maternal grandfather was Steward of the Workingmen's Club and the Sub-postmaster for over 30 years. He continues to be very much involved with the place he has known for three-quarters of a century.