

*The
Eynsham
Record*

THE EYNESHAM RECORD
Number 7 – 1990

FRONT COVER [see note 1 below]

The archaeologists' assessment trench on the Eynsham abbey site, looking north, in December 1989. See *Eynsham Abbey Excavations* on pp 3-6

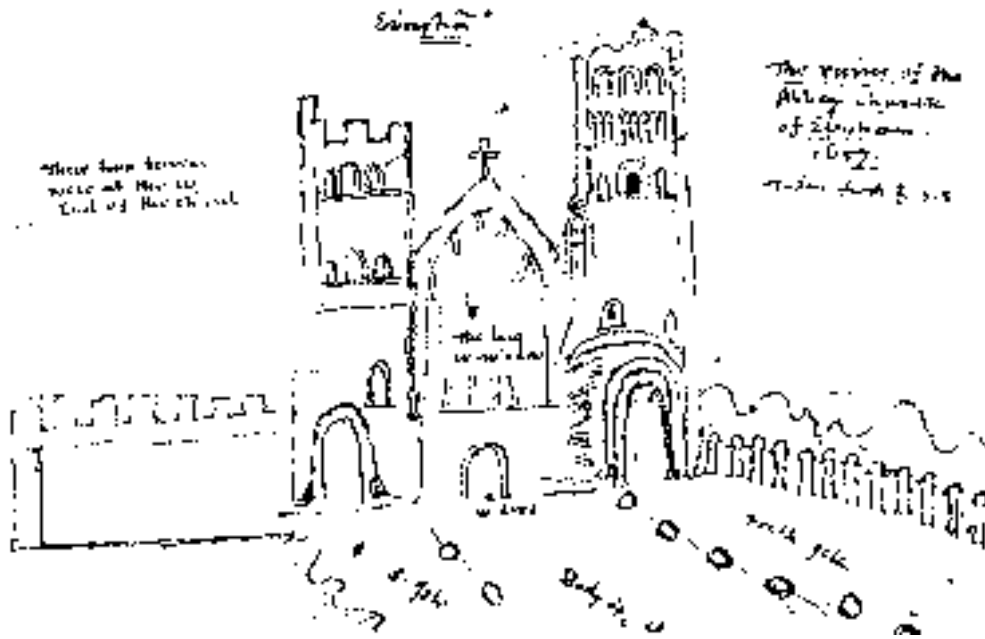
NOTES

1. Images have been optimised throughout for online viewing.
The front cover image on coloured paper was sadly unusable.
2. Typographic errors in the printed edition, where identified, have been corrected in this digitised version.
3. Errors of fact or interpretation in the original which have since come to light are repeated but followed by an amendment in curly brackets { thus }
4. The pages are not available for printing “as is”, though you may copy/paste sections into another document.
5. Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in **print** for £1 plus p&p.
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THE EYNHAM RECORD

Number 7: 1990

Journal of the Eynsham History Group



THE REMAINS OF EYNHAM ABBEY IN 1657, DRAWN BY WOOD

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EDITORIAL

For all those with an interest in the history of this small 'neck of the woods', 1990 promises to be a most exciting year. God willing, three things will come to pass. Here they are, in no particular order.

1. Bishop Eric Gordon's book, *Eynsham Abbey, 1005 -1228: A small Window into a large Room* will be published by Phillimore. Having been privileged with a preview, I can promise that this book will stand alongside Salter's two volumes dealing with the Eynsham Cartulary, and Chambers's *'Eynsham under the Monks'* in its importance to both local historians (our 'small Window'), and to students of English ecclesiastical history (the 'large Room'). An opportunity to buy this book by advance subscription at a very heavily discounted price will be well advertised. Do take advantage!

2. The long awaited new volume of the Victoria County History which deals with this part of Oxfordshire is due to be published in the autumn. The large Eynsham section will provide a synthesis of its past, researched and written by a professional historian, Alan Crossley. It will be an essential resource for future work, not least because it will draw our attention to many new (to us) primary sources.

3. Either of these publications alone would make 1990 exciting, but *mirabile dictu*, the same year is also witnessing the unveiling of the subterranean remains of Eynsham's Abbey, and evidence of the earlier Saxon history of the site, of which more anon.

The History Group enjoyed 1989, its 30th year. Notable events included an exhibit, researched and displayed by some of our members, about the Civil War, part of an exhibition held in Witney in the summer having the theme 'War in West Oxfordshire' (see pp. 15-18); and the formal opening of the Hugh Cooper Memorial Library (see p.45). We have just completed another season, with many splendid talks from a variety of speakers with a diversity of topics; and an outing to Highclere Castle.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Turning to this number of the Record, my thanks for their articles to members of the EHG, namely Eric Gordon, Lilian Wright, Donald Richards, Edna Mason, and William Bainbridge; but especially to this year's professional contributor, Mr R. A. Chambers, Field Officer of the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit, who is conducting the excavations of the abbey site, and sets the scene for us on pp.3-6. I hope he will find time to write about his 1990 discoveries in the next Record. Special thanks, too, to our first overseas contributor, Mr Willis (p.39-41); and to the children (Peter Sonley p. 29, Alexander Brasier p.14, and the Eynsham Primary School Research Group pp.31-38). The ages of contributors span three generations, and their topics range over 1500 years of Eynsham's past! Variety is high on my list of editorial priorities!

Assistance from other individuals and institutions is acknowledged on the appropriate pages.

Sadly we record the deaths of two of our members.

Mrs Annette Faulkner (1903-1989), founder member of the EHG and its social secretary from 1964 to 1975, was a proud descendant of generations of Eynsham Burdens, the village blacksmiths. In her biographical contribution to *From Acre End* by Mollie Harris, she modestly tells us little of herself, but provides a wonderfully evocation of the family smithy in Newland Street. With her husband Peter, who owned the garage at the corner of Queen St., and who died several years ago, she also compiled the map showing the crafts and trades of the village at the turn of the century, reproduced in *From Acre End*.

Mr John Graber died in early 1989. Both he and his wife were members of the Eynsham History Group, and we extend our sympathy to the family.

EYNESHAM ABBEY EXCAVATIONS

By R. A. Chambers

INTRODUCTION

Eynsham owes much to the Benedictine Abbey which once lay to the south of the village. Without the abbey Eynsham would almost certainly not have developed as a medieval market town which established the present street pattern. Later there would have been no source of readily available stone from which the majority of the village was rebuilt during the 16th to 19th centuries, and to which the village owes its distinctive character. Today nothing of the abbey remains *in situ* above ground except, perhaps, for a fragment of the north gate now incorporated in the west end of St Leonard's church (my tentative suggestion and not yet proven!).

In 1657 Anthony Wood produced an annotated sketch of the ruinous west end of the abbey church viewed from the south-east. Although crude and lacking detail, this sketch shows the west end of the church flanked by two towers, each displaying the typical rounded forms of Norman Romanesque architecture.

The remains of the Benedictine Abbey which Wood recorded was that of a top ranking monastic establishment. Although it had never rivalled the other Benedictine house at Abingdon, it still became the third richest abbey in Oxfordshire. Eynsham Abbey was founded in 1005 as a reformation of an existing Saxon minster. Dr John Blair of Queen's College has now shown that this minster was in existence by 864 A.D.¹ Soon after the Norman Conquest, Eynsham Abbey was removed to Stow where it remained until its return to Eynsham in about 1094. Wood's 17th century sketch shows the ruinous west end of the great Norman abbey church built upon the return of the order to Eynsham.

Relatively little is known about the early layout of the medieval abbey precinct but there is documentary and field evidence of a major 13th century extension to the west. In 1217 a new grange or barn was built near the Old Barton, and the road realigned around the new western precinct boundary². The new road was almost certainly the present Station Road, formerly New Bridge Street, and *its* predecessor may still just be traced as a hollow way southward from the cul-de-sac of Abbey Street to the earlier crossing of the Chil Brook. The survey of c.1360³ describes the garden, fishponds then recently made, and the agricultural buildings around the court to the west of the abbey.

Although once such an important establishment, nothing is now known about the arrangement of the buildings. The principal buildings probably lie beneath the Anglican and Catholic churchyards, and if the present excavations of the unused parts of these had not been possible, the final opportunity to discover something of the layout of this great Benedictine abbey would have been lost for ever.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Various artefacts have been found on the site of the abbey over the last few centuries. Walls have been encountered when grave digging, and stone coffins and decorated floor tiles were dug up in 1851⁴. Rubble and building material is normally encountered whenever the ground is disturbed in this area.

In 1963-4 a 30m trench and four small cuttings, which exposed walls and burials, were hand dug by the Oxford University Archaeological Society along the western side of Nursery Field. In 1971, the same strip of land was again subjected to archaeological trenching by Margaret Gray and Nicholas Clayton⁵. This revealed pre-Conquest burials cut into later Anglo-Saxon pits and were themselves followed by early medieval pits and walls. However, these walls did not represent the principal post-Conquest abbey buildings.

The early medieval activity in the northernmost trench dug by Gray and Clayton included a levelling and gravelling over of the pre-Conquest graveyard. This presumably represents a tidying up, replanning and rebuilding of the abbey upon the return of the house from Stow in about 1094. Although their longer trench to the south was not excavated much below the turf line, the presence of medieval buildings and floor tiles was noted.

In late autumn 1989 the Oxfordshire Archaeological unit excavated an assessment trench along the entire length of St Leonard's churchyard extension (see front cover). This revealed further evidence of the Norman and medieval abbey and of earlier Anglo-Saxon occupation. The medieval abbey remains consisted of large robber trenches, mortar floors, and remains of domestic structures. Anglo-Saxon deposits were revealed beneath the abbey buildings, with 6th to 9th century pottery. There was little ceramic evidence for the late Saxon and Norman periods, although very little of the early abbey levels were excavated.

Spreads of mixed loam, powdered mortar, demolition rubble with chips of ceramic roof tile, medieval pottery and dressed stone work overlay the archaeology along almost the entire length of the trench. Although two pieces of painted window

glass were found, fragments of wall plaster were all whitewashed except one piece with a dull red ochre wash. Several small pieces of moulded stone work were also whitewashed, and there were a few fragments of floor tile remaining. The overall impression was that the site had been methodically worked over by demolition gangs removing all usable stone work, including the rubble fillings of the larger walls, leaving only the mortar behind.

EXCAVATION OBJECTIVES

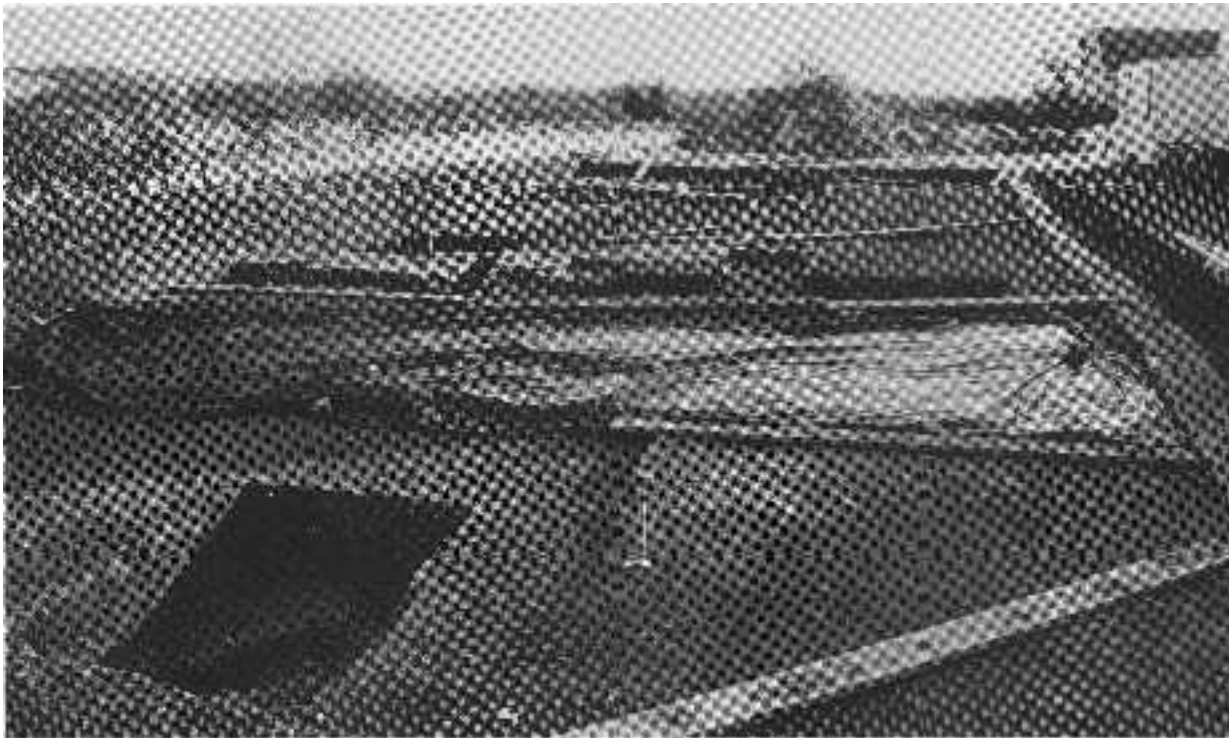
English Heritage has now agreed to fund the excavation of this part of the abbey before grave digging destroys the remaining archaeology. Excavation will continue until 1991 with only a short break during the early summer.

The excavation has several objectives. Eynsham appears to have been one of four towns to be captured in 571 after the battle of Becanford and was at that time likely to have been the regional centre for the whole of the Upper Thames. The 6th-8th century occupation revealed in the assessment trench and the 8th-10th century pits found in 1971, 18m to the north-east, make this site of key importance to the archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon period. The importance of this site in the early Saxon period almost certainly led to the establishment of the minster church. As on similar sites elsewhere in Britain, the minster church would almost certainly have defined the position of the abbey church of 1005 and of the Norman church begun in 1094. The closest parallels for Thames-side minsters with large cemeteries in the later Saxon period are at Oxford, Bampton, Abingdon and further down the river at Cookham and Chertsey. Archaeologically and architecturally we still know very little about the pre-Norman conquest Benedictine foundations in this country. Although cut about by Norman and medieval occupation, there is the opportunity at Eynsham to recover part of the plan of Aethelmaer's reformed monastery of 1005. Like Oxford, Abingdon and Bampton, Eynsham occupied a key position in the pattern of cross-Thames routes between Wessex and Mercia.

In the Upper Thames valley it is still virtually impossible to recognise mid-Saxon occupation because of the inability to date the ceramic evidence. The problem in recognising mid-Saxon (pre-9th century) ceramics is that the pottery may not be much different from earlier Anglo-Saxon wares. Unlike surrounding regions there are, for instance, no Ipswich type wares present to distinguish 7th century levels from earlier contents. The current excavations at Eynsham should provide mid-Saxon contexts with pottery and other associated dating evidence such as metalwork.

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1. Blair, J. *Saint Frideswide Reconsidered*. *Oxoniensia*, 52, pp.71-127, 1987.
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4. Gomme, G.L. (ed.), *Topographical History of Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Rutlandshire. A classified Collectiana of the Chief Contents of 'The Gentleman's Magazine' from 1731 to 1868* (1897), 113.
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The abbey site excavation in February 1990

EYNESHAM CHARTERS

by Eric Gordon

7. Adam of Hanborough: Much Ado about a Ditch

(Eynsham Cartulary, nos.410 & 444)

Much ado - yes: about a ditch - yes: but not about nothing. This was no ordinary ditch. It was a section of a very important boundary - the ancient line between the estate around Eynsham Abbey and the royal territory around Woodstock.

Some say it was 'the old ditch' (*tha ealdan dic*) of the abbey's foundation-charter bounds of 1005. Others put 'the old ditch' elsewhere (see, for example, Bailey, 1989). In any case (like that old ditch) it must have been part of the system which drained these eastern folds of the Cotswolds: first, down to the boundary brook (*rihte on maerbroc*): then, into the Bladene - the Evenlode still retained its Celtic name - *andlang broces innon Bladene*: finally, into the Thames - *andlang Bladene into Temese* (see Fig. 1).

The ditch in question separated two woodlands. Adam's wood, called Moseley, lay to its north. Eynsham abbey's wood, Le Frith, was to the south. Note this last name: first, 'Le', still natural to the French-speaking landed classes, two centuries after the Conquest: then 'Frith', an Old English word, somewhat vague, somewhat awesome, and used for sundry types of woodland. Later, it would become poetical in use, and often alliterative, as in 'frith and fell'. Le Frith still appears on our maps, but as The Thrift, just south of the little lane, which runs across from Freeland to Church Hanborough. It gave its name to Freeland itself.

In medieval economy woodlands were not just pretty occasions for a ramble, but vital to living. They must be husbanded. They must be well-maintained. Here was timber - for buildings, large and small, sheds, barns, cottages, as well as churches and manor-houses: timber for appliances and implements - ploughs, spades, carts, platters etc: timber for fencing, timber for furniture, timber for fire, for cooking, for heating: timber also so that your pigs could nuzzle in the woodlands in the autumn: and there was also game. Woods mattered very greatly.

My wife and I used to live in the huge and historic house, Bishop's Court, in the Isle of Man. Our successors live elsewhere. Over the road was Bishop's Court Farm and Bishop's Court Glen, once integral parts of the estate. Visitors walk up the glen, and revel in the trees and the plashing water. but the glen had first been planted out

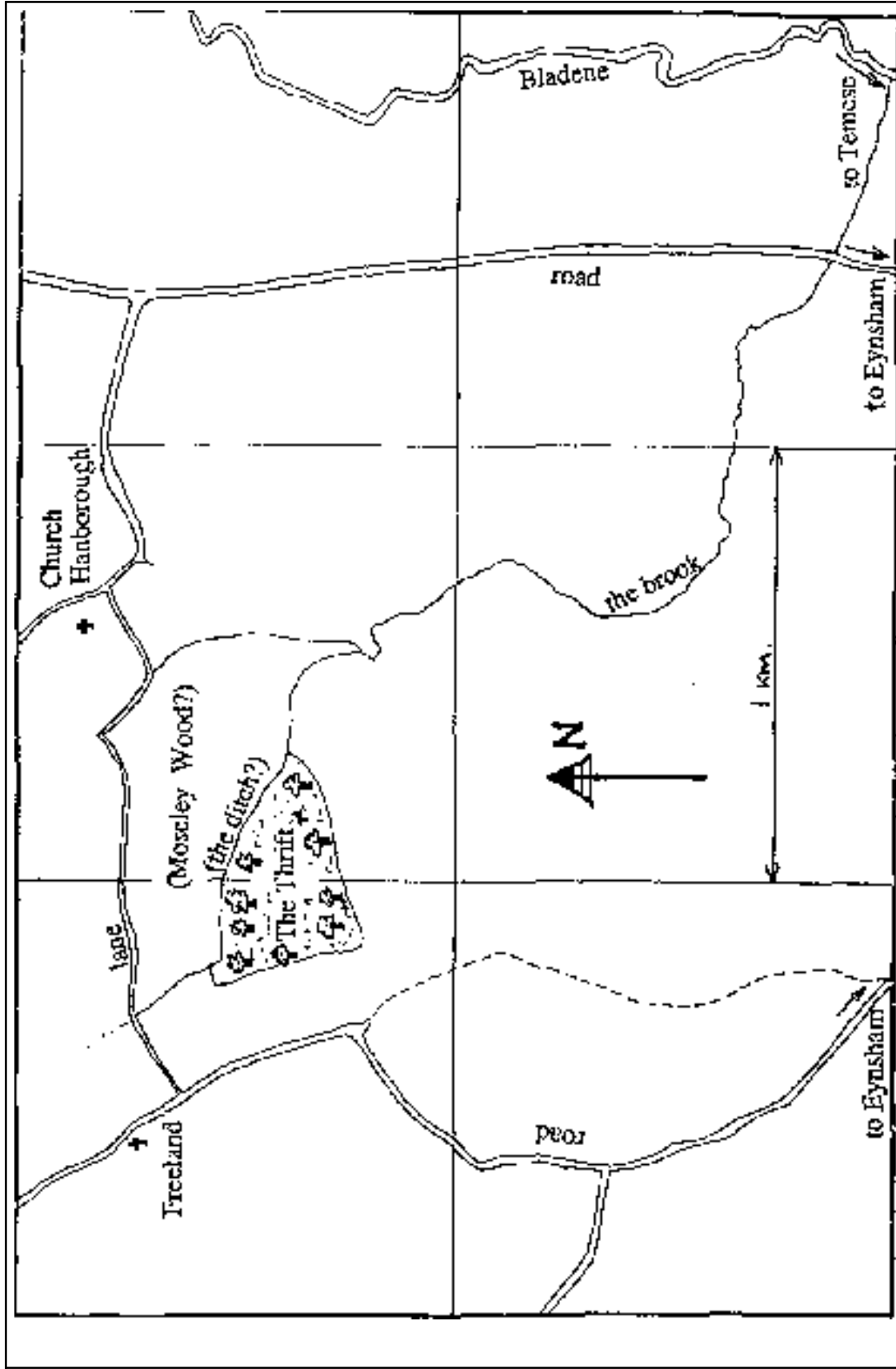


Figure 1: The approximate situation of the ditch in question

and kept for stern practical purposes - here was timber, here was water, here were millponds to power the Bishop's mill: and doubtless the Bishop fed his pigs there also!

Eynsham abbey's wood, Le Frith, seems to have been suffering, perhaps because of Abbot Adam's mismanagement of all the abbey's affairs, some 40 or so years before. He had been deposed in 1228. Probably the vital ditch had become overgrown, blocked perhaps with leaves and branches, broken banks and weeds. No one, perhaps, had bothered very much about trespassers from its northern side. Whatever the case, the present abbot, John of Oxford (1268-81), was of a different mould - worldly indeed in his style of living and entertaining (see Gordon, 1986), but acute in business, and efficient.

It is clear that Adam of Hanborough and his men had been trespassing in Le Frith, stripping it of some of its assets. Now the abbot wishes to clean up the boundary-ditch, and enlarge it, and repair its sides. Finally he would erect a fence. Feelings ran high: there was a dispute, and Adam lost. Eynsham charter no.410, translated below, was the immediate outcome.

Adam renounced all rights to every inch of the ditch, and by implication to any access whatsoever to the abbot's wood beyond. In return the abbey gave him a small compensatory payment, amounting to 20s. It was called a *gersumma* - an acknowledgement of a settlement rather than any fixed fee. There had probably been some form of arbitration at sessions of the abbey's local manor-court.

One other point: ditches created and needed embankments. Each would make the other more effective. The Anglo-Saxon word '*dic*' and its derivative '*dike*' are both elusive in their meaning: both can mean either ditch or embankment. And their Latin equivalents share in that ambiguity.

In my translation, and in all this discussion, I have settled for '*ditch*', just as Salter has done, and many others. But the Latin word *extollere*, used in the context, has caused me concern, and left me uneasy. Its basic meaning is 'to raise' or 'to lift': and in this charter that could mean either a raising of the quality of the ditch, an improvement of it, or increasing the height of its embankments and putting a fence on one of them. Aware that monastic Latin was not always very efficient I have settled for the vague translation 'improve'. The sketch below (Fig.2) illustrates the problem. Note that there was often a woodland way, just inside the boundary, for the use of the wood-wardens (see Baines, 1987).

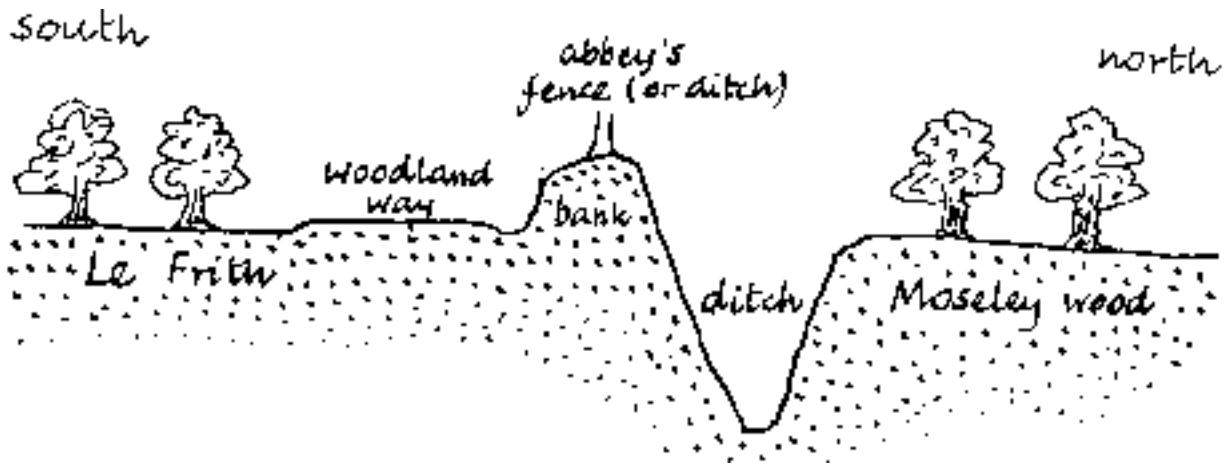


Figure 2. Possible components of the disputed boundary

Here then is the text of Adam's submission. It was probably drawn up by the monks themselves - almost the only people who could read and write. The date can only be narrowed to between 1268, the year of the accession of Abbot John, and 1280, the year of charter 444 (*see below*).

To all [&c]: Adam, son and heir of John de la Dunhalle, of Hanborough: salvation in the Lord for ever and ever.

Be it known to one and all that I have given up, released and quit-claimed, so far as concerns myself and my heirs, to John, lord abbot of Eynsham, and to the convent of that same place, and to their successors, all right and claim, which I had or could have had, in the ditch (*in fovea*), which is between Le Frith, belonging to the said abbot and convent, and my own woodland, called Moseley: *as in breadth, so in length, I have surrendered it, and, on its north side, right up to the boundary of my own land (usque al hore terre mee ex parte boreali): and that is the ditch wherein my claims have at any time been unlawful (in qua injuste aliquo tempore clamium feci).*

Furthermore, the said religious may clean out the said ditch, and improve it (*mundare a extollere*), and at their own discretion make a fence above it (*cepem super ipsam facere*), without any gainsaying from myself or my heirs or my assigns.

Thus, neither I, Adam, nor my heirs, nor my assigns, shall be able to assert or to claim any right whatsoever, at any time, in regard to the said ditch.

In return, however, for this present release, surrender, and quit-claim, the said abbot and convent have given me, by way of premium (*in garsumma*), twenty shillings of silver pennies, cash down.

In which matter [&c.sealing]: in the presence of the following witnesses, Robert le Eyr, then bailiff of Woodstock, William de St.Adoenus, of Hanborough, John, of Leigh, Thomas the Butler (*le Boteler*), of Wilcote (Wivelecote), John the Porter (*le porter*), of Eynsham, Richard Halewy, of the same place, John Morrell, of the same place, and many others.

(from the Latin of Eynsham Cartulary, no.410).

(Note: Wilcote (Domesday, *Widelicote*) is just north of North Leigh. `Le Boteler' illustrates the transition from occupation to surname, as well as from French to English. Latin *buticula* has gone to French *bouteille* and *bouteillier*, and thus to *boteler*, on the way to *bottler* and *butler*.)

The abbey must have hoped that that first agreement with Adam of Hanborough would settle him. But the trouble continued, and even got worse. Perhaps the abbey was grasping, and perhaps Adam was an especially contentious character. It is difficult to judge. The next charter, translated below, gives the impression that he, and his men also, were a thorough nuisance. It suggests constant trespass, and arguments, not to say fisticuffs: and it looks as if Adam was not only perpetrating trespass, but positively organizing it, and planning it, and prompting others to a like ill-will. And the quarrel has actually gone to one of the King's courts, and both sides face considerable expense and interminable litigation.

So now Adam makes his submission in even more stringent, and in very repetitive, terms. And, what is more, the abbot will not only make a fence, but will draw the timber for it, and more also, from Adam's own woodland. Only 40 precious oak-trees of Adam's are specifically excluded from the abbot's axes, and, of course, there is an addendum that the abbot will not actually ravage and destroy any part of Adam's woodland.

There is also a provision for future disputes: to avoid the cost and trouble of full litigation, there is to be a system of a local jury of four, or sometimes five, men, to settle the guilt: and the guilty party will pay over to the other a cask of wine! We are in the reign of Edward I, and England still holds much of eastern France, including Gascony with its wine. So there is a continuous and brisk exchange in which, amongst other things, French wine and English wool are traded.

To crown it all, Adam swears, with his hand on the holy book, risking thus the dire agonies of purgatory, to which the famous *Vision of the Monk of Eynsham* had been such an eloquent and vivid witness.

The wordy document follows. Note that it is precisely dated to 23 June 1280, one of the regular quarter-days on which Eynsham abbey received its dues.

To all men [&c.]: Adam de Dounhalle, of Hanborough: greeting.

To all of you I make known that, whereas a matter of dispute (*materia questionis*) had sprung up, between the venerable father John, by the grace of God abbot of Eynsham, on the one part, and myself, on the other, concerning a variety of issues, complaints, and questions, in regard to things as well as people, and especially in regard to losses inflicted upon the same lord abbot in a certain woodland of his, called Le Frith, at long last some common friends have mediated between us, and on the Eve of Blessed John Baptist, in the year of grace 1280, and in the eighth year of the reign of our King, the whole disagreement has been laid to rest, as follows:

to wit, concerning the plea of trespass (*de placito transgressionis*), still pending between us, in the court of our lord the King, I shall keep the lord abbot free from loss (*conservabo indempnem*):

and what is more, I here and now give a firm undertaking to the same lord abbot, that, to compensate for my past trespass in his said woodland, called Le Frith, he may freely take what he wills from my own woodland, which adjoins the said woodland of his, with the exception of the 40 oak-trees which have now been marked, and on condition that he does not destroy my woodland:

it is also my wish, and I undertake, that henceforth the lord abbot may freely, and at his own discretion, and without any hindrance or disturbance from myself or my men, clean out and repair his ditch (*fossam suam mundare possit & reformare*), already established between his said woodland and mine, precisely as my deed, already concluded with him in this matter, testifies:

furthermore, by the tenor of these presents, I give an undertaking to the said lord abbot and to his house of Eynsham, that henceforth I shall neither do nor plan any harm or damage, either to himself or to his men, in any place whatsoever, and especially in the said woodland, Le Frith, and I shall not give advice or assistance or encouragement to any who do or plan such things:

in addition, by the tenor of these presents, I undertake freely, willingly, simply, unconditionally, absolutely, and to the end of my life (*meo me perpetuo*), that if (which God forbid) it can be proved that, by advice or by word of mouth or by assistance given or by any other means, I am at any time guilty of doing injury (*ad meam injuriam delinquere*) to the said lord abbot and his house of Eynsham, in the said wood, Le Frith, or elsewhere, in any other place whatsoever, either by keeping silence or by speaking, then such a misdemeanour shall be put right, without strife in lawcourts (*sine strepitu judiciali*), by the judgement of four trustworthy men, chosen by agreement between the parties, under penalty of one cask of wine, to be handed over by the offending party (*sub pena unius dolei vini a parte contradicente solutura*): and if the said four chosen men are unable to agree upon a single judgement, then let a fifth be chosen by the same four, and let the matter be settled by the vote of the majority:

and I make this promise, with a pledge of faithfulness, and swear to it with my hand upon the holy gospels (*fide media ac corporali juramento super sacrosanctis evangeliiis prestito*), undertaking that I will keep this my willing obligation, in each and every aspect, without guile or deceit or gainsaying or disturbance of any kind, for ever:

in assurance of which [&c.] sealing:

settled at Eynsham, on the day and in the year aforesaid: 'Witnesses, Robert le Heyr, then bailiff of Woodstock, William de St. Audoenus, Edmund, Richard, John, and others. (from the Latin of Eynsham Cartulary, no.444)

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A MEDIEVAL ARTEFACT

by **Alexander Brasier (aged 7)**

When I was digging in my front garden at 22, Queens Lane I found a piece of carving, quite small (about 4 cms. tall). When I washed the mud off, it had more detail. It is white and quite shiny. It is the bottom half of a carving of a lady with dog beside her feet. The dog looks very smooth.

I took it to the Ashmolean Museum and left it there for two weeks. They said it was medieval.

I wonder if it came from the old abbey?



Drawing by Martin Brasier

CIVIL WAR AROUND EYNSHAM

by Edna Mason

When the Witney History Society asked for contributors to an exhibition featuring West Oxfordshire in Wartime, the Eynsham History Group decided to present a contrast to the many stands dealing with the wars of this century, and especially the second World War. We attempted to show how the neighbourhood was affected during the Civil War - the conflict between Charles I (the Royalists) and the Parliamentarians. We had to research the subject, for little has been written on Eynsham's history in the 17th century, so Edward Hibbert, Phyllis Pimm, Pat Atkins and Edna Mason looked for sources of local information about those troubled times.

This proved rather difficult, for although Eynsham is situated in the centre of an area of major activity, West Oxfordshire had little direct involvement in the actual fighting, and the area immediately around Eynsham even less. The battles of Cropedy (June 1644) and the sieges of Banbury (August-October 1644, and February-May 1646) in the north of the county were not matched in this district. The skirmishes at Radcot Bridge (May 1645) and Gaunt House in Standlake (June 1645) and the siege of Woodstock Palace (April 1646) were the closest recorded incidents of battle. So the major historians of the war tend to ignore our immediate area, and contemporary writings refer to it only in passing, if at all.

Captain Henry Stevens, wagonmaster to the King, gives details of the movement of supplies, and just once mentions plans for a baggage train to go through Eynsham, with the proviso that the causeway at Swinford might be impassable if the river were high. Perhaps its low-lying position and the difficulty of fording the river protected Eynsham's relative peace.

Nevertheless it must have been a worrying time for local people. When Charles established his headquarters at Oxford in the early years of the war, the Parliamentary forces were concentrated to the east, at Aylesbury, Henley and High Wycombe. The King, apart from fortifying the city and encamping his cavalry on Port Meadow, only a few miles from Eynsham, set up a line of outposts. Radcot, Gaunt House and Bletchington Manor were fortified, and the King's shooting-lodge at Woodstock held troops when necessary. The Royalist cavalry were based at Abingdon, but in 1644, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of its commander, Lord Wilmot, the garrison was withdrawn and the Parliamentary general, Waller, occupied the town. Eynsham must have been acutely aware that it was very close to the action.

The presence of armies in any neighbourhood usually prompts local mothers to 'lock up their daughters', and it would be unusual for no pillage or illicit looting to take place. Although there are no records of such incidents in Eynsham, it is very unlikely that the town escaped entirely. Repairs to the church, listed in the Churchwardens' Accounts later in the decade may be for making good damage done one way or another by the armies. Certainly Eynsham would not have been spared frequent demands for food and other commodities which could be put to military use. Horses were in particularly short supply. In January 1642/3 Sir Samuel Luke, scoutmaster (head of intelligence) to the Parliamentarian general, the Earl of Essex, reported that Princes Rupert and Maurice (Royalist commanders) '*summoned the contry to appear in armes both horse & foote with all the ammunition they could get*'. The following month the King commanded the constables of '*17 parishes adjoining Oxford to bring in straw, hay, oates, com and all other provisions whatever*'. In June Sir Luke's scouts reported that Rupert had taken 2000 horses out of Oxfordshire and local husbandmen complained that they had none to use on their land. At the beginning of the month '*the country people confess that they have received some satisfaction for their goods which have been taken from them, till Monday last, and since then Cavalleyers have taken their goods without payeing any money at all*' and a fortnight later most of the King's force were reported between Oxford & Bicester where there were 10000 horse; '*they still came to the county to bring victualls and other provisions daily unto them*'. Luke was understandably eager to present the King's armies in as bad a light as possible but wagon master Stevens' frequent orders to scour the countryside for provisions tell the same story.

Arms were also commandeered. The Royal Ordnance Papers contain lists of those taken. That for Witney in December 1643 shows:

Powder.....	1 barrel
Match.....	10 skeynes
Musket shot.....	1 barrel
Muskets.....	36
Bandleers.....	23
Bird peece.....	1
Carbines.....	2
Brests.....	6
Backs.....	5
Head peeces.....	6
Sords.....	6
Long pikes.....	17
Clubb staffe.....	1

Broken sword..... 1

Girdles for bandeleers... 4

No local diarist kept a record of the time in Eynsham. Anthony Wood has stories of events in Thame, but Eynsham's experiences may have been closer to those recorded by the then Vicar of Ducklington, the Revd Thomas Wyatt.

In January 1642 he wrote that *one regiment with the earle of Denbigh in red cloakes came through Ducklington some ... were billeted at Ducklington. I had 6 men & 8 horses they came at night' . A day or two later - The same day captayn Snead came to see me in his passage to Faringdon a goodly gentleman but very drunk did swear most fearfully & took some horses etc.'*

Later some Welsh soldiers arrived *'mixed with some others that were billeted at Witney and thereabouts were impetuous some in begging some stealing that nobody durst travaile about us - they took horses tack anything' . His own horse seems to have been taken for he wrote 'a soldier came riding on my old mare mop which he took out of an Oxon park the soldier being in my house took her for him & I asked him whether he had not taken another mare & he swore by god Mr I took but this one'.* It is difficult to believe that Eynsham did not have similar experiences, lying as it did in an area where there was so much troop movement. It is probable too that Waller's forces were for a time encamped in the vicinity, and local tradition has it that Waller himself stayed at what is now known as Wintle's Farm.

This was in June 1644 and was the occasion of the King's amazing night march from Oxford. After the Roundhead forces had taken Abingdon they set out to encircle the city. Waller marched west, coming up, it is thought, as far as Eynsham. Essex meanwhile had crossed the Cherwell and was encamped at Bletchington, with, according to Clarendon, many of his horse advancing to Woodstock. The King, fearing that he would be trapped in Oxford, drew up his forces on Port Meadow including, according to John Adair in his biography of Waller, *'3,000 troopers, 2,500 musketeers riding pillion, 30 carriages and eight guns'.* They marched out from Wolvercote towards Yarnton and crossed the Evenlode at Bladon Bridge before resting around Northleigh Common while the King was entertained at Perrot's farmhouse. By the time Waller's scouts brought him the news, he was too late to catch the King although he pursued him as far as Burford.

The apparent ease with which such a large force was able to pass between two enemy forces camped within a few miles of each other seems incredible today, and highlights the difficulties of communication in the days before field telephones and motorised transport. Rumour must have been rife, and no doubt Eynsham had its

fair share. Even without any direct involvement, shortages, taxes, forced purchases, probable looting, and the general atmosphere of disquiet must have made Eynsham inhabitants long for the time when both armies were far away in other parts of the country.

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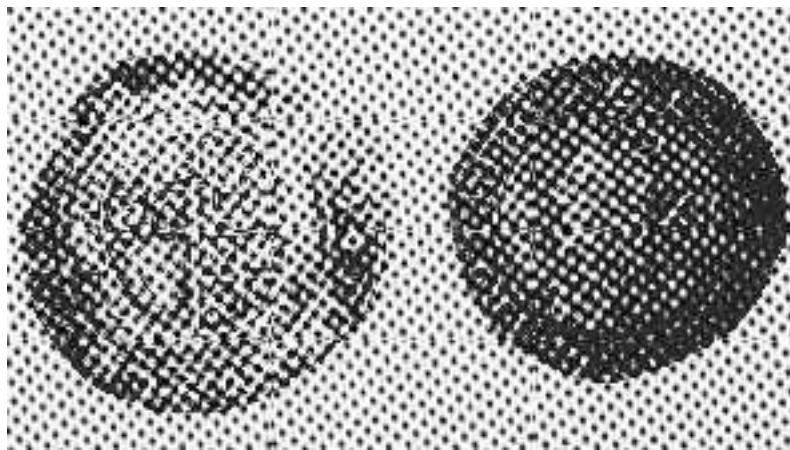
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Two coins from the Civil War period, found locally

Left. Charles I silver half-crown, minted in the period 1641-3, and found at Church Hanborough in 1935. This would have been a high denomination coin for a Hanborough man of those times to have mislaid, and it has been speculated that it may have been lost there by Charles's army as it fled from Oxford in June 1644.

Right. Charles I silver shilling, minted 1638-9. (For further details, see Atkins, *Eynsham Record*, No.2, pp.39-43, 1985)

**MICHAEL SPARKE:
A PURITAN PUBLISHER FROM EYNSHAM¹**

by Donald S. Richards

History is not overflowing with famous individuals who were born in Eynsham or were resident there for a substantial part of their lives. There was Aelfric, of course, from the days when the Abbey flourished, and a handful of others perhaps less well remembered today. It is only proper therefore to be reminded of Michael Sparke, a figure of some notoriety in the first half of the 17th century. He was a fervent Puritan, an outspoken critic of aspects of society, a minor author and an important publisher.

He was born in Eynsham, possibly in the year of the Armada, 1588. That is suggested by the fact that he began an apprenticeship with a London stationer, Simon Pauley from Atherbery (= Adderbury?) in Oxfordshire, on 7 June 1603, the normal age for that being fifteen. The period of his indenture ended in June 1610². His father was Richard (died 18 September 1624), who is described as a miller ("milner") of Eynsham in his will, dated 27 November 1623³. At that date, besides Michael, there were three other sons, George, Richard and Thomas, and a daughter, Elizabeth, who was married to John Macocke, a London printer. Another son, William, was by then dead⁴. It has been claimed that Michael "was perhaps educated at the grammar school to which in his will he left a bequest," or that "there is every indication that [he] had been educated in a nearby local grammar school"⁵. As will be seen Michael's will contain clauses that probably refer to the *setting up* of "a free schole" and there is no real evidence that any school existed earlier in Eynsham. It is worth noting, however, that the will of Anne Carter in 1628 described a witness as "*William Hope of Eynsham, Schoolmaster*"⁶. Was there a school in Eynsham around 1600? As for "nearby" grammar schools, that at Witney was founded only in 1585, but only "for the sons of Freemen." Banbury (before 1524), Chipping Norton (founded by Edward VI, 1547-53), Thame (1558), and Burford (1571) all seem too distant⁷.

In 1616 Michael Sparke set up business as publisher and bookseller in London, at the Blue Bible in Green Arbour Court, in the "little Old Bayly". Even before this date he had been engaged in the book trade, if we follow what he himself says in a short tract published in 1652: "I am a *Stationer* and a *wholesaleman*, and I so professe my self, and have dealt in *Books* above 40 years for myself"⁸. He travelled widely about the country and regularly sold books to the Bodleian Library. His career was marked by disputes with the royal licensing authorities and later with Parliament.

He was often at odds with the Stationers and fought against monopolies in the trade, suffering various fines and imprisonment. William Prynne, the famous Puritan polemicist, used him as his publisher. For publishing Prynne's infamous attack on plays and stage performances, the *Histrionomastix*, Sparke was pilloried and fined in 1633. Perhaps more to his credit is that he published books such as Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the account of the early plantations in Virginia by Captain John Smith, celebrated for his rescue by the Indian chief's daughter, Pocahontas. Sparke was also associated with the first English editions of the *Atlas Major* of Mercator, which introduced the projection of the world with which we are all familiar and governs the way we think of the world.

His own published verse is not highly thought of, but some of his little tracts are not insignificant. A devotional work, *Crums of Comfort*, went through forty-one editions by the middle of the 17th century. His other themes were the situation of the deserving poor and how best to alleviate it and the iniquities of monopolies in the publishing trade, not least in the production of Bibles. He attempted to import cheaper Bibles from Holland and found himself in trouble again. Some of his writings give important information about the book trade at that period.

From the records of the Stationers' Company it is known that Michael Sparke was the master of apprentices. Before 1640 there was a Francis Backle, and a Josua [sic] Miller (indentured 1638-46). His own son, another Michael Sparke, was apprenticed to him and was freed in 1641. He went on to publish with, and independently of, his father. It is difficult to tell whether some individuals were bound to Sparke Senior or Junior, for example, Richard Collins (freed late 1641), Lodwick Floid [sic], a Welshman (freed 1648). Two Eynsham youths were apprenticed to the Stationers. One was bound in 1652 to Michael Sparke (possibly Sparke Senior the year before his death?) and freed in 1662 by "Sparkes [sic, obviously the son], Henry Weston and Eleanor Cotes". The lad in question was "John Love, son of Edward (baker) of Ensam, Oxon". The other was Thomas Almond, son of Christopher, a husbandman. His "master" during the period 1657-65 was Eleanor Cotes⁹.

Michael Sparke Senior died "upon or about the six and twentieth day of December" 1653, and was buried at St Sepulchre's, London. In his will¹⁰, which was proved on 3 March 1653/4, there is a passage which is interesting for the history of Eynsham, because it shows that he intended to fund a school in his birthplace. It goes as follows:

"Item I give and bequeath unto the Parish of Eynsham in the County of Oxon One Hundred Pounds out of the money oweing unto me from my cosen Richard Launce and Mr Thomas ffrench towards the maintenance of a free Scole in the Sayd parish to be payd so Soone as it shalbe gotten in of them. If this sayd moneye shall not be gotten in of them then I give ffifty pounds in money to be payd by my Executor towards the maintenance of Such a free Schoole in the sayd parish or to be layd out

towards the purchaseing of some howse or Land for that purpose and not otherwise nor for any other use whatsoever at the discretion of my good friends Henry Eccleston John Hampsher Richard Evans John Oakes Nicholas Harte James Qaterman And intreat them to be carefull to see the Same done accordingly"¹¹

For some reason or other, about which one can only speculate, these provisions of Michael Sparke's will seem not to have been carried out. For its first documented free schooling Eynsham had to wait until the year 1701 and the charity of John Bartholomew.

NOTES

1.I am indebted to Mr Paul Morgan for useful references, and to my wife, Pamela, for her knowledge of Eynsham wills.

2.L.Rostenberg, *Literary, political, scientific, religious and legal publishing, printing and bookselling in England 1551-1700*, N.Y. 1965, vol.1, pp.162-4.

3.Oxf. C.R.O. 59/4/30. He was overseer and witness of the 1604 will of Thomas Browne, innkeeper (4/1/5).

4.William was mentioned with his siblings and his father in the will, dated 1601, of Margaret Evans, probably Richard Sparke's mother-in-law (C.R.O. 20/1/43).

5.H.P.Plomer, "Michael Sparke, Puritan Bookseller", *The Bibliographer*, vol11, no.9, 1902, pp.409-410, and Rostenberg, *op. cit.*, p.162.

6.Oxf. C.R.O. 12/3/10.

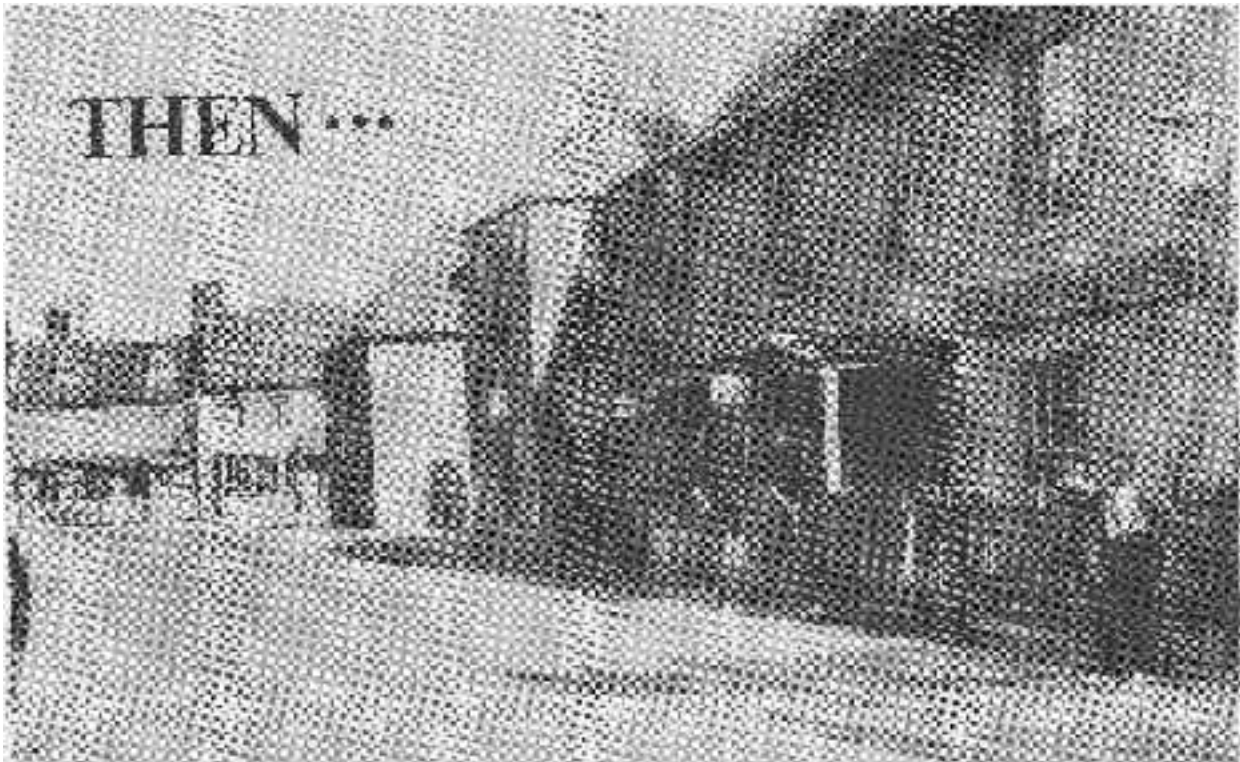
7.See N.Carlisle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England & Wales*, London, 1818, vol.2, pp.294-320.

8.In *A Second Beacon fired by Scintilla*, London, 1652, p.5 (A copy is in Christ Church Library).

9.See W.A.Jackson, *Records of the Court of the Stationers' Company 1602 to 1640*, London, 1957, pp.484 & 487; D.F.McKenzie, *Stationers' Company apprentices 1641-1700*, Oxford Bibliog. Soc., 1974, nos.4254, 4255, 4251, 4252. John Love, no.4253: his father, Edward, was buried in Eynsham on 6 November 1659. Th. Almond, no.982: a Thomas Almond was buried 29 June 1682 (his will, dated that year, C.R.O. 2/2/8).

10.In the Public Record Office, Prob. 11.236, 49a-50b.

11.All the persons mentioned belonged to Eynsham families, except for John Oakes, and it is possible that I misread his surname. For the family names mentioned here, and also for a Christopher Almond, see Brian Atkins's article on the 1650 Survey of Eynsham in the *Eynsham Record*, No.6, pp.43-46, 1989. A Richard Launce appears in the will of Nicholas Launce, dated 1629 (C.R.O. 41/3/34). The surname 'Launce' is read as 'Lions' by Rostenburg, *op. cit.*, p.192. Henry Eccleston (sometimes Egleston), "Gent", was buried in Eynsham on 6 June 1659.



Undated view from 'Carfolks', looking east.
Mumford's shop (newsagents and barbers) is immediately to the left of the
Red Lion. From an old postcard kindly loaned by Mr Keith Green



From the same viewpoint today, we have a sight of Mill Street!

NOTE: the images opposite
have been re-sized to reduce the overall size
of this .pdf file.

Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in print for £1 plus p&p.
Contact the Editor Brian Atkins, 8 Thornbury Road tel 01865 881677 email
brian@fbatkins.free-online.co.uk

or Fred Bennett, 68 Witney Road tel 01865 880659

PRIVATE SCHOOLING ON OFFER IN 1826

Advertisements from Jackson's Oxford Journal, Saturday 7th January 1826

EYNSHAM, OXON.

The Misses NUTT, in submitting the terms of their SCHOOL to the public beg to assure them that their utmost efforts will be directed to promote the domestic comfort of their pupils in connection with their education; and the very moderate expense at which those objects are secured, encourage them to anticipate an increased share of patronage.

Respectable references will be given. For Board, Washing and Instruction in English, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography with use of the Globes, Plain and Ornamental needlework. £10/10/- p.a.

Under 8 years of age £16/16/-. Weekly boarders £12/12/-.

French, Music, Dancing and Drawing as charged by the Masters.

The school will reopen January 17th 1826

EYNSHAM SCHOOL.

On the Cheltenham Road between Oxford and Witney.

For the Education of Young Gentlemen.

Conducted by the Rev. J.T. Dobney with the assistance of a Graduate of the University.

The Plan of instruction pursued at this School is adapted to the purpose of imparting the most useful knowledge, and to render the acquisition of it easy and delightful to the youthful mind; to qualify the Pupils for the purpose of Trade and Commerce, or to engage in the professions for which a superior degree of learning may be required.

The premises are airy and extensive; and while nothing essential to the health and comfort of the Pupils is omitted, it is Mr Dobney's aim, by the inculcation of Christian Principles, to form their minds to a love of virtue, and to render them honourable members of Society.

For Board and Instruction in the English Language, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Geography and use of Globes, the Elements of History, Composition and Elocution.

The terms are — 22 guineas per annum.

Maths and Classics 4 gns/ann.

French, Music, Dancing and Drawing by the most approved Masters.

School reopens January 10th.

WATER, BUT HARDLY FIT TO DRINK

by Lilian Wright

November 1989 saw the privatisation of Water Companies in this country. But what was the state of water and sewage disposal in Eynsham a hundred years ago?

The Public Health Act of 1848 had given municipalities the opportunity to set up local boards of health and to appoint Medical Officers of Health, but it was not until the Sanitary Act of 1872 that such powers were given to rural districts.

The first Officer of Health for the 'Combined Sanitary Authority of Oxfordshire' was Gilbert W. Child, and his report for 1873-74 has some interesting observations about Eynsham in particular.

In the whole area of 700 square miles with a population of 124,850 (excluding Oxford, Banbury and Headington Union) there were some main features and certain capital defects common to the whole district. Criticisms of the drainage arrangements were mainly of four kinds:

- a) None at all worth calling arrangements; as at Leafield and other scattered villages.
- b) Cesspools; as at Woodstock and other innumerable places.
- c) Open gullies; as at Thame and Bampton and elsewhere.
- d) Imperfect systems of sewers; as at Eynsham, Brill and other places."

All these deficiencies would ultimately lead to the discharge of sewage into natural watercourses or wells. All were bad, but the sewer system as it existed in most parts of the district would have been the worst. The Officer of Health selected Eynsham to illustrate this point:

"A fair example of this is to be found at the present moment in the little town of Eynsham. It affords a good example but may be taken to represent the great majority of the towns and villages in the district. In this case as is shown in a recent report addressed by Mr Ripley to the Highway Board of the district what has happened is this:-

In the streets of the town there have been laid loose square open drains under the surface, and intended originally to carry off the storm water from the streets. These lead into either natural watercourses or mere ditches dug alongside the fences in the high roads leading in different directions from the town. Gradually, as the houses multiplied and breweries and farmyards got included within the circuit of the town, these drains

were found to be convenient receptacles for soil, kitchen stuff and house slops generally, and became in fact converted into sewers, for which they were in all respects unfit. Their loose structure admits the escape of foul matter into the wells while they serve also as the conductors of sewer gases; and in the meanwhile they fill the ditches or watercourses into which they run with the most noxious and offensive sewage. In this as in many other such cases it is proposed to substitute glazed pipes for the loose stone drains above mentioned and my opinion has been asked on the subject. I can only say that the suggestion does not seem to meet the difficulty; for though the alteration might obviate the danger of the wells, yet glazed pipes would act still more effectually as conductors of sewage gas than the loose drains now do, and unless the authority can see its way to a proper water supply, a satisfactory outfall, and an efficient system of sewer ventilation they will not in my opinion have made an appreciable improvement in the sanitary condition of the town."

Such was the state of affairs in Eynsham in 1873-4.

Fifteen years later the Witney Rural Sanitary Authority was responsible for this area. The Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, Dr W.Dyson Wood, for the year 1889, handwritten exactly one hundred years ago on 28 April 1890, is one of many such reports in a bundle in Oxfordshire Archives. Mr Jasper Taylor had been appointed as Inspector in 1873, about the time of the earlier report when the district comprised 42 parishes, but excluded Witney. By 1889 Witney was now included, and Taylor was still in post. Parts of the report read as follows:

"For the whole district deaths 238. 66 in Bampton, 66 in Burford, 67 in Eynsham" [There are 30 burials recorded for 1889 in St.Leonards Register] "39 in Witney plus 38 in the Workhouse. The population of the district at the 1881 census was 18,517. The death rate is therefore 12.8 per 1000.

Deaths of Children under 1 year, 41; Children 15 years, 19; Persons over 60, 115. Diseases: No deaths from Smallpox, Scarlatina or Diphtheria. Other causes of death: Measles 3; Whooping Cough 2; Typhoid 2; Diarrhoea 2; Consumption 25; Heart Disease 16; Bronchitis and Inflammation of the Lung 18; Injuries 5.

On February 4th [1889] I made a systematic inspection of a considerable part of Eynsham with Inspector Taylor. There were cases of Measles in the Infant Board School. I visited 12 houses affected by Measles and gave instructions for washing infected clothing. I inspected the drainage at the 'Star Inn' and neighbouring cottages, and also Curtis's Yard, Hambridge's Yard, Crown Crescent, Abbey Street Cottages, Sherwood's Yard in Mill Street. I gave instructions to Inspector Taylor as to

matters noticed. Mr John Eltham, road contractor of Eynsham, expressed the opinion that at the time no main drain in Eynsham was blocked. I recommended limewashing of several houses.

On February 20th I made an inspection of Eynsham and Stanton Harcourt with Inspector Taylor and requested a sample of well water to be forwarded to me from a house in Mill Street. The water was unfavourable. I recommended improvement of the drainage channel in the near neighbourhood of the well. The improvement was carried out. I also made an inquiry into 2 cases of Typhoid Fever in one house in Pugg Lane [Pugg or Pug Lane at this time is equivalent to modern Queens Lane and Newland Close]. The house was a dirty one. I inspected the drinking water and a sample was taken. The water turned out fairly well. The Oxford Road ditch was free from nuisance on the day of my visit."

These were some of the nuisances reported and dealt with over the whole district; Foul dwellings, defective roofs causing damp bedrooms, infected houses, defective water supply, defective ventilation, defective closet accommodation, defective drainage, foul drains, foul closets, overcrowding, swine, other livestock, foul bakehouse, deposits and refuse, slop pails, hog wash, night soil, urine tub.

There are some more details for Eynsham in the 1891 report

"In Eynsham there have been bye laws for 10 years for Pig keeping and manure heaps in relation to distance from dwellings. With a population of 1998 Eynsham's water supply is principally derived from private wells. No public drains are blocked according to information received. There is a Scavanger in Eynsham whose duty it is to empty closet receptacles, cleanse street catch-pots for drains, cleanse drainage outfall ditches and remove house refuse placed for him on the ground. Receptacles of about 50 closet pails are emptied once a week by the Scavanger. Other pails are attended to by occupiers.

Cottage accommodation is on the whole good. Three Slaughter houses are well kept. Six bakehouses are well kept. There was one case of Typhoid Fever in a child of 3 years who died." [St.Leonard's records for this year list the burials of two 3-year old children, Alice Burden of Newland St. (buried 11 March) and Olive Pickett of Acre End St. (buried 29 July); since typhoid would have been more likely to occur in the summer, Olive Pickett may be the victim referred to]. "Samples of well water were taken and the water was not thought to be polluted. It was recommended that improvement be made in the keeping of the premises. Inspection and reports under the Canal Boats Acts were carried out.

W.Dyson Wood to Rev R.S.Baker"

In 1892 an inquiry was made into the curious pollution of 12 or 13 wells by gas oil from some closed Gas Works. An inspection of the grounds of the gas works was made and the apparent source of the pollution was found. The Gas Works were from 100 to 500 yards from the affected wells. The wells had been slowly purifying themselves though some were not recovered. As far as is known no injury to health was caused.

The gas works, on the site now occupied by Eynsham Car Repairs on the north side of Spareacre Lane, although apparently closed in 1892, were not extinct. By 1898 they had been bought by a Mr Morgan with a view to reopening them with new plant. The village was self-sufficient in gas supplies as late as 1934/5. The area affected by the pollution of wells in 1892 may have involved most of the village; 500 yards from the gas works reached as far as Acre End St. to the south, and Tanner's Lane to the southeast.

Sources:

Child, Gilbert W. *Report on the Sanitary conditions of the districts of the Combined Sanitary Authorities of Oxfordshire from Lady Day 1873 to Lady Day 1874*. London, Longmans 1874.

Witney Rural District Sanitary Authority. Medical Officer of Health's Reports for 1889, 1891 and 1892.

Information from 1988 draft of a paper on the history of the Eynsham gas supply by Mr J.B.Horne of British Gas (Southern). [I hope we can publish the final version of this paper in a future number of the Record. Ed.]

St Leonard's Church records of burials, 1889 and 1891.

WELL: WELL, WELL!

by Peter Sonley (aged 12)

While we were making alterations to our house, 69 Mill St., we came across a large block of stone. We hit it repeatedly with sledge hammers and it sounded as though there was a space or hollow underneath. When it cracked we decided to dig round it and eventually we managed to make a hole at the side. As we walked round, small blocks of stone and mud fell in. We heard the sound of a splash. We threw some more stones down the hole, and it seemed a long way down.

We picked up the sledge hammers again. Soon a complete side of the stone fell in and made a massive splash. We managed to hold on to the other larger side of the stone until everyone was gathered round and then we let go that side.

What we had discovered was a deep well. The diameter at the top was 3 ft., widening to 6 ft. towards the water line. From top to water was 22 ft., and at the bottom was 4 ft. of clear water.

Around the top there were lots of stones. They went down for 3 ft. From there down, the well went into lots of small shingle stones. About a quarter of the way down there was a pipe in the side that probably once went to a pump.

After we had examined it thoroughly, going down it and taking photographs, unfortunately we had to fill it in for safety reasons.

[There is no reason to believe that this well is any of those singled out for special criticism by the Medical Officer for Health in the late 19th century, (see pp.25-28), when Eynsham must have had scores of wells in active use. Ed.]

....And a glimpse of

**EYNESHAM'S
MEDIEVAL WATER/SEWERAGE ARRANGEMENTS!**



This small drain, still partially capped, was discovered on the abbey site towards the south end of the assessment trench in December 1989 (see also front cover and pp.3-6)

'THE EMERGENCY': EYNESHAM 1939-1945

by Eynsham Primary School Research Group

'The emergency' was how the Minutes of the School Manager's Meeting of September 1939 referred to the war, although the Headteacher, Miss Jepson, was a little more explicit in the Infant School Log Book.

"Owing to the the outbreak of war with Germany on Sept:3rd & the evacuation of the London schoolchildren school remained closed until today [Sept. 11th]". So began a period of history which was to affect so many lives, not only those of the people of Eynsham.

It certainly caused many problems for the school as well as the village. Suddenly there were many new children and their teachers and some mothers with babies from outside the village to be dealt with. Besides private evacuees, 21 children, mainly from Glengall Infants School, Cubitt Town, Isle of Dogs, the heart of London's dockland, arrived that September, and on June 14th 1940 the entry read "owing to the serious situation more children are being evacuated from the danger areas". However, our researches into the effect of the evacuation on Eynsham and those who came here are not yet complete and will be the subject of a future article.

Apart from the extra children in the school there were other matters of concern. Already in June of 1939 the School Managers had noted "that the use of the premises for training of territorials, if required, and for the assembly of evacuated children had been sanctioned" and that they had received circulars on Civil Defence. In December 1939 "An A.R.P. stirrup hand pump was delivered at [the Infant] school this afternoon" but it was not until June 1940 that the Managers' Minutes state that "a circular has been sent to all teachers giving particulars of an A.R.P. course including instructions in the use of stirrup pumps".

The Parish Council had urged the School Managers to build air raid shelters for the children in September 1940 "in view of the new landing ground which has been established at Stanton Harcourt", but nearly a year later in June 1941 it was reported that "the work on the shelters has not yet been started". There was comment in the press but it seems that the shelters were never built. It was just as well there were no bombs dropped on Eynsham. The Mixed School at least developed a "system of having children on duty daily listening for air raid warnings". This was a practice remembered by our present School Caretaker and was not discontinued until the end of 1943.

Other precautions were taken against air raids. After considerable debate a Home Guard Observation post was set up on the Church Tower. This was first proposed in March 1941 when the Parochial Church Council agreed to grant the application on condition that the Church Council should be under no obligation in case of any injury to person or property and that there should be no smoking. After the erection of a handrail on the right hand side of the turret stairway and the placing of a fence within the parapet on the roof, the tower was brought into use as an Observation Post by the Home Guard in May 1942.

Everyone had to have a gas mask, including the children who had to take them to school. They also had to be kept in good order to be ready for any 'alert' as the Log Book shows. "1941 Feb.28th. All the children's gas masks have been examined by a local warden to see if any children require a larger size mask. Two children were found to need larger masks. Masks are examined frequently for defects or damages. This is reported to the parents who take them to their own district warden for repairs. During an 'alert' a local warden helped by being on duty by the door (to answer enquiries from mothers who wished to remove their children) with excellent results. No parent entered a classroom, and the children were consequently not alarmed by agitated callers. Only two or three children were removed. The rest were unaware that an alarm had been given. A second alert was given in the afternoon. Not one child was removed from school".

The whole village had been keyed up from the beginning of the emergency. When a fire broke out at the Newland Inn one night about a fortnight after the declaration of war "apprehension was caused by people mistaking the alarm for an air raid warning" (*Oxford Times*). It was also reported that in the same week "within a few minutes of the air raid warning being given on Wednesday morning, the Fire Brigade, A.R.P. wardens and decontamination squads were at their posts. Great efficiency was displayed". The Parish Council seemed pleased to announce that nobody in Eynsham was being paid to carry out their air raid precautions.

In 1940 the windows of the Infant School were wired to prevent flying glass, and slats were added to prevent the children from being scratched by sharp edges. All large pictures were removed from the walls. All this work seems to have been done at a very leisurely pace. Blackout which was begun in September 1941 was not completed until May 1942 despite the fact that the blackout was generally taken very seriously. Miss Mary Oakeley who had taken 1st Eynsham Brownies to Swanage in September 1939 remembered that "each night we looked out to see if the lights of Portsmouth had gone out, which would have meant that war had begun". Those not complying with the blackout were quite heavily fined, and in at least one case (in Oxford) sent to prison. It was reported in the *Oxford Times* of November 10th 1939 that "The first case at the Court [Witney Petty Sessions] of a light being shown in a house during the

blackout was heard when Arthur Carr of Queen Street, Eynsham was fined 5s. for displaying a light at 8.50 pm on 16th October". Mr Carr used to keep the fish-and-chip shop near the corner of Queen Street and Newland Street.

The blackout regulations applied not only to lights in houses but also to street lighting and the lighting of vehicles. No street lighting was allowed and in December 1939 Eynsham Parish Council requested that lamp posts should be painted white at the base so that they would show up. Lights on vehicles had to be obscured and this led to an increase in road accidents. The *Oxford Times* of 24th January 1941 reported an inquest conducted at Eynsham. It had been a dark and drizzly night and a car was driving with only side lights as there was a raid on. It was driven into a stationary lorry whose driver was under his vehicle changing a tyre. Both drivers died.

Even what might today seem to be minor accidents could prove fatal because of the lack of medicines we take for granted today. In 1940 a 78-year old toll bridge gateman was hit by an unknown car. He lived long enough to describe the car, even believing that he knew the driver; but his injuries became gangrenous and he died a week after the accident. Similarly, Dennis Buller of Eynsham died when the gun shot wound he received when he was accidentally shot in the leg while rabbiting became infected with gangrene. This was before penicillin was available.

Children's health in general during this period was less good than it is today. Rationing (see Fig.1) meant that there was not the plentiful and varied supply of food that we are used to now. Everyone was encouraged to 'Dig for Victory', growing as many vegetables as possible in their own gardens. The keeping of pigs was encouraged and there was considerable discussion at Parish Council Meetings as to the possibility of keeping pigs on Eynsham dump. "Concerning the keeping of pigs on Eynsham. Dump Mr Coates proposed the space should be advertised for the keeping of pigs and that refuse should be dumped for pigs and the person who occupied the dump should erect fencing. Father Lopes proposed a scheme should be devised to promote pig keeping in connection with the refuse dump" (*Oxford Times*, 1 March 1940). At the end of March the Council was still waiting to hear if it was permissible to keep pigs on the dump.

Potatoes were an important staple in the diet, and in October 1940 the County decided to double the acreage of potatoes to be planted in the next year. There were special school holidays in September for the potato harvest which were noted in the Log Book of 1944 and 1945.

Ration coupons were needed to buy material and clothes and there was much 'make do and mend'. Fuel was in short supply and homes lacked the amenities we now take for granted. In her reminiscences, Mrs Grace Brown describes her home, in the old thatched cottage on the corner of Queen Street and Newland Street which

was then three separate cottages, her family living in the middle one - "We had a living-room and a bedroom, a toilet across the yard and shared a washhouse at the end of the yard with the people either side of us. Our old gas stove stood in the corner of the living-room and we shared a cold tap in the yard with the neighbours. Light was provided by a gas lamp over the fireplace with candles upstairs. The floor was of flagstone and the 'coal-shed' was in the living-room". This description conjures up a picture that would probably be not unfamiliar to many who were children at that time.

People were encouraged to save and economise. In March 1940 the Parish Council decided to cut the water supply from 10pm to 6am nightly and as late as March 1944 notices concerning economy in the use of water were put about the village. In 1940 Father Lopes, the Catholic priest, *as a* member of the Parish Council, organized parties of boys to collect old iron and tins from houses and fields. The White Hart and the Jolly Sportsman were to be collection points for scrap iron, and householders were encouraged to save bones as well as tins. Today we talk of 'recycling'; then it was 'salvage'. The District Council wanted to collect the railings in front of the church and the war memorial, but this was prevented by the intervention of the Diocesan Board. Eynsham did not do well in its collection of waste paper. In June 1941 it was reported that the Parish Council had received a letter to say that less waste paper was received from Eynsham than from neighbouring villages.

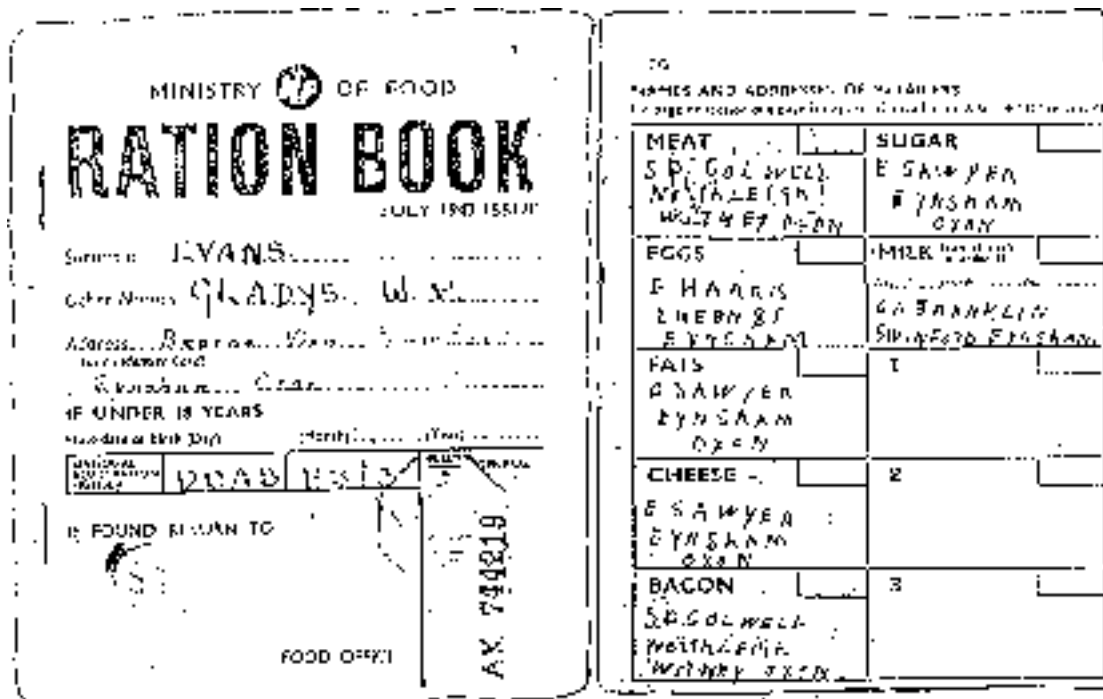


Figure 1. Front cover and page 36 of a wartime ration book, a precious possession in 1943 of Mrs Gladys Evans of Beacon View, Swinford. (Scale: approx. half size).

We can find a record of children's health during the war from the School Log. The '40s saw a series of particularly bad winters. The winter of 1940 was noted in the *Oxford Times* as the most severe for forty-five years. The winter of 1941 was again hard, and coal for the school stoves difficult to get. In January of that year there was a measles epidemic. In May most of the children of the Infants' School were immunised against diphtheria, but chicken pox was common and there was scabies.

The Log also notes "May 30th. The effect of Double Summertime on the children is very noticeable after a few weeks of it. The children arrive in the morning looking pale and tired, yawn incessantly and are restless and inattentive and noisy. Unpunctuality has increased. There are many more cases of unwashed hands and faces and unkempt heads. Occasionally, the insistence of a child in asking for milk and the greed with which it is taken, leaves one guessing about the amount of breakfast he has found time to eat. Reports reach me of children being met or heard in the streets between eleven and twelve (night)". However, it was noted that they were cleaner and less tired after the Whitsun holiday.

Bad weather kept the school closed for several days in January 1942 and it was difficult to get the classroom temperature above 32°F! The winter of 1943 saw a further epidemic of measles and then in the following autumn scarlet fever closed the school for several weeks, from October 25th to December 6th (after fumigation). In the following March it was whooping cough that sent the attendance down. The winter of 1945 was not much better. The Headmistress reported on January 19th that "there is little coal left. An order was sent 8 days ago, but the coal has not been delivered". On January 23rd the children had to be sent home for lack of coal to light the fires. Not surprisingly, it was noted that "many children are suffering from coughs and colds".

Help did come in the form of special milk allowances and in April 1945 "The children under 5 today commenced taking their cod liver oil quite willingly, and gave no trouble whatsoever". This was remembered slightly differently by Grace Brown "I had cod liver oil and malt which tasted like chocolate spread and I looked forward to lining up for it each morning. Some were not so fortunate and had to take a large spoonful of cod liver oil! Ugh!". School dinners were started at the Infants' School on May 7th 1945. Again things seemed to have moved very slowly for "during the [Christmas] holiday a great deal of equipment has been delivered at the school, ready for the commencement of the canteen for serving dinners to the children at this school".

Another problem that the residents of Eynsham had to get used to was the increase of traffic, and in particular the heavy military vehicles. In April 1942 the Parish Council received many complaints that dangerous driving and speeding by lorries

in Swan Lane was a hazard to school children. Grace Brown remembers the military vehicles from a child's point of view. The 'Duck Boats'¹ of American soldiers who had to stay a few days awaiting orders, lined up on the grass in Newland Street were like enormous monsters to the children. "Excitement came when a convoy came down our road. To avoid the toll gate bridge the tanks and other vehicles would come along the A40, along Cassington Road, turn up Queen Street into High Street and then into Station Road. All the 'war' traffic therefore, had to pass our house. We would hear the shout "Spatchie coming", which meant a dispatch rider was heading for the corner to direct the coming convoy in Queen Street. We would all run out to see the fun and shout "Any gum, chum?" to the soldiers. If it was very cold my mother or one of the neighbours would make a bucket of cocoa and the vehicles would slow down so that the men could dip their cups in for a drink on their way through. Once my sister, who was only 2 years old at the time, was on the far side of the road when the tanks started coming round the corner. My terrified mother just shouted and shouted for her to stand still. It was a great relief when the convoy ended and mother could retrieve her".

The route taken by the military vehicles was that which many of the children had to take to get to the Infants School on the corner of Swan Street and Station Road. One day, as Grace Brown recalls, a boy was very late for school and gave as his excuse "I couldn't cross the road because there was a long convoy going by", after which this became a standard excuse!

But tragedies occurred. The *Oxford Times* of July 1942 reported how a 6-year old girl, Yvonne Feltham of 30 Mill Street, was run over by an R. A.F. articulated lorry, receiving severe injuries from which she died shortly after admission to the Radcliffe Infirmary. A girl companion was slightly injured. The driver, who was exonerated, said he saw two children walking on the pavement. They had a mackintosh over their heads. He drove over the crossing but looking in his mirror he saw the children walk into the rear offside wheel of his lorry. He had had no idea that they would attempt to cross the road.

The elderly also suffered. In March 1945 a 71-year old Eynsham man was knocked down by a U.S. ambulance going at 50/60 m.p.h.

There were also worries for those who had members of their families in the services, and the *Oxford Times* reported several missing or wounded or killed in action. Happily, we also found mention of the homecoming of some who had been taken prisoner early in the war

It was not a time of total gloom and grief as we have seen from Mrs Brown's reminiscences. Although there was no TV and it was difficult to get to the cinema - in

¹ The DUKW was a kind of amphibious transport vehicle or landing-craft.

October 1944 an Eynsham man was fined £2 for the unlawful use of petrol for a trip to the cinema - the radio was a great source of news and entertainment and people did much to make their own fun and incidentally raise a lot of money for the 'war effort' and to help those who were suffering as a result of the war. There were dances, concerts, whist drives, and all sorts of sales to raise money, as well as the regular National Savings, the stamps that could be bought for 6d., 1s. and 2s.6d. towards IOs. certificates. National Savings stamps were distributed as prizes to the school children during Warship Week, and the *Oxford Times* of April 9th 1943 reported that "One of Eynsham's latest recruits to War Savings is Patricia Dorothy May Harris who started with 2 certificates when 48 hours old bought with 3d. bits saved for the event".

'Warship Week', 'Wings for Victory Week' and 'Salute the Soldier Week' were the three main national fund-raising events of the war in 1942, '43, and '44 respectively. Eynsham exceeded its target each year. £5000 became £20,000 for 'Warship Week', £10,000 became £15,000 for 'Wings for Victory', and £15,000 became £22,000 for 'Salute the Soldier'. The proceeds of Warship Week joined other monies raised in the Witney area to adopt H.M.S. Aldenham, a destroyer which was sunk in January 1945 after a very distinguished career in the Mediterranean. A Spitfire was purchased in 1943, and a Churchill tank in 1944. These fund-raising weeks were highly organised affairs with well-known personalities to open the proceedings. Leslie Banks, the actor, who launched 'Warship Week', managed to auction a bottle of sherry for £50! 'Salute the Soldier' was opened by the well-known journalist and broadcaster, Henry Wickham Steed, while Clement Attlee, the future prime minister, made a political speech to give the 'Wings for Victory' campaign a good send off.

The children did not miss out in all these exciting events, for there were sports and fancy dress parades and, among the prizewinners of the school children's competitions, we discovered Aubrey Howard, our present Caretaker. At Christmas there were still parties. The *Oxford Times* of 1st January 1943 described the entertainment given by American soldiers to the Eynsham schoolchildren. "Gifts were distributed at the Mixed School by Father Christmas and the children also received bags of candy ["the like of which I have never tasted since", says Mrs Brown]. An entertainment was also given in the Baptist Church Hall, the main feature of which was a living marionette show. Carols and popular songs were sung by the children, and a regimental choir performed".

Children also made their own amusements. Grace Brown recalls "we would play 'Milk Bottle Tops' for hours to pass the time. The bottle tops were flat rounds of cardboard about 1 in diameter. The first person threw their top and the other players would have to get theirs nearest the first one. The nearest would win all the tops

thrown. We were easily pleased and the tops were free".

Looking at the records such as the School Log, the Managers' Minutes and the Parochial Church Minute Book shows just how much of 'normal life' seemed to continue. Worries over blocked drains, the cost of school supplies and the upkeep of the church never change.

The group is continuing its researches, for there is much more to the story of Eynsham 1939-45 for us to discover.

Written sources:

Oxford Times; Parochial Minute Book; School Managers' Minute Book; Infant School Log Book.

Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to several villagers for sharing their memories of the war years, and especially to Mrs Grace Brown of 75, Evans Road, Eynsham whose own words we have, with her permission, quoted above.

Eynsham Primary School Research Group 1989-90

Matthew Brasier, Fiona Bryant, Alan Collett, Lewis Dixey, Warwick Dumas, Marcus Hall, Katrina Hartigan, Elizabeth Harvey, Tom Jerred, Jamie Langford, Darwin Peltan, James Posslewhite, Pamela Richards, Christopher Thiele.

`WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE KIDDING, MR HITLER?'

by Robert E. Willis

[Editor's note: These delightful verses were written during the last war by Mr Willis, then an Eynsham farmer, now farming in Canada, who served in the local 'Dad's Army'. Mr Willis aptly calls his poem 'The Bells', which were pealed only in the event of an expected invasion: but it also captures so well the defiant spirit of those dark days, that I have ventured the alternative title above, and hope that he will forgive me! Nothing else is changed.

Thanks are due to Mrs Mollie Harris for passing this on for publication, together with Mr Willis's biographical note which follows]

THE BELLS

'Twas on a silent starlit night
When the Nation was at war,
Old Tom Gritt and I was in the Guards,
And we was on patrol

Way up the Witney Road us was,
Beyond the `Evenlode'
Invasion in the minds of all
It were a heavy load.

Then all at once we heard the bells
From over 'Sow-Leigh' way,
And both our hearts just missed a beat,
And a deadly fear held sway.

I looks at Tom - Tom looks at I,
Then cast our gaze into the sky;
Tom seized the bolt of his trusty gun
And rammed the shell full home.
Then I of course just followed suit
We knew the time had come!

"Thee's got one up thur has thee lad?
`Hast got one up the spout?'
And then he whips his bayonet out,
Nigh half as long as Tom.

So then we marched through Eynsham Town
To face both gun and bomb!
Side by side through the empty streets,
Both in step with rifles neat;
For we was in the Guards you know,
And did our best to make a show.

An inspiring sight we must have made
To the Fuhrer's troops should they invade,
For old Tom Gnu was five feet four,
While I was nigh a full foot more.

We marched on by the old Schoolyard
And into Acre End,
And the women called in voices hard
`Bist thee foe or bist thee friend?'

Our aim to reach the far Guard-Room,
Some called it 'Ye olde Tea Shoppe',
And so we swung into Eynsham High
With nary a pause or stop.

'Twas then we heard that dreaded roar
From the silent starlit night,
We knew the Hun was watching us
And gathering all his might.

He saw the glint of our bayonet,
For Tom and I was marching yet;
His heart must then have turned to stone
As he turned his plane - to head for home.

Fuhrer, Fuhrer, do not come,
They are ready here, and will not run';
So ran the message from the sky,
As he sees old Tom - and then sees I!

They told us it were a false alarm,
'Return to your factory, field or farm';
But Tom and I both knew full well
That night we heard the Sow-Leigh bell,
'Twas us as turned the Nazi might
On that dark and silent, starlit night!

Biographical note in a letter of January 1990 to Mollie Harris.

My family arrived at Pinkhill Farm during the spring of 1935. I was the 'forerunner', having driven a pair of horses and wagon from west of Shrivenham, Berks., starting out early one morning and walking the entire distance, about 30 miles, arriving just before dark, a feat of which I was quite proud! I spent a night alone in this lovely old farmhouse, finding it somewhat quiet; and next day preparing for the arrival of my Father and Mother and three of my brothers. During this day also, our small herd of milkcows travelled by train to Eynsham station.

I loved Pinkhill Farm and enjoyed the years I spent there, my contribution being mainly working the teams of horses and later enjoying the tractor work.

I joined the Home Guard immediately it was formed, and served throughout the war. [These verses recall] one episode among others.

Mary and I were married in 1947 and we started farming on our own. We farmed 'Southfields' for seven years together with 'Oathouse', 70 acres in all, and carried on a contractor's business - ploughing etc. until farmers could more easily obtain tractors and implements of their own. They were in short supply during the war.

We bought and moved 'Barbary', a sectional house, from Minster Lovell and lived at the head of Pinkhill lane, opposite the Miles family, with whom we still correspond. Realizing we would never make a big success in spite of hard work, we sold up in 1954 and moved to Tiverton, Devon, where we farmed for six years. This period, too, was not producing the results we expected, so thinking prospects would be better in Alberta, we sold the farm and moved here to Canada, and have never regretted the move.

I still farm with son Martin, and each of our four sons has either a farm or contractor's business of his own.

AN EYNESHAM LANDSCAPE PAINTING

by **Brian Atkins**

I have acquired a small early 20th century watercolour painting inscribed Eynsham ' which has some minor topographical/historical interest.

The painter was Robert James Winchester Fraser (1872-1930), who signed his works "R.Winter", probably to avoid confusion with several more or less close relatives called Fraser who also wielded the paintbrush, most notably his father, Robert Winchester Fraser (1847-1906). River landscapes, often of the Bedford Ouse, were the favourite family theme (Mallalieu, 1976).

The painting is only 3½" x 10½" in size. Blues, greens and whites are the dominant colours. The pencilled inscription on the back lacks a date (Fig.1).

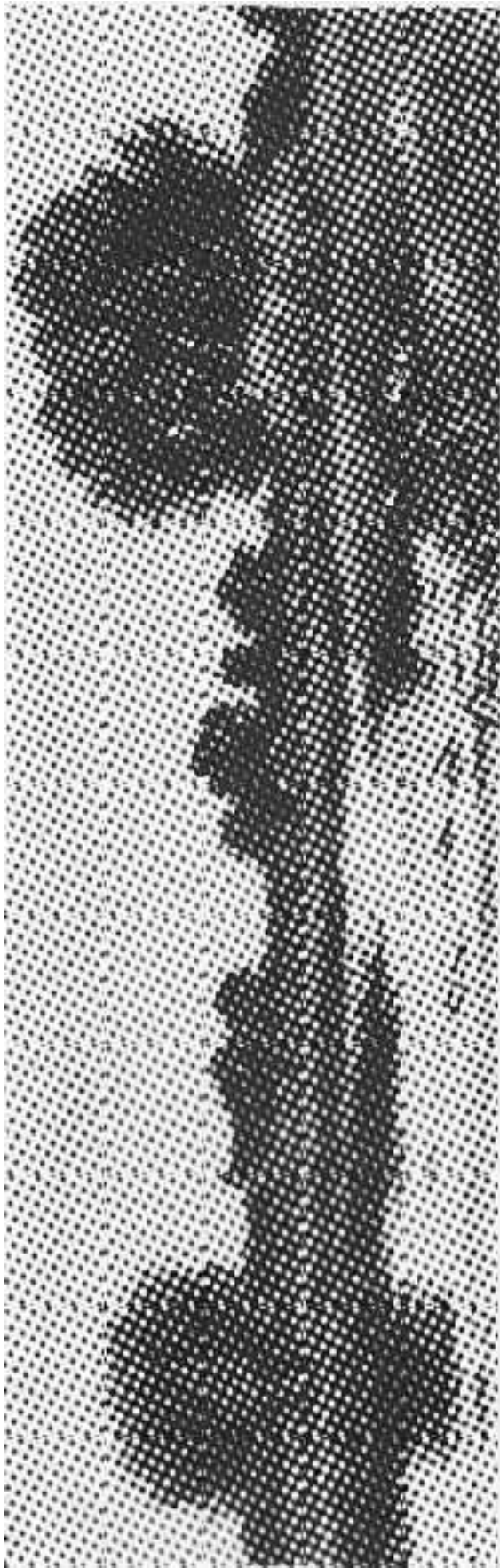
The scene includes St Leonard's church tower (centre), a nearer building to the left, and a sinuous watercourse crossed or flanked in the middle distance by a substantial wooden structure.

I am forced to the conclusion that the view is along the Wharf Stream, the only significant watercourse hereabouts that is aligned in places on the church; and that the building to the left is the Talbot inn. The church tower is depicted as rather more squat than it is in reality. The Talbot is shown with its south-east gable projecting above the line of the roof ridge. Today the roof line, viewed from this angle, is higher for approximately one quarter of its length from the south-east end. In both cases we can, perhaps, allow the painter his artistic licence! The Wharf Stream appears to be less choked by weed and somewhat more substantial than it is now, but it probably was!

In fact I think it is possible to identify precisely the bends on large-scale maps, and on the ground, and thereby the point at which the artist set up his easel (see Fig.2). From this viewpoint the church is now entirely obscured by the Oxford Magnets buildings, and the Talbot, though visible, is masked by trees to a greater extent. Not surprisingly today's trees and hedges are different, and the ducks are no longer there!

Since the painting shows signs of considerable technical maturity, its date was probably later than 1900 when the artist was 28 years old, and assuredly no later than 1930 when he died.

But what of the wooden structure in the middle distance? There was never a weir on the Wharf Stream. Could it have been a landing stage on the north bank, not shown on any map of which I am aware, and of which, if it existed, there are no surviving



Frynscham -
- R. W. W. W. W. W.

traces on the ground? It seems too substantial for a fence.

I should be delighted to hear from any reader who might have a different interpretation of the viewpoint, or who could explain the wooden structure, or in any way help to pinpoint the date of the painting.

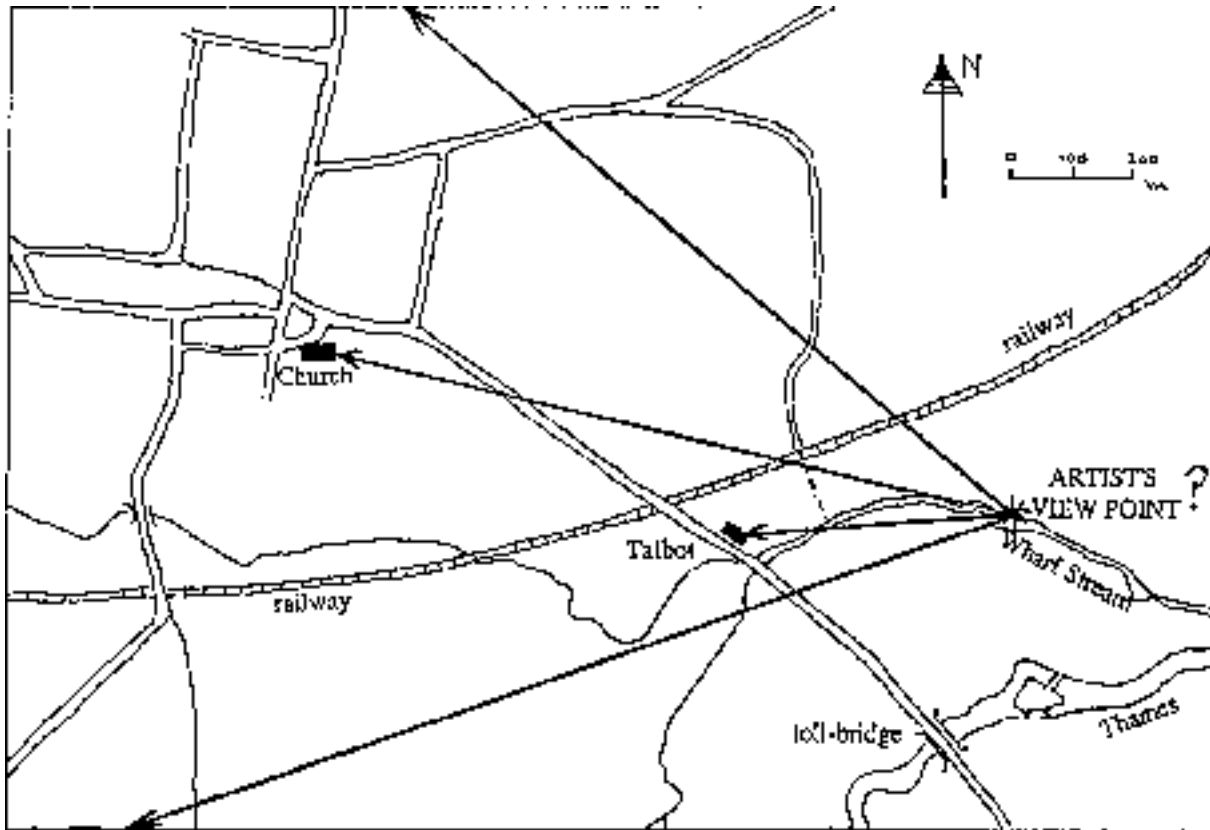


Figure 2: The artist's viewpoint?

Heavy lines indicate limits of the scene, and lines of sight to the Church and the Talbot.

Reference:

Mallalieu, H.L. *Dictionary of British Watercolourists*. Antique Collectors Club, 1976.

Acknowledgements:

Mr H.J. Compton of Woking who, through Lilian Wright, alerted the Eynsham History Group to the existence of this painting.

Mr Leonard Eames and Mrs Elizabeth Eames, proprietors of Abbey Antiques & Fine Art, Hemel Hempstead, from whom the painting was purchased, and who kindly supplied unpublished biographical details of the Fraser family, and the photograph reproduced here as Fig. 1.

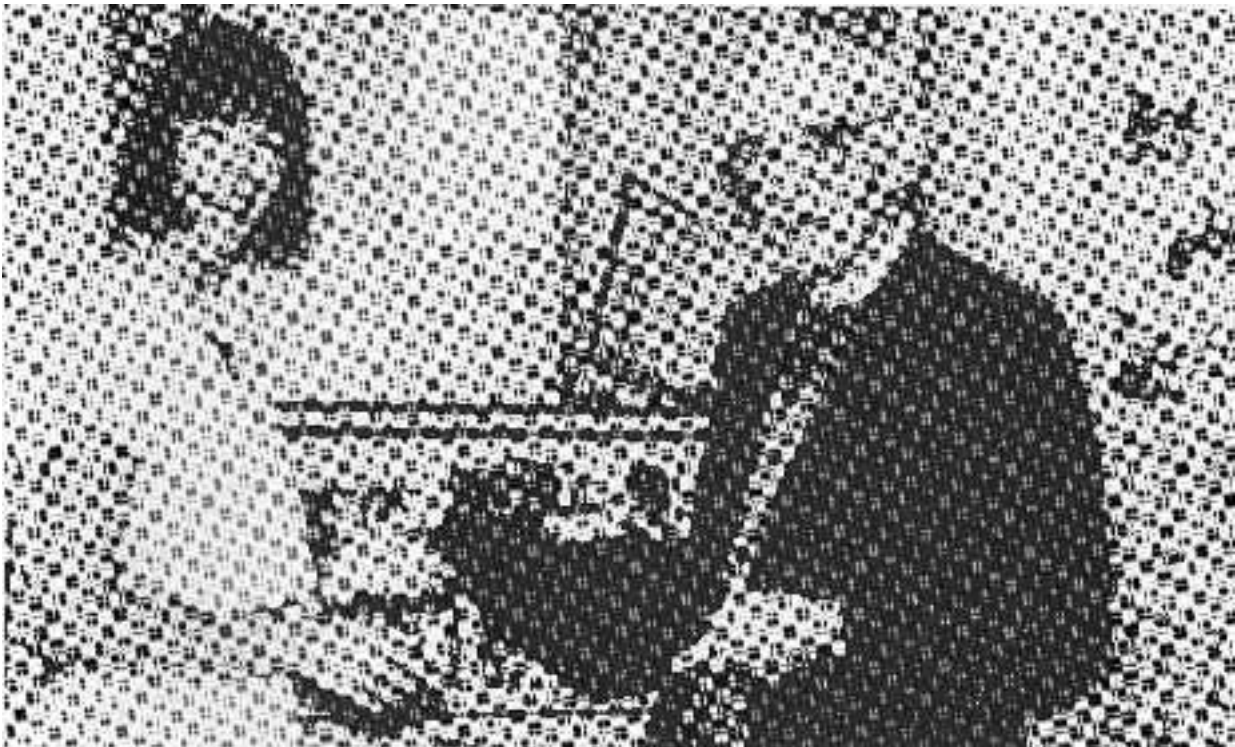
THE HUGH COOPER MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Hugh Cooper Memorial Library, housed in the library in Mill Street, forms a useful reference archive for local historians and others seeking information about the parish - past and present.

The collection represents an unusual, if not unique, collaborative enterprise: much of the literature belongs to the Oxfordshire County Library; the remainder to the Eynsham History Group. All of it is made available to the public.

This section of the library was formally opened on 23 August 1989 by the Rt. Revd. Eric Gordon, President of the Eynsham History Group; and is designated *The Hugh Cooper Memorial Library* in honour of Mr H.C.D.Cooper (1899-1986), founder of the society in 1959.

At the same time, various records were deposited, including Hugh Cooper's own notebooks, correspondence and other files dealing with the village, which were generously donated by his family. Some items are not on open shelves, but can be made available to readers on request to the librarian.



Formal opening of the the Hugh Cooper Memorial Library by Bishop Eric Gordon, and deposition of Hugh Cooper's historical archives and an album of photographs donated by Miss Mary Oakeley. The librarian is Rosemary Walsh.

(Photograph by Lilian Wright)

? "EYNESHAM-ON-AVON" ?

by William Bainbridge

Last year there appeared on the Mill Street Library a metallic shield-shaped plaque with low-relief Victorian scrapbook images on a plain field (Fig.1). Starting from the base we have an open book, presumably symbolizing the library itself, or perhaps the scholarly renown of our ancient abbey; above are naturalistic pictures of Swinford Bridge and Eynsham's Market Cross with its capital; finally, top left, is a building looking exactly like Bradford-on Avon's famous Saxon church, complete with its two modern sloping buttresses which replace the vanished south porch (Fig.2) . We have only hints as to what our original abbey church might have looked like, but we do know from Anthony Wood's 1657 drawing that its Norman rebuilding had two west towers, and maybe a central one, a quite considerable building of minor cathedral proportions.

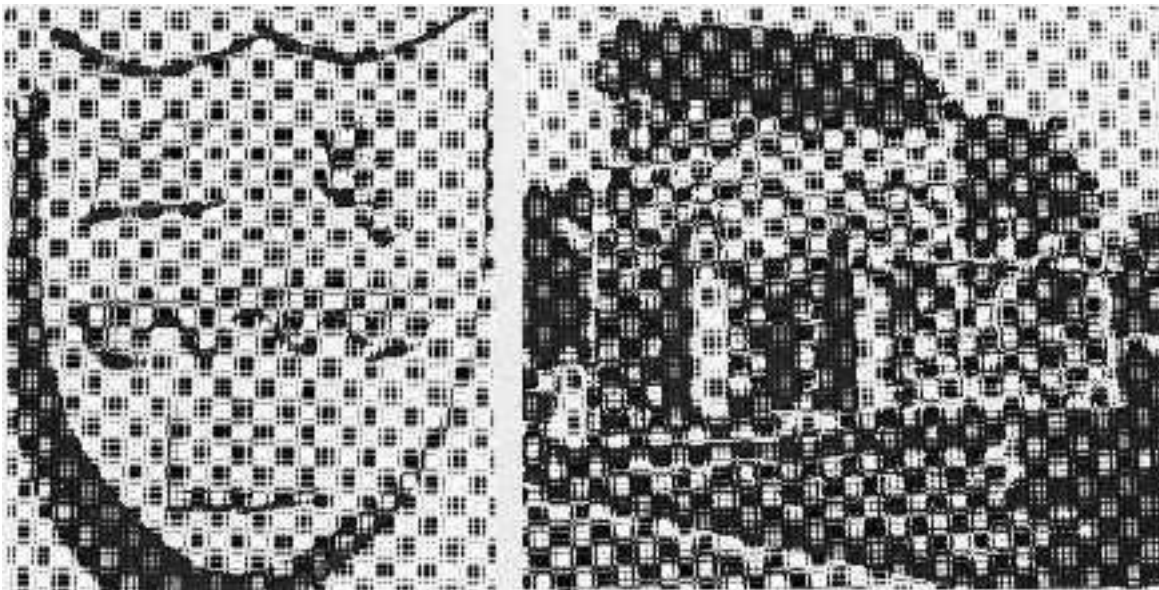


Figure 1.(left): The plaque on Eynsham Library.

Figure 2. (right): St Laurence, Bradford-on Avon's Saxon church, south side.

EYNSHAM HISTORY GROUP

Founded 1959

The E.H.G. exists primarily to encourage studies in, and to promote knowledge of the history of the village and parish of Eynsham, Oxfordshire, by means of regular meetings (normally at least ten), with invited speakers, during the winter and spring; and occasional outings during the summer.

New members are welcome.

The current subscription is £3.00 per annum (excluding the Record).
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