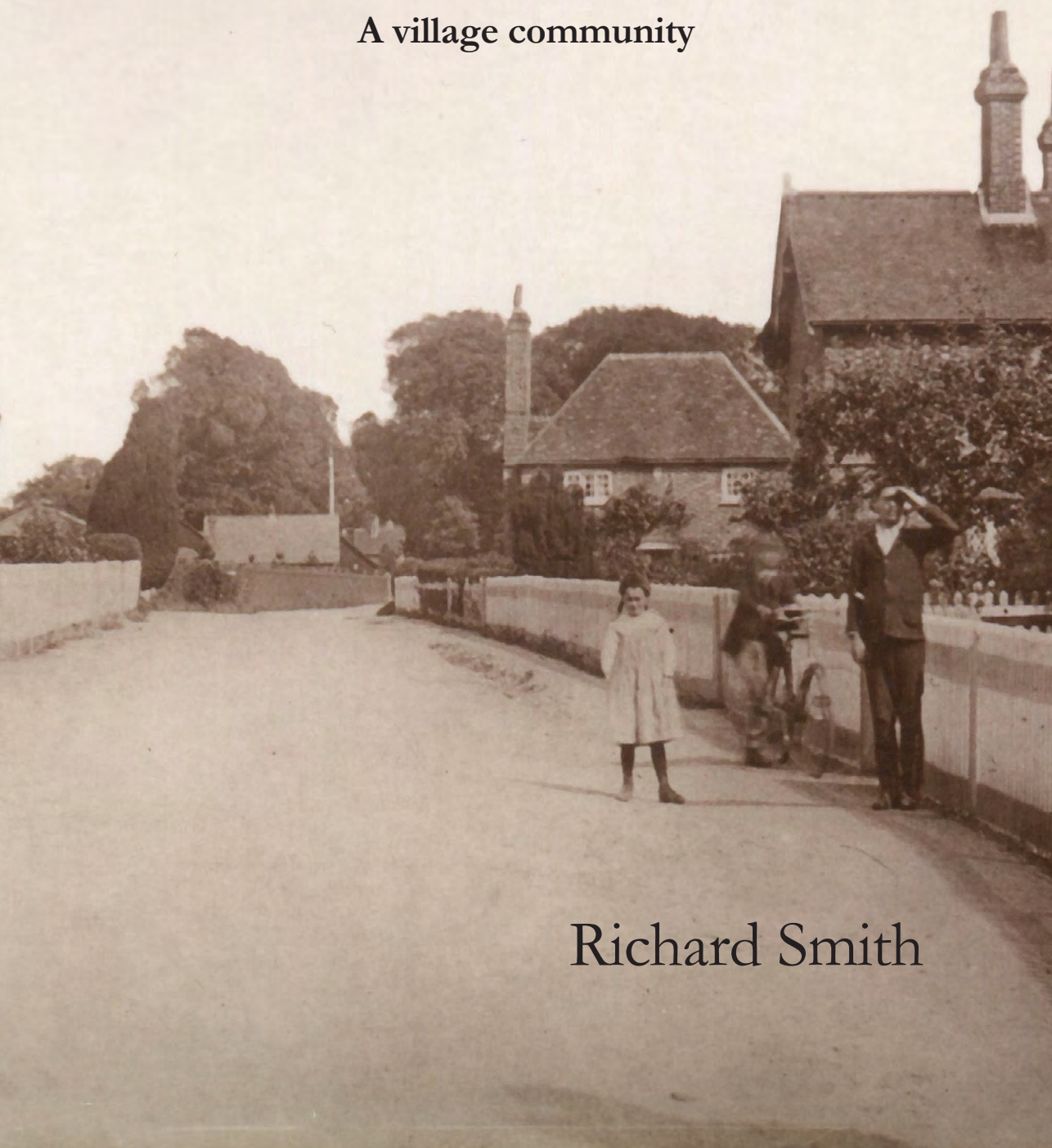


The Lines Fallen in Pleasant Places

A village community



Richard Smith

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The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a
goodly heritage. *Psalms 16:6 (King James version)*

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This Blessed Plot



English villages, archaeologist Ben Robinson says in his book *England's Villages*, have been a defining characteristic of England and the English for a long time and provided the solid social and economic backbone of the country for centuries. Definitions of a village inevitably tend to concentrate on numbers of houses and size of population and these are not irrelevant indicators but, as Robinson observes, “*Much about what makes a village now and in the past is as dependent on its community as it is on built structure*”.

Many old villages probably started their existence as an extended family unit when nomadic hunter-gatherers settled down to farm, providing a unifying purpose that bound together the people. Englefield was originally, perhaps, one such village and its purpose was almost certainly agricultural, as witness its earliest recorded name, from Saxon times: *Englafelda* - the fields of the English. Some villages retained this extended family aspect for a long time, with the occasional new-comer being literally taken into the family through marriage but as villages started to grow more rapidly, particularly in more recent times, that could not continue and the sense of family and common purpose was lost.

The family aspect certainly remained, quite literally, to an extent in Englefield with many households still being related either by birth or marriage in the middle of the 19th century. Just as that link was falling away a new focus was provided, when Englefield became a typical estate village with that “*overwhelming and firmly established atmosphere of the great country house of Trollope's novels*” as noted by John Betjeman.

The estate village goes largely unrecognised by social historians and where mention is given at all it is largely confined to the supposed iniquities of tied cottages. But the 19th century estate village, particularly one like Englefield where the generous Squire went out of his way to foster the sense of community by actively involving himself and his family in it, is very much the rural counterpart to the more celebrated creations of the industrial philanthropists like Salt, Lever and Cadbury. Indeed, modern Englefield is contemporary with Saltaire and pre-dates Port Sunlight

and Bourneville by more than 20 years. Here were modern houses set in their own gardens, jobs, a school, recreation and a church all set in one agreeably and harmoniously-styled place (although still comfortably spaced from one another) and surrounded by well-managed and productive countryside - an ideal the post-war planners have singularly failed to achieve.

The change from what had been a quite a number of separate landowners, not all of them residents, to a single estate under a single owner restored the unifying purpose, not only for those villagers who continued to be involved in agriculture (now as tenants or employees) but also for the many other people and their families that now became part of the estate workforce, and the village population: carpenters, plumbers, brickmakers, bricklayers, keepers, painters, blacksmiths, gardeners, grooms, woodsmen, keepers and the whole gamut of domestic servants. As the century progressed to its end, there came a range of new trades like stationary engine driver, electrician and motor engineer. This was a true community, “...*the last of its kind in the county...*” as John Betjeman wrote in 1949

Unlike many modern villages the people were brought together constantly: the men all worked together in the timber yard, the farms or the gardens; the children all went to the village school together, played in the street or roamed free-range around the fields and woods; the women met at the shop or the post office. At the end of the day the men met again at the Workmen’s Club or the Thatcher’s Arms and at the weekend there was cricket or football, according to season. On Sunday there was church, and perhaps more cricket - but that only after the service had finished.

Englefield people were always a mixture. Some like William Cox, Egbert Allen and William Horne were indeed born, married, lived their whole lives, died and are buried there; many of them having ancestors in the same churchyard at least back to the beginning of parish records in the 16th century and probably beyond - Kipling’s “village Hobdens”, “*whose dead are in the churchyard 30 generations laid*”. Others came on marriage or, particularly the professionals like the Agent, the farm bailiffs, Clerks of the Works and the clergy, for work. Some of those who came, stayed and are still with us in the churchyard; 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 and so the village family feeling became particularly strong because of the long association between people who might have been at school together, worked together and, even in an era of tied cottages, by the benevolence of the Squire were allowed to remain in their cottage through their retirement and widowhood so that three generations of the same family in the village, even in the same house, was common. In this way memories were kept alive

and passed through the generations so that the Squire's son, taking up a particular position on the estate shoot, could be told by one of shoot staff from personal knowledge, *"That was your grandfather's favourite spot"*.

While this was a hierarchical society in theory it certainly was not excessively so in practice. In a close community like this there are few secrets so little point in standing on one's dignity - although some tried it. The village was an example of Benjamin Disraeli's "one nation" idea (the original one, not the current version): a symbiotic alliance between the landed proprietors and their rural tenants and workers. This was not surprising perhaps, as the Squire through the second half of the 19th century, the man who more than anyone was the creator of the modern village, was the Conservative MP for the county during both of Disraeli's periods in office.

There was constant movement of people around the village but at intervals through the working day there would be a sudden transhumance between work and home as the men returned for meals and went back to work. Each movement triggered by the sound of the timber yard hooter, which could be heard across the whole of the estate and possible only because work and home were conveniently close to one another.

For many hundreds of years the village looked after itself, originally through the Manorial Court and then through the Vestry meeting chaired by the Rector and attended by all the parish ratepayers. In addition to looking after the church and the various related appointments, the Vestry appointed a village Constable to enforce law and order, maintained the roads, looked after the poor, set up the fire brigade and ran the school; although the fire engine, fire station and the church and school buildings were all paid for by Mr Benyon.

The transfer of responsibility for relief of the poor to the Poor Law Unions in 1834, which created the Workhouses and the system of "indoor relief", obviously didn't fully take hold in Englefield for in the 1851 census Charles Horne is living in his cottage in The Street with his occupation given as *"Farm Labourer (now in receipt of Parish Relief)"* and even in 1890 Englefield still continued to look after its own with over £25 (approximately £2,000 today) collected for the poor, although only £16-10s-4d was given out, despite this apparently being a time of much illness in the village. The reason for this, as explained by the Rector, was that *"so much brandy, wine and nourishing food of all kinds has been given from Englefield House..."*. Eight trained nurses were also retained to attend to sick persons in the village during the course of that year and in other years a Parish Nurse was always provided, courtesy of Mr Benyon.

Such was the village community at perfect ease with itself: the Squire, the Rector, the managers, the workers, and all their families; together with the village institutions of the workmen's club, the shop, the school and the church. This pleasant place was their England, demi-paradise, their little world; made by their own efforts; a precious stone yet to make shameful conquest of itself¹.



1 *Richard II*, Act II, Scene I. William Shakespeare

Englefield People

The census of 1851, in the fourteenth year of Victoria's reign, was the first to record the place of birth and of the 73 households recorded in Englefield 32 had a head of household who had been born in the village and in five of those 32 households so had his wife. In a further seven households, although the (male) head had not been born in Englefield his wife had been. Of the remaining 41 instances where the birthplace of the head of household was not Englefield, in 23 of them it was in one of the immediately surrounding villages where the estate had a presence. Of the 73 separate households making up the parish, there were five Horn households, four Coxes and five Allens and of the total population of 363 there were 20 people named Cox, 38 named Allen and 30 named Horne, a quarter of the population was from those three families and that doesn't include women who had married and therefore acquired other names.

The professionals, like the Agent, the farm bailiffs, Clerks of the Works at the Timber Yard and the Rector were not among those with a local pedigree. In the last quarter of the 19th century William Rhind, Clerk of Works, was from Scotland and 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, from Warwickshire; and Rectors Charles Travers and, much later David Cound, from Ireland and Wales, respectively. 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. Several of the clergy, among them Francis Eyre and David Cound, also have their final resting place in the same churchyard where they had read the committal for so many of their fellow villagers, although Francis Eyre had for many years been in retirement at Tunbridge Wells when he died in 1878. The Reverend Charles Travers lies there too, 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, came to Englefield from Cholmondley in Cheshire in 1898 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 team, fire brigade and the Club Committee. Agricultural workers were particularly prone to moving jobs regularly at Michaelmas: Emily Horne born in the village, married William Percy Smith in 1907 and over the next seven years

had four children, each born in a different place - and a fifth after the War in yet another place.

As Mary Russell Mitford notes in *Our Village*, her collected essays on life in nearby Three Mile Cross, there was a general tendency 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 village society came to be every bit as much a network of families related by blood and by marriage as did the aristocracy. Perhaps Englefield just maintained the practice for longer than many other places. Caroline Horne and Charles Cox were both born in Englefield and were 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 had been 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 one of Esther's sisters, Ethel, married George Parsons from Parker's Corner. When 11-year-old Emily Cook, like Laurie Lee in Slad, "*was set down from the carrier's cart*" in Englefield on 5th November 1930 to begin her life in the village (though it was a motor bus driven by her Uncle Dick from Watlington on this occasion) the first person she saw was Jack Smith (son of Emily Horne and nephew of Esther and Ethel), one of a number of lads engaged in building a bonfire. Twelve years later they were married in the parish church and thus one of the newest "incomer" families became connected to one of the oldest with over 500 years residence in the village.

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 both the 20th century and the Edwardian era, only 13 of the 67 houses in Englefield had a head of household born in the village (including five Coxes, two Hornes and one Allen). In only two of the 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. 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. 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 in 1901 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 had been 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, was housed 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.

In large part this lack of housing availability was due to the number of houses occupied by retired estate workers or their widows, allowed by the Squire to remain in a supposedly tied cottage for as long as they wished. When William Horne died in 1896 his widow remained (as a laundress) in their home until her death in 1935. Daughter Emily Smith had returned with her children to live with her in 1925 after the death of her husband and she too then remained there until her death in 1981.

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 (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 (Sussex) in 1939 and Frederick Reid (Kent) 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 actually born in Englefield was in 1881 when Caroline Cox (daughter of Caroline Horne and Charles 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 and villagers, and between servants in the same or associated households. May Winchcomb (granddaughter of Thomas Horn and Matilda May, 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 and Hannah Reid, he born in Blackheath and she in Scotland, as was Mabel. 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.

The many large farmhouses built all around the greater estate were intended to house not only the farmers’ families but also the unmarried farm hands who “lived-in”. Edward Horne, whose parents Henry and Ann (née Allen) lived in Common Hill, lodged at Wickcroft Farm in 1851 and in 1855 married Eliza Tinsey (or Tincey) from Aldworth, a servant also at Wickcroft Farm in 1851.

In the 20th century, the disruption of the two World Wars also resulted in a number of marriages. 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 a chauffeur at Speen in 1939. 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. The evacuation of the Woolwich Arsenal to Theale was also responsible for a number of marriages between local people and Londoners both in that and the next generation.



A group of Carriage Drivers, probably having delivered their employers to a function at Englefield House



Grooms



Mr Benyon's Coachman, perhaps Frederick Reid or his predecessor Henry Wheeler



An unknown chauffeur. The car looks to be from about the time just before the Great War but Frederick Reid was still described as James Herbert Benyon's "coachman" as late as 1921. At that time Percy Garton was "chauffeur" to Henry Benyon, then living at Ufton Court.



The Cox family

Estate Management

A key appointment made by Richard Benyon when he came to his new estate in 1854 was that of Agent, usually called Estate Manager these days. 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. Betjeman was probably judging by the distinctively up-market appearance of this detached house with its rusticated quoins, unique in the village, but there is no evidence that an Agent ever lived there.

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 as well, removing the need for a separate architect.

The Agents

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 near the west gate 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 old farmhouse then still stood alongside it, where the farm buildings now are, and was still inhabited by farmer George King, although the census 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 for the estate there. 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, in fact a descendant of the Thane of Cawdor - the real Macbeth. He had come to live in

Padworth Manor House with his mother and father (brother of the 4th Earl of Cawdor) in 1930 from Pembrokeshire where there was a family estate that would largely be subsumed into the Castlemartin tank live firing range a decade later. In 1851 John Campbell, the 1st Earl, had engaged George Gilbert Scott to rebuild the local church, four years before Richard Benyon did the same at Englefield.

Col Campbell commanded the Berkshire Yeomanry between 1952 and 1955 and before coming to Englefield he was Agent to the Marquess of Salisbury at Hatfield - a cousin to Mr Benyon's mother. 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 new 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.

By this time the demands of running a modern estate required a considerably enlarged staff, so the Agency building ceased to be both a home and an office for the Agent and became solely an office building. The Colonel's successor, his deputy Kenneth McDiarmid, was housed in Elmfields in The Street, formerly occupied by the Clerk of Works.

The Clerks of Works

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 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 from 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 initially 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 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 (left) 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, also 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 there earlier that year.

Harry Davis was succeeded in the post by John Bevan, who continued in the post until at least September 1937 but about whom little else is known.

Frederick Dry 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 died in 1967 and was the last Clerks of Works, as such, for the estate. Although his assistant, Mr Cork, stayed for a short while, the job has subsequently been carried out under contract when necessary and Elmfields became home to the Agent when the Agency was converted to be solely an office building.

The Timber Yard

The timber yard was one of the three main centres of employment on the estate, the others being the gardens and Chalkpit Farm. When the first Civil Parish Council was formed in 1894 it was decided at a public meeting of all electors that the five places on the Council would be occupied by Mr Benyon (Chairman), the Clerk of Works George Roake (Vice-chairman) and one representative from each of these centres of employment. The nominee from the timber yard was Daniel Harris, a carpenter living at number 1 in The Street, with Thomas Dixon from number 18 representing the gardeners and the farm blacksmith Henry Horne from 39, Chalkpit Cottages for the Farm.



The timber yard in the 1950s

The site of the timber yard was, at the end of the 18th century at least, the farmyard of Chantry Farm in the possession of Richard Carter and William Toovey, sons-in-law of Elizabeth Powel who had owned it in 1762 when it was described as "*houses, yard and gardens*". A similar-shaped building to the long sawmill is shown by Josiah Ballard in 1762 (right) on the same site and while the upper storey of the present building is of timber and from the 19th century, it stands on a brick wall with the bricks laid in English bond perhaps suggesting that this is a remnant of an 18th century, or earlier, original.



Richard Benyon inherited the estate in 1789 and made it his permanent home in 1802. He immediately set about removing the old village and made a start on



building a new one as well as re-routing traffic around the outskirts. A sketch plan probably from the first quarter of the 19th century and by Richard Benyon himself, shows a block of three houses where the range of buildings, including the forge, bordering the road now stand with another pair just to the right and opposite Chantry Lane. By 1844 (left) the site (68) had become the timber yard owned by Richard Benyon de Beauvoir. The part at 67 was rented to Charles Mason, a builder, who lived in the old Pound Cottage at 66 on the map. At 106 is the old Chantry Cottage and both this and Pound Cottage were replaced by new buildings later in the century. At 104 is the old number 12 and 13, demolished in about 1892.

By the time he died in 1854 Richard Benyon had more or less completed the road building and built a few new houses. If he did not build many more houses it was probably because he was making the preparations for that by establishing the brick kiln to provide the bricks, and the timber yard for the joinery items that would be required. The beneficiary of these preparations was his successor Richard Fellowes Benyon who over the next 40 years completed the village (as well as other villages in the surrounding area) to the state in which it would remain for nearly 100 years, and more or less the position it is today.

Just before he died Richard Benyon de Beauvoir installed a single cylinder beam engine by Thomas Piggott to power the sawmill and it was this that did the work of sawing the timber that was needed for Richard Fellowes Benyon's building programme. This steam engine and boiler were replaced in 1900 by John Wilder of Reading for James Herbert Benyon with another by Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies of Ipswich. A second engine built by Clayton and Shuttleworth dating from 1863 was relocated from one of the farms at the same time to power a saw bench.



The Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies engine

Chris Allen/Englefield Estate Saw Mill, steam engine/CC BY-SA 2.0



The Clayton and Shuttleworth engine

Chris Allen/Steam engine, Englefield Estate Sawmill/CC BY-SA 2.0

After World War 2 the steam engines fell into disuse with power by then being provided by electricity. Since 1970 both engines have been restored by volunteer steam enthusiasts and both are capable of use on special occasions.

The yard hooter was a constant presence in the village throughout the day and originally this would have been operated by steam from the boiler for the engines. It was obviously converted to electricity when the steam engines ceased to operate after the war for it was still in use in the 1950s. Even into the second half of the 20th century the estate started work early and came home again for breakfast, the farm workers often with a can of fresh warm milk straight from the cow and in winter the men at the Yard with a bag of blocks for the fire. They went back again until dinner time (as it was always called), then back again to work until the hooter signalled the end of the day. This was possible because home was, of course, an estate house situated conveniently close to their work.

In the 1880s the church and Englefield House began to be lit by gas. This gas was acetylene made in a similar device to that installed at the Workmen's Club in which water was dripped onto a solid block of calcium carbide. The Timber Yard also had such a device in a gas house attached to the sawmill that was still in place until it was demolished during the 2023 works.

Timber was not only a resource for building on the estate itself but also an important source of income. In March 1847 there were advertised for sale by auction at the Horn Inn, Mortimer 33 oak trees lying at Baughurst, 236 at Pamber, 276 oak and 27 ash trees at Ufton, 95 oak and 10 ash at Mortimer, 51 ash, 7 elm, 9 abele and 5 beech trees at Englefield, all the property of Richard Benyon de Beauvoir. After the Second World War felling was restricted to only what was necessary for use on the estate and for safety and woodland management.



The woodland at Englefield was not commercially managed and is predominantly native hardwoods of all types, although the many elm trees were lost to Dutch Elm Disease, but other parts of the wider estate at Ufton, Mortimer and Pamber Forest are eminently suitable for pine and silver birch which, along with gorse and heather would in fact be the natural flora of this gravel plateau if the land were left to itself. These softwoods are managed as a commercial crop and the birch can be coppiced for a variety of uses; the brushwood shown stacked here is destined for making hurdles on National Hunt racecourses.

The trees that reached the timber yard were sawn in the sawmill on the lower floor of the sawmill building (right). The upper floor was a carpenters' and joiners' workshop.



The whole range of constructional and agricultural uses were covered and for constructional use the hardwood at least may have been used green. Some of the softwood for gates, fencing, etc would be impregnated with creosote to protect it from rot and a large pressure tank was used for this purpose.



Some hardwood trees at least were sawn lengthways into slabs that were then stacked in the shape of the original tree in the area to the left of the buildings in the photograph on page 17.

Spacers between the slabs allowed air circulation while the wood seasoned for several years.

This seasoned timber was then used to make the furniture and other items that were often exhibited at agricultural shows such as the Royal Agricultural Centenary Show in Windsor Great Park in 1939 when the King and Queen congratulated Clerk of Works Frederick Dry on the exhibit which included a panelled fireplace. When the church was rebuilt between 1855 and 1857 all the furnishings were made by the carpenters at the yard and paid for by Mr Benyon.



Fuel for the fire was not the only use found for the many offcuts of timber that would otherwise be wasted. Oliver Hopley, a carpenter through the first half of the 20th century, practised his craft even in his leisure hours (when not singing in the choir, playing cricket, out with the fire brigade or at a meeting of the Club committee) and made many small pieces such as the table seen here.



As we know, the timber yard was not just that, though, and it was also the workplace of a whole range of tradesmen: plumbers, bricklayers, wheelwrights, painters, blacksmiths and carpenters - over 40 men in the 1950s. These men would look after the maintenance of all the buildings on the estate. In the picture a group of wheelwrights fit an iron tyre onto a new wheel.

With the sawmill no longer in use and no demand for wheelwrights and blacksmiths many of the buildings became redundant and some have been re-purposed and rented for commercial or light industrial use. The sawmill building itself has become a new estate office, bringing that facility into the village itself for the first time.



Workmen at the yard in the 19th century...

...and in the early 20th



Various trades from the yard, including painters and plumbers, working at the Agency in the 1930s. Jack Smith at the back third from left in the top picture and second from left in the lower one.





		Bob Chandler	"Brisher" Cox	?	Mark Wise	George Parsons
Alf Steele	Bert Newman		Bert Chandler			



				Bob Chandler		
Jim Warwick	Alf Steele	Frank Why	Bert Chandler	Fred Lamperd	"Snowy" Goodall	

Former workers at the yard in retirement in the 1980s.

The Village School

There is mention in ecclesiastical records of an Englefield Parish School existing between 1540 and 1835 and in 1721 Michael Kirby, an ordained Minister, is listed as schoolmaster. Kirby was ordained on 13th October 1706 and became Rector of Tidmarsh on 2nd May 1707. He seems to have continued in this living until his death on 9th June 1730 despite also being at various times Curate and Rector of Sulham and Curate of Englefield as well as the schoolmaster.

The Old School



Before the opening of the new school building in 1863, the school was at what is now No 11/12 the Street, part of which was also known as the “Mission Cottage” and which was the house of Thomas Horne in 1762. The schoolhouse was the part with the gable end shown in this picture and the schoolroom (probably the

Mission Cottage) was the part to the left of this, then only a single storey. This had the upper storey added when the old school was later converted into two houses, when the part to the right was also added. Miss Winchcomb (whose mother Mary Elizabeth Horne was born in North Street in 1856) suggested that the infant school was located a little further down The Street in one of a pair of cottages that stood opposite the present entrance to the estate yard and where in 1851 Elizabeth Horne (a cousin of Miss Winchcomb), was living in one of them with her parents and described as an “Infant School Mistress”.

The 1844 estate tithe map confirms the location of the school as described above. An interesting anomaly arises from the 1851 census, however. The schoolhouse of 1844 is now listed as “one house void” and the “Englefield School House” appears to be on the road to Theale, situated between 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 in front of the Old Rectory and the Fishery Cottage at the far end of Garrett’s Lane (nowadays Wigmore Lane).

There is no map or plan of this period to show if there was a building but there is a dip in the field close to the road and in the days when this field used to be cultivated

the plough would turn up bricks in this dip. In 1861 the school is very clearly back in its old place.

By at least 1854 the Englefield school was a National School operated under the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. This body, the name abbreviated to the National Society, was set up in 1811 by the Church of England and in 1833 the government began giving grants for new school buildings to the National Society and to the nonconformist British and Foreign School Society. It is possible, therefore, that a new National School was built between 1844 and 1851 but that after Richard Fellowes Benyon inherited the estate in 1854 he moved the school back to the old building as part of a plan to close the road to Theale to the public and retain it simply as a private drive to Englefield House. While the school was back in the old building by 1861 this was only temporary as Richard Benyon then built another new school.

The New School

The new school was built in 1863 by Richard Fellowes Benyon on part of Loring's Meadow and remained in the ownership of his successors James Herbert and Henry Benyon. The stone used is the same as the Lodges on the Pangbourne Road built the previous year and the Rectory built seven years later. The architect for the Rectory was said by Betjeman and Piper to have been P C Hardwick so he may have designed the school as well. If so Englefield is in good company for he was also responsible for Charterhouse School. On the other hand, the lodges and gate screen on the Pangbourne Road are attributed to Richard Armstrong, the architect for the alterations to Englefield House in 1855 and the rebuilding of Upton Nervet church, also in 1862.



The school as it was in 1959 is shown on the left. The original building was modified several times before it assumed this form, the first time as early as 1870 when a separate classroom for the infants was added. They previously had been taught in a gallery in the main classroom, to the general disturbance of the other classes. The gallery was not

removed, though, until 1908 and the school log book notes that double desks were “substituted” so perhaps the gallery continued to be used for the senior class as a sort of “upper circle”. Further work took place in 1882 when the infants’

classroom was enlarged. By 1888 the building had reached the state shown with three rooms. The two main gabled elevations facing the camera in this picture were the main schoolroom on the left and the “bay” on the right, these being in fact one large space with the bay slightly shorter in consequence of having a passageway/cloakroom across the back of it. The infants’ classroom was behind the main schoolroom. In the same year, the Soup Kitchen was opened to supply children with halfpenny dinners and to provide cookery classes but this burnt down in 1901.

The passageway at the back gave access to the bay, the schoolroom and the infants’ classroom, and was the girls’ and infants’ entrance. In 1890 this space was enlarged to provide more room for hats and coats and a galvanised iron roof was added outside, over the space between the infants’ classroom and the headmaster’s house, to give extra protection in wet weather. The galvanised iron was later replaced by glass. In 1912 a half glazed screen was put between the main room and the bay and certainly by the 1950s the older pupils were taught in the bay, with the larger room becoming a general space for assemblies, PT, etc.

The porch at the front in the picture was added in 1892 as a new entrance for the boys and the area in front of the porch became the boys’ playground. The girls’ playground was at the back of the building and was nearly twice as big as the boys’ area, though it did have to accommodate the infants as well. There was a pump in each yard, and from 1892 the boys had, as the girls already had, a washing basin with towels provided for their use. As the Rector observed this provision was, *“oftentimes very necessary this time of year - it is not unusual to see a high-water mark under the chin of a boy where the sponge or the towel has not done its proper and cleansing work; and even if the face has been attended to, hands are often somewhat black”*.

In 1963 the open bicycle shed to the right of the porch was enclosed and modern flush lavatories were installed within. Until then bucket closets were still in use, housed in brick buildings, one for the girls at the bottom of their playground (since re-purposed as a garage) and one for the boys some 25 yards to the right of the picture, along the footpath leading to the Rectory. In the foreground is the school garden where the older boys would learn gardening and to the right of that out of the picture is the remnant of Loring’s Meadow. In the playground to the left of the school building is the swing boat frame, the boats themselves being long gone by 1959.

The school was originally lit by oil lamps but these were replaced by gas in 1888 when the school log book notes that on 5th January, *“The school was lit with gas for the first time at the Night School on Tuesday”*. An entry for 25th May 1935 tells us that *“Electric light has been installed in this school”*.

Heating was by coke fired stoves and it was the job of senior boys to make sure they were regularly stoked and the hods were filled with coke. By this means the area close to the stove was warm enough during the winter but the further reaches of the room were still bitterly cold. In the early days there were many reports of children burning their hands on the stoves, which later had wire guards put round them. These stoves were replaced by electric night storage heaters the late 1960s.

In the later part of the 1950s Henry Benyon considered gifting the school to the education authorities but this was a time when the number on the roll was falling dramatically there was concern that the school might become unviable. In those circumstances, if it were under the ownership of the education authorities they would be able to do what they liked with it and sell it to anyone for any purpose. It was obviously not desirable to have the building used for what might be a totally unsuitable purpose right in the heart of the village so instead of giving the building it was proposed to lease it on a short, but renewable, lease. However there remained other problems concerning the right of way across the playground for fuel deliveries to the Club and for the Club caretaker, whose car was garaged roughly where the modern school buildings now are. There were also problems with adequacy of water supply and sewerage and the issue was still unresolved when Henry Benyon died in 1959.

In 1975 a new school building was erected at the bottom of the schoolhouse garden, on the road that replaced the footpath to the Old Rectory when the new one, St Mark's House, was built in 1963 although the old building remains in use.

Schooldays

Victorian schools were usually structured into two classes: infants from the age of 3 up to the age of 6 and seniors from 6 to 12. At the age of 13 children could start work, though they could work half time from age 9. In 1874 these ages were raised to 10 and 14 respectively. From 1880, attendance at school became compulsory and in order to be able to start work at 10 children had to have achieved at least standard five. At the same time the so-called "dunce's certificate", which allowed less able children to leave school at 10 if they had completed 250 attendances, only became available at 13, and then only if they attended half time for further year. These measures increased the school population considerably especially in Englefield, which was noted for large families. After the Second World War the leaving age was raised to 15.

Few village children continued in education beyond the earliest possible leaving age, particularly in places like Englefield where there was a ready supply of jobs in the

estate yard, in the gardens and on the farms. However, many of those who left at 13 were apprenticed in various trades and therefore became skilled craftsmen filling vital roles as bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, etc. In any case, until the Education Act of 1902 empowered the new Local Education Authorities to set up secondary schools, secondary education was only open to those whose families could afford to send their children to fee-paying schools. Nevertheless, some scholarships were available from a number of sources, including the new County Councils created in 1889, to those who passed an examination. In that year Stephen Claydon was awarded a Boarding Scholarship of £30 at Newbury Grammar School and Arthur Horne a day scholarship of £10 at Kendrick School in Reading. Emily Horne passed the examination but did not gain a scholarship. From 1907 the new grant-aided secondary schools had to provide free places for those who had spent at least two years at a public elementary school and passed an entrance test. In 1925 Peggy Cottrell attended Newbury Girls' School for such a test (result unknown) and in 1935 Graham Fisher (centre of the back row in the picture below) was granted a special free place at Newbury Grammar School. His grammar school education enabled him to become the bomb-aimer in a Lancaster aircraft in 1944 when after two years in training he was killed with all his crew mates on only their second mission.



The 1944 Education Act that raised the leaving age to 15 also introduced the “Tripartite System” of secondary education consisting of grammar schools, secondary technical schools and secondary modern schools, though not all authorities provided technical schools. The allocation of pupils to the various types of secondary school was determined by the 11-plus examination but the difficulty in building enough secondary modern schools meant that the new system did not take effect until 1951, although at Englefield in 1949, ten children took the intelligence

test and two took the full range of examinations. In 1952, five children aged nine took the intelligence test.

In September 1956 the new Willink secondary modern school opened in Burghfield Common and the twelve senior children at Englefield were transferred there. From then on Englefield became officially a one-teacher school for children 5 to 11 only, although it actually continued with two teachers until the retirement of Mrs Claydon in 1958. The grammar school normally allocated to Englefield pupils who passed the 11-plus was at Newbury a 14-mile bus ride away, with classes also on a Saturday morning. A few children managed to get into Stoneham (boys) and Westwood (girls) grammar schools at Southcote in the Reading Education Authority area, a much shorter journey and with no Saturday attendance.



Ray Stevens	?	Roger Martin	Anita Tidbury	Bob Lamperd	Susan Powell	David Baker	Janet Gray	Denzil Owen	Pam Sims	Clive Taylor	Ann Cripps	Peter Young	Eileen Stevens
Eddie Newman	?	Susan Newport	Annette ?	Mrs Claydon			Mr Hayes	Susan Taylor	?	Albert Harwood	Richard Baker		
Alan Harwood		Alan Hayes	Terry Bryant	Derek Harwood		Robin Baker	Timmy Newport	David Young		Raymond Hopgood	Richard Smith		

The last group photograph before the older pupils were moved to Willink

Physical Education

In 1870, with France and Prussia involved in a dress rehearsal for the First World War, military drill was introduced into the curriculum and took place in Loring’s Meadow. It then seems to have been dropped, for it was re-introduced into the timetable in 1888. In 1905 the boys were taken for a “march-out” in the park. Until 1890 the playground was very rough but in that year the large stones were removed and a layer of gravel applied, though in 1907 the inspector noted that the playground

was very rough and recommended that a part of it should be suitably surfaced for drill and from then the drill was inspected by the Inspector of Physical Education for the Berkshire Education Committee. In September 1914 it was recorded that a part of each playground had been paved for physical exercises, though in the 1950s there was only paving in the old boys' playground.

The boys played cricket against other local teams including, in 1866, the Bradfield Union (Workhouse) boys. In 1872 a half-holiday was given (on a Wednesday) on account of a cricket match in the park. Football and stool-ball were also played, the latter perhaps involving the girls who didn't seem to feature much in physical education, although in 1925 swimming lessons for an hour a week were given to both girls and boys, with the girls having a half-hour each day on Monday and Thursday mornings with Miss Benyon and Mrs Claydon and the boys an hour on Friday afternoons with Mr Whittenham and Mrs Claydon.

The two photographs here are from a school sports day in 1926. They appear to have been taken on the tennis court at the Rectory.



Sports Day 1926

Rev & Mrs Whitfield

Mr J H Benyon

Mr Denchfield

Miss Giles Mrs Claydon

Marjorie Morrell

Recreation was not neglected and at the beginning of 1891 swings and a horizontal bar were provided in the boys' playground at the expense of Mr Benyon. The cost of this equipment was met by the sale to the children of food prepared by the girls during a course of cookery lessons, the ingredients having been given by Englefield

House. By the end of February the swings and bars had proved to be a *“daily and constant pleasure”* but in April the same year it was reported that the ropes of the swings had been *“maliciously cut by some person”*. Notwithstanding this ingratitude, a set of parallel bars was added to the “gymnasium” in the same month and it was hoped that some of the retired soldiers and other athletes in the village would show the boys some exercises on both the horizontal and parallel bars.

In 1892, two see-saws were added and the ropes of the swings were replaced by chains. By 1894 there was also a “giant stride”: a tall pole with ropes/chains attached to it. Children could grab hold of the handles and run in circles, so fast that their feet would leave the ground. Most of the fun seems to have been reserved for the boys but in 1906 it was recorded that *“Yesterday the swing boat fell while in use. Luckily the girls in it were not much hurt”* so by then it appears that swing boats may have replaced the swings and been for use by the girls as well. The frame for the swing boats can still be seen in the photograph of the school taken in 1959 with a single horizontal bar remaining alongside it.

The School Garden

In the First World War, official encouragement was also given to the establishment of school gardens and allotments and from 1917 the older schoolboys took gardening as a manual exercise. In Englefield where some of the boys would certainly go on to become gardeners on the estate and the estate workers houses all had large gardens anyway (which were expected to be kept tidy) it was good preparation in general.

In the next war, the school garden in Loring’s Meadow next to the school was begun as part of the Dig for Victory campaign in 1941 and the first plant (a spring cabbage) was placed by the headmaster on 26th September. At that time there were 60 children on the roll and the garden measured some 800 square yards. Under the School Garden Act of 1942 the produce was sold, with the proceeds being shared by the school and the authority. On 25th January 1943 the school received £12-13s-4d from the sale of produce, £2-2s-8d being remitted to Reading.

In 1953 the Rector proposed to the managers that the school garden should be discontinued and a smaller area of some 300 sq yds allocated at the bottom of the schoolhouse garden. There were then only nine boys taking gardening, for two hours a week, the oldest being 12. The managers did not agree but the garden seems to have been much curtailed in any case, becoming merely the allotment-sized strip alongside the road as seen in the picture on page 26. The garden was discontinued anyway after 1956 when the school became solely a primary school.

School Fees

Until 1891 parents had to pay to send their children to the school despite the fact that education was compulsory and they were taken to court if their children did not attend regularly. In 1882 James Ballard was summonsed to the Reading Magistrates' Court for not sending his child regularly to school and Mrs Ballard, who attended court in his place, told the Magistrates that she sent the regular fee but the Head Master, Mr Eastman, would not accept it. Fees were limited by law to a maximum of 9d per week and in Englefield were 6d a week, reduced to 2d a week for the first child and 1d for each further one if the parents were labourers but by authority of the school managers, who had consulted the Education Department, children were fined for irregular attendance and Mr Eastman had raised the fees for Ada Ballard by 1d for that reason.

In May the following year George Hedges was sent home to get money for school fees for himself and his sister, which were in arrears to the tune of two shillings. In January 1876 the Wiggins children had also been sent home for the same reason. The Free Education Act of 1891 provided government grants of up to ten shillings a week and the children at Englefield had free schooling from the start of the new term on 11th September that year.

Wartime

During the First World War the school was closed on four afternoons in September 1918 for blackberrying when both teachers and pupils collected blackberries and other fruit for making jam, as well as horse chestnuts for use in making anti-gas respirator filters. Allotments were established alongside the Pangbourne Road opposite Chalkpit Cottages, which may be where the older boys did their gardening. In a reversion to an old practice, school children were excused attendance at school to help with agricultural and other work.

In September 1939 the school opened for both Englefield children and evacuees from London in almost equal numbers: 40 Englefield and 39 evacuees. The initial proposal was that the school would open on 12th September with the Englefield children attending from 8.50 until 12.30 and the London children being taught by their own teachers from 1.00 until 4.30 but by the 19th all the children were being taught together. By January 1940 the number of evacuees at the school had fallen to 17.

As in the First World War, children were excused attendance at school to help with agriculture and potato picking. "Spud-hucking", the local term for picking up the

potatoes lifted by the mechanical harvester, was a common activity that continued for a time after the war was over.

Homework

Homework for the children was sometimes a bone of contention, as it is today, but at no time was it more so than in the 1880s under the headmastership of Henry Best, as was corporal punishment. Several parents objected to the amount of work the children were expected to do and declared that their children were suffering bad dreams or insomnia as a result. Illness was prevalent at this time. John Gibson had his sons John and Edward examined by Dr Cox who certified that they were suffering from overwork and advised a short relaxation from homework.

In 1883 Henry Best noted that he had *“commenced giving marks for work, especially home lessons...”*. This involved giving extra marks for work in excess of *“an ordinary and reasonable amount”*, with a minus mark for work below the expected standard. The child receiving the least marks each week received no play during the following week.

The School Roll

At the 1891 census the total population of the parish was 320, down from 389 in 1881. Despite this there were 114 children at the school, 25 of whom lived outside the parish boundary (remembering that at this time North Street and Mayridge were outside the boundary, as they still are for ecclesiastical matters), leaving 89 children from the parish, considerably more than the one fifth of the population that the government expected the school to provide for. These numbers certainly explain the fact that as well as the headteacher the school always had at least two assistant teachers in addition to the monitors.

It was customary to give a prize to those children who had good attendance and in 1888 fifty-four children received the prize for making at least 400 attendances out of a possible 430. Nine children had a perfect 100% attendance record.

In 1891 when there were 114 children at the school the capacity was 120. The attendance registers for the years up to 1901 were all lost when the Soup Kitchen burnt down in that year but in 1908 the capacity was 120 in the mixed class plus another 37 infants - which would have been something of a squeeze and certainly not enough room for modern teaching methods. While the actual numbers in the mixed class remained fairly constant at around 55 through the decade, the number of infants suffered a decline from 30 in 1904 to only 18 in 1907. This pattern was

repeated between 1924 and 1934 with a fairly steady average of 40 in the mixed class but declining numbers in the infants, from 12 in 1924 down to only nine in 1934 despite a sudden peak of 23 in 1927. Through the second half of the 1930s the numbers in both groups declined, down to 28 mixed and only 6 infants by the start



The infants class in 1924

of the Second World War. At the end of the War the senior numbers had declined further to 19 but the infants numbers had risen to the same figure. The 1950s saw a rather more serious decline in numbers from 37 in the year Queen Elizabeth II came to the throne down to just 12 by the end of the decade. The main cause of this sudden fall was the opening of the new Willink Secondary Modern school in 1956.



1953

The small number of children remaining at the school was almost responsible for its closure but instead nearby schools at Sulham and Tidmarsh with similarly

small numbers were closed and their pupils sent to Englefield. This bolstered the numbers sufficiently to ensure viability.

Absences

In rural areas children could be excused from school for up to six weeks to help with agricultural work and this often happened at Englefield. The long summer holiday was even called the “Harvest Holiday”. In May 1865 it was noted that several lads were away haymaking and on 2nd July that year a very poor attendance was recorded on account of a number of boys out at work. In June four years later the attendance was small on account of “haymaking and bee-minding”. In October 1870 it was noted that 73 children were away on the morning and 76 in the afternoon, probably because the high wind during the night had blown down a great number of acorns. The acorns could be sold to Mr Benyon’s gamekeepers and in 1894 the Rector reminds us that *“it is not lawful but downright robbery to sell them to any other person”*. The acorns were stored in the barn at Wimbleton’s and used to feed the deer through the winter.

Illness was one cause of absence and in the later years of the 19th century Englefield suffered a number of epidemics including measles in 1881, 1884 and again in 1893. In 1881 the school was closed from 14th January to 19th February. In 1893 a measles epidemic, which resulted in scarlet fever, caused the school to be closed on 12th October when 36 children were absent. When school resumed on October 23rd it was found that a further seven fresh cases had occurred in the previous two days so the school was closed by the managers for a further three days and this closure was then extended by the sanitary authority until 3rd January 1894. Four children from two families died in this epidemic: Margaret and William Eyles from number 3 in The Street and Jesse and Cecil Povey from Malthouse Farm. An epidemic of mumps occurred in 1897 when it was noted on 5th February that *“The attendance today is the worst the school has ever experienced, there being only seven children present in the infants and 39 in the Mixed School; 57% of the whole. Mumps and very wet weather are the two causes”*. There was also smallpox in 1871 but individual medical reasons also accounted for many absences. Ringworm was quite common and in 1883 Mrs Wise was asked to keep Louisa at home until a ringworm on her neck had disappeared. A year later Fred and Elizabeth Cooper were sent home with ringworms and in 1889 Mary and Martha Harris were sent home with instruction not to return *“unless their swarming heads are thoroughly cleansed of vermin”*. Also in 1883 Mrs Fisher was asked to keep Nellie at home until the pimples on her hands had disappeared.

The weather, as noted in 1897, was a common cause of absence with snow and heavy rain making it difficult for children to get (on foot, of course) from the

outlying houses. In January 1940 much snow and frost was the reason for a poor attendance with only 24 out of 57 pupils present. In this the evacuated London children did rather better than the locals with 10 present out of 17 whereas the local children could only muster 14 out of 40. It may be that the London children were accommodated nearby while many of the local children came from more outlying houses. A little later, in the 1950s, for example, Ann Cripps lived at Lambden's Farm Cottages and used to walk to school (a distance of two miles) with her mother and sister across the Park, where they were sometimes chased by cows.

At the other extreme, in June 1869 it was reported in the local paper that *"On Monday morning, about a quarter past 11, during the fiercely hot sunshine which then prevailed, a boy, attending the National School at Englefield, named James Ballard, was struck down by a sunstroke. He fell like one dead, and remained in a state of insensibility for two hours. He was most assiduously cared for, and all the usual remedies administered, pending the arrival of a medical gentleman, for which a man on horseback was despatched. The boy fell in one of the rooms at the School at the very moment he had returned from a few minutes' recreation during forenoon school. Under the care of Mr. Cox, the boy (who is about 12 years old) is slowly progressing, and it is to be hoped no permanent injury will follow"*.

Less legitimate excuses for absence included the Cavalry exercising at Theale in 1865, the General Election in 1868 and the hounds meeting in the village. In February 1893 the Master of Foxhounds, Mr Bligh, asked that children be let out of school at eleven to see them, but as no holiday had been given the previous year the managers declined. In February the following year when hounds met John Bond and William Fowler took matters into their own hands and "played away" all one afternoon.

Despite all this, in 1904 the attendance for the three months to May was the highest percentage in the Bradfield District and in 1910 George Claydon received from the Education Committee a silver medal for seven years' perfect attendance.

Punishment

Corporal punishment was, of course, common for both boys and girls, although there seems to have been little of it recorded until Henry Best, a notorious user of the cane, came to the school in 1883. In a single month that year Albin Jupp, after being cautioned for his *"daring ways"* received two stripes of the cane for throwing some kind of hard substance around the room, E Allen, J Allen and W Elliot were all given four stripes on the hands for failing to do homework even though given extra time in class the next day, and for talking whilst changing lessons Kate Davis was given two stripes, Sarah Bradley three, Fred Coombes four and Solomon Allen and

Walter Abery five each. In June 1883 Chas Phillips was given two stripes for putting his toe on the seat of Walter Abery as he sat down *"thereby placing him in danger"*. A month later Walter Hall received six stripes for calling William May *"a devil"* and in October A Adlum was punished with two stripes after the Monitor heard her use the words *"you're a silly brute"*. After Ernest Allen's mother complained, Best stated his policy as *"with regard to lesson work, never to use the cane unless nothing at all in the way of honest work is done; also with regard to talking, never to use the cane for less than six times talking"*.

The school log book for 1886 records that *"Agnes Harris, an infant, being very sulky and refusing to obey her teacher force was used and she was compelled by the cane to do that required of her"*. Agnes's father took her to Dr Cox and told Best that in consequence of two marks on her arm he must take the child from the school and expose him unless he paid the doctor's bill. This was reported to the school managers and although the outcome is not reported, Best was replaced by Henry Sait the following year.

Having "played away" in 1893 to see the hounds, John Bond was *"duly whipped"* but William Fowler who got very wet and caught influenza was considered to have suffered enough. John Bond left the school at 14 and became an apprentice wheelwright on the Estate but later left to become a carpenter with the local firm of E C R Wigmore at Theale where he remained for 50 years. In 1969, then living at Beenham, he celebrated his 90th birthday with a party at Beenham Village Hall.

Other punishments were also used: Miss Winchcomb recalled being punished in about 1900 for talking in class by being made to stand on one of the wooden forms with a duster tied over her eyes. *"Not a pleasant experience for a small child"*, she remembered. Ernest Allen was another who suffered the same punishment.

Teachers

Victorian schools usually used the monitorial system by which older pupils were used to teach the younger ones under control and guidance of a qualified head teacher who would have attended a training college. The monitors continued their own education and passed on the knowledge they learned but did not receive any instruction in teaching method. A formal pupil-teacher apprenticeship system was introduced nationally in 1846, the same year that Maria Harris gained a first class scholarship and entered Newlands Training College, but the use of untrained Monitors clearly continued, for in 1868 Sarah Burgess is mentioned as a Monitor and in 1904 Edith Annie Buckland (daughter of the Head Keeper) *"...commenced her duties in the Infants classroom as monitress"*. Mabel Reid served as a Monitress at the school from 1908 to 1912, for which she was paid £5-4s annually. Mabel Wells

apparently followed her a monitress until she left the village in 1918 being replaced by Alice Joyce.

Pupil-teachers were formally apprenticed at the age of 13 for a period of five years, during which time they taught the children for some of the time while they also learned the art of teaching by part-time attendance at a pupil-training centre (including Saturdays) and continued their education under the head teacher in the evenings. After completion of their apprenticeship the pupil-teachers could move to a training college to complete their professional and academic education. Miss G A Smythe completed four years' training as a pupil-teacher at Englefield in 1929.

The 1841 census lists Elizabeth Giles, aged 70, as schoolmistress and her son Robert Giles (40) as schoolmaster, as they still were in 1844. The 1851 census that appears to locate the school elsewhere has as schoolmistress Henrietta Percy, aged 21 and from Bermondsey, although a record from three years later gives Miss Susan Worsfold as the Mistress of "the National School, Englefield". The 1861 census (with the school back in its old location) has Miss Emiline Vick as schoolmistress.

In 1851 Elizabeth Horne was an infant teacher living with her parents Charles and Mary at number 13, perhaps where the infants were taught, next to the old school. She married Thomas Herbert in 1858 but they continued to live with her (now widowed) mother at number 13 and she was still Infant School Mistress. By 1871 she and her husband were living at Mile House Cottages and her occupation was "Shepherd's wife". The school log records that in June 1865 "*Mrs Herbert took sewing in the afternoon*" so perhaps she had ceased to be a full-time teacher by then and just helped occasionally.

The turnover of headteachers in the early years seems to have been fairly rapid. Miss Vick is still listed as Mistress of the National School in 1863, the year the new school was opened, but by 1866 H W Bellows was the school master of the new school. The following year it was A Compton, then the year after that Henry S Brickhill. Brickhill was dismissed instantly by the managers on 13th June 1870 for behaving improperly towards Sarah Burgess, a pupil who was engaged as a pupil teacher in that year. He initially denied the accusation made by her mother, but later admitted it and left on 17th June, at which point the school closed. Sarah Burgess continued as a pupil teacher for two more years but then resigned to go out into service.

After some difficulty in finding a qualified teacher at short notice the managers obtained the services of Mr Berry from All Saints, Paddington and with the assistance of his sister he reopened the school on 4th July and ran it until the end of term on the 29th. On 12th September the school was reopened under a new

headmaster, John Eastman, but by 1883 he had been replaced by Henry J Best. Best's tenure seems to have been the only time when a good deal of corporal punishment was inflicted and, as noted earlier, and he gave way to Henry Sait in 1887. Sait stayed for only two years and in 1889 he moved to Woolton Hill school. Albert E Robinson took over and brought some stability at last, for he served until 1903 when he moved to Bradfield school, although he seems to have remained closely involved with the cricket club and Workmen's Club. His place was taken by Thomas Golding, who also stayed for a reasonable time but the 1920s seem to have been another period of rapid turnover with first John Wittenham and then by 1926 Mr Denchfield. In 1930 John Turnbull took over and stayed until he was succeeded by Austin Hayes in 1951.

There was a succession of assistant mistresses - the only mention of a man as other than headteacher seems to be in 1896 when John Harris, a candidate for pupil-teachership, "*left by mutual consent of his parents and the school managers to engage in another profession*". Some other Assistant Teachers known to have been at Englefield are Ellen Godfrey from 1883 to 1886, Isabella Munt in 1886, Emily Gray in 1887 and 88, Emma Tucker in 1887 and E Planner in 1888. Maria Harris was a pupil teacher with Sarah Burgess in 1872.



Mr Denchfield
Christine Smyth Mrs Claydon Miss Giles

Mabel Reid who had been first a pupil and then a Monitress at the school took over the infant class in 1918 from Miss Janes who, despite having "*given universal satisfaction in the care and teaching of the infants*" left to "*pursue another profession*". Mabel married Arthur Claydon from the Club on 4th August the following year and although she gave birth to no child of her own, over the next 40 years cared for many on a daily basis, to each of whom she gave a good start in life.

Miss Giles was another long-serving member of the school staff and both these ladies can also be seen in many of the group photographs.

In 1908 the headteacher was paid an annual salary of £125, which had risen to £357 by 1929. In 1945 the salary was still only £360 but the following year jumped to £570 and the Infants' teacher received £95. In 1952 the headteacher received £699 and the Infants' teacher £338. The headteacher had accommodation provided in the schoolhouse and Mabel Claydon had her housing provided by virtue of the fact that her husband Arthur worked on the estate.

Assistant Mistresses were often accommodated in various houses in the village and in May 1891 it was noted that *"the Assistant Mistresses are about to remove into No. 5 to set free the Rectory Cottage for Mr. Bligh's Coachman"*. These would have been Miss E M Fillingham and Miss Alice Downing. Mr Bligh rented the Rectory for a few years while the bachelor Reverend Arthur Heigham lived in number 9 in The Street. When he resigned the living in 1896 and was succeeded by the Reverend Henry Savill Young, who had a family and moved back into the Rectory, the assistant teachers moved across to number 9 and in 1899 Mary Elizabeth Winchcomb (widowed by the measles epidemic that broke out in 1893) moved into number 8 in The Street to act as housekeeper to them. Number 9 was occupied by various teachers until 1907 when two teachers from Theale were appointed and the house was used for an estate worker. The furniture, which had been supplied by the Squire, was dispersed among the villagers.

Royalty

The school was closed for a week's holiday on 29th May 1953 in celebration of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen visited Englefield House in November 1956. Coloured lights, flags and other decorations lined the road by the school. Villagers and their friends filled the school playground and the schoolchildren lined the road. To a great cheer the car came to a halt outside the school, the Rector made a speech of welcome and Lorna Young presented Her Majesty with a bouquet of lily-of-the-valley and pink rosebuds.

Princess Margaret visited Englefield House on 19th July 1950 and Mrs Benyon asked the schoolchildren to see her at Appleton's Corner when Janet Soper presented her with a bouquet of carnations.

On 20th January 1955 the Duke of Edinburgh landed by helicopter in the park to watch a display of farming procedures and the schoolchildren were allowed to watch his arrival.



In July 1980 the Queen Mother paid a second visit to Englefield, her first having been, when Queen, to the hospital at Englefield House during World War 2.



1906



1913



1947



Circa 1950

	Mr	Frances	Gerald	David	Enid	Hugh	James	Mrs	Mrs
	Turnbull	Dyer	Stevens	Baker	Green	Amor	Maynard	Claydon	Parsons
Pamela	Martha	Annette	Sheila	Gillian	Valerie	Rodney	Peter	Raymond	John
Blandford	Midwinter	Bush	Why	Lamperd	Young	Young	Smythe	Smith	Green
Doreen	Jean	Geoffrey	Robert	Hazel	Jennifer	Violet	Janet	Denzil	Peter
Jones	Maynard	Haynes	Turner	Young	Haynes	Garton	Soper	Owen	Young
	Iris		Susan	Diana	David		William		Robert
	Garton		Powell	Stringer	Newman		Brown		Lamperd



1955

The Workmen's Club

The building of the club began in 1884 and it was opened with great ceremony by Mr Benyon on 1st January 1885 as a Workmen's Club and Reading Room. Mr Benyon had paid for the building for which a nominal rent of five shillings was to be paid, if demanded.

A committee of management was appointed to remain in office until Lady Day next, when a general meeting of members would be held and a new committee would be elected by ballot. The Club President was, of course, Mr Benyon with the Rector and the Club Steward as other ex officio committee members. The remaining members of the committee were to be elected annually.

Members had to be aged at least 17 and either be parishioners of Englefield, live in one of Mr Benyon's houses or work on the estate. The hours of opening were between six and ten in the evening from Michaelmas to Lady Day and from seven to ten from Lady Day to Michaelmas.

Smoking was permitted but refreshments were not considered desirable as most of the members would live close at hand. Books were available for use in the room only and daily, weekly and illustrated papers were also available at the expense of Mr Benyon for the first six months. Draughts, chess, dominoes and other games were provided but cards and gambling were not permitted. Political or religious discussions were strictly prohibited. The subscription was one penny a week, payable quarterly in advance.

At Christmas 1885 an *"interesting and successful entertainment was given by the members of the club to the villagers only"* with Mr Benyon in the chair and Mrs Benyon and their daughters also present. The chairman himself amused the audience with a reading "A night with a stork" and the remainder of the programme was:

Pianoforte solo	Mr H J Best
Song - Beautiful Isle of the Sea	Mr J Adlum
Trio - Lordly Gallants	A Jupp, J Chamberlain, D Harris
Song - Seventy-two	Mr E Shrimpton
Trio - Ye Shepherds, etc	A Jupp, J Chamberlain, J Adlum
Song - The Lost Chord	Mr H J Best
Duet - Piano and Ophicleide,	H Best and E Shrimpton
Old English Airs	
Song - The Old Brigade	Mr F G Barnes
Concertina solo	Alfred Jupp

Song - The Union Jack

Trio - When shall we three, etc

Song - Powder Monkey

Duet - Piano and Ophicleide,

The Village Blacksmith

Song - Beautiful Star

Trio - Here's a health unto her Majesty

William Horne

A Jupp, J Chamberlain, J Adlum

Mr Shrimpton

H Best and E Shrimpton

Mr J Adlum

A Jupp, J Chamberlain, D Harris

Notwithstanding the success of this event, in this alcohol-free guise the club did not prosper and on 16th June 1886 it was re-opened with ginger beer, made by Mr Claydon, squash, whisky, gin, rum, brandy and beer for sale as well as cigars and tobacco.

Next door to where the Workmen's Club was built had been the Crown Inn, later Crown Cottage, and there was also at that time another inn, called the 'Three Daggers, in the village. Well before the 1880s, though, both of these had gone, although there was the New Inn and the Thatcher's Arms at North Street as well as many public houses in Theale. The Club was intended as a place for the men to go in the evenings to keep them away from these places: "*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*" as the Rector put it.



The Club originally consisted of a single large room (in the centre of this picture with the gable end facing) with living accommodation for the Steward attached (left of the gable end). In 1892 the porch was added and in 1894 the Billiard Room was built at right angles to the main clubroom, across the school

playground (right hand side). The billiard table was installed in early 1895 and first game (of "50-up") was played between the Secretary (A E Robinson, the Schoolmaster) and the Steward on 5th March that year. A raised dais ran along the west wall of the billiard room with a long settle for spectators and those awaiting their turn to play. Players were allocated half an hour for a charge of twopence. The bar cellar was the small flat-roofed, single-storey addition built into the angle between the main Club room and the Steward's house (with blue door facing) and service was through a hatch in the wall between it and the clubroom. This may not

have been added until 1895 when it is known that the matching extension to house the Post Office was built (left, behind the wooden fence). In the 1930s an extension was added on the south side of the Billiard Room to house a ladies' cloakroom with WC and a wash basin with a cold tap. Toilet facilities were also provided for the men in the space between the boiler room at the back of the main clubroom and the coke store.

The Steward's accommodation initially comprised a living room and kitchen on the ground floor and three bedrooms upstairs. The living room was known as the "Committee Room" and initially used for meetings of the Committee. An extension to the Steward's accommodation was added in 1909 and comprised another downstairs sitting room and a large larder, with a bedroom above. Until the ladies' cloakroom was built the women who attended the dances used the bedrooms of the Steward's family as cloakrooms. The standard of accommodation was probably normal for the 1880s when it was built but remained little improved for the next 80 years.

The Stewards

In the first 75 years of the Club's existence there were two Stewards. The first was Mr James Claydon who also worked as a gardener and in 1892 the Steward's remuneration was £4 a year, with a gratuity of £1 for Mrs Claydon. From 1st January 1893 the salary was raised to £6.

In addition to catering for functions at the Club, the caretaker was also responsible for erecting the Members' Tent at cricket matches (for which 2/6 was paid in 1892) and for providing the teas.

In 1930 Mr and Mrs Claydon retired and Mr Cook took over having just left the Army after 26 years' service with the Royal Berkshire Regiment, including seven years in India and the First World War in France.



Mr and Mrs Claydon at their new home
"Anningsley" in Burghfield Common

The remuneration as Steward of the Club was then £1 per week, with additional payments as determined by the committee for catering for the various functions. By 1949 the salary had doubled to £104 a year, although no mention was then made of any extra payment for functions. The following year the flat annual rate



W G Cook and his daughter
Emily outside the Club on
her wedding day in 1942

was replaced by an hourly rate of two shillings and threepence. Coal and light were provided and the house was free of rent and rates.

In addition to the jobs of Club Steward and Sub-postmaster he also took over from James Claydon the responsibilities of groundsman of the cricket field (which hosted lacrosse matches for the Berkshire Ladies team in the winter) and provider of teas at matches. Another role was as treasurer of the football club. At the outbreak of the War in 1939 all these extra duties ceased (although he then became the Chief Air Raid Warden) and were not taken on again afterwards.

When Mr Cook retired in 1963 he was briefly succeeded by Mr Ron Lee and then he by Mr and

Mrs Sergeant, by which time the Workmen's Club had become a general members' social club open to all rather than just the preserve of the estate workmen. At the end of 2018 it succumbed to the pressures afflicting so many rural licensed establishments and closed its doors. After extensive refurbishment, including the removal of an accretion of modern extensions and a return to the original design, the Club has reopened as a Village Hall run by a charity.

The Library

In continuation of its original purpose, a lending library was provided for members. This was accommodated in the billiard room, which had a range of cupboards up to waist height all along the south wall and on top of these bookshelves up to the high ceiling level. A much lower suspended ceiling was installed as part of modernisation during the late 20th century but has now been removed again to reinstate the original.

New books were added each year with about eight or ten pounds being spent annually in the 1890s. In 1894 there were 898 books and a further 57 were added in 1895 for a total of £9 11s 6d. The books were a mixture of fiction, both classic and popular, and non-fiction with a number of scientific and technical books. There were also bound sets of popular periodicals such as the Strand magazine and the English Illustrated. Lending was over 1200 books per year in 1895 and by 1909 there were 1635 volumes on the shelves, although when £10 for new books was

voted at the AGM in 1910 and suggestions were sought the Rector was “...*sorry to see how little interest is taken in the matter*”.

In addition to the library, which eventually filled the shelves, weekly and monthly newspapers and magazines continued to be provided as the gift of the President.

The books remained on their shelves, though long unread, up to the 1970s.

W G Cook

William George Cook who was Steward of the Workmen's Club for over 30 years was born on 5th May 1884 at Benson in Oxfordshire, the eldest child of William James and Hannah Cook. They lived initially with his great-grandfather who was licensee of the Three Horseshoes in Benson but they later moved to Watlington where his father was a local carrier and horse dealer. He was sent back to Benson to work for his grandfather on his farm but on 1st March 1904 after a family argument he ran away and joined the Army at Reading. The pony was quickly harnessed to the trap but his father and grandfather arrived too late to prevent his enlistment in Second Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment. He was subsequently cut out of his grandfather's will.

After home service for 3 years, including time spent at The Curragh in Ireland, he was posted with the battalion to India where they took part in the 1911 Delhi Durbar to celebrate the coronation of King George V the previous year. At the outbreak of war the battalion returned to the UK, reaching Liverpool on 23rd October 1914. On 4th November 1914 he married Jessie Robinson Smith at Watlington and, his service record shows, arrived at Le Havre with the battalion on 5th November! He was taken prisoner on 27th May 1918 when the Battalion was overrun at Berry Au Bac with estimated casualties of 23 officers and 600 other ranks (leaving only 1 officer and 68 other ranks) during the great German advance.

When he was repatriated after the war he served with the battalion in the UK and Germany until he retired in 1930, having reached the rank of Colour Sergeant. He needed to find both a job and accommodation and was recommended by his Commanding Officer for two jobs: one as gatekeeper at Blenheim Palace and the other as Steward of the Workmen's Club at Englefield. He decided on Englefield, perhaps an odd choice as he had run away to join the Army precisely to avoid that sort of thing.

In 1963 he retired from the Club and Post Office and went to live at Tilehurst in a house he had bought new in the 1930s using his Army Gratuity. He died peacefully while sitting in the garden on 26th June 1973.

Entertainment

Games such as bagatelle, cribbage and darts were available as well as snooker and billiards, and games tournaments against neighbouring villages were frequently played. Whist drives, darts matches and snooker matches were a regular feature through the 1950s. In 1891 annual dances started to be held on a trial basis and, having been pronounced a success, were continued thereafter. Entry to these was free to Club members with tickets for their lady partners at threepence.

After the first entertainment in 1885, regular smoking concerts were also held in the Club, when the members entertained each other. George Johnson, a foreman gardener and a batchelor living in the Bothy in 1891, was a regular at the Club and a member of the committee. He often sang songs of a military nature at the smoking concerts. At a dance in November 1899 he entertained the company with a rendition of "Tommy Atkins" after which a collection was made for the widows and orphans of the soldiers and sailors then "*doing Tommy's duty in South Africa*" as the Rector put it. Within a few months George Johnson was himself doing that duty. He sent regular letters back to the Rector, who published some in the Parish News. On his return from South Africa a smoking concert was held in the Club on 13th August 1901 to welcome him home. George Pusey a house painter from North Street saw service in South Africa too and was also a guest at the welcome-home concert.

A special dance was held on 7th June 1900 to celebrate the relief of Mafeking. Dancing went on from eight until midnight and the evening concluded with all present joining in singing *Rule Britannia* and *God Save The Queen*. A new floor was laid in time for the first of the regular winter dances on 24th October that year, attended by about 50 people who danced from seven until eleven pm. In later years Mr Cook's wife and daughter would scrub this floor annually on their hands and knees. The new floor is somewhat easier to keep clean.

At New Year there was the President's Dance with free admission for both the members and their lady guests (although the lady's name had to be notified to the Steward beforehand) and free food plus the first drink. This was discontinued on the death of James Herbert Benyon in 1935 and replaced, after World War 2, with an ordinary dance.

In 1895 a troupe of "minstrels" was formed from the members and led by Mr Robinson, the schoolmaster. For several years they put on entertainments in the Long Gallery at Englefield House during the winter.

In 1894 it was proposed to open the Club to women for one afternoon each week *“to read, to work, to talk, to drink tea and biscuits (one penny) or otherwise amuse themselves”*. This was not considered a success, with numbers of 7, 5 and 3 (exclusive of babies) attending in the first three weeks, and was abandoned at the AGM in January 1895. The Rector felt that this proved that *“...the women of our village are too busy or happy at home to care to come out once a week...”*.

Life at the Club

When Mr Cook took over as caretaker of the Club on his retirement from the Army in November 1930 he moved into the Steward's house with his wife and three children. His second daughter, Emily Cook who remained with her parents, her husband and son at the Club until they all moved to Tilehurst in 1963, gives us an idea of what life was like there before the Second World War. Having spent her life thus far (she was then 11) in various Army married quarters, she felt that the village surroundings with the park and the lake seemed like paradise. However, she found the cottage and amenities very primitive to say the least.

There were about twenty oil lamps in all in the Club, eight above the billiard table to start with. All had to be filled, wicks trimmed and the lamp glasses washed and polished every day. Another hardship was the lack of water and a sink indoors. The water had to be fetched from an outside pump and washing-up was done in a bowl on the kitchen table.

They were required to provide the refreshments for the whist drives and dances, games tournaments and darts matches. The New Year's Eve Squire's Dance, with 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 for hot water for washing-up and each bowl of dirty water had to be taken outside and emptied on the garden. If it was cold and frosty the outside pump would freeze up and each venture out for water meant taking a kettle of boiling water to thaw the pump first. Then next time refills were needed the pump would be solid again despite copious lagging and wrapping-up.

After Army quarters it was goodbye to creature comforts like a water closet. The lavatory was a wooden seat with large bucket beneath situated in a boarded-off corner of one of the sheds - at least this was a slight improvement on the two-seater “thunderbox” at Watlington (in the house of her mother's parents where she had been living since her father left the Army). The nature of the facilities was not the only problem: *“Should one be unwise enough to want to pay a visit after dark it meant*

putting on your 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 squeaks and scuffles. Should the lamp shine into the corners there would be the horrible red eyes of rats, causing shrieks of terror and a very hasty end to operations and a withdrawal to safety”.

The late 1930s saw the advent of the Elsan chemical closet, luxury indeed. It was installed in a small shed nearer to the house, which seems to have been an outside larder at some time. This had a concrete floor, a small window and not so much as a mousehole. It was made clean; a fresh coat of whitewash on the walls, then came a washstand fitted with bowl, towel rails on the end and a drawer at the bottom for bits and pieces. A large mirror was hung above and a mat put on the floor. Another plus was a lock and key to ensure privacy, sadly lacking before. Of course it wasn't big enough to take the bath, a six-foot long galvanised one which was hung on the wall outside when not in use.

Having a bath meant filling the copper in the wash-house then lighting the fire underneath and waiting for the water to heat. In the winter the bath would be carried in and placed in front of the kitchen range but in the summer you bathed in the wash-house. This was a less arduous task as it saved countless trips back and forth with buckets of water. Then one would enjoy a lovely bath, ever mindful of the fact that once dried and dressed the baling-out operation would begin, thus undoing the soothing effect of the bath.

Somewhere in the 1930s a small annexe to the billiard room was built to provide a ladies' cloakroom with flush toilet and a hand basin with a cold tap. The men's facilities were also similarly upgraded and as this latter facility was accessible from the garden through the coke store without going through the Club, the men of the family could now enjoy the luxury at all times. The women, however, could only use the new ladies' cloakroom during the day when the Club was closed.

Oil lamps were scrapped in favour of acetylene gas, made in an outhouse. A very large machine was installed and into this troughs of carbide would be inserted. Each morning the troughs would be full of a greyish-white sludge which had to be emptied and the troughs refilled with fresh lumps of carbide, this gave off an extremely nasty smell.

The next step forward was electricity and the allowance was three lights and a power plug. As there were three rooms downstairs that meant candles would still be needed upstairs so Mr Cook paid an electrician to put a plug in each bedroom so they could have bedside lamps. He also bought a Baby Belling electric cooker for use in the summer but the range was still used in winter. This was for warmth as much as anything because although the club room had radiators fed from a boiler

with the water heated by a furnace the only means of heating the house apart from the range was by a coal fire in each room downstairs or by paraffin heaters.

A sink and indoor pump were also installed. The sink was about three inches deep and placed on two brick piers but owing to its shallowness, water was continually slopping over, but at least there was a waste pipe and drain outside. At the end of the Second World War piped water was laid on, with the trenches being dug by German and Italian prisoners of war, and all the cottages in the village were provided with baths and flush toilets. All except for the Club and Rectory Cottage that is, although in the Club a tap was at least exchanged for the pump in the kitchen and, through the good offices of the plumber and in the teeth of opposition from the Clerk of the Works, a deeper sink replaced the shallow one. These last two premises did not get the benefit of indoor baths and flush toilets until the 1960s.

The Village Shop and Local Tradesmen

The shop is one of the older buildings in The Street, certainly parts of it are from the 18th century or perhaps earlier. It was originally a bakery as well. 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. Despite that when his father retired he took over the business and ran it for about 20 years. James remained unmarried and died in February 1901 after which Frederick Pocock became the grocer and baker. After he died in 1915 his widow Alice carried on running the shop single-handedly until at least 1921. Although her younger son Albert was still living with her then he was employed as a motor engineer at Vincents garage in Reading. By 1929 Mr and Mrs Gosling kept the shop and continued to do so through the 1950s and 60s.



The view of The Street above, with the shop on the right, is from a postcard that was sent through the post in 1903 so it is probably Mrs Pocock and her elder son Frederick Charles standing at the gate.

There was for a time also a shoemaker's shop in the village just up the road from the bakery in another one of the old houses (number 5) where Aaron Grey was the shoemaker for more than 40 years until at least 1881.

Until 1893 villagers could get milk from Chalkpit Farm but unless someone in the house worked at the farm this meant a walk there and back every day in all weathers,

usually a task for the children. In 1893 Mr Palmer, the recently-arrived farm bailiff, procured a milk cart which meant that the milk was delivered along The Street instead. Householders were warned that the success of the project depended on the milk boy not being kept waiting or “allured” away from his cart to take milk to the door; they were also expected to have the correct money ready and not require change, nor to ask him for more milk than their usual daily requirement.

Bread was baked at the village shop, probably until World War 2 as Mr Gosling is described as a “Master Baker” in the 1939 Register. After the war Percy Gundry supplied bread with a horse and cart and fresh fish was provided by Mr Collins with his motor van. There was even for a period a fish and chip van that called once a week.

For the main grocery shopping it was necessary to go further afield but Mr Carter who ran the grocer’s in Theale High Street would deliver weekly orders, which could be telephoned through to the shop. In the pandemic of 2020 the then shopkeepers Andy and Laura Allen provided a vital lifeline for many in the village.



Percy Gundry with his horse drawn bread van in about 1950

The picture below is from the 1950s when the shop was kept by Mr and Mrs Gosling.



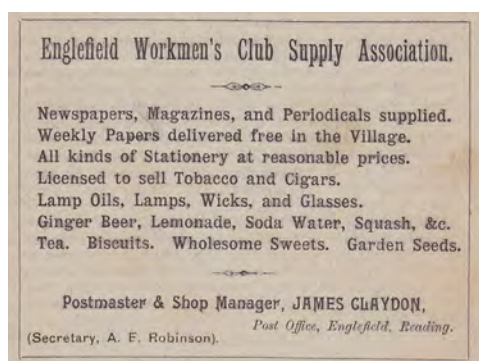
The Post Office

A sub-post office was opened in Englefield in 1895 in a newly-constructed annex to the house of Club Steward, who also became the Sub-Postmaster. Local mail deliveries were made from the Englefield Post Office until the Second World War.

Postal deliveries came to Englefield in June 1838, the month of Queen Victoria's coronation, and before the post office was opened 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. A new post box was incorporated into the side wall of the post office to the right of the door.



It was the decision of the Post Office authorities that the post office should be at the Club in a small building was constructed for the purpose rather than at the shop. This is the left-hand square single-storey extension on the front of Club Cottage when viewed from the road. This 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.



The Club Committee also decided to sell a few articles of common everyday use from the Post Office, forming an association to carry on the business. It was convenient that the Club Steward was also the Postmaster. It was not intended to interfere with local trade (so presumably stocked things that the shop didn't) but to retain any profit that might be made in the village, rather than losing it to the traders who constantly came through the village

with their carts. The kind of things that were sold are shown on this trade card produced at the time. This initiative certainly ceased before 1930.

Mr Cook took over the role of Sub-postmaster although the most of the work was done by his wife, later assisted by their younger daughter, Emily. For a long time the post office had one of only four telephones in the village (the others were Englefield House, the Rectory and the Clerk of the Works) so it was not unusual for the family to be knocked-up in the middle of night to phone for the doctor. The telephone number was initially Theale 66, changed to 366 in the 1960s. A public telephone box was later installed outside the Club entrance.

In those days post office duties began at 6am with the arrival of the mail from Reading. This had to be sorted into the rounds ready for the postman, if there was one. If not, the family had to make the deliveries and Mr Cook would go one way and his son James the other. The rounds extended to Parker's Corner, Bostock Lodges, Daintylands, Beenham Lane, Englefield House and Wimbleton's one way and The Street, Chalkpit Farm and Tidmarsh Moors the other. The second delivery would arrive at 1130 and this would be delivered by Mr Cook's elder daughter Renee. 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 Renee 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 stamped and put, in neatly-tied bundles, 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.

In 1930 when Mr Cook took over from Mr Claydon at both the Workmen's Club and post office the salary for the Sub-postmaster was about £40-£45 per year and in 1961 had risen to £231 5s. This was based on a formula calculated from a triennial return of business conducted and that for 1960 shows that then pension payments formed a large part of the business but much larger still were the sales of Postal Orders and National Insurance Stamps - all declining or completely lost business these days.

By 1968 post office services were moved to the village shop but were withdrawn altogether in 2008.

Public Houses

Before the Workmen's Club was opened in 1886 there had been earlier public houses in the village. The Three Daggers seems to have been the longest established and was part of the old village, moving location with it in the early years of the 19th century. Another was the Crown Inn, built apparently in the 18th century but known to be operating as an inn only in the middle years of the 19th century. In nearby North Street was the New Inn, operating for a short while after the Three Daggers and the Crown had ceased business, and the Thatcher's Arms which operated from at least the middle of the 19th century and continued to do so into the 21st century before becoming a private house.



The Three Daggers

The Three Daggers was the principal inn in Englefield for many years and was evidently a significant building for it was the regular venue for auction sales and inquests. The name is probably a reference to the arms of the Paulet family (right) as is the case with an inn in Wiltshire dating from 1750. There is a record of the Three Daggers in Englefield being kept by William and Elizabeth Chamberlyne in the second year of the reign of William and Mary (1690), William and Elizabeth Miland in 1725 and apparently by a Mr Gibson in 1774. The inn is regularly mentioned in the local newspapers as the venue for auction sales and inquests throughout the remainder of that century and most of the next.



The inn must have originally been at one end of the old village, as a bookend to the church at the other, (somewhere around the figure 2 in the image above) for the line taken by the Tidmarsh Turnpike when it was built in 1771 is described as running from the Bath Road at Bostock Lane *“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”*.

When the old village was pulled down by Benyon de Beauvoir and rebuilt in its present location, the Daggers moved with it and certainly from around 1820 or slightly earlier was the last house (pictured right, now number 27) at the bottom of the new Englefield Street, by the junction with the Pangbourne Road (figure 3 in the image).



It was at that time kept by Edward May and after he died, by his widow Kitty until she too died, of a stroke, in the garden of the Daggers in December 1850. The building was at that time only the central section seen here and was divided into two dwellings, the “wings” at each end were added later. John Woods took over from Kitty May and at that time the inn seems to have occupied the whole of the building though earlier it was only the right-hand half as seen here.

The Three Daggers seems to have closed shortly after 1861 when the New Inn was built in North Street and John Woods moved there.

The Crown



The Crown was what is now number one in The Street (pictured left and figure 1 on the aerial image), assessed to date from some time in the 18th century. Whether it was built as an inn is unclear and information is sparse but in the 1841 census it was inhabited by James Mildenhall aged 32, the Parish Clerk, and his wife Harriet and in the same year

W Fletcher and E J Nieman in *A Tour Round Reading* mention the Crown Inn in Englefield.

James Mildenhall obviously died soon after for in the register of rents and tithes of 1844 the house, which is owned by Caroline Hopkins, is lived in by "*the widow Mildenhall*". In 1851 Harriet Mildenhall's occupation is given as "beer seller" though the only official description of the property as the Crown Inn is in the census of 1861 when the publican was William Ham. In the next census the house is listed as "Private" and occupied by Benjamin Webb, a retired grocer. In 1881 the house is listed as "Crown Cottage" with Mary Bulbeck in occupation. She is described as "Wife" with no head of household listed so her husband was presumably away from home on census night.

The Thatcher's Arms

The Thatcher's Arms (figure 5 on the aerial image) was the last of the local pubs to go when it was converted into a private dwelling in 2009.

The Thatcher's Arms is first mentioned as such in the census of 1851 when the occupier is Thomas Woodeson and his occupation is given as "*Thatcher, Grocer and Beer House Keeper*". His son John was also a thatcher

so the name "Thatcher's Arms" is more than just a casual choice (though it should really be Thatchers' Arms, of course). Thomas Woodeson was also living in North Street in 1841, though neither the name of the house nor his occupation is stated. In 1871 and 1881 Thomas's son Amos is listed as a Beer Seller at the Thatcher's Arms but by 1891 he had moved next door and was solely occupied as a thatcher. The Thatcher's Arms was then in the hands of Samuel Fisher, a Blacksmith, Grocer and Beer Seller and he remained there in 1911, although he was then a woodman as well as publican.

Like the Three Daggers, the Thatcher's Arms was used as the venue for inquests, including that in 1858 of Lydia Woodeson, an "idiot woman" aged 26 and the daughter of Thomas Woodeson, who was burnt to death in the house when her clothes caught fire as she was reaching up for some pins on the mantelpiece.



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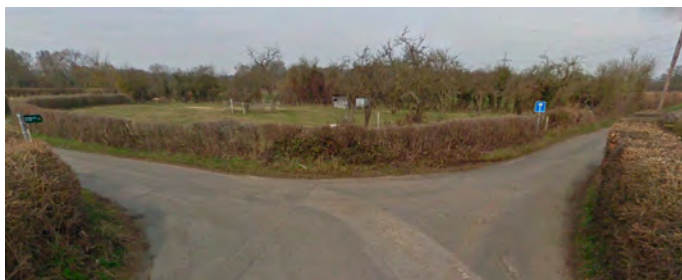
In 1899 Samuel Fisher was fined £1 for selling alcohol during prohibited hours on a Sunday. He appealed against the conviction and the case apparently turned on the definition of “bona-fide travellers” (to whom the serving of alcohol was allowed). It concerned a number of groups of people in traps who, it transpired, were simply on an organised “pub crawl” rather than being bona-fide travellers and Fisher’s appeal was successful on the grounds that he made the necessary enquiries to ascertain that the groups were bona-fide travellers, even though they turned out not to be.

In 1893 William Knight, a carpenter employed by Mr Benyon was fined one shilling with eleven shillings and sixpence costs for assaulting Samuel Fisher during a dispute over a one penny deposit on a bottle of beer to take out. In 1876 James Knight, a labourer from Theale, was fined £1 with 11s 6d costs for being drunk and disorderly in the Thatcher’s Arms after he became abusive and struck Amos Wooderson’s daughter when Amos refused to serve him on the grounds that he had had sufficient.

When the Workmen’s Club in Englefield was opened the Thatcher’s Arms was one of the sources of *“bad company and excess of drink”* that the Rector said the Club was intended to save the men of Englefield from - apparently with some justification.

The New Inn

The New Inn was built at North Street at the junction with Piper’s Lane on the site of the “Timbered Cottage” (below) after that was pulled down in 1860 (figure 4 on the aerial image).



The publican was John Woods who moved from the Three Daggers, which then became a private house. The New Inn was the venue for the annual payment of rents by the estate tenants, after which they would be entertained to dinner by Mr Benyon.

John Woods was still a Beer Seller in North Street in 1881 but after that the New Inn seems to have ceased operating and while buildings were still shown on the site in 1883, by the start of the First World War it had been levelled.

The Fire Brigade

Fire was a ever-present hazard in the days when all heat and light was by a naked flame. With the one notable exception Englefield seems generally to have avoided major house fires, but farm fires were common, many set deliberately. Wickcroft Farm alone suffered at least three fires. At the beginning of the 19th century all fire response was by volunteer bodies, parish authorities or insurance companies and estates like Englefield would have their own fire-fighting facilities. There was a hand-operated fire pump at Chalkpit Farm certainly by 1835 when it was used on a rick fire there and Mr Benyon bought another for Englefield House in 1873. One of these pumps is shown on the right.



The Englefield Fire Brigade was formed on 14th June 1894 at a meeting in the Timber Yard office. A set of rules and duties was adopted and drill nights were fixed for Thursday, fortnightly in summer and monthly in winter. Cleaning and maintenance were to take place each Tuesday evening and the first drill took place on 21st June. Mr G S Roake, the Clerk of Works, was the Chief Officer and those who formed the first Englefield Fire Brigade were:

Chief Officer	G S Roake
First Officer	J Tegg
Second Officer	W Palmer
Firemen	W Barefoot, H Horne, C Fisher, G Taylor, H Shackleford, G Tizard, W Vince, D Horne
Coachman	W Cox
Messengers	M Cox, D Harris

These men worked either at the Timber Yard or Chalkpit Farm so were close to the fire station during the day.

The brigade was equipped with a new horse-drawn engine with a steam-powered pump that could easily throw a jet of water from the terrace in front of Englefield House up to the top of the house. The engine, by Shand Mason of Blackfriars, was ordered on 2nd May 1894 and delivered two months later at a cost of £661 10s. The boiler pressure was 100 lbs per sq in and it took between five and seven

minutes from the fire being lit under the boiler for that pressure to build up. It may sometimes have taken rather longer to capture the two horses that lived in the field opposite the fire station! The pressure enabled a jet of water of 150 gallons per minute to be projected up to 160 feet high - a far cry from the old manual pumps.



This engine was housed in the new fire station (left) adjacent to the Timber Yard, along with the earlier manual pump. The fire station was fitted out and gas lighting provided as well as uniforms for the crew and enough hose to reach the 450 yards from the lake to Englefield House. The whole of the cost was paid by Mr Benyon. The blue uniform jackets and brass helmets still hung on their pegs on the walls of the fire station into the 1980s when the building was renovated as a village community centre; it is now a nursery school.

William Cox, the fire engine driver, was also Mr Roake's coachman and when he died in 1914 the fire brigade formed a guard of honour and escorted the coffin from his home in The Street to the church (right). Another of the original crew who received a similar honour was David Horne in 1903.



When Mr Roake himself died in 1907 the coffin was also carried by members of the Fire Brigade and a framed photograph was subscribed for, presumably to hang in the fire station. The inscription on a plate beneath this photograph reads:

George Stuart Roake Died December 5th 1907 Aged 50 years
14 years Captain of the Englefield Fire Brigade
This photograph was subscribed for
by the firemen and his friends

The Englefield Fire Brigade made, at least by November 1916, a charge for their services. Attendance by the steam engine and its accompanying hose van was five guineas for the first five hours (the minimum charge) and ten shillings and sixpence per hour after that. Attendance of the Chief Officer was charged at five shillings for the first hour and then two shillings per hour or part hour afterwards. Firemen were similarly charged for at three shillings and one and sixpence.

In the first 13 months of its existence the Englefield crew attended four fires: 25th January 1895 at Englefield School House; 9th April at Mrs. Butler's, The Lambdens; 20th April at Mr Stacey's, Hall Place Farm, Tilehurst; 5th July at Mr Waring's, near Lambden's Farm. A total of 26 hours was employed in extinguishing these fires and the number of miles travelled was 17. The parish magazine report on the fire at Mr Waring's reads:

"The Fire Brigade on Friday, July 5th, had a tough and long job at Mr. Waring's, near Lambden's Farm, three large hay ricks being on fire. The call was received at 11.53a.m. The nearest water was at Mrs. Butler's pond, 1560 feet of hose had to be used to get the water on to the burning ricks, and after working about 16 hours the pond was emptied, and the Brigade returned home at 4.30 Saturday morning. About 70 tons of good and bad hay was saved; the value of the three ricks was £800."

The Fire at Englefield House

On Thursday 12th August 1886 a fire completely burnt out the interior of the Long Gallery, although not the rest of the House as reported in the Victoria County History. A smaller fire had started in the scullery of Englefield House on 21st October 1843 at about four o'clock in the morning but was discovered by a carter going to market and extinguished before the engine from Reading could get there. No harm was done on that occasion except to some furniture damaged in being removed.

The following is an edited version of the newspaper report of the 1886 fire.

About 3.30pm a bricklayer, who was engaged on one portion of the mansion, which was undergoing repair, discovered a quantity of smoke, followed by flames, issuing from near a stack of chimneys on the roof of that portion of the house in which the Long Gallery is situated, and above which are the servants apartments. An alarm was raised, information being at once sent to the timber yard on the estate. Mr Rhind, the clerk of the works who happened to be in the yard the time, with assistance got out the manual engine and quickly attached the hose to a service pipe near the tower entrance. The engine from Chalk Pit Farm, in charge of Mr A Shrimpton, arrived at the same time and did excellent work. In the meantime the fire engines had been telegraphed for, the message being received in Reading by about five o'clock.

Mr Benyon was at Englefield House at the time of the outbreak and Mrs Benyon, who was accompanied by her daughter, was driving along the Bath Road towards Ufton Court for the purpose of attending a garden party when she noticed smoke of an extraordinary volume issuing from the house. She drove back with all speed

to Englefield and prevailed upon her husband, who unfortunately is suffering from rheumatism, to leave the house and go to the Rectory at Englefield where he remained all the evening and during the night, the Rev ALC Heigham (the Rector) rendering every assistance his power. A band of willing workers from the village and neighbourhood, with the household servants, was soon organised and under the personal supervision of Mrs Benyon (who throughout the trying time acted with commendable coolness and deliberation) the contents of the Long Gallery, where were hung some splendid art treasures, were removed on to the lawn and the gardens adjacent, and we are pleased to say that the pictures, notwithstanding the rather rough usage which was inevitable such a crisis, remain almost intact. When the outbreak became known in Theale and the villages around people flocked in and proffered their aid, which was gladly accepted.

There are several hydrants at Englefield, and immediately the tidings became known hose was applied by the servants, and was brought into play, but the flames spread so rapidly that the roof of this wing of the building was soon enveloped in flames. The fire worked downwards, and in a short space of time the servants' bedrooms, the laundry, and the Long Gallery were in flames, this being the old portion of the house. A large quantity of water was thrown on to the flames and, although every effort was made by Mr Rhind and the men under him to save the wing, it was evidently doomed from the first. On the arrival of the Reading Volunteer Brigade, with their steam engine, under the Captain, Mr John Wheeler junr - the time occupied from the reception of the call to the arrival at Englefield being 65 minutes - they ran out their hose, which was placed in a pond in the rear of the conservatory, and from whence an ample supply of water was obtained, and they confined their attention to that side of the mansion. By this means a great quantity of water was thrown on to the burning mass and soon sensible reduction was made in the extent of the conflagration.

About the same time that the Volunteer steamer commenced work, the "County" engine, from Reading, under the direction of the energetic Messrs Wheeler, got into play, deriving their supply of water from the same source. In quick succession came the splendid little steam engine from Maiden Erlegh - admirably manned, and captained by Mr Frederick Stallworthy (steward to Mr John Hargreaves) - and a manual fire engine given by Mr Benyon for the Mortimer people, which is stationed at Church Farm, Mortimer. The Maiden Erlegh engine arrived within 40 minutes of receiving the call, which was made by telephone from the Kennels in the Bath Road. The two latter engines were placed at the lake, which is situated a short distance in front of the mansion, and the Maiden Erlegh steamer having an excellent run of hose, the two engines combined, the leather being brought over the terrace into the yard by the tower, with splendid supply of water, good service was rendered on that side of the house. Notwithstanding the efforts of firemen and

others, the flames got a very strong hold of the building, and fears were entertained lest it might spread to the principal portions of the house, including the library, dining and drawing, reception, billiard, and other rooms, but owing to very great exertions and able management on the part of the brigades, the front of the house was saved.

In consequence of the close proximity of the flames to the walls dividing the two wings it was thought advisable to remove the contents of the rooms, and the lawns were quickly strewn with furniture, ornaments, pictures, statuary, and other valuables, including Mrs Benyon's jewellery, all of which were placed the care of the Berks Constabulary, under Supt Pocock of Reading, who was driving in the neighbourhood, and who arrived on the scene about five o'clock. Unfortunately, in the excitement, many articles of furniture, &c, were thrown from the windows to the ground, and were much damaged. The fire assumed alarming proportions during the evening, the Newbury Fire Brigade was telegraphed for and they arrived, with their steamer, about 11.30, Mr Wilson, the captain, being in command. With copious supply of water from the lake in front of the house, they brought their hose and played on to the roof of the burning wing, one of the engines thus being relieved. A never-failing stream of water was poured on to the fire from different directions, and soon after midnight it was seen that a mastery had been obtained over the flames, which from that time decreased until about four o'clock, when all fears of the fire spreading were at an end.

The Newbury Brigade left between five and six o'clock, the Maiden Erleigh having preceded them by several hours. Some of the members of the Reading Volunteer Fire Brigade and the Messrs Wheeler with the "County" remained until eight o'clock, at which hour there were no signs of a further outbreak, and they left for Reading. Three of the Reading Volunteer Fire Brigade had a narrow escape while engaged in one of the lower rooms, the ceiling falling upon them, but fortunately they did not receive much injury. It is uncertain in which particular spot the fire originated - the laundry, the kitchen, or in one of the servants' bedrooms, and it will probably remain a mystery. The wing destroyed was, as mentioned above, the old portion of the house, and much historical interest was associated with it. In this wing were the celebrated Long Gallery, King Charles's room, the laundry, kitchens, servants' apartments, &c, all of which are completely gutted, only the bare walls remaining. The servants, unfortunately, have lost the greater part of their property. When the fire was discovered to be of a serious nature precautions were at once taken to turn off the gas at the meter, so as to prevent any explosion. A considerable amount of rain fell during the night, and every available covering was obtained for the furniture placed on the lawn and in the gardens. A very large number of persons visited the fire, and remained the greater part of the night, and Supt Pocock with 12 men had no slight task in preventing the crowd from coming

into the gardens and elsewhere. In speaking of the ready help rendered by persons many of whom were wet to the skin, we must not omit to mention the names of Mr Todd (estate agent), Mr Rhind (clerk of the works), Mr Shrimpton (home farm), Mr Coombes (head gardener at Englefield House), Mr Chiselham (butler); and Mr W Hawley, Mr C Witherington, Mr Hart (Sulhampstead), Mr Jenkin Davis, Mr W Chillingworth (Bradfield), Mr Bucknell (Ufton), Mr W Holloway, Mr Whatley, &c. The fire Brigades deserve great praise for their promptitude in turning out at short notice and with rendering invaluable assistance. Yesterday (Friday) morning the whole of the articles taken out of the mansion on the previous night were returned to the house; but the rooms are in chaotic state of confusion.

A similar fire also destroyed part of the roof and attics at Mr Benyon's London house, 17 Grosvenor Square, just three years later.

The Fire at Tyle Mill

The Englefield Fire Brigade attended the fire at Tyle Mill on Saturday 11th July 1914 from 1030 in the evening until 3am the next morning, returning at 9am and working until 8pm.

The cause of the fire is unknown and at the time the mill was closed down with all the electricity switched off. It is believed that it started in one of the purifying rooms at the top of the mill where the grain is cleaned before milling. This process creates much dust that is highly flammable and it is possible that the hot sun shining on the roof and through a window all day long created sufficient heat to cause ignition.

The mill had been shut down at 5.15 that afternoon and the doors were locked by the foreman, Mr William Lock, at 5.35. At 9.20 the two maid servants, Margaret Rolfe and Ada Bradley, in the adjoining house of the mill owner, Mrs Langford-Smith, were preparing to go to bed when they heard the sound of breaking glass and from their window saw flames bursting through the roof of the mill. They raised the alarm and the co-owner of the mill, Mr Swain, telephoned to the fire brigades of Newbury and Englefield. The motor engine of the Newbury Brigade was on the scene within half an hour and the Englefield crew arrived at 10.30.

A large crowd of villagers quickly assembled and made efforts to save some of the furniture from the house. By the time the fire brigade arrived the mill itself was beyond saving and their efforts were concentrated on the house. They succeeded in saving this by midnight although the mill was a blazing inferno with flames shooting up to a tremendous height with *"brilliant displays of fireworks"* as the machinery, much of it new, crashed down through three floors. The Deputy Chief Constable, Mr

Robotham, with Sergeants Goddard, Elsbury and Taylor and several local police officers maintained order among the large crowd.

In the morning only the lower portion of the walls of the mill remained with all the glass from the windows lying melted into shapeless masses and all the machinery twisted out of all shape and fit only for scrap. The roof and attic of the house were burnt and the rest of the building was badly damaged by water, with every room covered with cinders and debris, and much furniture destroyed. The damage was estimated at £15,000.

The Englefield crew was in attendance again on the following Thursday between 6.30pm and 11.30 when flames were seen in the debris of the mill, once more endangering the house.

Farm Fires

Farm fires were a very common occurrence, usually in hay or grain ricks. Sometimes this may have been the result of spontaneous combustion from internal heating of material that was ricked too wet but very often it was caused by people, whether accidentally or deliberately.

There was a fire at Chalkpit Farm on 18th August 1835 caused by the overheating of a rick of water meadow hay and the destruction of one half of the ricks and the premises was prevented by the *"prompt and active exertions"* of many local people. The Berkshire Chronicle reported that *"Many females were peculiarly active in rendering assistance in putting a stop to the progress of the flames."*

Wickcroft Farm suffered fire on at least three occasions. The most serious happened on 20th December 1873 when only the house and one granary were saved from destruction by a fire that 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 onto 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. Three fire engines from Reading were used and the ruins smouldered all the next day.

Earlier, in August 1867 a fire had broken out in the rick-yard, which was close to the road, supposedly started by some tramps who were seen nearby though it was not known whether by accident or design. Some of Mr Benyon's men spotted the smoke and flames and the fire engine was quickly dispatched to the spot. The

County Fire Office engine from Reading also attended and the fire was put out before it could spread to any of the nearby ricks. Upwards of 100 men and women were involved in putting out the fire and all were paid for their services by the County Fire Office by whom the farmer, Jenkin Davies, was insured.

In May 1885, George Fry, a 14 year old boy in Davies's employ, was charged with arson when a hay rick at Piper's Farm caught fire. The magistrates remanded Fry on bail for trial at the Assizes, where he was acquitted by the jury. Mr Davies himself put up part of the bail money.

On 31st October 1876, a fire broke out at Field Farm, Ufton (now called Lambden's Farm), cause unknown. Mr Benyon's fire engine from Englefield was quickly on the spot and contained the fire to one oat rick.

In 1892 along with the Reading Volunteer Brigade and the County and Maiden Erlegh fire engines, the Englefield fire engine attended a rick fire on a farm occupied by Mr White at Theale.

Two fires were attended in 1897. On July 23rd at Field Farm, Burghfield and on July 26th at Perrin's Farm, Mortimer. The number of hours employed in extinguishing the above was 15 and the miles travelled to and from the fires were 26.

A straw rick belonging to Mr Benyon was set on fire in 1903 and although the Englefield Fire Brigade did their best it could not be saved. Mr G Knight at work in the field saw a man, one Simpson from Mortimer West End, near the rick immediately before the fire. Simpson was arrested and committed by the Magistrates to the Assizes.

In 1909 the Englefield Brigade attended a fire that destroyed two ricks belonging to Mr Thoyts of Sulhamstead House.

On August 9th 1915, 2nd Lt Kirton of the King's Own Scottish Borderers was motoring with friends near Beansheaf Farm when they saw a rick on fire. 2nd Lt Kirton drove to warn the Englefield Fire Brigade but two ricks were destroyed despite the application of 1450 tons of water. John Thomas Clayton of no fixed abode admitted setting the ricks on fire, which he said he did because he had been rejected twice for military service, could find no work and preferred to be in gaol.

On March 9th 1918 a corn rick at Bushy Wigmore caught fire and through the efforts of the Englefield Fire Brigade the greater part was saved.

Some Other Fires Attended

On 21st November 1901, the Englefield Brigade was called out when a building adjacent to the school caught fire. This was known as the “Soup Kitchen”, opened in 1888 to supply the children with halfpenny dinners and also used for cookery classes.

In 1905 the Chief Officer reported that five calls were received during the past year, two of which proved to be of a serious nature. One of these was a fire at Bozedown House, Whitchurch, in January. The fire originated in a maid’s bedroom but the cause was unknown. Despite the combined efforts of the Englefield, Pangbourne and Whitchurch firemen the roof had already fallen in by the time they arrived and the house was completely destroyed, although valuable furniture and paintings were saved. Only Mrs King, the wife of the owner, was at home at the time, Mr King and a large party of guests being out shooting.

Early on Tuesday morning, May 15th 1906, the Brigade was called to Theale. *“The fire proved to be at the stables of Mr D M Davies, which were burnt out; we can only regret his loss, one horse being burnt, and five traps, also his sons’ bicycles, being destroyed.”*

The Fire Brigade was also called out on the afternoon of August 4th 1918, the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war. The last working job for the engine was in 1940 when incendiary bombs were dropped on the estate and after standing unused in the fire station for some time it went on loan to the Berkshire and Reading Fire Brigade.

In 1965 it returned to the estate for a demonstration when it was pulled from its old home at the Yard to the courtyard of Englefield House where it was put into action, fortunately this time only as a demonstration. The pictures below were taken at that time.



Village Recreation

Even if their hours of work were long and hard, villagers were nevertheless extremely active in their time away from work. In addition to the Thatcher's Arms and the Club, which also provided games evenings, dances and smoking concerts put on by the members, football and cricket were played. There was swimming at the Dairies, the River Kennet and the bathing pool provided by Richard Fellowes Benyon.

Healthy exercise, either on foot or by bicycle, was obviously in fashion as these photographs show.



A group of cyclists and walkers at Bushy Wigmore.



Another group further back along the Pangbourne Road near Wickcroft.

In the 19th century, annual outings for the choir were organised and in the next century there were regular day trips. Right is a “Jolly Boys” outing to the seaside and below a more mixed group on an outing to Job’s Dairy at Didcot in about 1960. Below that is “Jim” Smith, former tractor driver at Chalkpit Farm, lucky enough to be chosen in a draw for a flight on Concorde around the Bay of Biscay in September 1978. This was organised by the Bell Inn at Aldworth, which happened to be the “local” of Concorde Captain Brian Calvert



Christmas was a very busy time with not only a dance in the Club but also a party at Englefield House for the village children, with a Christmas tree and presents for all. There were also concerts put on by the villagers in the Long Gallery and a troupe of minstrels was formed in 1895. Later there was also a Pierrot troupe. Mr and Mrs Benyon's house guests also put on entertainments for the villagers, as a programme from 1906 shows:

Piano Duet "Hungarian Dance No. 6" (Brahms)
Miss WINIFRED BENYON and Mrs HARCOURT VERNON

Cantata "The Wreck of the Hesperus" (T. Anderton)
Solos by Miss RUTH FREEMAN, Rev. G G SKIPWITH and Rev E B CONDER

Song "Cats and Dogs"
Mr J F G GILLIAT

Piano Solo "Valse, E minor" (Chopin)
Miss WINIFRED BENYON

Song "Bedouin Love Song" (Ciro Pinsitti)
Rev E B CONDER

Song "Dainty Davie" (Sir O Villiers Stanford)
Miss RUTH FREEMAN

Song "Annie Laurie" (Scotch Ballad)
Rev G GORE SKIPWITH

Dissertation Mr J F G GILLIAT

Violoncello Solo "Tarantella" (W. Fl. Squire)
Hon H TREFUSIS

Song "They all love Jack" (Stephen Adams)
Rev E B CONDER

Spanish Dance Miss WINIFRED BENYON

Song "When Father laid the carpet on the stairs"
Mr J F G GILLIAT

"GOD SAVE THE KING"



In cold winters when the lake froze, skating took place. Unlike this picture of a solitary skater, many people were to be seen on the ice at the weekends and even some at night when the moon was full. A good deal of fun was had and this was a rare opportunity to explore the islands in the lake - alas something that could now be done on foot in the summer. In the 1960s the task of testing that the ice would “bear”

fell to Arthur Plumb, himself an accomplished skater often to be seen “cutting out figures” on the ice.

Guy Fawkes Night bonfires also became a village event in the 1960s. Previously these had been a matter for individual families, although a group of older lads would often get together to organise a joint bonfire. It was Arthur Plumb again who took the lead in organising things in the 1960s and for many years the bonfire and fireworks, complete with hot food, was an annual event of some note. Here Mrs Joan Baker bangs the gong to announce that the food is ready while Susan Black attends to the sausages; Sally Plumb, one of Arthur’s two daughters, looks on at far left.



In the early 1960s there was for a time a grass tennis court on part of Loring’s Meadow just in front of the Rectory kitchen garden wall.

Swimming

At the turn of the century at least, swimming was a very popular summer pastime and the schoolchildren were taught to swim in the bathing pool along Chantry Lane. Other swimming venues were the River Pang at the Dairies near Hogmoor Bridge and the pen lock on the Kennet between Sulhamstead and Theale, this being then in the parish of Englefield.

The bathing pool in Chantry Lane was built by Richard Fellowes Benyon and was filled with water annually as soon as the weather allowed in May. Swimming was initially for boys only and towels and bathing drawers were provided. The Rector

(Revd Arthur Heigham) supervised the swimming. Those at school had the use of the bath in the evenings and Saturday afternoons were reserved for those who had recently left school, although as these were much taken up with cricket the Rector was prepared to give an hour (6 to 7) on one other day in the week.

In 1890 swimming began on 17th May when the water temperature was recorded as 65°, a few degrees above that of the air, and closed on 16th September. During that season a total of 30 boys bathed a varying number of times each, Fred Dixon managing 46. Nineteen of them could swim. The next year there were 36 boys' names on the list for swimming, 20 of them requiring lessons, so that the Rector was in attendance at the bath twice a day, at 12 and 4 o'clock. The youngest bather was Stephen Claydon aged 4. In 1894 swimming went on until at least 12th October when six boys enjoyed a water temperature of 59°. In 1905 a total of 902 bathes were had by the end of August when swimming stopped, in the season from 1st June to 4th September 1908 there were 1014 bathes and 1052 in 1913.



After the Rev Arthur Heigham moved away from the village the duty of supervising the swimming bath was taken on by Mr Claydon the Club caretaker.

When the Girl Guides were begun in 1917 they also went swimming in the bath, again supervised by Mr Claydon. In 1925 swimming was part of the school curriculum for both boys and girls. The swimming bath is still there though disused, certainly since the Second World War. In the 1950s and 60s it still held a little rain water in the deep end where newts and frogs could be found among the rubble. It is now disappearing into the landscape (left).

The Dairies near Hogmoor Bridge had been the place for swimming before the swimming bath was made and was still used by those boys and men adjudged beyond the age for the swimming bath. 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 Club. Some 20 lads and young men took advantage of the swimming here in 1891. The prohibition on Sunday swimming at the Dairies did little to prevent it and in 1896 to prevent the annoyance of having lads all over the place all afternoon the swimming bath was opened for working lads on Sunday

afternoon. The bath was also opened for them on Saturday at 6.30, an earlier time not being possible as some did not stop work until 5 pm. Saturday evensong was held half an hour earlier than usual, not later than six pm to accommodate this.

The pen lock (right in April 2014) is the weir where the Kennet and Avon Canal diverged from the River Kennet to go through Sulhamstead Widemead lock and was part of Englefield parish. This was another recognised swimming place and the vegetation on the bank of the river would be cut back to allow access to the water. It was very much only for the older and better swimmers



as the river was much wider and deeper here with several holes. The current could also be much stronger and a boy drowned here in the 1950s.

Cricket

Cricket was evidently a major summer sport with matches against other local teams.

The first match of the Englefield cricket club, as such, is reported to have taken place against Bradfield on the evening of Wednesday 8th June 1864, although there is a record of an earlier match between an eleven from Englefield and an eleven from Aldermaston Wharf played in a meadow near the Three Kings, Jack's Booth on 9th August 1858, which Englefield lost by an innings and 72 runs. Things obviously got better, for reporting the 1864 match 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"*. Englefield scored 45 in their first innings and 22 in their second; Bradfield made 21 and 43. The game must have been played with some speed to get four innings in before the light failed. There is no record of the players but the secretary was the Curate (the Reverend D Yonge) and when he left the parish the office was taken by the Rector, the Rev A Clutterbuck, Mrs Benyon's brother.

Englefield were not so lucky in a match later in August the same year when they lost to Sulhamstead by an innings and 15 runs. The team on that occasion was: W Ford, W Stannard, W Parsons, Carey, C Pollard, W Robey, H Buxey, Pierce, W Smith, W Horn, Nightingale. There were evidently plenty of players, for in June 1869 a match was played between Englefield Club and Englefield Rovers and two

matches were played during the same week later that year: on Monday 30th August against Mr Wood's Eleven from Tidmarsh and Pangourne and on Wednesday 2nd September against Theale. Five men played in both matches, including the Curate, Mr Yonge. Mr Yonge took eleven wickets in the match against Mr Wood's team, E Haygarth taking the remainder, one of which was caught by Mr Yonge and another stumped by him. In the match against Theale, J Cox took 5 wickets in the first Theale innings and W Horne took seven in the second.

In 1890 the captain was F Cosburn, the sub-captain D Horne and the secretary A E Robinson (the schoolmaster). The committee was: J Battram, J Claydon, G Davies, L Harris, A Mayer and W Smythe. Mr Benyon was the President. The members paid a subscription of one shilling each. The matches to be played in 1890 were against the Biscuit Factory at Reading, Calcot Park, Burghfield, Abbey Wharf, Woolhampton College, Woolhampton Village and Yattendon. The proceeds from village entertainments staged in the Long Gallery at Englefield House were given to the club.

In 1891 a photograph was taken of 13 members and the umpire and a copy hung in the Workmen's Club.



The 1891 cricket team photograph from the Club. In the back row in the bowler hat is James Claydon and on the extreme right is Alf Lamperd. Extreme left in the middle row is George Day, the blacksmith at Mayridge Farm and third is AE Robinson, the schoolmaster. The wicketkeeper (front row 2nd from left, in spongebag trousers) is Henry Benyon.

The season traditionally opened and closed with a “married versus single” members match and “House and Gardens versus Yard” fixtures were also played. Mr Benyon provided a tent for the use of members at home matches and this was erected by the Club caretaker who also acted as groundsman and supplied the teas.

Also in 1891 L E Bligh, who had played cricket for Kent, came to live in the village. The following year he became captain of the cricket team and achieved the best batting average (22) for that season. He did not captain the side the following year but was again top of the batting with an improved average of 38, although on this occasion he declined the bat awarded for the achievement and it was instead presented to T Harris, the next in the order on 16.

In June 1893 the Rector notes that *“The match against Bradfield ended in a severe defeat... but when first-rate players are brought to play against a village team, the results are not very uncertain”*. Clearly, Bradfield had their own imported players too but presumably the Rector was familiar with Matthew 7:3 and Luke 6:41. Further friction occurred the following month when, while taking the waters in Homburg, the Rector 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, then as now, 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”*.

As with the first match in 1864 there seem initially to have been two innings each side but later this changed to a single innings each, starting in the afternoon with play not being permitted on Sundays until after church. On Bank Holiday Mondays longer matches would take place starting in the morning and thus lunch was provided as well as tea.

In 1894 an improvement in the fielding was noted, though the length of the “tail” was causing concern. The tail was not needed in July 1896 against Earley when Englefield scored 222 for 7 and then dismissed their opponents for only 33. Two matches previously, against Whitchurch, C Perrin had taken three wickets with consecutive balls. The quality of the fielding had obviously improved further too, according to the report of a match against Aldermaston on 22nd August 1896.

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”*.

Major The Honourable L E Bligh



L E Bligh was born in Dover on 24 November 1854, the son of the Honourable and Reverend Edward Vesey Bligh, son of the 5th Earl of Darnley and Lady Isabel Bligh. E V Bligh was originally a diplomat but Lady Isabel's father, the Earl of Abergavenny, wished her to marry a clergyman so he left the Diplomatic Service and took Holy Orders. In 1861 E V Bligh was Rector at Rotherwick in Sussex and in 1871 was Vicar of Birling - the birthplace of Lady Isabel.

L E Bligh was educated at Eton and Jesus College, Cambridge. By 1881 he had become a Magistrate and Captain of Militia (subsequently a Major in the 3rd Buffs) in Ryarsh, West Malling where his father was now also a Magistrate and "*Clergyman without cure of souls*". Bligh married Marion Louisa Stewart-Savile on 1st June 1886 and by 1891 he was Master of Foxhounds at Dulverton living at Northmore House in Dulverton with his wife, 2 surviving sons and 11 servants. Hedging their bets for school place, their first son was named Harroweton but he survived for less than a year.

In March 1891 Bligh was appointed Master of the South Berks Hunt and the Rector moved from the Rectory to "The Parsonage" (Nos 8 and 9 The Street, only newly-built) and Bligh moved into the Rectory. The assistant schoolmistresses moved from Rectory Cottage to make way for Mr Bligh's coachman.

In 1892 Bligh was captain of the cricket club. His father had played cricket for Oxford against Cambridge, for Middlesex and for Kent. His cousin the Hon Ivo Bligh (later 8th Earl of Darnley) also played for Kent and captained England in the first ever Test series for the Ashes in 1882/83 in Australia. Like his father and cousin, L E Bligh also played for Kent, scoring 107 runs in 18 innings at an average of 7.64 (best score 20) and taking 5 wickets for 157 runs off 363 balls with a best of 2 for 36 and an average of 31.4.

His second son Algernon played for Somerset and the family thus became the first to supply three generations of first class cricketers. A third son Ronald Edward survived for less than a year and his fourth son, Capt Jack Frederick Bligh MC, baptised in Englefield church on 21st February 1893, was killed in action with the Royal Field Artillery on 1st July 1917. There was also a daughter, Rose Marion Bligh.

He left the village in 1894 to become Master of the East Kent hounds and subsequently moved back to the West Country to take the Minehead Harriers in 1899. He died on 16th May 1924 at Cambria House in Minehead.

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"*.

Better times 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.

From the beginning tea was provided at a cost of 6d a head and consisted of beer, bread and cheese, and lemonade at each home game. Initially visiting teams also paid but in 1891 it was decided that, as the Englefield team invariably had the benefit of a free tea at away matches, visitors to the village should receive the same. The bread, beer and cheese were given up and a free tea was provided by "a member of the club" for all the teams that visited. Englefield players could have tea at 3d if they wished. Mineral waters (1d) and biscuits were also on sale in the tent. The tea urn, crockery and cutlery were provided from the Workmen's Club.

James Claydon, the caretaker of the Workmens' Club was the groundsman, erected the tent provided by Mr Benyon for the use of the team and club members at home matches and supplied the teas. His successor, Mr Cook, also took on these jobs

and although the building of the pavilion had rendered the tent unnecessary, it did create an additional job as Emily Cook recalled.

"First the pavilion had to be spring-cleaned. The deer would roam all over the pitch so the floor got very stained. Father and I would spend the day scrubbing and cleaning to have it all ship-shape for the first match".

There were other jobs each week too.

Cricket season meant clean, white umpire's coats, no nylon but cotton drill, starched and ironed every week. Friday was spent oiling the bats and cleaning, then whitening, the pads ready for Saturday. When Jim [her brother] wasn't available I would be roped-in to fetch and carry for Father when he prepared and marked-out the wicket, also with hoisting the sight-screens. None of your wooden jobs pushed around on wheels for us, these were heavy white canvas held up by three long poles and fixed with guy ropes and tent pegs - a tough job on a windy day.

"In the afternoon it would be tea for about 30 people with the washing-up to follow; the morning had been spent making the sandwiches, and no sliced bread either, for which we were paid 6d a head".

During the 1930s the cricket ground was used in the winter by the South Berks Ladies Lacrosse team, of which Miss Winifred Benyon was a member, with Mr Cook again acting as groundsman. After each match the teams went to the Club where long trestle tables were laid for tea. The Berks Ladies brought all the food with them, mostly from the kitchens at the House. Afterwards several of the ladies: Miss Nancy Fair, Miss Puxley and Miss Arnold, would insist on helping with the washing-up in the Club kitchen. Any left-over food was also placed on the kitchen table for the family.

All these duties ceased with the outbreak of war in 1939 and afterwards the refreshments were provided by Kitty Dance. The account on the right, is from a Whit Monday match just before the war.

Kitty's sons William, Ken, Roy and Norman all played in the team. Ken, Norman and Roy are seen in the photograph at the top of the next page from the late 1940s, with Umpire Mark Wise third from left in the back row. Ken and Norman were still playing in the 1960s.

2 1/4 lbs Beef	1.. 8. 8.	28 Lunches @ 2/6 each	
12 1/2 lbs Ham	14. 3. 3.	28 Tea @ 6 each	
3 1/2 lb Cheese	3. 2. 2.	12 Tea Visitors from Reading	
1 lb Potatoes	11		
1 Pot Picadillo	10		
1 " Pickles	10 1/2		
2 lbs Butter	2.. 4.	Drunkers	
2 Bts Salad Cream	1.. 9.	5 1/2 pts S.P.A @ 6 per pint	
2 lbs Lump Sugar	6		2 1/2
3/4 lb Lyons Tea	1.. 0.	19 Bots S.B @ 7	11. 1.
1 Tin Apricots	10 1/2	7 Bots Lemonade @ 3	1. 9.
1 " Peas	11		15. 7
1 Slab Cate	3. 0.		
Bread	3. 11		
Cucumbers	1. 0. 6		
Tomatoes	1. 0. 0		
Milk	3. 0. 0		
Jelly & Strawberry	2. 6.		
	<u>5. 10. 11</u>		



?	Oliver	Frederick	Ben	Mr	?	?	Edgar	Charles	R
	Hopley	Reid	Webb	Benyon			Worth	Claydon	Claydon
Charles			William	Albert		S			James
Fisher	?	Lamperd		Robinson		Fisher			Claydon
								Walter	Arthur
								Smyth	Claydon

Footmen from Englefield House



The wicket keeper in the front row is Henry Benyon and in the second row at the left is Alf Lamperd with Oliver Hopley next to him. In the umpire's coat is James Claydon



Football

The football team was probably formed about the same time as the cricket team as the earliest report of a match is in the Berkshire Chronicle of 22nd February 1868 when a team under the Curate Mr Younge played at home against Sulham and won 3-2. It is likely that both cricket and football teams came into being after Richard Fellowes Benyon came to Englefield and allowed them the use of the park.

The football team seems to have fallen into abeyance for nothing more is known of football in Englefield until a report in September 1889 that it was resolved to start a football club. In October 1890 the opening match of the season, against Woolhampton College, was cancelled, the afternoon being so wet that the opponents did not turn up and nor did three of the home side. The remainder of the season was obviously more successful with eight games played; five won, two lost and one drawn. Four matches were arranged for the 1891/92 season but there is no report of any being played and on Monday 18th September 1893 a meeting was held in the Workmen's Club to reform the football club. About 24 people indicated they were interested and a committee was formed with Mr Benyon as president, H Shackleford as captain and Charles Fisher as vice-captain. The committee members were: P Chamberlain, Lewis Smythe and messers Claydon, Eborne and Johnson. Mr Robinson the schoolmaster was Secretary.

Fifteen matches were played in the first season of the new club with six won and nine lost and the comment was made that certain opponents were not bona fide village teams but were packed with the best players from around the area. A new committee was elected in August 1893 with G J Taylor as captain, Dan Fisher as vice-captain and members T Cox, C Fisher, T Harris, G Johnson, A Lamperd and E Mosby. Mr Robinson continued as secretary and the Rector was treasurer. James Claydon was referee. For the 1894/5 season 24 matches were arranged but only 13 could be played owing to the prolonged frost and in the following season, of 23 matches arranged 11 were played with only one being won, six lost and four drawn; goals for were 14 and goals against 44.

Although it was resolved to continue in 1896/7 no matches are reported and in 1897/98 only one. Nevertheless, the club was "resuscitated" for 1898/9 but there are no reports of any more matches being played until 1904 when 25 were arranged. There is no further mention of football in Englefield after 1909 until the 1930s. The Dance brothers, Norman and Ken, were long-term members of the team, as they were of the cricket team. Both are seen the photograph from 1937/38 and Norman at least was still playing in 1978.

Football seems initially to have been played in the park near the cricket ground and at the 1893 meeting there was discussion about playing a little higher up in the park but later football moved to the field next to the timber yard. This field was separated from the road by a fence of closely-spaced six-foot tall iron pickets with spiked tops with a gate next to the fire station. Two adjacent bent pickets on the corner by the shop allowed small boys to get through without the need to walk all the way to the gate at other end. The gate and a section of the pickets (with the spikes lopped off) still survives by the nursery school playground but the rest has been replaced with something more friendly sited further back from the road edge.



The team thought to be in about 1911



Clearly at an away match, probably in the 1920s. Some familiar faces from the cricket team are James Claydon (standing extreme right), Oliver Hopley (centre row, third from left) and Charles Fisher (standing, extreme left).



Englefield Football Club 1937-38

"Brickie" Farr	Jack Smith	C Sparkes	J Hutchins	Len Prewett	Jim Cook	Ken Dance	Harry Day
		R Sparkes	R Shard	Norman Dance	E Sparkes	J Clegg	

Scouts and Guides

A Scout troop was started in the village in 1916 with 17 boys and Dan Partlo as Scoutmaster. When he enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service the following year Cecil Golding, son of the schoolmaster, took over the troop.

When the King and Queen visited Reading in March 1918, with Lord Lieutenant Mr Benyon, Mrs Benyon and Miss Winifred Benyon in attendance, the Scouts helped to keep order in the Market Place. On Whit Monday that year the upper park "seethed" with Scouts from Reading, Thatcham and Bucklebury as well as the Englefield troop, about 300 in all, where they were inspected and addressed by Mr Benyon. To help the war effort and grow more vegetables the Scouts took over an allotment at Chalkpit and 25 bushels of potatoes and quantities of other vegetables were grown. They also collected waste paper and a ton of horse chestnuts for the Ministry of Munitions.

A Scout band was formed and led the troop through the village with flags flying on the morning of 11th November 1918. In July the following year when the official peace treaty was signed the band headed a parade of schoolchildren into the park for the celebrations (below).



The Scouts continued in the 1930s but then seem to have ceased as a separate Englefield troop, probably a result of the war.

The Girl Guide company was formed on 17th June 1917 with two patrols of five girls each, led by Mabel Wells and Clara Seymour. There was also one patrol of Brownies led by Winnie Sparkes. The captain was Miss Winifred Benyon with Miss Nannette Skipwith, the Rector's daughter, as her lieutenant. Their headquarters was at Englefield House. In June 1918 the Company was inspected by Countess Gurowska, the Divisional Commissioner, on the lawns at Englefield House where they put on a display of Morse signalling and Indian club drill. The Countess enrolled Nellie Absalom as a Brownie and presented Mabel Horne and Mollie Rose with 1st Class Brownie badges. Ella Chandler and Kathleen Harris were presented with knives for one year unbroken attendance. The Guides were then put through some Company drill and marched past in fours with the Countess taking the salute.

Swimming lessons in the bathing pool for girls, taken by Mr Claydon, seem to have begun with the formation of the Guides and in September 1918 they were taken to the canal at Theale where Alice Joyce, Winnie Sparkes and Nannie Baker swam the 50yds for the 1st Class Guide test and Edie Nash, Kathie Harris and Hilda Horne swam 25yds.

In the 1930s Miss Winifred was still in charge but with Miss Kitty Paul as her Lieutenant. They went to camp at Rousdon in Devon, Mrs Benyon's family estate, and took part in a Rally at Coley Park in Reading with the Chief Guide, Lady Baden-Powell, taking the salute and Emily Cook carrying the Union Flag. Each company had to put on a pageant depicting St Hilda of Whitby Abbey and Miss Winifred had hired proper costumes from London. Emily was also chosen to play St Hilda (right).



The Guides carried on (or restarted) after the war and ran through the 1960s, though with members in single figures, based in a hut where the new school now stands.

A Butler's Life



Donald Large was butler to two generations of Benyons over more than 50 years, after service in the Royal Navy before, during and after the First World War.

He was born in Thorpe, Norfolk on 21st December 1892 and baptised in the local church on 24th September 1893. His father Ambrose was a groom and later the family moved to Dunston, near Norwich, where Ambrose became a coachman in domestic service.

Donald left school at the age of 13 with a workman's certificate and went into service in a small household where he had to do everything: clean boots, scrub floors, wash up and pluck pheasant. He was later promoted to hall boy and then to second footman, at which time he was spotted by a visitor, Lieutenant Bernard Buxton of the Royal Navy, who encouraged him to enlist as a steward. This he did on 28th February 1909 at Portsmouth and when, as he told it, in the stress of the moment he gave his real date of birth (making him only 16 and under age) he was roundly admonished for telling lies and the enlisting officer duly deducted exactly two years, recording his birth date as 21st December 1890. This not only had the immediate effect of allowing him to enlist there and then but had an additional bonus many years later when, to everyone's surprise, his naval pension turned up two years early.

In December 1915 he was posted to HMS ALERT at Abadan in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). ALERT was the depot ship that fitted out the gunboats operating on the River Tigris providing fire support for the Army engaged in protecting oil supplies and preventing Germany from extending the Berlin-Baghdad railway to the Persian Gulf. Men from her complement were detached to the various gunboats and Donald went to HMS MANTIS, whose captain was Commander Bernard Buxton.

In later years he was fond of describing enemy action in somewhat lurid terms: "*The first time we knew we were under attack was when the captain's head went rolling down the scuppers*" was one version. Another tale was that he was ordered forward when the ship was under fire to take over a gun and "*...met the gunner's head coming towards me*".

For services in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf, Donald Large was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, gazetted on 7th August 1918.

After the armistice, Donald was posted to HMS NEW ZEALAND, the flagship of Admiral Jellicoe, which immediately departed from Devonport to “show the flag” on a year-long cruise round the world via the Mediterranean, Suez Canal, India, Australia, Canada and the western seaboard of the USA, then through the Panama Canal back to England - much to the disgust of Donald’s new wife Hilda.

Donald continued to serve in the Royal Navy in a number of ships until he was invalided out in March 1924 with pulmonary tuberculosis.

After leaving the Royal Navy, Donald worked first at Littlebredy (pronounced “little briddy”) as butler to Sir Philip Williams at Bridehead House. The Bridehead estate is very similar to Englefield, not least in the fact that it has been owned by the Williams family since 1797 and has a model estate village, school and church, all rebuilt from the 1850s onwards. Littlebredy is today described as “almost the last intact estate village in Dorset”, a description that applies equally to Englefield in Berkshire but the connection is even more marked than that, for Sir Philip’s wife Margaret was the sister of Violet, wife of Henry Benyon. By 1933 Donald had moved to work for Henry and Violet Benyon, then living at Ufton Court, but history does not relate whether there was some Wodehousian intrigue involved in this switch of a servant between brothers in law. When Henry’s father, James Herbert Benyon, died in 1935 and Henry inherited, Donald moved to Englefield House with him.

At that time there was a full-time indoor staff of eighteen and his hours were 7am to 10 or 11pm with one day off a month. Things were still very formal then and liveried footmen would stand in the dining room even when Mr and Mrs Benyon dined alone. One day Mrs Benyon noticed a strong smell and Donald was forced to confess that it was the footman’s feet. Thereafter the housekeeper bought a dozen pairs of socks for the footman and he had to wash his feet each time he was on duty in the dining room.

There were also great occasions, with parties for 450 guests and every summer the Eton-Harrow match at Lord’s. The Benyons usually had several nephews playing and so had a private table with 20 to lunch and 50 for tea, all the equipment having to be transported from Englefield. One year a footman got mislaid at Theale when he got off the van to buy a newspaper without telling the driver and was left behind. When they arrived at Lord’s they found him already there having taken the train.

During the Second World War Donald’s duties took on a different complexion when Englefield House once again became a war hospital for convalescent servicemen and he also became a member of the local Home Guard. In later years Mrs and

Mrs Benyon lived much more quietly and Donald was able to retire to his cottage at Wimbleton's after lunch, returning in the evening.



He stayed on after Henry Benyon (by then Sir Henry) died in early 1959, although he did take time off to visit Canada with his wife from July to October that year, and after the death of Lady Benyon in 1964 continued to serve the new occupants of Englefield House, Mr and Mrs William Benyon. He was still performing his duties when he was photographed (left) for a Reading Evening Post article in February 1976, by which time there were just two full-time staff: himself as butler/valet/handyman and a nanny.

Donald was a great “fixer” and his ability to get things done was well known. One day when his grandchildren wanted to play tennis in the garden but had no net. Donald disappeared for a while and returned with a full-size tennis net - obtained from who knows where. He also had a lively sense of humour: Kenneth McDiarmid, when assistant Agent for the estate, once called at Englefield House and asked if Mr Benyon was at home. The straight-faced reply in the most correct of port-soaked butlerian tones was, *“No, sir, he has just gone out and as he borrowed a pound from me he may be some time”*.

Whatever the circumstances surrounding Donald's move from Bridehead to Englefield, family relations were obviously not impaired for the present Sir Philip Williams recalls visiting Englefield as a boy, just after Sir Henry Benyon's death, and being impressed by the scale of hospitality. There would usually be six for breakfast and in the warming trays under the covers on the sideboard would be six portions of various types of cooked egg, six portions of bacon, sausages, kippers, fried bread, etc, etc, in case everybody wanted to choose exactly the same combination and he wondered what happened to what was left over. No doubt Donald knew what to do with it.

He married Hilda Dorothy Vallens at Weymouth, her family home, in 1918, the couple having met earlier in the War in Cape Town, South Africa where Hilda was a nurse. They had three children: George, born in Portsmouth in 1922 while Donald was still in the Navy; Sybil in 1925 at Littlebredy and Rosemary in 1933 at Ufton.

Donald Large died at Englefield in 1980 and Hilda in 1983. Both are buried in the churchyard.

The Lines Fallen in Pleasant Places

A village community

This was a village community at perfect ease with itself: the Squire, the Rector, the managers, the workers, and all their families; together with the village institutions of the Club, the shop, the school and the church. This pleasant place was their England, demi-paradise, their little world; made by their own efforts; a precious stone yet to make shameful conquest of itself.



Richard Smith was born in Englefield where his father's family had lived for at least 400 years and grew up there through the 1950s when things had changed little since the beginning of the century. He attended the village school, was married in the parish church and still lives in another of the estate villages nearby.