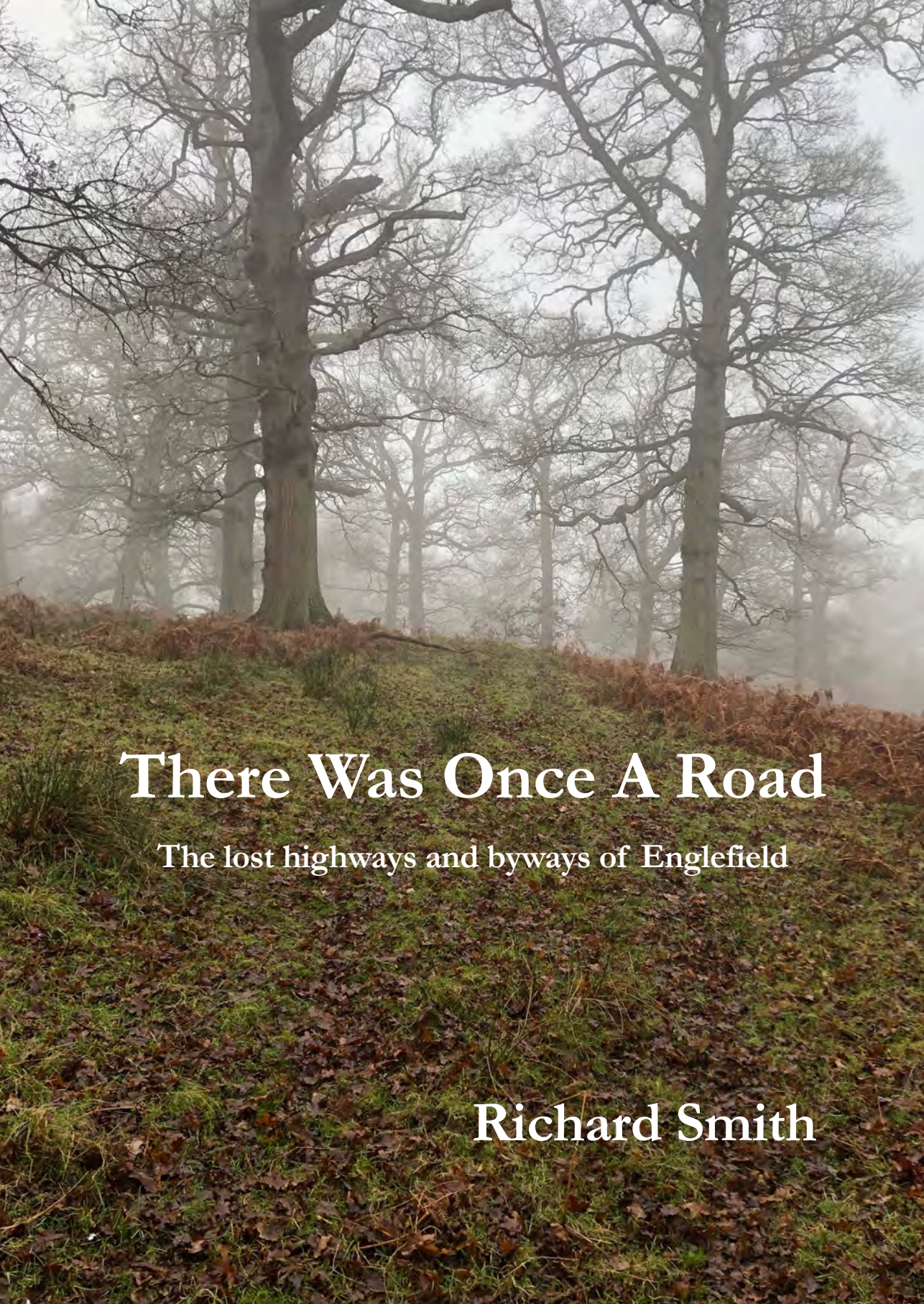


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a misty forest. In the foreground, there is a grassy field with scattered brown leaves. In the middle ground, there are several large, leafless trees with intricate branch structures. The background is filled with more trees, their forms softened by a thick mist or fog, creating a sense of depth and atmosphere.

There Was Once A Road

The lost highways and byways of Englefield

Richard Smith

There Was Once A Road

The lost highways and byways
of Englefield

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.

Rudyard Kipling: *The Way Through the Woods*

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The Rolling English Road

One of the remarkable things about the village of Englefield is its secluded nature due to the absence of through traffic, though terminating traffic is now pretty well continuous throughout the day. This was not always the case though, for the Englefield of the 18th century was very much in the main stream of through traffic (such as it then was).



As John Rocque's 1761 map "*A Topographical Survey of the County of Berks*" (extract left) shows, the village was situated on a cross roads at Appleton's Corner, made up of what are now the private drive to Englefield House, Englefield Street and the track across the Park. These roads were then all public through-routes and formed the principal connections between the Bath Road and the villages of Bradfield, Tidmarsh and beyond. Indeed the road from Theale to Bradfield formed part

of the accepted "high route" between Reading and Newbury and was frequently used in winter as a better alternative when wet weather made the "low route" along the Bath Road very difficult going. Had this situation continued then Englefield would certainly not be what it is today.

The earliest roads were made simply by the passage of people and animals as they went from A to B; unplanned and following originally the whim of beasts, but later of man since early man was after the beasts for food, taking the best route at the time and avoiding boggy ground and steep gradients or dog-legging up them where unavoidable. When a part of a road became impassable a new route was created by simply going round it. Hence Chesterton's "*A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire*;".

Even after the first farmers settled down in one place most roads, though they still hardly justified that word, were haphazard affairs on a strictly local basis since few people ventured so far from home



What may have passed for a road before (and after) the Romans

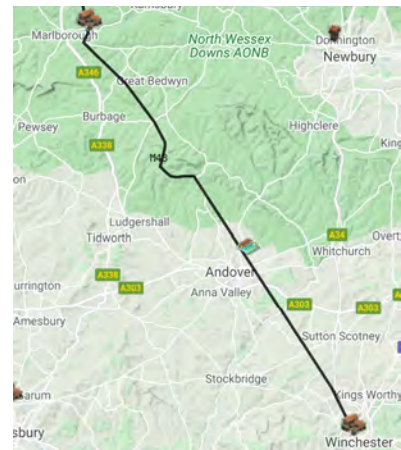
that they couldn't get back there by nightfall - a habit that continued as far as some country people were concerned even into the 20th century. If one strictly local set of roads happened to link up with another to give any semblance of a longer distance network that may have been pure accident, although long distance routes like the Icknield Way and the Ridgeway certainly did exist and people and goods moved internationally over long distances well before the Romans arrived.

Since all early movement was on foot or by pack animal, many roads were little more than paths in width, working their way through the landscape except where they crossed open spaces when there could be several tracks running side by side. Heavy wheeled carts did exist, though, even in the Iron Age and that demanded wider and better roads.

The Romans

The Romans were famously the first to build planned long-distance roads that were engineered, with drainage and a proper surface. The early Roman roads had a specific purpose other than simply moving from A to B. That purpose was, as would so often be the case for road building in future centuries: to enable the rapid movement of military forces and supplies in order to subdue and then control the local people, but later, once the military objective was achieved, other roads with a commercial purpose were needed and some of these may have been narrower and less well engineered.

While the looked-for characteristic of an old Roman road is arrow straightness over a considerable distance, and there are many examples of that, it is not always the case (and neither are many modern straight roads necessarily of Roman origin). While Roman roads ran straight from A to B and B to C, they weren't necessarily always straight from A to C, for the Romans respected the terrain as much as the animals and early Britons did and, at least with their later commercial roads, they avoided difficult ground where possible. The road from Winchester to Mildenhall is a case in point. After running in a perfectly straight line northwest from Worthy Down just outside Winchester to Conholt, it curves through a long semi-circle before returning to something like the original alignment near Tidcombe. The reason for this deviation is the steep-sided valley of Hippienscombe near the



Map courtesy of saxonhistory.co.uk

village of Chute but the apparent curve of the Chute Causeway is actually nine short straight stretches, each one-quarter to three-quarters of a mile long with angled corners between them.

There was a Roman road between Silchester and Dorchester and definite traces of a Roman road have been found near to Englefield at Ufton. The exact line the road took is unknown but there are several speculative accounts of its route that take it close to, or possibly even through, Englefield.

After the Romans

The network of roads that Roque mapped in 1761 was probably much as it had been when the Romans left in the 5th century, for there was no planned road building after that until the 18th century. Many Roman roads would have been lost because although they were wide, well constructed, with a hard surface and raised on embankments above boggy ground in many cases their purpose was not the purpose of the Anglo-Saxons. They didn't, therefore, necessarily meet the needs of more local movement which was mostly of individuals on foot and people and goods on the backs of animals with no significant amount of wheeled traffic until Tudor times. Where a stretch of Roman road was convenient it remained in use but, lacking regular maintenance, deteriorated rapidly.

New roads continued to come into being where there was a need and certainly the open field system of cultivation used by the Saxons would have created many short lengths of road linking the fields to the village and giving access into the more central parts of the fields. The development of new Saxon villages and towns in places different from the Roman settlements would have also required some new roads, although these would have been mere tracks compared with the Roman roads.

The common Saxon method of marking a property boundary was to dig a ditch along the boundary line and pile the earth on the inside. On the bank thus formed bushes and trees grew that in time became a hedgerow. This ditch-bank arrangement often persists to this day showing boundaries unchanged over all that time. However, hedges were also the common method of marking the new field boundaries at the time of the enclosures and although they are not usually accompanied by a ditch,



The typical appearance
of a Saxon boundary

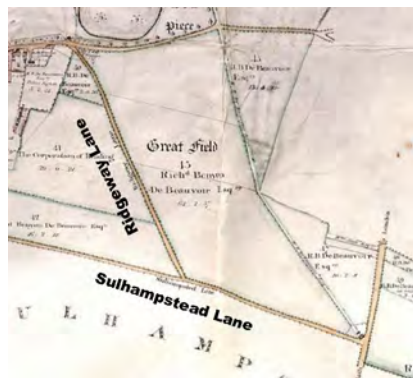
many of the old Saxon ditches have been filled-in over the years so it may be difficult to say whether a boundary is 1000 years old or just 200. One clue is that enclosure hedges were generally exclusively hawthorn and there is a formula for dating an old hedge that says that in a 100-foot stretch there will be one different woody hedgerow species per 100 years. So if there are six different species in 100 feet the hedge may be adjudged to be 600 years old.

Where two properties were contiguous there was a double ditch-bank with the two ditches next to each other to form a single wider one that was just about the right width for a sunken road called a “holloway”. The true appearance of such a road has only been preserved where the track was never adopted as a public road and remained as a footpath or bridleway. Where such roads were adopted for traffic and later surfaced accordingly their appearance may be somewhat disguised. A typical use of the double ditch-bank arrangement was the boundary between two manors, later parishes, so Bostock Lane, which marked the boundary between Englefield and Sulhamstead Banister, may have been originally such a holloway.

Such roads as already existed or were made anew were not surfaced but when a stretch became almost impassable, labourers would clear away the largest boulders, fill the ruts with small stones or gravel and perhaps spread a little sand. The condition of the Beenham Lane as seen on page 21 is perhaps as good as it ever was. Extra stones would sometimes be laid to one side to extend the width and take the traffic away from the worn section and repetition of this could lead to roads as much as 100 yards wide in places. This repair work was haphazard until parishes became responsible for the upkeep of roads within their boundaries by an Act of 1555 and such *ad hoc* minimal maintenance means that perhaps even some stretches of Roman roads that remained in use became heavily disguised over time by deviations in their alignment.

No new properly engineered roads were built until the 1720s and the first were intended for exactly the same reason as the first Roman roads: military movement, in this case around the Highlands of Scotland to enable General Wade’s troops to suppress the Jacobites after the rebellion of 1715. It was not until later in the century when long-distance coach travel became more common that the first proper new roads for travellers were built, but beginning in 1707 Turnpike Trusts were set up by Act of Parliament to take over the maintenance of existing principal roads from the parishes in return for being allowed to charge travellers on the road a toll. Later on they also started to construct completely new stretches of road like the one through Englefield in 1741, indicating that DBFO schemes are not a 20th century invention.

This was also the time of the enclosures, which also created a number of new roads. As the new, enclosed fields were, if not rectangular at least rectilinear, in shape and any roads followed the field boundaries those roads also necessarily ran in straight lines with angled corners. Add to this the fact that these “enclosure roads” were also typically lined by banks with hedges on top and it can be difficult to distinguish between a Roman road, a Saxon holloway and a 19th century enclosure road.



That stretch of Bostock Lane mentioned earlier, called Sulhamstead Lane in 1829, is a case in point for, while it marks an ancient boundary between two manors, our first sight of it is on Roque's map of 1761, by which time the fields on the Sulhamstead side of it had already been enclosed. The dead straight second part of this road (Ridgeway Lane in 1829) might be Roman in origin or it too might be an enclosure road that just happened to have been built as a matter of convenience before the enclosure was completed - or it might be both those things.

Englefield Retires



Fortunately, the situation shown by Roque in 1761 did not continue and a map by Thomas Pride: *“A Topographical Map of the Town of Reading and the Country adjacent to an Extent of Ten Miles”*, drawn only 30 years later shows us that Powlett Wrighte has already begun the process of removing through-traffic by creating a new turnpike road and shutting up the one that ran across the park in front of his house. Self-interest perhaps, but certainly enlightened self-interest when viewed from today.

Powlett's successor, Richard Benyon de Beauvoir, was responsible for the remaining significant road building. Again with a certain self-interest, for he wanted to close up the road to Bradfield that then ran under the Long Gallery at the back of Englefield House. He first extended the road that ran from Parker's Corner up the south side of Blyth's Hill (nowadays Common Hill) in both directions to connect the Bath Road at Theale Green to Bradfield village. He next built another road

(now the A340) from the Bath Road to Hogmoor Bridge and this enabled him to close Powlett Wrighte's turnpike that still ran through the village, removing much of the traffic between the Bath Road and Pangbourne.

The final stage was "New Road" between the chalkpit and Bradfield. This meant that there were now satisfactory alternatives for all journeys that previously had to pass through Englefield and the road past the back of Englefield House could finally be closed, although the final closure order was not made until 1855, the year after the death of Benyon de Beauvoir.

Thus by just after the middle of the 19th century Englefield was isolated from traffic and when the 20th century brought a huge increase in vehicles of all kinds the village remained unblighted on an island of relative calm.

But the old roads from earlier times have not all entirely disappeared. In common with the rest of England our modern road network overlays thousands of years of history so it may be that the modern highway is built upon a foundation that was originally laid down as long ago as prehistoric, Roman or Saxon times; or it may be an old turnpike from the 18th century or an enclosure road from the 19th; or it may be all of these running on top of each other.

Few of the old roads around Englefield have been completely lost. Some remain still in daily public use and many others are now (or always were) private roads and tracks used for farming and estate purposes. Only a few stretches have been lost completely to view, although it is not "*the wind and the rain*" that have "*undone them again*" but rather the plough and the harrow.

The Roman Road

The Roman road from Silchester to Dorchester must have passed somewhere near Englefield but exactly where is highly speculative. This road, apparently from the 2nd century, seems to have been a relatively minor one not intended for much traffic and therefore lacked the structure that might allow many signs to endure over nearly two millennia. There have been several accounts over the years of parts of this road but as is so often the case much stems from a single source with some unattributed additions.

In 1837 officers from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst undertook a survey of local Roman roads that was reported in *The United Service Journal* (Sep 1837), an account of which was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* the following year. This has been successively referenced by Ditchfield and Page in *The Victoria County History* (1906-1924), Ivan D Margery in *Roman Roads in Britain* (1955, reprinted 1967) and Trevor Coombs in *The Berkshire Archaeological Journal* (2011). In the early 1960s, William H Manning found signs of a road during an archaeological dig, also reported in the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal* (1973).

The line of the road leaving the Roman town of Calleva by the north gate has long been established as far as the southern outskirts of Upton Nervet in a plantation called Hundred Acre Piece. The road is considered by most then to have gone via Pangbourne where traces of a Roman settlement have been found and signs of a metalled road construction were seen in Shooter's Hill in the 1960s, although it is not certain whether these signs were of Roman origin or the 18th century turnpike. The road then, it is logically believed, followed the River Thames through the Goring Gap at Streatley. Between Hundred Acre Piece and Pangbourne, however, the route is not clear.

The Evidence

Both the Sandhurst party and Margery observed signs of a road on the ground, but without excavation neither could be certain at the time that it was necessarily Roman, nor can the signs seen in Pangbourne be positively identified as from that time rather than much later. The only person to have found hard archaeological evidence of a road that is almost certainly Roman was Manning.

The Sandhurst Survey

The officers were taken by Mr Congreve, the owner of the Aldermaston and Upton estates (who sold Upton to Richard Benyon a year later), to a spot in a fir plantation

on a line between Silchester and Ufton Nervet church where that line crosses the road from the Round Oak to Four Houses near the junction with Camp Road and where some 25 or 30 years earlier faint traces of the road had been seen. They found that the side ditches were still visible for some 800 yards until they were lost in a marsh, probably north of the road in Roundoak Piece but certainly not in Aldermaston Park as stated in *The Victoria County History* (VCH) and echoed by Coombs. Aldermaston Park is a few miles away and now partly covered by the AWE site, through which a different Roman road (the one from Silchester to Cirencester) runs. According to Coombs, when Hundred Acre Piece was excavated for gravel in 1971 a section of Roman road was seen in the north wall of the excavation, though no official record was made of the find.

The report in 1837 also stated: *"In front of Ufton Nervet church a track, about 500 yards long was observed..."* (Coombs quoting the United Services Journal). This length was *"almost wholly covered with underwood"* (Gentleman's Magazine) and did not exactly coincide with the direction of the Hundred Acre length but was only about 10° displaced from it.

Margery

Like the Sandhurst officers, Margery visited the two sites at Ufton but over 100 years later. He found there were still traces of the road running from just north of the Round Oak-Four Houses road southwards through Mortimer West End almost all the way to Silchester. He also found a length of road near to Ufton church: *"a strip bounded by ditches 38 feet apart which can still be seen bordering a forestry nursery plot in the south-west angle of a crossroads about $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from the church"*. This he takes to be the one found by the Sandhurst officers and he says it was *"pointing northward to Ufton Nervet Rectory (adjoining the church)"*, referencing the Gentleman's Magazine, although that source simply says *"in front of"* the church.

Manning

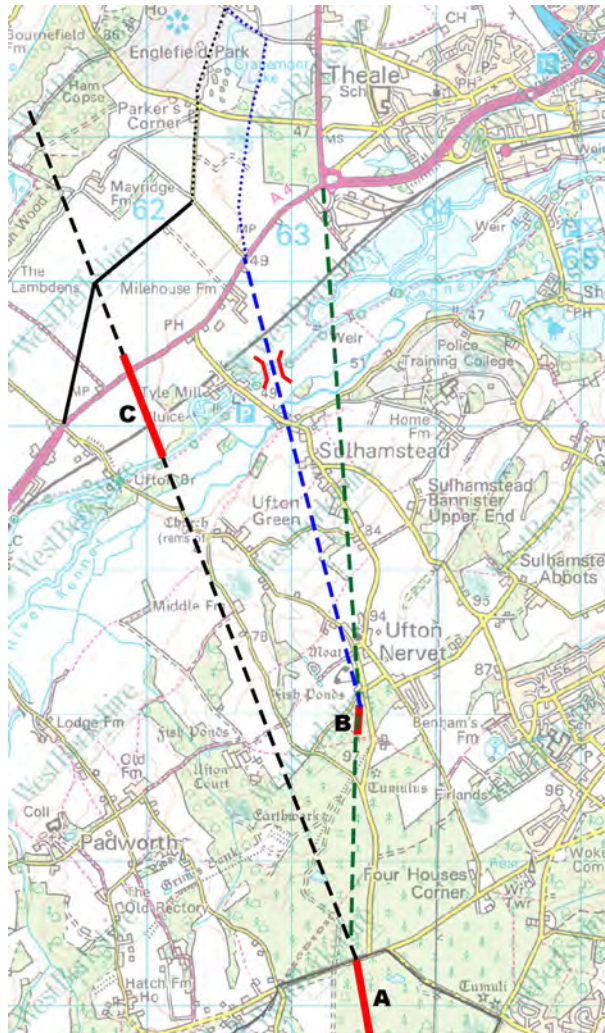
W H Manning excavated a site between the River Kennet and the Bath Road at Tidney Bed near Ufton between 1961 and 1963 and discovered signs of enclosures and trackways dating from Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon times. Aerial photography showed a road running NNW from the River Kennet at a point where in the early years of the 20th century there was a gravel spit used for bathing from - *"no doubt"*, says Manning, *"the remains of the ford"*.

The road crosses the railway line and the Bath Road before disappearing in the field on the opposite side. Manning excavated the site and found evidence of side ditches and a metalled surface, which he said had long been known to local

ploughmen who surmised it was a Roman road. A gate from the Bath Road into the field was positioned on the line of the road, to take advantage of the relative hard-standing when bringing machinery into the field in wet weather, suggested Manning.

The Supposed Routes

Assuming a starting point of Hundred Acre Piece (A on the map below), which all the sources do, and the evidence provided by the Sandhurst officers, Margery and Manning, there seem to be three potential routes.



The Sandhurst Route

A line from Roundoak Piece displaced by 10° from the original line (in green on the map) connects with the length in Church Plantation (B on the map) described by Margery where there would need to be only a further very slight change of course to connect with the end of the A340 on a line passing through Ufton Church. The VCH says that the officers “*inferred that it ran northwards from Silchester through Ufton, crossed the Kennet at Theale and followed the present road to Pangbourne*”. “*The present road to Pangbourne*” can, in 1837, only have meant the modern A340 which was completed 12 years earlier. The mention of Theale appears to have been an inference on the part of Ditchfield and Page rather than the Sandhurst officers.

If this was the route intended by the Sandhurst surveyors, we must accept that by “*in front of Ufton Nerve church*” they meant in front of the main bulk of the building (albeit at a distance of some 400 yards - but then in 1837 there would have been nothing between the two points) rather than past the main door, which was then at the west end.

This produces a plausible route from Ufton church to the A340 with a river crossing just south-west of the end of Wigmore Lane, plausibly closer to Theale than Sulhamstead, and then continuing on level ground to Pangbourne.

Margery's Route

Margery suggested that (coming from the direction of Pangbourne towards Silchester) the road may have followed “*the straight road through Tidmarsh in the direction of Sulhamstead, where it would have crossed the River Kennet*”. He also allows that this road may be a turnpike improvement, which we know the road at Tidmarsh is, although the A340 beyond Hogmoor is not so much a “turnpike improvement” as a completely new road replacing the old turnpike on a different course.

Margery didn't suggest where the road might have gone between Tidmarsh and Ufton other than in the direction of Sulhamstead, so he may have meant the A340 as it was in both 1837 and 1955, and indeed now, but also possible is the route of the old turnpike through Englefield to Bostock and a river crossing on that line would certainly be more compatible with the description of it being at Sulhamstead rather than Theale. Whether Margery was aware of the old turnpike or not is unknown but he clearly did believe that the piece of road in Ufton near the church was part of the Roman road and therefore the route shown in blue would fit.

Manning's Route

Manning takes a completely different approach, and has the archaeology to prove it. A line projected on a back-bearing from the road (C) discovered by Manning would intersect with the Roman road at the Hundred Acre (black dashed line), though passing well west of Ufton Church and not through the length of road in Church Plantation. Manning notes however that as the road in Church Plantation is only 38 feet wide while at Hundred Acre Piece the road is 62 feet and at Tidney Bed is 59 feet it may be a branch road and not the main one. This Church Plantation road may even not be Roman at all, of course, as there has been no dig to confirm the presence of a metalled surface. As Manning also notes, his projected line runs very close to the modern lane near the ruins of St John's church at Ufton Green, which may represent the line of the Roman road.

In the absence of any evidence between the point at which the Tidney Bed road runs out and Streatley (the metalling seen at Shooter's Hill not being confirmed as Roman) Manning suggested the road might run on via Bradfield to drop down into the Thames Valley at Basildon just below the Goring Gap. This, he notes, would be a continuation of the line north of Streatley.

Coombs's Analysis

Coombs does not offer any evidence of his own other than aerial photographs but simply summarises the three sources. Unfortunately the analysis becomes confused over three different versions of *"the present road to Pangbourn"*.

Coombs appears to take the "in front of" in the Sandhurst report to mean literally right in front of the main entrance, which in 1837 was at the west end of the church. However, just in front of the west end of the church was and is Church Lane and that area was not *"covered with underwood"*.

Taking a line from just west of the church, he infers a crossing of the River Kennet at a point near Sulhamstead (red bridge symbol on map). Continuing in a straight line then takes us on to the junction of Bostock Lane and the Bath Road which he supposes Margery meant, and he may well be correct. At this point things become confused with mentions of, in different places, the 1771 turnpike from Bostock through Englefield, the 1822 planned replacement for part of it, starting just south west of Cranemoor Pond, and the actual road that was built in 1825, leaving the A4 just where it does now. The last of these is not consistent with the supposed location of the river crossing and a road continuing to Bostock Lodges (which he wrongly calls Mile House Cottages). In his conclusion Coombs produces two conjectural routes between Ufton and Streatley.

Using aerial photographs, he continues a hypothetical route from Manning's excavations on a NNW line (which Manning only suggested as a suitable subject for further investigation) and finds aerial photographic evidence of roadways at two points on the same general line. Projected onwards this line would pass through the most difficult terrain in the Streatley Hills but, as Coombs notes, the present Hook End Lane, necessitating a change of direction by some 90 degrees, provides an easy route to reach the Thames near Lower Basildon, which is where Manning said it did. Coombs discounts this route owing to the steepness of the slope at the northern end in the Streatley Hills, ignoring the fact that he has elsewhere suggested Hook End Lane as a perfectly viable route consistent with Manning's description.

Conjectural route two is based on Margery and, as described in detail, is actually the route of the old turnpike from Bostock through Englefield (blue dots) that was closed in 1825 and therefore could not have been the road to Pangbourne in 1837 but might be what Margery meant.

Which Way Did The Road Go?

In coming to a conclusion we might consider four things: the archaeological evidence, the visual evidence, the etymological evidence and the nature of the terrain. We might also include the knowledge that there was no proper road building after the Romans left until late in the 18th century so it is logical to assume that some roads we see in 1760 might follow the line of Roman roads where they remained relevant. Where they did so the Anglo-Saxons often gave them the name "*strete*" as in Streatley and "The Street", the name of the road running through both Tidmarsh and Englefield.

We should also not assume that a Roman road continued in the same straight line between A and B indefinitely, but over shorter distances would follow the terrain to avoid steep hills and other obstacles where there was a choice. For this road there is no option to avoid the descent from Ufton to the Kennet valley but there is a choice after that so we should look at the whole route in two parts.

From the archaeological evidence, Manning's route down to the Kennet valley is the most likely option since it includes both pieces of a metalled road that could be Roman but could not be an 18th century turnpike and that was implicitly assumed to be the case by S J Lobb and P G Rose in their *Archaeological Survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire* (1996). It was discounted by Coombs in 2011 but only because of difficulties much later along the route and the evidence was not available to Margery or the Sandhurst party. In a straight line this is also somewhat the easiest descent to the Kennet valley, and obviously the easiest ascent coming from the other direction.

If from there the road continued on Manning's hypothetical route it would have passed just to the west of Mayridge Farm before climbing and descending two ridges of high ground to reach Bradfield and then doing it again twice more to get to Hook End Lane. While this is supported by some archaeological evidence (although not conclusively Roman evidence), it is the most difficult terrain and it avoids both "*stretes*".

There is, however, another possibility for the second part of the route. Just north of the Bath Road, not far from the point where the hard archaeological evidence runs out, Manning's route intersects the road that in 1761 ran from Lambden's Hill to Bostock Lane (in solid black on the map) at just about the point where it makes an abrupt angle. Following this line towards the north east takes us to Parker's corner, then across the present Deer Park to Englefield village street (black dots) then along the old road to Hogmoor and Tidmarsh Street and on to Pangbourne, all on level ground.

The Roads in 1760

A difficulty with mapping the lines of ancient roads or other landscape features is that over time the traces may become disguised or even completely destroyed, not just by building but also by successive changes in agricultural practice. Even when left alone nature slowly covers any features and some World War 2 bomb craters that were clearly identifiable 60 years ago are now indistinguishable from natural landscape features. Furthermore many later roads can often mimic the appearance of old ones. Fortunately from the time King George III came to the throne things are clearer because we have John Roque's map of 1761 and Josiah Ballard's survey of 1762 to show the roads in and around Englefield at that time and these are overlaid on the aerial photograph below.

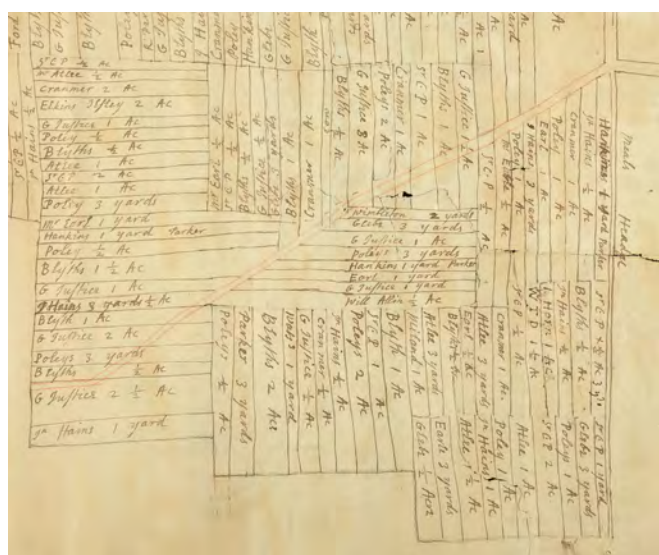


The Road to Tidmarsh

In 1760 travellers on the Bath Road wanting to go to Tidmarsh, Pangbourne and Oxford had a number of options, all but one of which involved passing through the centre of Englefield.

The first option from the west was the road that branched off the Bath Road at its junction with Lambden's Hill and ran across the common fields of Ufton, Sulhamstead and Englefield to Parker's Corner. The stretch of road between Bostock Lane and Parker's Corner is called Ridgeway Lane on the enclosure plan of 1829 and the other part, which then formed the boundary between the parishes of Sulhamstead and Englefield, is called Sulhamstead Lane, or rather "Sulhampstead" as it was then spelled (see page 5). On Ballard's map of 1762 Ridgeway Lane appears merely sketched-in and neither does Roque show it as confidently as the other roads.

An earlier plan of the common fields (probably from about 1690) has Ridgeway Lane apparently added later in red ink and cutting through the middle of some of strips as the extract here shows. A curious thing about this map is that it is drawn "upside down" with the Bath Road, to the south, at the top as if showing the view from Englefield House rather than the more conventional "north-up" view. Hence the road from Lambden's Hill across the Sulhamstead and Ufton fields is seen coming in from the right rather than the left as we would normally expect. The Sulhamstead and Ufton part of the continuation of this road is not shown on the enclosure maps of those parishes (Sulhamstead, 1811; Ufton, 1805) though part of it remains today as a farm track.



Perhaps Ridgeway Lane road was part of the Roman road between Silchester and Dorchester, as described on page 13, and some or all of it was ploughed-out when the Englefield common fields were created in Saxon times but then reinstated in the late 17th or early 18th century, when the common field system was being discontinued. The name Ridgeway Lane comes, no doubt, because it ran across the ridge and furrow of the common fields.

At Parker's Corner the traveller went straight on across what is now the New Deer Park, past Cranemoor Pond to Appleton's Corner and thence along the modern Englefield Street. Just past the Timber Yard the road forked, one way going towards the right and North Street (not on the present alignment but along the back of the houses that are now here) and the other to the left cutting across the fields to Hogmoor where it joined Piper's Lane to cross the river at Hogmoor Bridge. Part way along this road was a turning that now leads to Bradfield but then ran only as far as the chalkpit.

Passing the first turning and going a little further east along the Bath Road, the traveller could turn left along Bostock Lane. The modern name, Bostock Lane, seems to have been the original one, for it is called that on the plan of about 1690.

The third option was to continue further east to Green Lane and thence through Englefield village to Appleton's Corner turning right on the road through the modern village.

A final route, and the only route that did not go through Englefield village, was to continue on to Theale and take Deadman's Lane, through North Street and along Piper's Lane to Hogmoor.

The Road to Bradfield...

From Theale the road to Bradfield followed a line close to that of what is now the private drive to Englefield House, at that time running through the common fields of Englefield. Until the mid-19th century this road deviated to the right a little way along its present course and ran somewhat to the east of the present road. In 1760 the part of this road after the junction with Green Lane was the Englefield village street with the Three Daggers Inn seemingly at the junction and the village houses on the left hand side of the road, where the grassed area under the trees is today. It rejoined the present course just beyond Appleton's Corner. The line of this road is shown in red on the aerial image below.

Just beyond the church, in front of Englefield House, the road turned sharply to the left and passed through the arch at the back of the House under the Long



Gallery - as it still does today but now only into a courtyard. In what is now the pleasure garden of Englefield House it took a sharp turn to the right, ran up the hill and over the top through the Old Deer Park, then down the other side to the bridge over the Bourne, as seen running across the top half of the map below which is an extract from the one

that accompanied the Enclosure Award of 1829. The track of this road can still be seen running along the edge of the Park between high banks. Just before the Bourne bridge was a large circle with, in 1760, a road leading off it into what was then the common wood of Englefield. About halfway along this road was a turning that ran back up the hill to join the Beenham Lane at Goff's Farm.



...and to Beenham

Immediately after leaving what is now the garden of Englefield House, the road to Beenham turned left off the Bradfield road and ran across the front of the slope in the New Deer Park to form the crossbar of a T-junction at the top of Blyth's Hill (at that time there was no road down the other side of what is now Common Hill) before continuing on to Beenham.

The course of this road can also still be seen running through the park up to the point where it joins the modern Common Hill. That part was evidently closed before 1829 for it is not shown on the enclosure map above. After the road down the north side of Common Hill between the Beenham Lane and the Bourne Bridge was made in 1802 a new road was made joining the Bradfield Road to Common Hill, as seen on the map above. Maybe when the brickworks that supplied the bricks that were used building the new houses of Englefield was established for that was situated on this road just at its junction with the Bradfield Road.

The remainder of this road to Beenham was still in public use up to the 1970s but was closed when gravel was extracted and now continues (though diverted at the Beenham end) only as a bridleway and farm track.

A Trip Along the Road to Bradfield



The road passing through the arch under the Long Gallery...



...running up the hill through the garden after turning sharp right...



...along the edge of the Old Deer Park....



...and down the other side of the hill to the Bourne bridge at the bottom.

Along the Beenham Lane



The Beenham Lane coming from its junction with the Bradfield Road...



...and running out into the New Deer Park...



...crosses the park...



...at the top of the hill



...to Common Hill (Blyth's Hill)...



...and continues towards Beenham

The New Roads



The village in the 18th century was centred on the cross roads at Appleton's Corner with buildings along the Theale-Bradfield road between Green Lane and the church and along the road that is now the village street as far as where the road to Tidmarsh turned to the left off the road to North Street, as can be seen here in a map of 1765. There were also buildings in what is now the New Deer Park in front of Englefield House.

The old manor house of the Englefield family was probably Cranemoor House on the edge of Cranemoor Pond then, as the map above from 1765 shows, on the edge of the village but when Englefield House was built in about 1590 it was set apart from the village, in the fashion of that time. Aside from that, Englefield seems to have escaped the Tudor craze for surrounding a great house with a spacious park, no doubt partly because of the disputed ownership after 1559, and it was not until much later that this process was begun, with nothing much happening until Powlett Wrighte's turnpike in 1771 - and even then it went relatively slowly.

The Pangbourne Turnpike

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

As seen in 1760, most of this route already existed and the trust merely took over the maintenance of it in return for the right to charge a toll, but a completely new length of road was required from the junction of Bostock Lane with the Bath Road across the Great Field to Englefield Street. The “*house...known by the sign of The Daggers*” was the Three Daggers Inn and its sign was the arms of the Marquis of Winchester which were “*three swords pilewise*” as can be seen on the family ledger stones in the church.

Powlett Wright, who was a Trustee of the turnpike, gave his consent and allowed the builders to take materials for the road from his land without charge. The new part of the route is shown on the image below as the solid yellow line while the part that followed the existing roads is in red and yellow.



While Powlett Wright gave the land without charge he did make two conditions. The first was that *"...a highway leading out of the SW side of Englefield Street on NW side of Blacksmith Shop and from thence to the NW side of Cranmore Pond to a gate leading into the common field shall be shut up."* This was the road that ran in front of Englefield House from Appleton's Corner to Parker's Corner so he was able to remove the traffic

from his view and begin the process of creating a park that would be completed later by his half-brother Richard Benyon. Thomas Pride's map of 1790 does not show this road at all, although it remains to this day as a private gravel track. Also closed at that time was Green Lane except for the part where the turnpike followed its course and a section at the southern end (in red dashes) giving access into the Great Field.

The second condition was that there should be no toll gate between the southern end of Bostock Lane and Chalkpit Farm and this meant that traffic was at least able to move from one side of the estate to the other without payment.

The Act of 1771 duly authorised the erection of *"One Toll-gate and One Toll-house between the south end of Bostock Lane and Pangborne"* and this must have been the one that still stands in Tidmarsh, listed by Historic England as late 18th century, although there is no record of it before 1815.



Powlett Wrighte died in 1779 and his uncle Nathan Wrighte inherited but Powlett's expenditure on remodelling Englefield House had run up debts and Englefield House had to be rented out to gain some income. It was only after Richard Benyon came to Englefield in 1802 that any further road building was carried out.

The Road Over Common Hill

As soon as he took up permanent residence at Englefield after selling his house at Gidea, Richard Benyon started on two projects. One was to create the new deer park in front of Englefield House and the other was to close the road to Bradfield that ran under the Long Gallery. Common to both of these projects was the creation of a new road from the Bath Road to the Bourne bridge, taking in the existing road up Blyth's Hill.

The initial stage seems to have been confined to straightening Blyth's Hill between Parker's Corner and the T-junction with the Beenham Lane. The undated, but probably earlier than 1802, plan on the next page shows Blyth's Hill as it originally was with the intended modifications.

At the lower end of the hill is a pair of sharp bends, left then right (the original Parker's Corner), which were apparently intended to remain. Further up the hill



was a sharp dog-leg right and left followed by a junction where it was necessary to turn right to continue up the hill. The road that ran straight on at this point led past some buildings to a cottage, later known as “Blyth’s Cottage”, that stood just off the left hand edge of this map and then ran on to join the Beenham Lane. In 1844 this road is shown as leading only to some fields owned by the Corporation of Reading and no further but the 1883 map shows it still to run its full original course through the woods, as it does today, except that now there is no longer any connection to Common Hill.

Approaching the junction with the Beenham Lane was a long curve, also to the right, leading up to the T-junction. Both these bends formed incursions into what was intended to become the new park.

The plan shows how these bends were to be removed, to leave a straight run for the wall that now provides the boundary of the park. The plan also shows, in red, a number of houses, now all gone. At least some of this land belonged to Mr Blyth and after the alterations to remove the bends had taken place Richard Benyon wrote to him to apologise for inadvertently running the road over some of his land, mentioning that there was already a track there which the waggoners were in the habit of using when the weather was good anyway.

The second plan, which is dated 1802 and covers the whole length from Theale to the Bourne, is here separated into two parts. The northern part shows a new section of road continuing beyond the Beenham Lane from Hill Close down the northern slope past the Englefield Common Wood (hence Common Hill) to meet the Bradfield Road coming from Englefield House just before the bridge over the Bourne. The proposed road seems to have run a little to the west of the present course to approach the “roundabout” on the Bradfield Road at a right angle rather than merging into the road as it later did. The section of the Beenham Lane between the old Bradfield Road and the top of Blyth’s Hill appears already to be stopped-up on this plan, although the new section of road replacing it (as shown in 1829) does not appear.



Either when it was actually built and certainly some time before 1829 (see map on page 18) Common Hill was realigned to its present course at the Bourne bridge end and two new pairs of cottages were built alongside it half way down the hill. The road into the common wood remained in 1844 and had also been extended to meet the road coming down from the top of Mayridge Hill. This road still remained connected to Common Hill in 1883 but the connection was severed sometime later, although the remainder of this road through the wood remains.



The second stage in completing the new road to Bradfield was to link Parker's Corner with the Bath Road as shown on the left. There was an access road into the common field from Parker's Corner and the new road follows that as far as the turnpike.

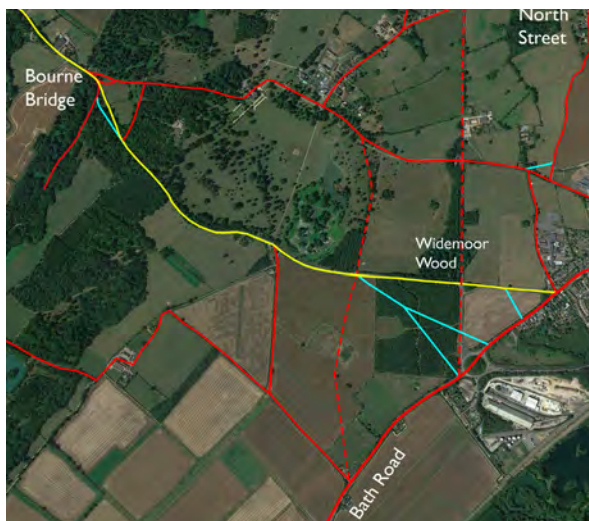
The plan also shows in pencil the double bend on Blyth's Hill being smoothed to something like its present course. The route of the old road remains visible to this day.

After crossing the turnpike the plan shows the new road running well to the west of Widemoor Wood then bending to the right to link up with the stub of Green Lane that remained after the road was closed when the Turnpike was built. Another pencil addition shows the road to continue straight at this bend, through an enclosure called "Walkers", to join

the Bath Road a little to the east of Green Lane. The First Series Ordnance Survey one-inch map of 1830 shows the straight road only but the enclosure map for the parish of Tilehurst in 1817, and that for Englefield in 1829 show both of these alignments, although the plan for the Pangbourne Road 1822 shows the Green Lane part only as a track.

An additional pencil line on the 1822 plan for the new Pangbourne Road shows Common Hill being diverted at its junction with the old turnpike to run alongside Widemoor Wood to join the Bath Road at the junction with Deadman's Lane, as it does today. This change must have been partly adopted after 1829 but before 1844 for the tithe map of the latter year shows that after crossing the new Pangbourne Road the road remains straight for about half the distance to the Bath Road but then to turn sharply right along a field boundary to join the Bath Road at another point still to the west of Deadman's Lane. At some time later, and certainly before 1883, the road was put on its present course to meet the Bath Road at Deadman's

Lane. Around the same time, at the other end of Deadman's Lane, the North Street road junction was moved to its present position when the new Agency was built. The image shows Common Hill as it was by 1883 in yellow with the earlier versions of roads in light blue. In 1825 the turnpike was replaced by the Pangbourne Road and these are shown dashed to denote that they never existed together.



Closing the Turnpike



By 1822 Richard Benyon had removed almost all of the old village houses, including the Three Daggers Inn, from the road leading to Englefield House but the turnpike traffic still used it so in that year he planned a new road to replace part of the turnpike as far as Hogmoor and bypass Englefield village completely.

As originally planned this was meant to use part of the existing turnpike from Bostock as far as its junction with the new Common Hill road just south west of Cranemoor Pond but then the new road would run diagonally across the former Great Field to a point on the road from Englefield to Theale where the lodge gates now are (shown as the broken yellow line left) before turning north and running in a straight line to Hogmoor where it crossed the river on a new brick arch

just upstream of the existing crossing, perhaps a ford. The existing river crossing was closed and Piper's Lane diverted to meet the new road just on the Englefield side of the new bridge. The road to Chalkpit Farm was extended back to meet the new road.

This route would have enabled any turnpike toll gate at Bostock to remain in use but a pencil addition to the plan shows the new road meeting the Bath Road where it does today. This was, in fact, the line actually taken for it is shown in 1829 on the enclosure map and would have made a toll gate at Bostock redundant, requiring a new one further along the Bath Road. The toll house at Tidmarsh certainly remained in business because there is a record of £83 being collected in tolls during the year 1832.

By the time this plan was drawn the road to North Street had already been rebuilt on a new straight alignment (shown in light blue) and three new pairs of houses, including a new Three Daggers Inn, built along it.

The new road was opened in 1825 and an order made on 6th February 1826 closed the section of the old turnpike between Bostock Lane and the road from Theale to Englefield church and the one from Englefield Street to Hogmoor. The turnpike trustees gave the land formerly occupied by the closed sections of road back to Richard Benyon de Beauvoir in exchange for the land taken up by the new road.

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

The Village is Finally By-passed

Although the new road over Common Hill in 1802 had provided an alternative route for travellers from the west going to Bradfield and the new Pangbourne Road did the same for those going between Tidmarsh and the Bath Road, the shorter

route for those going from Tidmarsh to Bradfield was still through Englefield, past Englefield House and through the Old Deer Park. This meant that this road could still not be closed.

Just before his death in 1854 Richard Benyon de Beauvoir succeeded in gaining agreement for another new road (appropriately called New Road, though often called Chalkpit Road) from the chalkpit to Bradfield and providing a better route from Tidmarsh. This is shown by the yellow line on the image below and ran from the cross-roads at Bradfield College, through another chalk pit (now the College's Greek Theatre), a garden and a field, all belonging to the Rev John Frewen Moor and then, according to the notice in the Berkshire Chronicle of 4th November 1854, *"through the bottom of the hill plantation and along the bank of a stream called the brook"* to Lone Barn. Confusingly, the wood here called the hill plantation is not the one called by that name today (which was then called Middle Plantation) but the one called Bradfield Plantation in 1883 and now known as Strawberry Copse. From Lone Barn the new road followed the occupation road (a private road for the convenience of occupiers of the land) past the chalkpit to the Pangbourne Road by a cottage called at that time "Awberry's Lodge".



Application for the closure of the old Bradfield Road was formally made to the Justices on 1st January 1855 although that closure can't have happened for several months because the Reading Mercury of 26th May 1855 noted that *"...a new road... will shortly be opened. By this road, the long and dangerous hill, near Englefield House, will be avoided, and for this the public will be indebted to the liberal spirit of R Benyon Esq."*

New Road having been completed, the old Bradfield Road from the Pangbourne Road, past Englefield House and through the Old Deer Park to the Bourne bridge was closed. The section shown as a yellow broken line was disused completely, although the course remains visible (see page 20) and the remainder (shown in light blue) became a private road to Englefield House except that a right of public passage was retained over the length between Appleton's Corner and the southwest corner of the churchyard (in blue and red) to allow access to the church.

An elaborate gate screen and two lodges were built at the entrance to the new private road to Englefield House on the Pangbourne Road in 1862 to commemorate the marriage of Richard Fellowes Benyon to Elizabeth Clutterbuck four years earlier. These are attributed to Richard Armstrong who had already been engaged on making major changes to Englefield House for Richard Benyon.



The two photographs show the gate and lodges at different times. The first is by Tidbury of Pangbourne from the early years of the 20th century and the second is by Frith in about 1955.

In both of these pictures the gates are standing open but they were, and are, frequently closed to preserve the post-1855 status of the coach road as private although villagers from the part of the village near to Appleton's Corner would use the road on foot or by bicycle to get to and from the bus stop there or to get to Theale. This meant that when the gates were closed it was necessary to climb over the low brick garden wall just beyond the end of the screen wall on the right of these pictures and go through the garden of Egbert Allen who lived in the lodge. He also allowed people catching a bus to leave their bicycles in an open lean-to there.

Nowadays the road is a permissive footpath and a pedestrian gate has been placed in the screen immediately to the right-hand side of the main gate.

Local Roads

In addition to the new public roads created in the 19th century to by-pass Englefield, there were also various private estate roads created. All of these were always for private use, as are those that remain today.

Coach Roads



Early in the 19th century Richard Benyon had made a private coach road (the yellow line on the image left) from the Bradfield Road near the junction with the turnpike up to the front of Englefield House (where the main entrance was at that time) and then across his new park to Parker's Corner where it picked up the line of Bostock Lane.

At each end stood a lodge and although the one at Parker's Corner, inside the Park to the right of the gate in the picture below was demolished and replaced by the present Parker's Corner Lodge, outside the park opposite the gate, by 1844 the other remained into the 1870s by which time its role had been taken over by the new ones on the Pangbourne Road.

At Parker's Corner there still stand a pair of stone gateposts with a modern gate between them (below, left). This gateway is clearly aligned with the old course of Bostock Lane and the coach road, for the road across the Park to Appleton's Corner bears quite sharply right just inside the gate. An identical pair of pillars used to stand at the bottom of The Street where it joined the Pangbourne Road.

The pillars at the bottom of The Street, along with the flanking wall and the large tree on the left of this picture, were removed in the later 20th century in order to accommodate the requirements of modern traffic.



After the old Bradfield Road was closed the coach road across the New Deer Park was removed and the former public road was realigned onto its present course, initially following the coach road but then taking a course somewhat between that and the old public road as far as Appleton's Corner where it rejoined the line of that road as far as Englefield House. The old coach road was redundant by then anyway since Richard Fellowes Benyon's alterations to Englefield House moved the main entrance from the south front to the east one, which is better served by the former public road. The path of the old coach road can still be discerned from the air by the trees that lined it.

Richard Benyon made another coach road for his own use to replace the old Bradfield Road from Englefield House across the Old Deer Park and down to the Bourne bridge at the bottom of Common Hill, replacing the closed Bradfield Road. The road that already existed between the old Bradfield Road and Common Hill through Daintylands was extended to meet this coach road at the Dew Pond.

At Common Hill there was a gate (below) and two lodges (to the left of the gate) which still stand today, the sole survivors of many houses that were formerly scattered around here. The gate is now redundant, however, since although the old coach road still survives, it has been blocked near that end in recent years by a new plantation.



Occupation Roads

The image on page 15 shows that in 1760 there was a road from the Bradfield Road at the southwest corner of the churchyard. It skirted the south and east sides of the churchyard and then turned right to run only as far as Wimbleton's. By this route the road avoided the land to the north of the church on which the Rectory stood. The Rectory and the Wimbleton's road are both shown in the engraving of the church by Tomkins from about 1790, which also gives an indication of the state of these roads at the time. As part



of the parliamentary enclosure starting in 1805 Richard Benyon exchanged the land on which the Rectory stood for some elsewhere and by 1822 had made the road to Wimbleton's run straight along the north side of the church and the road in front of the church then served as access to the new stables that were then built.

The road was also extended beyond Wimbleton's to the Chalkpit by 1829, and probably by 1822. The junction of this road with New Road has now been moved to improve visibility to the left when turning onto New Road.

Actually, this road, which undulates across open parkland and provides tantalising glimpses of the east front of the House, provides the better approach to Englefield House as the more usual one means that the building is completely hidden until one arrives at the entrance.



In 1844 the occupation road that became part of New Road to Bradfield only ran as far as Lone Barn but another occupation road ran from it at the bridge over the river Bourne just past the chalkpit and followed the right bank of the river to the bridge at the bottom of Common Hill. From Lone Barn another road ran over the brow of the hill and down the other side to cross the Bourne on a brick arch bridge and join this first road coming from Chalkpit. Another road ran along the crest of the hill to Common Hill.

Lambden's House (now called "The Lambdens"), between Mayridge Farm and Lambden's Farm seems to have been built in the 1870s. Lambden is an old Bradfield name going back at least to the 17th century. This farmhouse originates from that time and was called Lambden's Farm in the census of 1851, but then Field Farm

in the next three censuses before reverting to Lambden's Farm in 1891. A road connecting Mayridge and Lambden's farms was built about the same time with another road from Lambden's House directly to the Bath Road at the point where Victoria Lodges stand. From the name and style it may be conjectured that these were already there before the road, probably built in 1837 or soon after. Although today they stand next to a modern barrier across that road, the name does not necessarily mean that they ever acted as lodges in the sense of a gatehouse for we know that Bostock Lodges a little further on towards Theale could not have done so.

One more new road was built in the 19th century and before it was made travelling the short distance, as the crow flies, from Parker's Corner to Mayridge Farm meant taking a somewhat longer route on Bostock Lane around two sides of the triangular-shaped Corporation Field. This road (heading into the distance on the right) remained only a gravelled track until well into the second half of the 20th century.

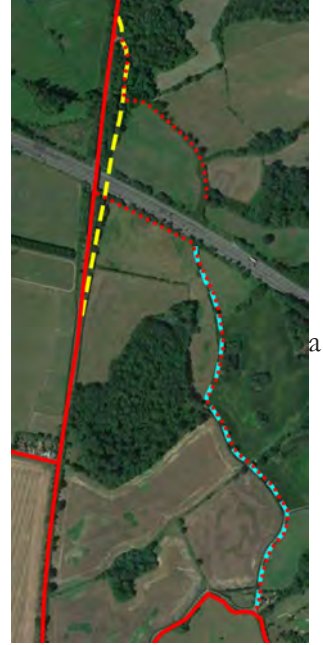


The roads as they were at the end of the 19th century are shown on this image. Public roads are in red and private roads in blue with those that are dirt tracks shown by a dashed line. Some of the private roads are used by members of the public for necessary access (eg deliveries) to properties and these are shown in blue/red. Only the length between Appleton's Corner and the church is a public right of way (and then only for access to the church), the others are permissive only.

Modern Times

The situation shown at the end of the 19th century remained until the early 1970s when the M4 motorway from London to Maidenhead was joined up with the western section beginning at Bath.

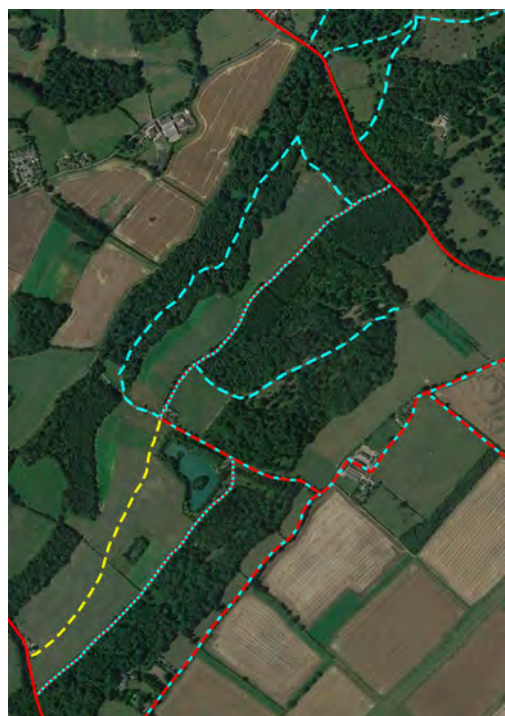
The Pangbourne Road was diverted slightly to the west just after the junction with New Road, crossing over the motorway and the River Pang on a new concrete bridge, slightly upstream of the old brick one, which is still there overshadowed by the newcomer. The old road is shown by the yellow line. The motorway cut across and blocked Piper's Lane near the Hogmoor Bridge end. Piper's Lane had long been disused as anything other than a farm track and public footpath and the part from North Street to the motorway remains as Restricted Byway. At that point a public footpath runs alongside the motorway and climbs the embankment to the Pangbourne Road at the new bridge. Part of the section on the other side of the motorway is also retained as a Byway Open to all Traffic linking up with a public footpath towards Sulham and using the old Hogmore Bridge to join with the new Pangbourne Road. "Byway Open to all Traffic" looks a questionable designation from the picture below



As another part of the motorway works, the Bath Road was diverted away from Theale High Street on a new dual-carriageway between the motorway junction and the junction with the Pangbourne Road, where a new roundabout was built to replace the tee-junction. This meant the loss of a local landmark: the Royal Automobile Club telephone box that stood there. These were introduced in 1912 and even in the 1960s RAC members were still provided with a key to open the door so they could use the telephone inside to summon assistance in the event of a breakdown.

The crossroads of Common Hill with the Pangbourne Road at Widemoor Wood (by then known as Wigmore Wood, or "Bushy Wigmore" locally) was staggered to help prevent the accidents that used to happen there, though not entirely successfully.

Gravel was dug from the top of Mayridge Hill at the Lambden's Hill end which closed the Beenham Lane there. Although the grassland was restored, the road was not put back and instead the whole length of Beenham Lane was closed as a public road. The length between Common Hill and the road up Mayridge Hill was retained and a new length made from Mayridge Hill across to Lambden's Hill a little further south than the original road. The whole length of the road is a public bridleway (dotted line on map below).



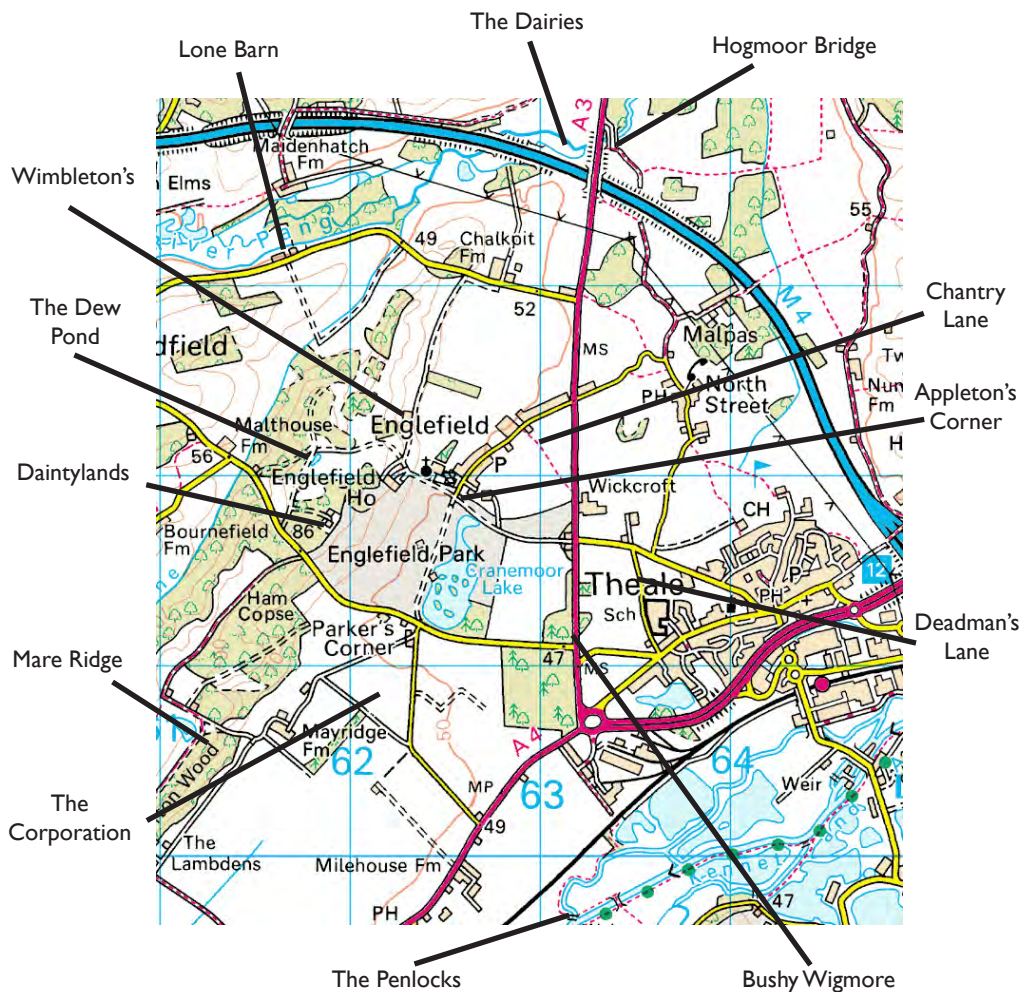
Common Hill has obviously had some work done on it to raise the road surface (perhaps to prevent pooling of water) for at two points on it the road surface on Common Hill is now several feet above the adjacent ground level. One of these points is where the track still ran from Common Hill road into the common wood opposite Bradfield Lodges in the early 20th century and the other is on the south side where even in the 1950s a road still ran across the field and through the wood to link up with the Beenham Lane. Both roads have consequently lost their connection to Common Hill and been somewhat truncated although they remain in use for estate purposes over the rest of their original length. The one through the common wood on the north side now

also connects to the old Beenham Lane, via the track that used to run alongside Goff's Farm, as it originally did. Those roads that are private roads but open for access to properties are shown in blue/red.

An Englefield Gazetteer

Local place names usually have some descriptive basis which may be lost in the mists of time but the origin is often not as old as we might think. Names also changed from time to time, sometimes with the original name being lost but sometimes with it being regained later (as with Wimbleton's). This is particularly so when names relate to people. Names also undergo subtle changes due to inaccurate transliteration into the written word, especially of local dialect pronunciation (Wimbleton's again and also Bushy Wigmore, May Ridge).

Names also move around over time, sometimes a long way and sometimes not so far (Parker's Corner, The Larches, Hill Plantation).





The Corporation

The Corporation is the piece of land that lies between Bostock Lane and the road from Parker's Corner to Mayridge Farm. The origin of this name lies in the fact that until the mid 19th century this area of land was owned by the Corporation of Reading.



were usually funded by the rent from a piece of land and there was formerly a Chantry Farm in the village, the farmyard of which was in what became the Timber Yard and is now the Estate Works, just behind the camera in this picture, but the bulk of the land was separated from it by other lands and reached by this lane, no doubt providing the origin of the name.

Appleton's Corner

Appleton's Corner is the area where the end of The Street meets the coach road from the Lodge Gates up to Englefield House and forms a cross-roads with the track leading into the Park. It is so called because in the early 1900s a Mr Appleton had a house here, on the grass just to the right of the road into the Park.



Chantry Lane

Chantry Lane runs off Englefield Street opposite the Yard and ends at the old bathing pool, though a public right of way continues across the field to the Pangbourne Road.

A chantry is a monetary endowment to pay for a priest to say prayers for the soul of one departed and a chantry existed in Englefield from before 1386 until 1536. Chantries



The Dairies

The Dairies were the water meadows, created in about 1710, on either side of the River Pang upstream (to the east) of Hogmoor Bridge. The meadows lay on both sides of the river and today the M4 motorway cuts through the southern part. By closing a barrier across the river and opening gates in the banks up and downstream of it water was diverted

to flow through a system of ditches, flooding the fields in winter to encourage an early growth of fresh grass for the cattle in the spring.

This picture shows the section to the north of the river with a main feeder channel lined by brown reeds running from the river in the bottom left corner and the side channels running from it can be identified by the lines of green rushes at right angles to it.

Dainty Land

The name started as “Great Denty Land” which in 1762 was just one part of the larger area at the top of Common Hill in the angle between the old roads to Bradfield and Beenham. Adjacent to it was “Little Denty Copse” and when the new road was put down the north side of the hill it followed the boundary between Great Denty and Little Denty with the latter later becoming known as Bennett’s Copse. By 1844 the area had become the brick works and plantations, with part of it absorbed into “The Lawn”, as the new Deer Park was then called. In the 1870s a new house was built on the part of The Lawn north west of the old Beenham Road as the residence of the Head Keeper and in 1883 (as seen here) this piece was called Dainty Land. By 1913 the plantation shown here as The Larches had become a gravel pit and The Larches was the piece south and west of Stonepark Wood. In 2022 The Larches is yet another plantation just off the top of this map and the whole area outlined is known as Dainty Land.



Deadman's Lane

Deadman's Lane is a narrow sunken road that runs from the Bath Road on the western outskirts of Theale to the Englefield Road. It originally formed a cross-roads with the Englefield Road then went on through North Street and along Piper's Lane to Hogmore Bridge and Pangbourne.

The origin of the name is sometimes related to the battle between Saxons and the Danes in 870 but the more likely source is the Civil War when after the first Battle of Newbury in 1643 there was a skirmish between Royalist and Parliamentary forces in the area with very heavy loss of life on both sides and the Parliamentary dead being buried in Deadman's Lane.



Bushy Wigmore

The original name was Widemoor, an area of unenclosed scrub and woodland on the edge of the common field before Enclosure and that was contracted to Widmoor. The pond that is still there (though dry in the picture, right) is shown on a field plan of about 1690 as "Widmoor Pond" but a much larger area surrounding it is labelled "Widemoor Common" in 1762 and also

on the enclosure map of 1829. On the 1877 Ordnance Survey map it is called "Widemoor Wood" so clearly over the years the area became progressively more wooded, or "bushy". The extent of Widemoor Common/Wood as seen on all these maps is outlined here in red. The 1913 OS map has the name as "Wigmore Wood". This may have resulted from a mis-hearing of Widmoor coupled with confusion with a local family of builders called Wigmore who lived nearby and gave their name to the road they lived in.

In 1825 the new Pangbourne Road was put through the Common and by 1883 the road from Parker's Corner was diverted along the south edge. The cross-roads formed by these two was a notorious accident blackspot because drivers coming down from Common Hill to Theale often failed to stop at the junction with the major road. The cross roads was later altered to the staggered form shown to try to prevent this.



Loring's Meadow

The name Loring's Meadow is no longer used but it certainly was up to the end of the 19th century. In 1844 (when it was written as "Loarins") it comprised two adjacent pieces of land that were part of the Glebe land belonging to the Rector and situated between the old Rectory walled garden and

The Street. In 1863 the new school was built on one of the pieces but the other remains to this day, now as the "5-A-Day" garden. In 1894 there was a walnut tree standing in the meadow that was said to be 100 years old and Mr Webb allowed the boys of the school to gather the walnuts from it. Mr Webb kept the shop at the time so presumably had some rights over the meadow or the tree. Part of the Meadow became the school garden in 1941 but the garden reduced in size in 1953 and discontinued altogether in 1956. In the 1960s the meadow was used by Head Gardener Bill Partridge to grow dahlias as seen here. There was also for a time a grass tennis court for use by the villagers alongside the Rectory garden wall.

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

Wimbleton's

Wimbleton Farm is mentioned in deeds from the early 18th century and a Mr Wimbleton had holdings in the common fields in the previous century so probably had the farm as well.



In 1762 when it was owned by James May the farm was called Park Farm but in 1844 it was Wimbledon Farm. A similar change of a "t" to a "d" also afflicted the place in south London where they play tennis but in Englefield it was back to Wimbleton by 1913. Wimbleton barn may well have its origins in the early farm but the two cottages alongside were built in 1892, replacing a block of three earlier ones.

The Penlocks

The pen lock was the weir where the Kennet and Avon Canal diverged from the river Kennet to go through Sulhamstead Widemead lock. It was often used in the summer for swimming and in 1892 Mr Todd, the Agent, had overhanging bushes cut back “...so that the whole pool will be available for a very enjoyable plunge”. It was very much only for the older and better swimmers as the river was much wider and deeper here than at the Dairies, with several holes and a very strong current. A boy drowned here while swimming in the 1950s.



The Dew Pond

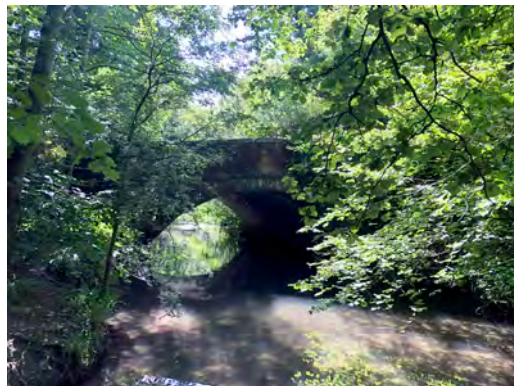
Dew ponds are traditionally found on high ground far from any protecting woods and where there is no spring or stream to feed it. These ponds seldom dry up, even when springs in the valleys are reduced to a trickle, and provide water for animals and man on exposed high ground. It is not known

whether the one in the Old Deer Park was actually constructed as a dew pond but it never seems to dry up even though the original part of the spring-fed Cranemoor Lake in the new park is now without water much of the time.

The traditional method of constructing a dew pond is to dig a hole somewhere where mist collects early on summer mornings. As with most old artificial ponds the bed is a layer of puddled clay but the secret of the dew pond is a layer of straw or reed between the clay liner and the compacted earth beneath. Once the clay is dry, the pond is filled by rain or artificial means and the theory is that it then retains its water even in the driest summers by virtue of the temperature difference between the surrounding land and the clay bed of the pond. During the day the land around the pond is warmed by the sun but the heat cannot get to the clay bed of the pond because of the insulating effect of the straw layer. When night falls the cooler clay condenses more moisture from the atmosphere and counteracts the evaporation during the day.

Hogmoor Bridge

Hogmoor bridge is now unused and invisible to the busy traffic on the A340 Pangbourne Road that now passes over a new concrete bridge above it but until the M4 motorway was built across Bucklesmoor and Great Mill Ground in the early 1970s and the A340 was diverted it took all that traffic over the River Pang.



The bridge was itself part of a diversion from the original road when it was built in 1825 as part of a new road to replace the old turnpike that joined into Piper's Lane and crossed the river a little further downstream.

There were several watermills along the Pang here at one time or another until the early 1700s, probably including the one mentioned in Domesday Book in 1086.



Lone Barn

The origin of the name appears to be obvious: a barn at a distance from any other building. The barn was first shown on the Estate tithe map of 1844 on land that was part of Chalkpit Farm and reached by an extension of the road beyond the chalkpit. It was then called "Bradfield Barn". In the description of the course of the new road in the Reading Chronicle in 1854 it is called Lone Barn but the pair of cottages next to it are first listed in the census of 1861, with James Cox and James Woodley as occupants, as "Long Barn", an equally accurate description. Ten years later, still with James Cox but Thomas Tame in place of James Woodley, the name is given as "Longbarn Cottage" and then in 1881 (with Thomas Tame and James Allen) as "Lower Barn". The first reference to Lone Barn in the census is not until 1891, still with Thomas Tame and James Allen as occupants.

The brickwork is in English bond with the headers being burnt to a blue-grey colour but the house is obviously not as old as that might suggest. It is now a single dwelling but that is relatively recent and its earlier form is obvious from the two bricked-up front doors replaced by a single door between them.

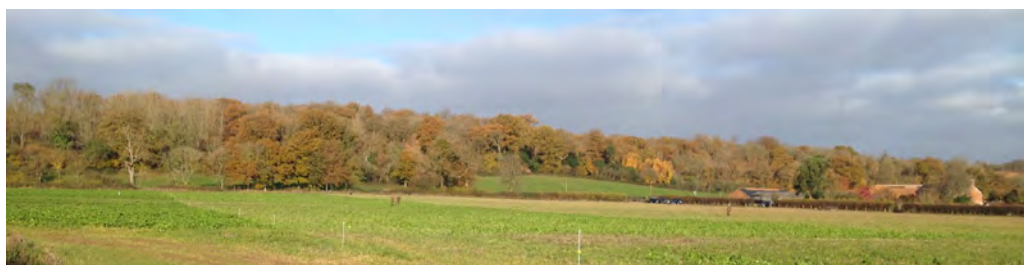


Parker's Corner

Thomas Parker lived in Englefield in 1695 and had some land allocated in the common field. There was a Parker's Farm mentioned in 1771 and a farmhouse at Parker's Corner in the 19th century so it is likely that this is the origin of the name.

The corner was probably not where it is today, at the road junction, but a few hundred yards further up the hill where until about 1802 there was a very pronounced double bend just where the farmhouse stood. The houses there today are 19th century replacements on the same site as the original ones but the road off Common Hill that serves them is probably the original Parker's Corner. This original road layout is shown in red.

Mare Ridge



This feature marks the northern side of that fertile river valley that was probably the reason the settlement later called Englefield came into existence, and also provided the origin of the name. Although in current times it is called "May Ridge" and the farm below it (right of picture) "Mayridge", the original name was Mare Ridge (sometimes "Mere Ridge") and until very recently (certainly in the 1950s and 60s) the local pronunciation was "Merridge" - as it still is today for older people born in the village. Mare Ridge is what it was called on maps from the 18th century up to and including the Ordnance Survey map produced between 1896 and 1904 but even then, while the old form was still being used on maps it was being written as "Mayridge" in the 1890s by the Reverend Arthur Heigham in the parish magazine.

In her 1892 history of Ufton Court, Mary Sharp says that in early days this high ground was called marrugge or marrige; possibly deriving from mere-ridge, a local term for the low turf ridges or banks dividing the different portions of the common meadows. The wood along the part of the ridge between Mayridge Farm and

Lambdens Farm is nowadays usually called Mayridge Wood but its proper name is Ufton Wood (as it is on the map on page 41) and it was formerly the common woodland of the parish of Ufton Nervet with the common fields of that parish to the south of it.

Cranemoor Lake

The lake in front of Englefield House called Cranemoor Lake today but previously also known as Crane Moor, Cranmoor, Cranmore or Cranmere and sometimes “Pond” rather than Lake, is fed by a spring at its north west corner that centuries ago regularly flooded the road at Parker’s Corner and caused alarm to travellers. The first reference to a lake here is in the 16th century when a free fishery called “Cranmere” was granted to Sir John Englefield, brother of Sir Francis. Ownership of this fishery was retained by the Englefields after Sir Francis’s lands were seized and granted elsewhere by Queen Elizabeth in 1589 and it was part of the land leased to the Earl of Essex in 1593. The son of John Englefield was in possession of the fishery when he died in 1631.



Josiah Ballard’s map of 1762 (left) shows what is clearly a long and obviously man-made canal running south west to north east and another crossing it from north to south, in appearance looking remarkably like an airfield. The longer canal ends at the wide green avenue running down from the south front of Englefield House. Around these “canals” are irregular pieces of open water, perhaps the original fish ponds that

Powlett Wrighte was then in the process of converting into an ornamental lake.

The enclosure map of 1829 (extract shown right) shows that the lake was by then a single complete open expanse of water, but of no greater overall extent than that shown by Ballard. It also shows a number of islands in a stylised form.



The 1844 tithe map (left) shows that in the intervening period the excavation had been completed and the lake had reached its greatest extent, in which form it continued for about another 150 years. Although the map shows the islands in the original

part more accurately, it does not show the one at the northern end, seen in the picture below.

Late in the 20th century, problems with leakage led to this north end of the lake being filled in and although the remainder of the later extension still holds water, the oldest part has reverted to what it probably was in its original state, a spring-fed boggy area filling with water only in very wet weather.



The original part, with the boathouse, is shown below in February 2020. The wet weather has refilled it, and then some, for the island in the middle right of the picture is completely submerged.



The Deer Park

The original park at Englefield (the Old Deer Park - or “Top Park”) lies to the north of Englefield House and includes the site of the battle in 870. This park was (and still is) more in the nature of a Medieval hunting forest than the typical 18th century park in the style of the Landscape Movement.

Ballard’s map of 1762 shows that from the Long Gallery of Englefield House was an avenue running uphill through a wood to a circular point on a large flat grassed area on the crest of the hill. Other



avenues run in various direction from this circular point. Perhaps the Long Gallery was built to provide access to this landscape feature.

To the north of the grassed area, just beyond the dew pond, the park falls away sharply down a thickly-wooded slope to the River Bourne, which marks the parish boundary. East of the grassy area are also thick woods that are carved into by a steep-sided re-entrant.

Along the western edge of the park runs the old Bradfield Road and at the north-east corner was another grassy area and an enclosed field called “Eight Acres”. This field is now incorporated into the park.

Some of the wooded area in the south-west corner is now part of the garden of Englefield House (minus the avenues) but otherwise the park remains today much the same as it was.

Many great houses had been built in Tudor times (Englefield House being a very late example) and this building continued in the 17th and early 18th centuries. These were generally set apart from the local community rather than amongst them as the Medieval manor houses had been. More significant, perhaps, than the houses were the parks that surrounded them. These were not necessarily contemporary with the house and many came later as the work of men like William Kent, Joseph Repton and Lancelot “Capability” Brown in the later 18th century.

The houses and their parks were often built on ground forcibly enclosed from the land farmed by the local villagers and the subject of much discontent. The Harcourts at Nuneham Courteney, moved the village in 1777 to make the park, allegedly much to the disgust of Oliver Goldsmith who wrote:

*“Till fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.”*

Englefield was again late to follow this trend and it was not until 1802 when Richard Benyon de Beauvoir took up residence after he sold his grandfather’s house at Gidea that he set about creating a landscaped park in front of his house. The Top Park had probably never been other than it was at that time (and still is now) the terrain being unsuitable for farming but the area south of Englefield House at this time was still farmed, other



than an area immediately in front of the House and a broad grass ride stretching down from the front of Englefield House as far as Cranemoor Pond.

Richard Benyon first straightened the road up Blyth's Hill to build a wall to mark the southern edge of his new park and over the next 20 years removed most of the village on the northern side from his view, though one or two of the old houses remained until the 1870s.

Although the two parks, old and new, appear to be separate they are in fact linked by a narrow corridor formed by the old Beenham Lane at the back of Englefield House so the deer may roam freely over both areas.

There Was Once a Road

The Lost Highways and Byways of Englefield

The secluded nature of Englefield today belies the fact that it has only been thus for about 170 years. Before that it was very much in the main stream of traffic with even a turnpike road passing through it.

This is the story of the roads that were once in common use, how many of them came into being and remain today while were closed to general use. The majority of the roads closed to public use did not disappear, however, but remain to provide access to quiet corners of the estate for those whose business it is to reach them.



Richard Smith was born in Englefield where his father's family had lived for at least 400 years so between them they would have seen, and used, all the roads described in this book.