

THE EYNSHAM RECORD



Number 17 – 2000

NOTES

1. Images have been optimised throughout for online viewing.
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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Note on abbreviations

Bodl..	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
Chambers, 1936	Chambers, E.K. <i>Eynsham under the Monks</i> . Oxfordshire Record Society, vol.18, 1936.
E.H.G.	Eynsham History Group.
<i>E.R.</i>	<i>Eynsham Record</i> .
<i>Eynsham Cart.</i>	<i>Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham</i> . Salter, H.E. (Ed.), (1 and 2) in 2 volumes, Oxford Historical Society, vol.49 (1907) & vol.51 (1908).
Gordon, 1990	Gordon, Eric. <i>Eynsham Abbey: 1005-1228</i> , Phillimore, 1990.
O.S.	Ordnance Survey.
Oxon. Archives	Oxfordshire Archives, (formerly Oxfordshire Record Office)
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
<i>V.C.H. Oxon.</i>	<i>The Victoria History of the County of Oxford</i> .

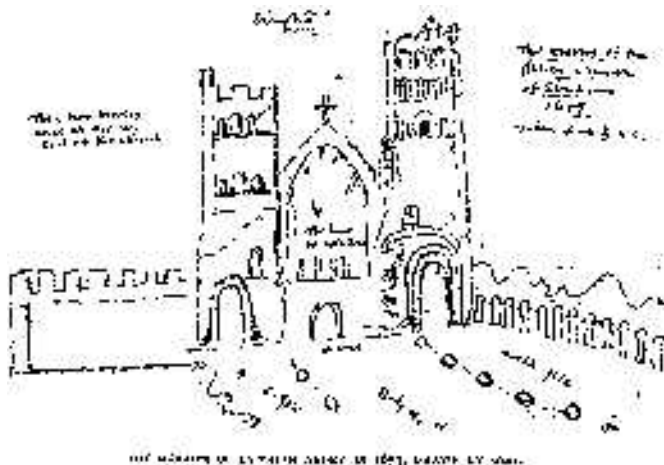
FRONT COVER:

Drawing by Chas. E. Dawson of Miss Maude Gatliff, winner of one of the prizes for the most approved costume, which first appeared in the October issue of *The Herald of Health*, 1897. See Don Chapman's article, pp. 31-33.

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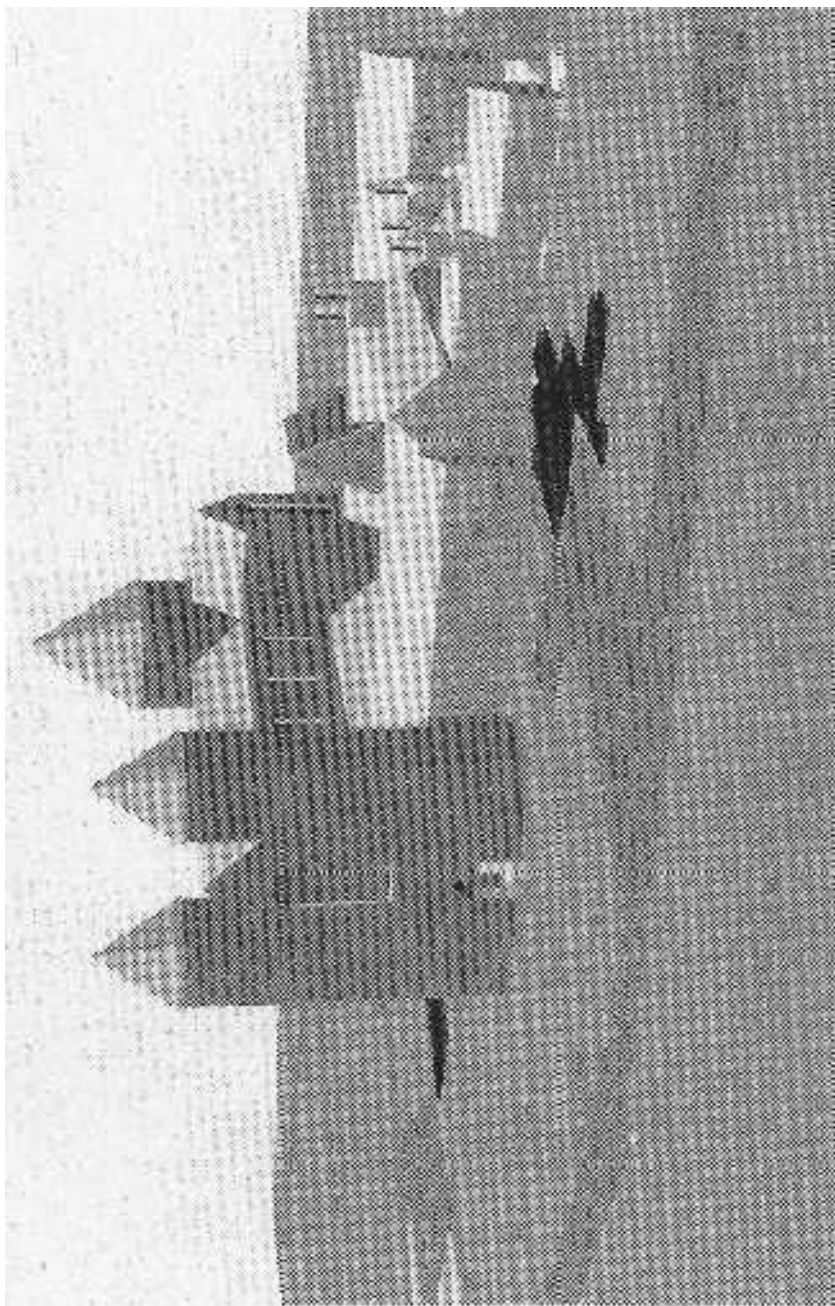
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EDITORIAL

When finally putting this number together, I realized just how many items concern transport and communications connected with the Thames crossing at Swinford. Robert Hamilton deals with the Wharf Stream (p.5). Lilian Wright recalls Parson Woodforde's journeys via Eynsham to and from Oxford by ferry and bridge at Swinford in the 18th century (p.26). Don Chapman has an interesting story of lady cyclists who crossed the bridge in 1897 (p.31). By 1906 Sawyer's were selling a wide range of bikes (p 28). Incidentally, the notorious murderer, Frederick Browne, was selling and repairing bikes in Eynsham in the first decade of the century (see Don Chapman's article in *E.R.* no.8, 1991). Frank Packer's picture of the Oxford bus at the bridge in 1925 is contrasted with a new view of the scene 75 years later (pp. 20-21). The significance of Beacon Hill, overlooking the river crossing, is discussed on p.34.

Apart from named authors, thanks are due to Robert Hamilton and the publishers of *Waterways World* for permission to reproduce the article on p.5, and to Rosa Johnson for drawing my attention to it; to Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive for permission to reproduce the image on p.20; and to Jean Buttrick for the illustrations on pp.22, 28 and 29 (The first of these is undated and captionless - interpret it as you will?), the snippets on pages 30 and 36, and loan of a book on which my contributions are largely based.

Finally, readers impatient for forthcoming publications by the Oxford Archaeological Unit on Eynsham Abbey should take heed of Alan Hardy's update on p3, and the website address where a mass of detail is already available on the Internet.



EYNESHAM ABBEY - LATEST NEWS

by Alan Hardy

You may remember the conjectural plan that appeared in the *Eynsham Record* two years ago¹. From that plan we have generated this 3D computer model of how the main buildings in the core of the precinct may have appeared, looking down from the south-west at the Abbey church, with the great square cloister surrounded by ranges of buildings, including the dormitory, the refectory, the guest halls and, further to the right, the kitchen and stores. The detailed style of the church is not known, but from excavated evidence and that of Anthony Wood's sketch, these are probably the most likely proportions.

The great size of the Abbey is indicated by the 'footprints of St Peter's and St Leonard's churches (in black) and the outlines of Abbey Street, St Peter's carpark and the Square

There would, of course, have been more buildings within the precinct, including a whole group centred round the infirmary, situated a little way off to the south-east.

As far as the long awaited report on the Oxford Archaeological Unit's (OAU) excavations is concerned, this is due to be published late this year. Along with the heavyweight monograph, we hope to publish a small (and more digestible!) popular booklet, and update our existing web page on the Abbey. Something to ask Santa for, maybe!

In the 1998 number I mentioned the project involving the OAU and the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) to put the Eynsham site archive on the Internet. This is now up and running , and attracting thousands of web 'visitors' - the web address is <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>

Reference

1. *E.R.* no.15, p.4, 1998



Figure 1.

- The twisting wharf stream at Eynsham which carried waterborne freight for over 600 years.

19TH CENTURY TRADE WAR

by **Robert Hamilton**

This article first appeared in the January 1995 number of Waterways World magazine. It is reproduced here (without its fine colour photographs!) by kind permission of the author and publisher. Figs.], 2 and 4 are black & white copies from the originals. Figs 3 and 5 are new. [Ed.]

Seen today in their serenity it is difficult to imagine a time when the canals were the scene of intense and hectic rivalry. The ruthless and often internecine wars that went on between many of the canal companies before and even after the arrival of their common adversary, the railways, are nevertheless well documented.

Undercutting of the toll-rates charged by competitors, the building of stop-locks, or even physical barriers at junctions to withhold water - such as the Worcester Bar in Birmingham - and the often embittered exchanges of letters between irascible company secretaries, are just some of the manifestations of the common lack of co-operation and the frequent discord. At times the collision of interests occurred even beyond the immediate lines of the canals. Just such a conflict took place in the peaceful and pastoral setting of the upper reaches of the river Thames near the small Oxfordshire town of Eynsham.

Always navigable, the river Thames provided Eynsham with a trade route from the earliest times and there was certainly a wharf on the backwater at the junction of the Limb Brook and the Chilbrook as early as 1302. In the mid-14th century a 'Robert the Navigator' is known to have lived there and, throughout the Middle Ages, traffic to Oxford and beyond was important to the abbey and the inhabitants of the town.

By the early 17th century the scale of the waterborne trade increased, with improvements to the river Thames, and by then the bargemasters of Eynsham were trading regularly to London, 119 miles downstream. Stone and agricultural produce left the wharf and furze and other fuel were also carried at that time in large quantities to the breweries and bakeries of Oxford.

Later, in 1690, the resident wharfinger is known to have owned several boats and by 1774 there was an unnamed public house at the wharf in which the wharf traders undoubtedly carried out the Thames custom of striking a bargain in a riverside alehouse. Several warehouses also appeared at this time. In 1778 the unnamed pub disappeared and the 'Horse and Jockey', later renamed 'The Talbot',

was built to serve the wharf. Then at the end of the 18th century two canals arrived on the scene and the pace of change accelerated.

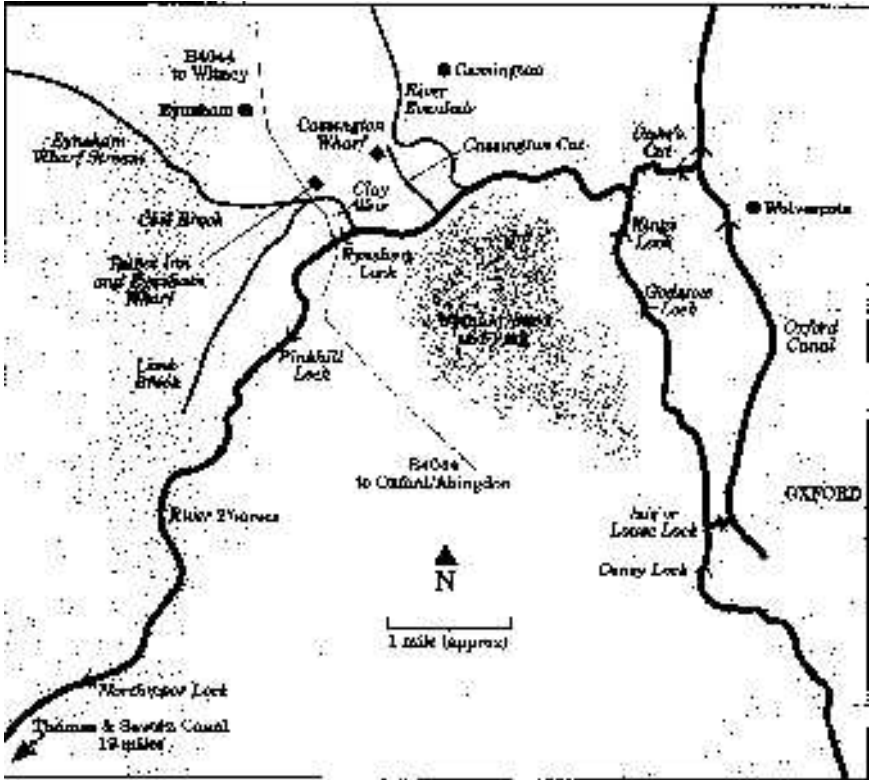


Figure 2.

Even before the Oxford Canal was completed, its astute proprietors had seen the advantages of supplying coal to the towns and villages to the north of the upper Thames. By 1789 they were advertising coal at Eynsham Wharf which had passed their line and entered the Thames via the Duke's Cut. The Thames & Severn Canal [T&S] opened in 1789 and its proprietors quickly launched a challenge. Coal from their river wharf at Lechlade was soon being carried in wagons to the nearby blanket manufacturing town of Witney and to Burford and beyond.

In an effort to take the lion's share of this trade in 1790 the Oxford Canal Company [OCC] offered a reduction in tolls equivalent to a bounty of 5p per ton. Two years later, to gain an even firmer foothold and develop its ambitions, the OCC installed its own wharfinger at Eynsham and improvements were made to the wharf stream. Narrow, shallow and tortuous, the stream had always been difficult to navigate and in an effort to alleviate the depth problem Clay Weir was built 200 yards from the junction with the Thames. This consisted of a gate with removable wooden boats or paddles similar to those on the flash locks which were then common on the main river. By lowering the paddles and admitting water into a leat through a sluice above Bolde's Weir beside Eynsham Lock, the water level in the wharf stream could be raised. The fact that narrow-boats and barges might still have to wait for five hours above the gate before enough depth had been obtained suggests how difficult navigational problems must have been previously.

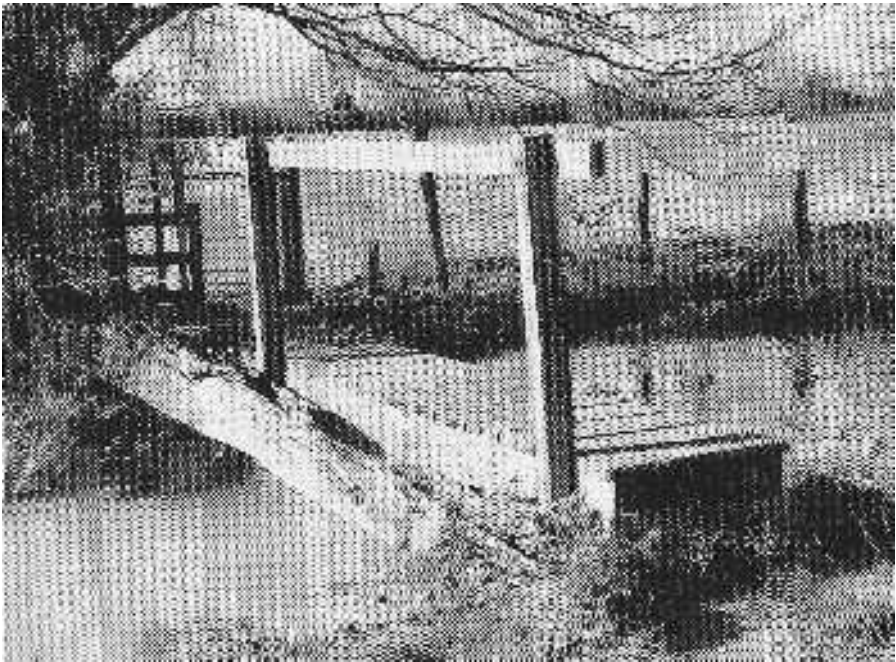


Figure 3. Clay Weir on the Wharf Stream, with the balance beam still intact. The footbridge, of course, is a modern addition. When this picture was taken (1/2/2000) the water was clear upstream (right), but muddy downstream in response to an abrupt change in depth at the sill.

Following the improvements, trade improved and it picked up even further in 1800 when a local farmer, bricklayer and entrepreneur, James Bowerman, bought the trading concern established there by James Lord together with his boats. Later that year the OCC leased the wharf for £60 a year and immediately banned the landing of coal carried along any other canal which in effect meant the Thames & Severn. Any T&S coal landed at Eynsham had then to be offloaded onto the banks of the river Thames and transported across the fields. The OCC's grip on the trade had tightened so much that in 1799 the T&S was forced to offer a profit cutting bounty of 10p per ton on Welsh and Staffordshire coals at its Lechlade wharf.

While the OCC was painstakingly taking steps to appropriate the waterborne coal trade of the area a mile to the east, the Duke of Marlborough was busy constructing a quarter mile canal from the 11th century Cassington Mill to the Cassington-Eynsham road. The Cassington Cut was opened in 1800 and seems at first merely to have served the mill. By 1802, however, it had been extended a further half mile to connect with the river Thames which it joined through a conventional entrance lock with the standard upper Thames dimensions of 112ft by 14ft 10in. A wharf together with a wharf house and two limekilns were built beside the Cassington-Eynsham road terminus and Henry Baker, the first wharfinger, soon opened a public house 'The Barge' to encourage and profit from the trade.

Cassington, a half-mile distant, had only a small population (374 in 1801) and the canal was clearly intended to break into the Eynsham market and to supply the neighbouring towns and villages already being served from there. Several men from Eynsham worked on the new wharf and a succession of coal merchants set up their businesses upon it. Barred from unloading coal at Eynsham Wharf, barges and narrow-boats from the T&S began to enter the Cassington Cut.

Cassington Wharf produced receipts of around £800 per annum -approximately half those received at Eynsham Wharf - but in 1834 the competition disturbed the OCC sufficiently for it to lease the canal and its wharf for £45 a year and again to obstruct the penetration of coal from the T&S and additionally by that time from the Somerset coalfield travelling via the Wilts & Berks Canal.

The T&S, never hugely successful, was dogged by its leaky summit, other maintenance problems and difficult navigational problems on the river Thames. The profits of £6,301 in 1824 for its whole line were only eight times greater than those taken at the Cassington wharf. It was no match for its wealthy and powerful

competitor the OCC which finally, through its efficiency and strategy, had virtually placed a cordon around its coal trade interests in the area.

The threat, small as it was, to the OCC of an independent Cassington Cut gradually diminished. Traffic on the Cut was light and in 1842 the OCC decided the foreseeable profits and possible future damage to its interests did not warrant renewal of their lease.

John Hambridge took over and the canal continued to decline. By 1862 there does not seem to have been a coal merchant located at the wharf and by 1865 traffic had virtually ceased. Complete disuse probably came in 1870. When Fred S. Thacker, the author of *The Thames Highway* looked for the lock in 1913 he could no trace of it.

Trade at Eynsham Wharf was more enduring. Before 1827 an office and a salt house had been built there by Richard Parker of Witney who was probably the most active coal merchant on the upper Thames. Parker owned a brickworks in Eynsham and also carried salt and corn in his large fleet of Thames barges. Other traders included Jonathan Sheldon, a maltster and corn dealer, and William Day, a farmer and timber merchant. In 1846 the OCC purchased the freehold of the wharf and, surprisingly for a canal company, bought 'The Talbot' which must surely be a very early example of company product diversification.



Figure 4. The remains of the second water gate built by the Oxford Canal Company in 1913 at the junction of the Wharf Stream and the Thames.

The arrival of the railways in 1853 in Burford and Witney brought a reduction in trade as did the opening of the station in Eynsham in 1861 but the OCC continued to retain and rim the wharf. Their ownership in all lasted for 101 years and they were still making improvements as late as 1913 when a second water gate was constructed at the wharf stream entrance to enable deeply loaded narrow-boats to more easily cross the sill of Clay Weir. The two gates and the intervening 200 yards of the river then functioned in the same way as a conventional lock.



Figure 5

The Clay Weir paddles installed by the OCC in 1924. The initials 'OCC' are still visible.

In 1924 the company constructed a circular enclosure beside each watergate to secure the weir paddles in times of flood. Shortly afterwards the wharf stream, like the Cassington Cut, ceased to have a transport role. In 1925 the last load of coal to arrive by narrowboat was unloaded there. The OCC continued to own 'The Talbot' until nationalisation in 1948, after which it was bought from the British Transport Commission by Halls Brewery. For a while, a sugar beet factory occupied Eynsham Wharf, and more recently a modern works has obliterated the site. Today, only the 'The Talbot' and a few ageing artefacts stubbornly remain as reminders of the link between Eynsham and a once powerful canal company which battled with its rival so purposefully among the quiet meadows of the upper Thames.

EYNESHAM'S GAS WORKS

by J.B.Horne

Mr John Thorne of British Gas Southern sent this draft article to the EHG in 1988. The company was intending "to produce a note on the history of each of the many sites where gas was made in our Region. There are about 100 such sites and work on those within the Oxford area is almost complete but Eynsham and Witney are among the last to be tackled." I managed to contact him in 1997 when he promised a revised version for the Record Unfortunately this didn't materialise and further attempts to make contact have failed; so with minor editorial changes, here is John Thorne's 1988 version, except for the first paragraph which is mine [Ed.]

Very early in 1898, in the depths of winter, a 'Special Correspondent' of the Witney Gazette was "invited to see for [himself] the extreme darkness of the village when no moon or stars shed their gentle light to guide the traveller". His entertaining account in the Witney Gazette¹ has been transcribed in this journal². Something was clearly amiss; the street gas lights were not working, and, according to the account, had been out of action for some six or seven years. Mr Home's story begins at that point.

In April 1898 Tom Burden advertised the plant, "late the property of the Eynsham Gas Company" for sale or piecemeal. His advert was written in non-technical terms but made it clear that there were three retorts although only four retort mouthpieces were available. There were two purifier boxes, one holder and about 40 meters in the district. The most interesting item was "...for making OIL GAS: Five retorts , long hydraulic main, Ascension and Dip Pipes, with Tank, Seamless Boiler and eight Wall stays". Plant for retorting oil was most unusual in gasworks, except for railway use: perhaps it had contributed to the failure of the Company?

In July 1898 the Journal of Gas Lighting reported that "Mr Morgan, the purchaser of the old gas plant at the Eynsham Gas-works, has now bought the land whereon the works stood and has commenced renovating the holders. He intends also to put down new plant on an improved system." If and when Mr Morgan succeeded in restoring the supply is not known , but the deeds of the land record the conveyance of the site from "Mrs R.H.Holmes and others to D.S.Mackay" on 20 March 1912. No returns were made to the usual gas directories at this time and, being non-statutory, the owners were not obliged to keep the Board of Trade informed of their doings. Information is scarce, therefore.

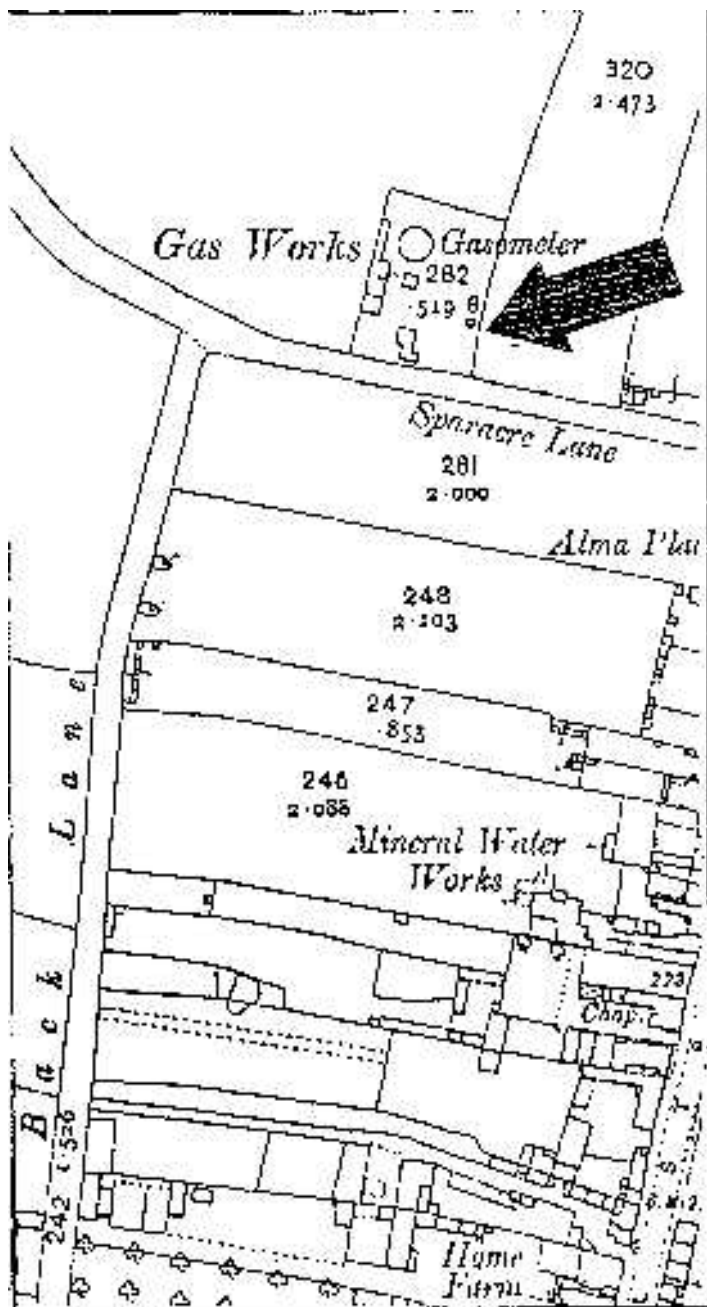


Figure 1. The site in 1913

The town of Eynsham showed signs of prosperity and growth in the 1920s and its tiny gasworks was noticed by William W. Topley F.C.I.S., who had recently retired as Secretary of the large Croydon Gas Company. He bought the Eynsham concern on 21 September 1927 and a month later conveyed it to the newly formed Eynsham Light, Heat and Power Co. Ltd. The new Company had Topley as Managing Director, Henry Woodall as Chairman, W.Henry Topley as Secretary and A.Chapman as the local manager. Henry Woodall was a famous gas engineer and also a Croydon director, among his many gas industry posts.

Three year later the two entrepreneurs sold the company to the British Gas Light Company, a very old-established concern which owned gas undertakings large and small in various parts of England and Wales. This Holding Company could offer the buying power and access to capital which was beyond the reach of a small company like Eynsham, although Woodall had been more than capable of providing the sort of technical expertise which many works lacked. No doubt Woodall and Topley increased the value of the Eynsham undertaking before disposing of it. They seem to have pursued a more active sales policy than their predecessors and they certainly extended the mains: a 4" was laid south over the GWR level crossing in 1928 and in 1930 some houses built by the Witney Rural District Council were connected. It seems that they were not able to spend much on the works, however.

Woodall was, in fact, Chairman of British Gas Light. He had been so since November 1919 and was only the Company's eighth chairman in over a century; his father Sir Corbet Woodall had once held the same post. Whether Henry Woodall was acting as a surrogate for BGL cannot be determined without access to the Company's records (they appear to have been lost after BGL was vested in the Eastern Gas Board) but it seems unlikely since he held on for three years. Of course, it is quite likely that he influenced BGL to take Eynsham off his hands at a suitable moment.

One result of the take-over by BGL on 6 October 1930 was that the Eynsham works became enshrined in the literature of the Institution of Gas Engineers, an unusual honour for such a tiny plant. In June 1934 D.B.Parkinson, 'Engineer in Chief of BGL, read a paper on "Modernising Small Gas Undertakings" (Communication 93) to a meeting of the Institution. Much of the content was appropriate to the country works inherited by Southern Gas fifteen years later.

For example: "With the fierce competition of the electricity grid and oil burning domestic appliances, many of the small Companies will go under unless obsolete plant is brought up to date.

"It is usually lack of capital rather than the lack of desire that prevents improvement, and when this is the case, the difficulty may often be solved by purchasing a supply from a large neighbouring works or by the Company becoming a subsidiary of one of the Corporations formed to control small Undertakings. In the first case the works are usually shut down and it is only the district mains that have to be put in order. In the second case, money must be spent on both the works and district. It will be realised that the proper financing of these small Undertakings is only possible where capital is available and immediate return is not essential."

It would be interesting to know whether or not BGL seriously considered buying a supply from Oxford before deciding to rebuild the gas works in Eynsham. When first purchased the works had an output of only 2.5 million cubic feet per annum, but urgent attention was necessary; not only were the retorts in very poor condition but the house itself was in a state of collapse, with the roof strutted off the retort bench. There was a generator setting but because of the high water table the cellar was also full. Repairs would have cost about £1000 and would have been difficult, so it was decided to build anew. Costs had to be minimised since no labour saving could be expected (the work was just made rather easier) and a new gasholder was also necessary.

In small gasworks the retorts were seldom charged at night, so the added cost of generator settings were unlikely to be covered by the extra coke released for sale. Regenerators were out of the question. Parkinson of BGL believed that with an up-to-date direct-firing setting, some attempt at regeneration could be incorporated. Gibbons Brothers of Dudley were asked to build a simple yet modern retort house on these lines. Very few carbonising plants so small as this were built as late as the 1930s, and it is therefore worth quoting at length from Parkinson's own description:

"The new bench consists of two settings, one of four retorts and one of three. The retorts are moulded fireclay, 21in. by 15in. by 9ft., D Section. The furnaces are taken to a depth of 1 ft. 9in. below the ground level so as to obtain as much fuel depth as possible, and also to obtain room for a short length of secondary air flue, the air being admitted into the producer just below the bottom retorts. Some slight preheating of the secondary air is obtained by bringing the waste gas down to a flue alongside the secondary air and then taking it up again to an overhead main flue. In order to obtain access to these flues and the dampers, the floor is excavated in front of the furnace and covered by removable steel plates. The furnaces are fitted with the ordinary bar grate. The chimney, which comes off the bench at the end of the main flue, is 16ft. high and 1ft. 6in. square (internal).

Separate steel hydraulic mains with bottoms sloping to a bottom central tar run-off are provided and situated well above the beds. The tar run-offs are connected by a 4in. main to a tar tower, which is 10ft. by 1ft.6in. by 12in., and has a branch from the tar outlet taken through the retort house wall so that barrels can be loaded direct from it. The retort mouthpieces are fitted with self-sealing lids, and are braced with single lines of 5in. by 2.5in. bulb rail. Ascension pipes are 6in. in diameter. The foul main is 8in. in diameter, and is taken round the house and thence along the outside of the back wall. With this arrangement, a condenser is not really necessary, and the plant worked for a long time without one. When the old retort house was pulled down, the existing condenser was moved across to the new house. The retort house is a plain brick building with an asbestos cement sheeted roof and ventilator. In order to provide for future extension, one end wall has been left out and light steel framing and asbestos sheets substituted."

Holding Companies like BGL kept registers of surplus plant and often found it possible to move equipment where it could be reused. Eynsham's purifiers comprised a pair of 6ft. home-made concrete boxes with water lutes.

Quoting further from Parkinson's account:-

"The boxes had cracked and were strapped up as well as possible but were always in imminent danger of collapse. The valves were in very bad condition so that it was not known which way the gas was travelling, but most of it must have been passing along the main between the boxes without going into either. In an endeavour to overcome the trouble, the Manager had to change a box each day. Two 6ft. cast iron boxes with connections were transferred from Aldeburgh, Suffolk, and were installed in their place, and the Manager's has in consequence been allayed ..."

Despite this thorough programme of improvement, the Eynsham works was sold by BGL to the South Midland Gas Corporation Ltd. on 15 June 1934, about the time that D.B.Parkinson delivered, his paper to the Institute of Gas Engineers.

South Midland Gas Corporation was wholly owned by the Oxford Company, which created it to organise the expansion of their business into the rural areas. The board members and chief officials were in common but the accounts were separate, which incidentally avoided any suggestion from the over-critical Oxford City Council that city customers were subsidising this expansion. South Midland came to control the Banbury and Witney gas companies which continued to trade under their own names, but in the case of Eynsham the old company was wound up and the Corporation dealt directly with the gas consumers, an unusual choice.

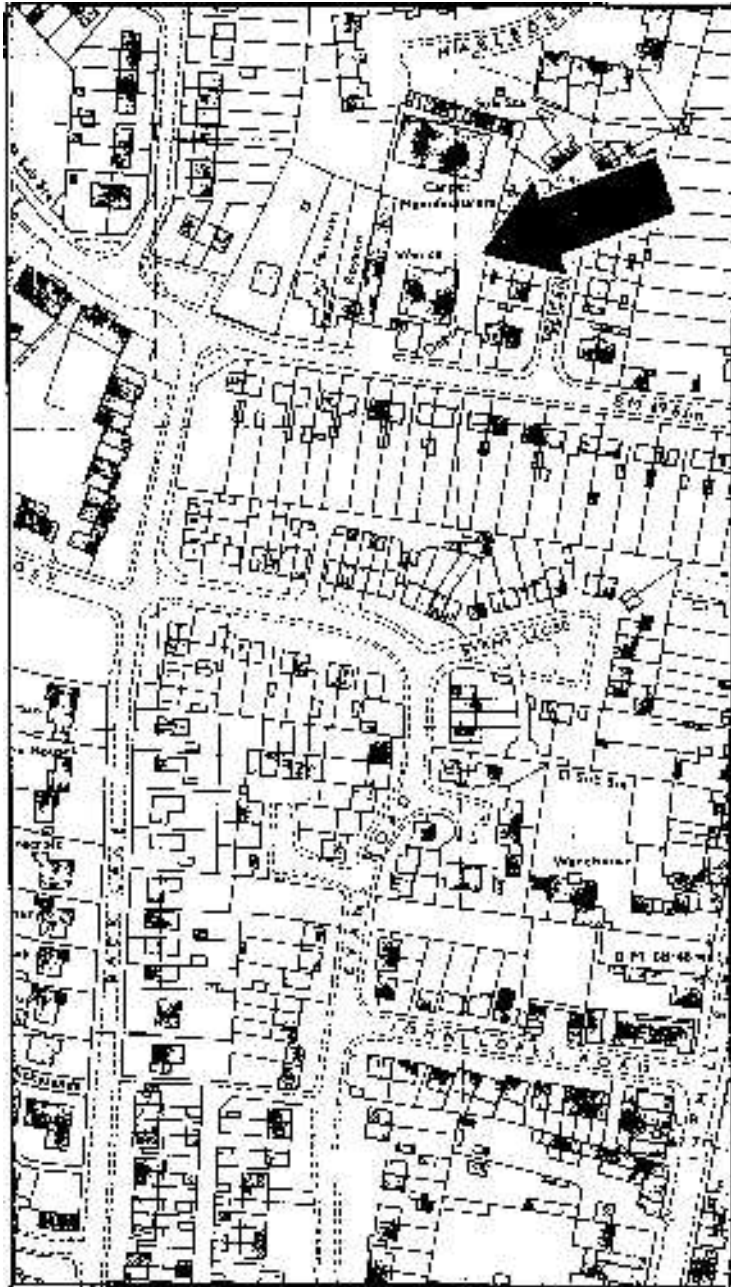


Figure 2. The site in 1969.

Although local management at Banbury continued much as before the take-over, the small size of Eynsham meant that one of the greatest potential savings came from reducing wages and salaries. D.W.Dillamore, the Manager of the Witney Gas & Coke Company, had Eynsham added to his duties, and ran it from 22 High Street, Witney.

Both British Gas Light and South Midland were Holding Companies but they differed in one important respect; British Gas Light was 'non-geographical' but South Midland had a definite area of influence into which it could transmit relatively cheap gas from the large and efficient works of its Oxford owners. As a first step a 4" main was laid from Witney to Eynsham and the Eynsham works closed down. On 20th November 1935 the greater part of the site was let to the Consolidated Rubber Manufacturers of London "together with the use and enjoyment of all the machinery, engines, condensers, plant, fixtures etc." All that South Midland kept was the works cottage facing Spareacre Lane, the newer of the two holders, and a small governor kiosk.

A 1938 directory quotes Eynsham as receiving 4.4 million cubic feet of gas and selling 3.3 million to its 334 customers. By 1940 consumption totalled 4.2 millions of 460 Btu gas per annum. The price charged to credit customers ranged from 7/4d down to 5/4d per thousand, depending on the discount for quantity, with slot customers paying an extra shilling per thousand but still qualifying for discounts. The gas actually received at Eynsham totalled 4.8 millions and, although much of the difference was probably condensation, the new owners were doubtless active in trying to reduce leakage from the distribution system.

During 1947 the volume received at Eynsham reached the surprisingly high total of 18 millions of which 16 were sold. By now the calorific value was 500 Btu and the price had increased to either 7/11d (or 5/9d on a block tariff, a commendably small increase on pre-war charges. Slots were still charged an extra shilling but did qualify for the block reduction.

A new tenant was found for the old works site in 1948. John Bruce (Engineers) Ltd of Eynsham signed a seven-year lease on 20th November. This time it included the cottage, and surprisingly the various items of works plant were again specified as though they were still in place.

References

1. *Witney Gazette*, 29 January 1898.
2. *E.R.* No.11, 1994, p. 17.

MRS PHYLLIS RUSSELL (NÉE BATTS) -HER STORY

by Joan Weedon

'Twelve Acre Farm': The name is an inspirational source for thought, and has an enduring resonance, as though on the edge of the village there exists a land of unexplored history. One small area of the farm has, interestingly, been called 'The Nunnery' for decades, and the last remnant of the long-vanished hamlet of Hamstall also lies on the farmland. Close to the start of the road to the Chilbridge and thence to the farm, a Roman drain was discovered some years ago.

In October 1915, Phyllis was born in a Twelve Acre Farm cottage (Newfield) to the wife of George Batts the shepherd. Phyllis was the youngest of nine children, and her mother was a member of the Russell family whose parents lived in the house which lies at the corner of Witney and Chilbridge Roads. Tragedy struck the family soon after Phyllis's birth when one evening her father returned home feeling ill. He died the next day from an illness which was diagnosed as meningitis. In the midst of a snowstorm Mr Batts was brought from the farm for his funeral on a farm cart.

The farmer, Mr Dean, assured Mrs Batts that she would have a home for life on the farm. However, their cottage was the official domain of the farm shepherd, and so the family was moved to a cottage at The Nunnery. Four of the children were then under the age of twelve, and their mother worked on the farmland by day and in the farmhouse in the evenings. Two of Phyllis's brothers joined the forces and served throughout the First World War. One of the older girls contrived to obtain a certificate allowing her to leave school so that she could work at Hall's shop in Acre End Street, where there was also a coal-yard and a bakery. During this time Phyllis was cared for by her sisters who pushed her in a pram to school with them. She remembers that, later, when she and her sisters walked to school, they pulled swedes to eat on the way cleaning them with an old knife carefully hidden in a hedge.

Opposite the Nunnery cottages there was a large medieval stone barn² in which, during harvest, a horse could be seen constantly walking round the mechanism which kept the grain elevator working. In the same barn Phyllis sometimes worked at a mangle, processing root vegetables for cattle food. There were three cottages at the Nunnery, two at Newfield, two on the farmhouse site, and one at Hamstall. All eight men from the cottages worked on the farm. There were also a

groom and other seasonal workers. On real red-letter days a delighted Phyllis with her sisters were given a lift in the farm trap home from school. The Widows' Pension became available in 1925. Mrs Batts received ten shillings per week plus five shillings for the care of Phyllis until her fourteenth birthday.

One night in December 1927 all the cottagers were awakened by the frantic barking of the farm dogs. The following day mysterious tyre tracks in the frost were discovered along the Oxford-bound railway line. Then came the news that the murderers Browne and Kennedy had robbed the stationmaster's office in Eynsham'.

When Phyllis's younger brother found gardening jobs in the village, Phyllis and her mother left the farm and moved into one of the Crown Crescent cottages in Acre End Street. Phyllis joined the choir and the Girl Guide Company, led by Mrs Owen the vicar's wife, who also held summer fêtes in the vicarage garden. Mrs Owen was greatly admired by all the girls.

Crown Crescent cottages had been owned by the operators of the Crown Brewery which had closed down before 1927 and is now a ruin in the grounds of St Michael's. The site and the main house were bought by the Sheringham family. Phyllis recalls that each year the Sheringhams hosted maypole dancing in their garden by girls from the school. The four Crown Crescent cottages had a common backyard with one water tap. At the eastern end of the yard was a gate in the wall of what had been the public house supplied by the brewery. The beer was trundled across the yard.

The Victorian "Crown Crescent" sign on the house wall fronting Acre End Street survives thanks to Phyllis who rescued it from an ex-inhabitant of No 18 (Dr Lock) who had thought to take the sign with him when he left the village.

Phyllis and her husband still live at 24, Acre End Street, an attractive cottage with a bright, flourishing garden, once part of the old communal yard.

Notes and references

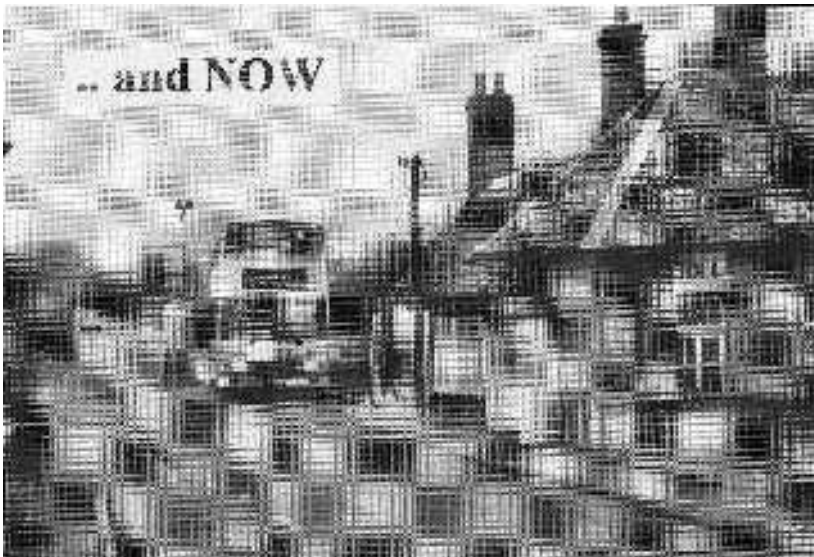
1. The circumstances of George Batts's death were misremembered by Margery Blake in 'From Acre End' by Mollie Harris, p.34.
2. The barn was demolished at the end of the 1960s.
3. For an account see 'Melodrama and Drama at Eynsham Station' by Don Chapman, E.R., no.8, pp.30-36.

Postscript

Since writing the above, the last remnant of the old brewery, the castellated tower, long a landmark from Conduit Lane, has gone. It will be missed.



The Oxford bus approaching Swinford toll bridge c. 1925. At that time control was by means of a gate operated by the toll collector (left). A Frank Packer photograph, courtesy of Oxfordshire County Council Photographic Archive.



The Oxford bus at the bridge at 7.45 a.m. on Sunday 27/02/2000. (Your otherwise intrepid photographer eschewed other times and days to perch here!). The gates have been replaced by a booth, unmanned at this hour, and the bracket lamp on the toll house by elevated floodlights. Otherwise little seems to have changed in 75 years.

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.
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or Fred Bennett, 68 Witney Road tel 01865 880659

EYNSHAM SCHOOL BOARD RACE

Since my last report we had had a large egg race to the front, whilst the outsiders have almost gone to the dogs.

THE SNOB.

I do not like the supporters of this Animal in it ever been desired, otherwise they would not expect water. From it is perfectly natural and no wonder they did not last time know the difficulties of Eynsham Course, which requires a local with a fine constitution. For why being the snob looks, in fact, to be like a young Turk and pony.

FLEECE.

A young old Hogg, but not quite enough to do anything for himself. Rumour says, from this table they were better white goods, and today they have degenerated; but out of this is not good money for the English people.

SHIFTYLOW.

This Animal, I don't think you support it by the truly supporters, who are very fond of having a bit of fun; as in its course of being a place to stand a pony and however, he is used to fill gaps or do as he is told.

HOLY FRIAR.

A very independent Animal, sometimes more, some time will not; his German training has not freed him in English riding.

The latest Betting in the Race is as follows:—

OLD DAD, - - - - -	Even on
KING SUTTON, - - - - -	5 to 1 on
WHAT'S HERE, - - - - -	5 to 1 on
DEANACRE, - - - - -	4 to 1 on
TALKBILL, - - - - -	3 to 1 on
THE FARMER, - - - - -	2 to 1 on
THE SNOB, - - - - -	1,000 to 1 against
SHIFTYLOW, - - - - -	500 to 1 against
FLEECE, - - - - -	50 to 1 against
HOLY FRIAR, - - - - -	600 to 1 against

I should advise you to be careful of the bets you make your bet with in the Eynsham Course, there are a few black legs, we think, that are out for the betting in the running of several of the horses the Snob, Fleece, Shiftylow, and perhaps others. I strongly advise the supporters of anyone attending the race from being sold, without a really serious bet.

TAX-PAYER.

AN EYNESHAM FARMER

**by Emily Beach and Jessica Scott, members of the Junior History Group,
and Pamela Richards**

One evening in late spring 1999, we went to see Mr Leslie Malin at Evenlode Farm where he now lives. He told us, during the interview, that he has been living on the farm for 50 years, since he came out of the RAF. In 1960 he was the first tenant farmer to move into Evenlode Farm. The building was started in 1959 on land which belonged to Oxfordshire County Council and which he was already farming.

Mr Malin explained some of his ideas about today's farming. He thought farming was a wonderful way of life. "What you sow you reap, so to speak. If you make mistakes then you have to pay for them and it's always a challenge."

Farming is changing, although Mr Malin had no idea what would happen to it in the future. At one time people would buy produce direct from the farmers but this is not the general custom now. There seems to be a very big gap between the farmer and the customer. A farmer will now sell a fat lamb for £25 but when you go shopping at a supermarket it will cost you the equivalent of £100.

Farm machinery has changed a great deal in Mr Malin's time at the farm. He told us about an old machine he still called a mangle grinder which chewed up all kinds of vegetables for animal feed, but today all he has to do is 'phone a supplier for some feed. Haymaking used to be done with a horse and cart and an elevator. You had to build a rick and then thatch it. Now you use a mower and a tethered turner and a baler and it is just baled up and put in the shed. Farming has changed in other ways since Mr Malin's younger days. He said that when he was a lad crops were rotated.

If you planted wheat in the fields one year, you didn't do that the next year. Instead you probably put in potatoes, grass seed, turnips, swedes, or mangles and then back to corn the next year. Today it's a matter of what pays best. You plough the field up and if wheat is doing well you put in wheat, fertilise it, spray it, and then the next year and the next year as long as it does well. It is a matter of supply and demand. There have been many changes in his farming life and not always for the best.

Mr Malin told us that in his younger days he lived with his parents at what he called 'Old Farm' which was right in the middle of Eynsham on the corner of Abbey Street and Swan Street, opposite Pimms the builders, and not far from the church. In those days there were eleven farms in the village as well as eleven public houses and a population of about 1100. All the farmers used to milk a few cows and they all used to start off from their shed and go in different directions all around the village. It was absolute chaos, but as there was very little traffic it really didn't matter. (It would be funny to try to do it in the year 2000 with all the double decker buses going through the village.)

Mr Malin told us about the date stone on the building and a little secret about the farm. When some buildings were flattened and the builders moved in there was a huge stone slab and it was thought to be a drain. However, Mr Malin thought he would investigate. He got a torch and had a look, finding some steps going down and a tunnel going away towards Abbey Farm. He thought it was possibly something to do with Eynsham Abbey. Sadly this cannot be explored as the builders filled it in.

When we asked him why he liked farming, he said that it was a very satisfying way of life, working with the animals and being out in the fresh air.

Postscript

The building that Mr Malin refers to as 'Old Farm', on the corner of Abbey Street and Swan Street, was until recently named 'Abbey Stones'. It was drawn by J.Buckler in 1826, and illustrated in a previous 'Then & Now' ¹. A stone on the front of the building bears the date 1561 and the initials 'TP' (Fig.1). The Victoria County History' suggests that the stone was probably reused but was in its present position by the early 19th century. I would hazard an opinion that it was associated with the property a good while before that.

Among the previous owners of property on the site was a Henry Eglestone in 1650 (variously spelled), who was leasing 'the 24th house and homestall in Mill Street' (see Brian Atkins's reconstruction of Whiting's 1650 survey³ and the VCH²). Henry Eglestone was the son-in-law of Thomas Perkins (the Elder) of Eynsham and a substantial beneficiary of the latter's will'. Thomas Perkins died in 1582, and it seems to me reasonable to suppose an identification with the 'TP' on the date stone. Granted the family's connection with buildings on the site, even though it may be difficult to determine when the date stone was placed where it now is, the identification with Thomas Perkins seems very attractive. I would like

to think that that Henry benefitted not only from Thomas's 'best blacke cott and .. best doublett', but also from a piece of masonry.

References

1.*E.R.* no.15, pp.20-21

2.*V.C.H.Oxon*, vol.12 p.113a

3.*E.R.* no.6, pp.40-50

4.Oxon. Archives, 50/1/20 186.210

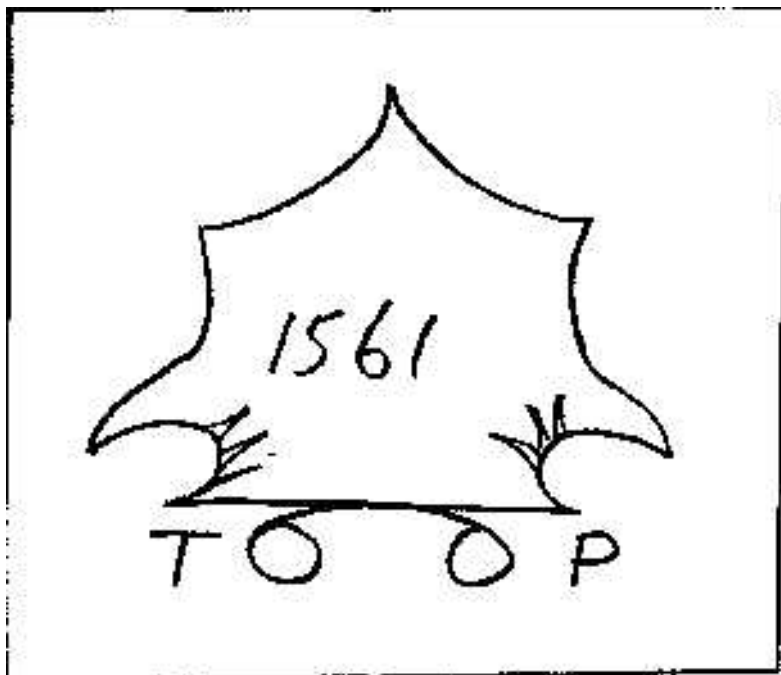


Figure 1. Date stone set in the front wall of No.2 Abbey Street.

PARSON WOODFORDE AT EYNSHAM by Lilian Wright

The first volume of Parson Woodforde's diary was published in 1924 since when it has fascinated readers with a portrait of the daily lives of villagers in the latter half of the 18th century.

James Woodforde was born at Ansford, Somerset in 1740 where his father was Rector. From Winchester College he was elected a scholar of New College, Oxford in 1759, gaining his BA degree in 1763. He became curate of Thurloxton, Somerset in the same year and also had a junior fellowship at New College which gave him the opportunity for frequent visits to Oxford. He took up residence again at the college in 1773 and became Sub-Warden (the Warden being the Head of New College). His duties included supervising the kitchen and cellar, which admirably suited his interests in food and wine. In 1776 he finally left Oxford to go to the College living of Weston Longville in Norfolk.

Extracts from the Diary'.

As an undergraduate he made a half day excursion with a friend to Witney, via Hanborough, returning via 'Ensum'ferry on 14 July 1762.

'Took a Ride this afternoon upon my grey Horse with Dyer, to Witney where we spent part of the afternoon. We put up at Staple-Hall at Witney, and for my Horse and for myself at Witney 0.2.0.

For 1 Turnpike and for 2 Horses I paid 0.0.2. Dyer paid for another between Oxford and Witney, at Hanborough or just by there for 2 Horses 0.0.4. For a Turnpike and for 2 Horses, coming to Oxford, as we came a different way I paid 0.0.2. At Ensun Ferry for 2 Horses I paid 0.0.2. For 2 pints of Ale at Ensum I paid for one Pint 0.0.2. We came home a little after nine o'clock this evening, and
(I thank God) safe and well.'

As the recently installed curate of Thurloxton in Somerset and junior fellow of New College, he visited the college via 'Enson' ferry on 25 January 1764.

'From Witney went with Whitmore over Enson Ferry which is 10 miles. Caldecot and Evans went in a Post-Chaise from Witney to Oxon all the Coach Road. At Enson Ferry at Old Winters² for strong Beer etc. I paid there 0.1.6. We got to Oxford about 8 o'clock this evening - And the first thing I heard was that Hayward would certainly be the Warden of this College.'

The ferry was superceded by the Swinford bridge in 1769, although the road from Oxford, still over Wytham Hill, remained steep and difficult, and was a haunt of highwaymen. As Sub-Warden of New College he recorded a journey of 31 January 1774.

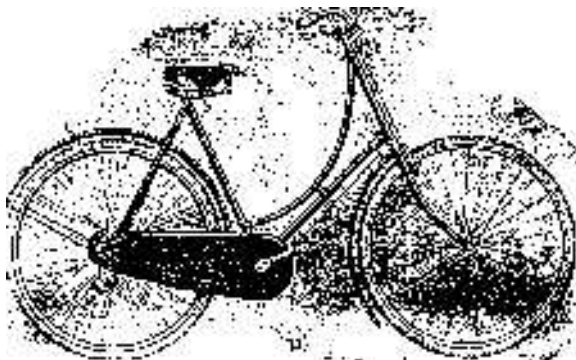
'I got up this morning at half past six in order to go in the Machine' to Bath. The Porter's man called me at six, for which and carrying my Portmanteau to the Cross Inn⁴ I gave him 0.1.0. To Frank Payne's Boy this morning gave 0.6. I went to the Cross Inn a little after seven and the Machine was gone, however I took a Post-Chaise immediately from the Cross Inn and overtook the Machine at Enson about 5 miles from Oxon, and there got into it. For the Post-Chaise paid 0.4.0., gave the driver 0.1.0. There was one Passenger in it a Gentleman of Exeter College, we stopped and breakfasted at Witney at the Bridge, and then I left the Gentleman as he came there only to meet some Company:5

Sources and Notes

The Diary extracts are direct quotes; the capital letters and punctuation are as printed in:

1. Woodforde at Oxford 1759-1776. Ed. by W.N.Hargreaves-Mawdesley. Clarendon Press, Oxford, for Oxford Historical Society, 1969.
2. There are many entries in the 18th century Eynsham Parish Registers bearing the surname 'Winter'. Of these, the most likely candidate for "Old Winters" is William Winter, married to Elizabeth, one of whose children was baptised in 1724, and who would therefore have been 'old' in the eyes of the 24 year-old Woodforde. A William Winter was buried in 1765, and another with the same name in 1767.
3. The Machine' was the scheduled long-distance coach. The post-chaise was the equivalent of a taxi which enabled Woodforde to catch up with it.
4. Later called The Golden Cross' in Cornmarket, Oxford's coaching station.
5. For an account of his whole journey to Bath see:
6. James Woodforde. The Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802. Ed. by John Beresford, OUP, 1935.

That ale was being sold near the ferry in 1764, may be relevant to the early history of The Talbot' ('Horse & Jockey?'), but that is a complex story I hope to publish here in the future [Ed].



SECOND-HAND MACHINES.

Gent's Rudge Whitworth, 23in., frame, free wheel	3 0 0
Gent's Humber. 26in., frame, 1 brake, free wheel	2 5 0
Ladies' Rudge Whitworth, 22in., frame 1 brake free wheel	2 10 0
Ladies' Mahdi, 20in., frame, 1 brake, free wheel	2 0 0
Boy' Little England, 18in., frame 1 brake, free wheel	2 0 0
Lady's Oxonian, 21in., frame, fixed wheel	1 5 0
Lady's Raleigh, 21in., frame, fixed wheel	1 5 0
Girl's New Hudson, 19in., frame, fixed wheel	1 15 0
Girl's Bicycle, 18in., frame, fixed wheel	1 5 0
Youth's Bicycle. 19in.. frame, fixed wheel	1 10 0

All complete with Accessories.

The New Machines will carry the usual 12 months guarantee.

The Reduced Prices are for nett CASH only. No Booking.

NOTE THE DATE OF SALE :

Friday, Aug. 10th, to Saturday, Aug. 25th.

EYNSHAM STORES.

Bicycles on sale in Eynsham in 1906, nine years after the events recounted by Don Chapman in the following pages.

Sundry reminiscences of Eynsham in the 1940s by Jean Buttrick.

Milk would be delivered by Mr Bill Banting, the local farmer, who would have a large milk churn on the handlebars of his bicycle. He would come to our cottage door and we would take the milk jug to him and he would measure the amount of milk we wanted. Mr Banting had two farms, one in Newland Street and another in Mill Street.

Sometimes we would get a tramp knocking at the door asking for a drop of tea, and my mother would fill up his little can and he would thank her and go on his way. My sister and I were frightened of him although there was no need as he was just a harmless old tramp who slept under haystack and hedges.

We used to eat a lot of rabbit which was made into a pie or stew for dinner. My father kept greyhounds to catch the rabbits which had to be skinned and gutted. We kept the skins for Mr Bridges, the rag-and-bone man, who used to ride a bicycle, with bags tied to the handles to put the skins in.

Mr Hunt, down the Oxford Road, ran the nursery business and always had a good variety of bedding plants. He made wreaths for funerals and for Christmas when his place was full of holly wreaths and masses of red berries.

People would sit on their doorsteps in the summer and watch everyone who walked by and to get a bit of news. I remember a Mrs Ansey, in Mill Street, who used to sit on her doorstep wearing a man's cap.

Because of the coal fires we had to have a sweep to clean the soot from the chimneys. The village sweep was Mr George Pratley who used to go round the village with his brushes under his arms. He would go into the cottages and put a sack over the grate to stop the soot falling into the room. Some people would put the sack of soot on their gardens as they said it was good for them. Children loved to watch the sweep's brush as it appeared out of the chimney top. Mr Pratley also sold watercress which he got from the ditches along Cassington Road. It was lovely.

KNICKERS, EYNESHAM, AND WOMEN'S LIB

by Don Chapman

Those Eynsham residents who were not in church on the morning of Sunday 5 September 1897 may have witnessed a small but telling demonstration of Women's Lib. Battling against the wind and the rain across Swinford Toll Bridge came four cyclists from Oxford.

As they passed through the village I like to think that the more radically-minded spectators gave them a cheer. Then as now Eynsham was a hot-bed of Liberalism. Then as now there were the less enlightened elements and they may have booed. Some of them may even have averted their gaze. Not only were the quartet cycling on the Sabbath. The three lady cyclists, the brazen hussies, were wearing knickers!

An American lady, Mrs Amelia Bloomer, is usually credited with the invention of the short dress and trousers - or bloomers - for women in 1851. But, as she frequently pointed out, the fashion she championed was only an up-market version of the attire North American Indian women had been wearing since the year dot.

It was not until the 1890s that it took off in England, when newspapers became full of stories of the unspeakable injuries ladies had done themselves by catching their skirts in their bicycles, and the unspeakable outrages other ladies had committed by appearing publicly in knickerbockers.

I have to thank an *Oxford Mail* reader for my interest in 'Rational Dress', to give it the name its advocates preferred. He was going through the papers of his grandfather, the late Sydney Savory Buckman, when he came across a bundle of press-cuttings, letters and pamphlets relating to an aspect of the geologist's career he knew nothing about

Sydney Buckman made long forays into the Cotswolds from his home in Cheltenham to pursue his fieldwork and found the then recent advance in personal transport, the bicycle, a convenient means of getting about. He encouraged his wife and four daughters to take up cycling too. Hence his embroilment in the argument about what and what not it was fitting for a lady to wear when she was riding a bike.

Mrs Buckman was the first captain of the Western Rational Dress Club founded at Cheltenham in February 1897. Its brochure stated: "The disadvantages of the skirt for any outdoor exercise are obvious. Even by holding it up, which is a

fatigue, the wearer cannot prevent it from becoming wet and draggled with mud ... None of these disadvantages belongs to the new style of costume, which is to be commended from the point of view of health, safety and comfort."

The public in general did not share this point of view. Nonetheless, the ladies refused to be daunted and in the autumn of 1897 seven cycling clubs banded together for what the popular press would no doubt christen a 'knicker demo' today! To prove the advantages of 'bifurcated', i.e. twin-forked, attire compared with skirts they resolved to ride from London to Oxford on 4 September 1897 - a commendable endeavour but, unfortunately, dogged with trouble from the start.

The *Daily Mail* reporter, who joined them, recorded ²: "The meeting at Hyde Park Corner at ten on Saturday morning was a fiasco. It was too conspicuous a place of assembly ...A street crowd of alarming proportions assembled intent upon getting as much entertainment as possible out of the occasion... The ladies did not care to face the ridicule which awaited them."

Only a handful in knickerbockers set off supported by a few friends in skirts and as they were pedalling away a wag called out: "You're out in yer husband's things again are yer, while he's at home minding the baby?"

At Kew Bridge there had been a better turn-out and, reinforced by these recruits, some of the ladies who had ridden from Hyde Park in skirts rolled them into bundles and rode on in the true rational attire. A feature of rational dress was the detachable skirt which could be worn over knickerbockers when not riding.

They could not have picked a worse day for their journey. According to the *Daily Mail*: "The strong and cold North-West wind which was blowing proved a merciless opponent to rapid progress, while the periodical showers of rain which were encountered were depressing to the enthusiasm of the keenest." According to Sydney Buckman³: "No skirts could have lived in such a gale."

Reports of the journey are somewhat confused. *The Oxford Times*⁴ said no more than a dozen of the forty to fifty cyclists who set off from London in two contingents, one at 10 a.m., one at 1 p.m., crossed Magdalen Bridge, while Mr Buckman himself maintained most of them made it, though interestingly he said the second contingent arrived before the first. What is certain is that the organisers of the great knicker demo had to postpone the celebration dinner by half-an-hour from 8.30 p.m. to 9 p.m. "By that time, however," he claimed "nearly all the riders had arrived and a party of 51 sat down at the Clarendon Hotel" - where the Clarendon Centre is now in Cornmarket Street.

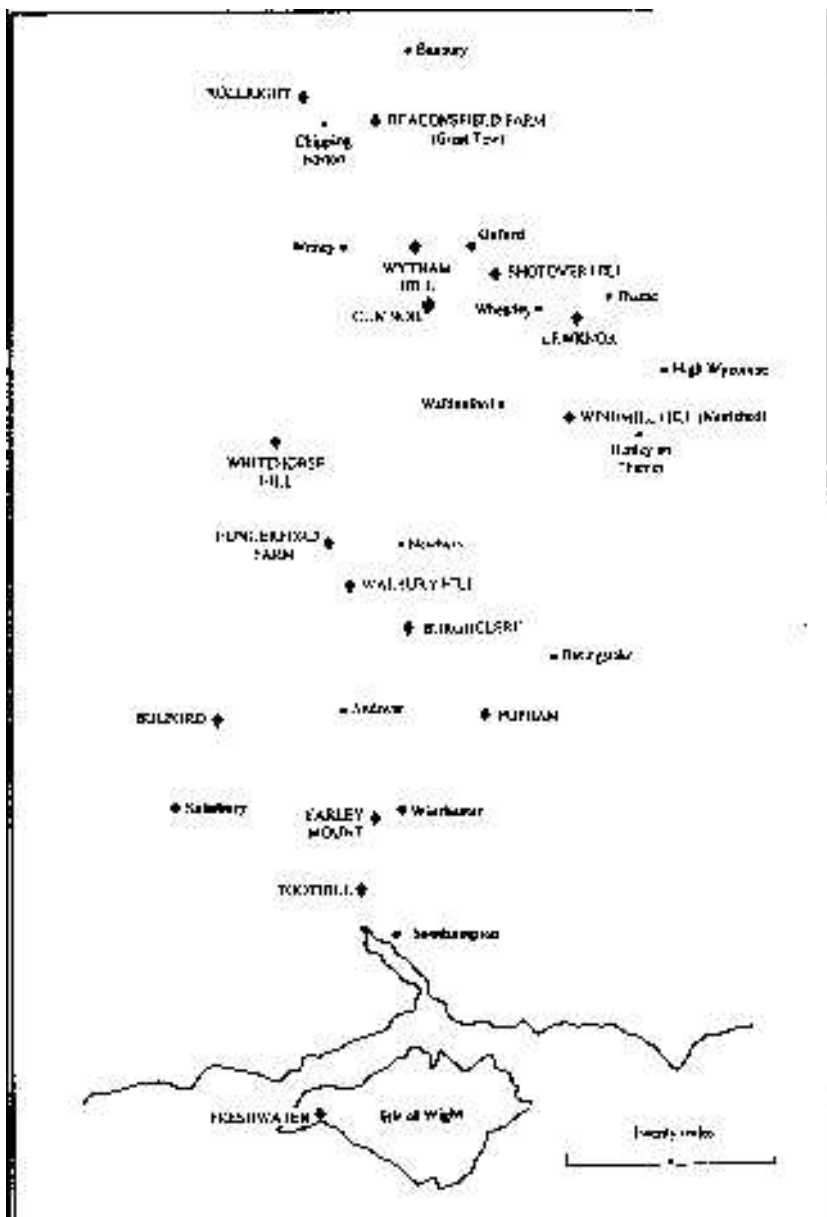
Next morning even those who had arrived in the small hours were up for breakfast by nine. Then, since the rain did not favour the proposed rally and church parade, they held the advertised competition for the three ladies wearing the most approved costumes, and went home ⁵. Some intrepid rationalists rode back to London, some waited in hopes the rain would stop, and some fainter hearts made tracks for the railway station.

Mr Buckman, his wife and two other lady cyclists set off for Cheltenham, in due course passing through Eynsham, where doubtless they inspired a fierce debate among those Victorian residents of the village who saw them about the pros and cons of knickers. So bad was the wind and the rain that two of the ladies barely reached Witney where they thankfully took shelter. "The other lady and her husband pushed on", wrote Mr Buckman, modestly referring to himself and his wife in the third person. "Over the Burford Downs where there is not a bit of shelter they had a very hard struggle. The wind had increased to a gale and the greasy oolite road made riding very dangerous ... They were thankful indeed to the Gloucestershire County Council when they got upon the bluestone road at Barrington at the border of the county."

They and the other champions of rational dress may have thought they had common sense on their side. As many reformers have found to their cost, it was not enough to sway public opinion. The *Oxford Times* probably echoed the sentiments of most of its readers when it commented: "From the earliest times civilised women have been robed, not knickerbockered. Men have grown up to know, love and esteem women in skirts. There are few men, we think, who would like to see their mothers or sisters without a skirt of some kind, though they might not feel the same compunction in regard to some other fellow's sister, provided she was young, good-looking and of a good figure ... A woman in wings would be less incongruous than an angel in knickers."

Sources and references

1. As recorded in a series of articles I wrote for the *Oxford Mail's* Anthony Wood Column in March 1971.
2. *Daily Mail* 6 September 1897.
3. Reporting the ride in his local newspaper, *The Cheltenham Examiner*.
4. *Oxford Times* 11 September 1897.
5. see the Front Cover illustration.



The probable beacon chain from the Isle of Wight to Oxfordshire. Beacons are shown in capitals. Modified, by the addition of Cumnor, from Beauchamp's compilation (see text).

BEACON HILL

by Brian Atkins

On the night of 8 May 1995, the 50th anniversary of VE day, Eynsham celebrated the occasion with a large bonfire and fireworks on the playing fields north of the Oxford Road. At the same time a fire burnt on the outlier of Wytham Hill overlooking Eynsham known as Beacon Hill.

Many years ago, in the course of a talk, the late Hugh Cooper, founding father of the Eynsham History Group and its first President, proposed a new interpretation of Eynsham's first appearance in documented history. This occurs in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, where after a battle at *Biedcanford*, Eynsham (*Egonesham*) is mentioned as one of four towns which fell to Cutha from the Britons in (allegedly) 571. Most authorities interpret *Biedcanford* as Bedford, but Cooper made the startling suggestion that the battle occurred at 'Beaconford' (in effect the place with a beacon overlooking a ford); and that Egonesham was a misspelling of something like Ignesham, a name which with variant spellings, but all commencing 'Ig...' indeed occurs in the late 10th century.

'Ignis' is Latin for fire: a beacon (O.E. *beacn*) was a fire: ...etc. went the ingenious argument. Intriguing though this suggestion was, it is a mish-mash of etymological and chronological interpretations which, taken together, can't be correct.

We seem to be on somewhat surer ground, historically, with a reference in the Abingdon Chronicle of 779 when Offa of Mercia, after defeating Cynewulf Wessex built a *castellum super montem Witham*, i.e. a fortress on Wytham Hill, its purpose being to protect the Swinford crossing, the first fordable place on the Thames up stream from Oxford. What we now call Beacon Hill is clearly indicated, a place of considerable strategic importance in those turbulent times.

But whence and why the name? In 1545 the mustered men of Oxfordshire (see p.37) were summoned to arms by a chain of beacons stretching northwards from the Channel. The accompanying map by Peter C. Beauchamp ¹ is a compilation from several sources of the probable beacon chain to Oxfordshire. If, by Wytham Hill (highest point 164m) we read Beacon Hill (133m), there is no line of sight to Shotover Hill, the shoulder of Wytham Hill intervening. However, in the text accompanying the map, it is stated that there was a beacon at Cumnor (not mapped since it was outside the then Oxfordshire county boundary.) There are clear lines of sight from Shotover to Cumnor (of which Hurst Hill, 159m is the highest point) and thence to Beacon Hill and points north.

The call-out in 1545 was one of many false alarms caused by incorrect identifications of ships in the Channel, bonfires, hoaxers and vandals, etc.; and the system was always reliant on good weather, and continuous manning during the summer months ².

Reference

1. Peter C. Beauchamp [Ed.] The Oxfordshire Muster Rolls. Oxfordshire Record Society. Vol.60. 1996, p.xxxvii.
2. *op.cit.* p.xxxvi.

My thanks to Jean Buttrick for drawing attention to this reference.

Wash Day: by Jean Buttrick

We had a wash house at the bottom of our garden in which was a galvanised copper, built in with stone, with a fire underneath. My mother would light it every Monday morning to do the washing. She would use a 'blue bag' to help whiten the washing and have an enamel bowl with 'Robin' starch in, to starch the table cloths. Everyone knew it was wash day because you could smell the washing and smoke from the coppers all over the village. Sometimes there would be little black bits from the fires floating about the village. The washing would then be put through the mangle, put out to dry and then hung in the kitchen to be aired on a clothes line which spread from one wall to another, after which it was folded up and put away. The copper was also used by my mother to cook her Christmas puddings in, and the smell from that was lovely. We would have one at Christmas, another at Easter, and one in March on my father's birthday.

EYNESHAM'S MUSTER ROLL OF 1542

by **Brian Atkins**

Eynsham Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII at the end of 1538, the same year in which the King had been excommunicated by Pope Paul IV. The Pope was also urging Roman Catholic heads in Europe, notably Emperor Charles V and Francis I of France, to depose Henry. This was sufficient cause for Henry, advised by his Privy Council, to order a series of musters for the southern English counties.¹

The musters were lists of able-bodied men (between the ages of 16 and 60) who could be 'enlisted' and called to arms when the need arose. They were selected ultimately by the Commissioners of Array, based on details provided by their deputies and county and parish officials.

It seems that the definition of the phrase 'able-bodied' was left to the subjective judgement of those drawing up the lists. What is clear is that the fittest and tallest were assigned as archers, provided they had already had at least notionally practised with the longbow on holy days, as required by a Statute of 1512. It has been estimated from the remains of the archers aboard the Mary Rose which sank in 1545 that their average height was 6 feet. Hardy² says that 'few today could pull great longbows even once'. Let alone repeatedly in battle, by implication.

The twelve Eynsham archers listed were as follows:

William Hungreford; Thomas Shuer; Mathewe Smyth; John Dykynson; Richard Kyngeston; William Barber; Walder Cole; William Tomekyns; John Roton; John Crostaker; John Carpenter; and William House.

Billmen were lesser mortals it seems, those deemed not to qualify as archers, on account of their perceived lack of fitness, height, or training, but still potentially capable of combat duties.

The bill was a long handled pike or spear which could have an additional hook or spike designed to drag a man off his horse. Sometimes the reverse side of the hook incorporated a concave blade, enabling a billmen to chop off the end of his opponent's pike.

There were eighteen Eynsham billmen listed.

Thomas Blakeman; William Amy; William Le Vondon; William Williams; John Loughgrove; John Daynson; Thomas Colyer; Richard Colter; M[aster] Pynnocke; Richard Elmys; Walter Clerke; Thomas Smerte; William Rowe; Thomas Crosse; Edward Newey; Richard Shepard; John Askewell; and John Cox..

THE GAMES WE PLAYED IN EYNESHAM

by Daisy Ainsley Grabsky

With the advent of television and computer games you no longer see children playing the games we used to play. In some ways we were perhaps more fortunate than today's children. The games we played were mostly in the school playground but after school we continued them on the roads and pavements. The roads were much quieter with very little traffic. Also we could roam the fields without our parents worrying about us.

It seems to me that many of today's children's games are solitary ones. Some of the games we played were regional, perhaps just pertaining to Oxfordshire. Supposedly in other parts of the country different rhymes could have been sung and the actions could have been different. We had much less money available to us so we had to engage in our favourite games. Do you remember them or others? These are the ones I remember.

Skipping was played throughout the year round. There was single skipping and group skipping. There is evidence that skipping goes back to Roman times when the rope was made of vine strands. For single skipping we used a rope with a handle at each end. For group skipping we used a long length of rope without handles.

In single skipping the child who passed the rope over the head the most times without interruption was the winner. we varies the skipping by crossing our arms or passing the rope over the head twice in each skip or skipping with another person. With group skipping a child each held an end of the rope. The rest lined and then one at a time jumped the rope. We sang a rhyme as we did this. One I remember was, "Red currant, black currant, raspberry jam, tell me the name of your young man; a, b, c, d, ..." Through the alphabet we would go until the skipper hit the rope. The last letter called was then presumed to be the initial of one's sweetheart. When the skipper was eliminated in his way, she ran out of the rope and another ran in immediately. these skiping games sewed to be played more by girls than by boys.

On the first days of spring out would come the **hoops and tops**.

The **Hoop** was a circular band of wood or metal. The hoop was used as a plaything in the Roman era and came to Britain with them. They were probably those rings discarded when a wine-keg or beer barrel was unbound. One used either hands or small sticks to bowl the hoop along. We used wooden hoops with

a smooth finish. The making of these seems to have ended in the Second World War due to a shortage of skilled craftsmen to make them. Another use for the hoop was to place it over your waist and see how many times you could spin it around your body.

Tops are thought to have come from China. They were made of wood and in the shape of mushrooms or pears or even carrots with a nail in the pointed end. We decorated the tops of our tops with different coloured chalks, so that as they spun they showed a kaleidoscope of pretty patterns. With the top one had a whip, usually a piece of string on a stick. The string was wrapped around the grooves of the top. There was a skill in setting up the top. It had to be steadied upright so that with a flick of the wrist the string would be torn away spinning it rapidly. As it spun it emitted a hum. If done correctly the top would spin so quickly that it appeared motionless. This was known as 'going to sleep' (whence the expression "sleeping like a top"). Skilful whipping with the string would maintain the spin for quite a while. Sooner or later the top fell over and was then declared as 'dead'.

Kites were usually brought out with the March winds. Kites are still popular today, but the difference between then and now is that we made our own from balsa wood and tissue paper. They were nothing like the elaborate ones you can see today which are usually bought from the shops.

Marbles

It is written that the Emperor Augustine enjoyed playing marbles with the children. They probably used small rounded pebbles. Each player would have the same number to begin with. One player would scatter his marbles on the ground, and then in turn the other players would roll theirs trying to hit one of the scattered ones. If successful it would become theirs. The marbles we used were beautiful multicoloured ones.

Flickers

This game was played with cigarette cards. One player would scatter a number of cards and the others would in turn flick one of their cards. If it landed partially on one of the scattered cards, that card became theirs.

The Farmer in the Dell

We formed a circle with a boy in the middle and sang "The farmer's in the dell, the farmer's in the dell, Eeoh, eeoh, the farmer's in the dell". Then we sang "The farmer wants a wife, the farmer wants a wife, Eeoh, eeoh, the farmer wants a wife". Then the 'farmer' would chose a girl and take her into the middle of the

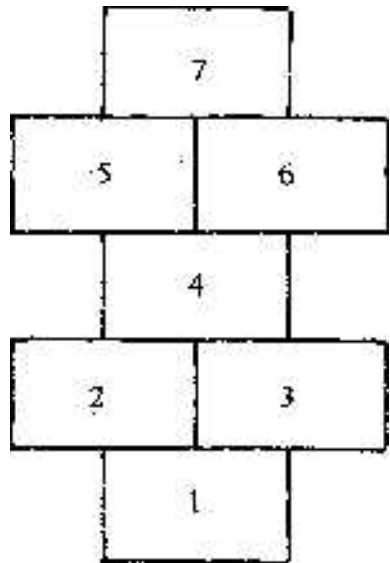
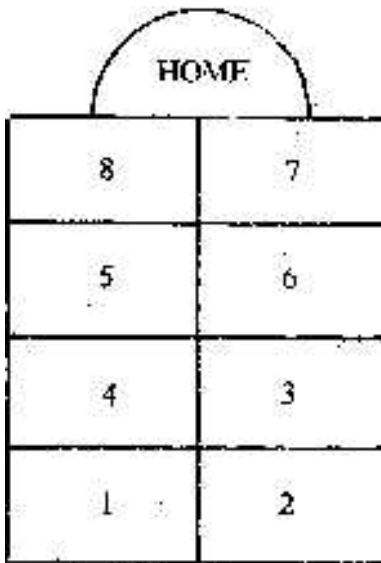
circle. Then we sang "The wife wants a child, the wife wants a child" whereupon the 'wife' would choose someone for the child.

Then "The child wants a nurse, ." Then "The nurse wants a dog, ..."

Then " The dog wants a bone, ..."

All this while the children on the outside and the children on the inside hold hands and dance round in opposite directions as they sang. Finally we sang "we all pat the dog, we all pat the dog ..." which we all did, and this concluded the game.

Hopscotch is thought to have been invented by North American Indians. We would play it when we hoped the weather would stay dry, as we had to 'scotch' or trace a pattern on the ground with chalk, and we did not want it to be washed away. There were two ways to play the game. In the first the player tosses a pebble into one square and then hops on one foot through the other squares to get to the object and then kicks the pebble before him back back to where he started. At no time must the pebble or player's foot touch a line, otherwise he's 'out'. The second way is to start at square one and drive a flat stone forward with one's foot into each square whilst hopping. Again neither stone nor foot must touch a line. This game was even enjoyed by boys! My mother tried to discourage her children from playing this game as it wore our shoes too quickly. Below are the two patterns scotched on the ground.



EYNESHAM 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 in the summer.

New members are welcome.

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