

A HISTORY OF

THE PARISH

OF

SHINFIELD

BERKSHIRE



For a contented life in the country, one must have "an almost exhaustive biographical and historical acquaintance with every object, animate and inanimate, within the observer's horizon. He must know all about those invisible ones of the days gone by, whose feet have traversed the fields, which look so grey from the windows; recall whose creaking plough has turned those sods from time to time; whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill; whose horses and hounds have torn through that underwood; what birds affect that particular underbrake; what bygone domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, and disappointment have been enacted in the cottages, the mansions, the street, or on the green. The spot may have beauty..... but if it lacks memories it will ultimately pall upon him who settles there."

Thomas Hardy: The Woodlanders: 1885

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FOREWORD

This history will fulfil Thomas Hardy's dictum most inadequately, but I hope that it will be a preparation for someone else, who has more time, to make a fuller study of the fields, plantations, cottages, and mansions.

The parish of Shinfield is bounded by that of Earley in the east, the River Loddon to the south, and it used to extend roughly to the Reading-Basingstoke railway to the west. It once reached in the north almost to what is now the top of Southampton Street, Reading.

The eastern part of the parish was in the Hundred of Charlton in 1843, and the western part was in the Hundred of Amesbury (Snare). Interesting details of boundaries and ownership of land could probably be found in deeds and documents.

Shinfield village might be said once to have been at Three Mile Cross. That part was in fact called "Our Village" by Mary Russell Mitford in 1820-40. We are lucky in having so minute a description of the district at that time, as that given by Miss Mitford. I have not included extracts from her articles, as her books can be read. She, not I, is indeed the person that has most adequately given us Thomas Hardy's dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, and disappointment.

Shinfield in 1843 is mentioned by J. G. Robertson in his "Tours of Berkshire" published by John Snare, and I have included all of this that is of interest.

About 1900 Lady Russell wrote "Swallowfield and its Owners", and I have included parts of interest from this book.

In 1923 Miss M. S. Williams wrote a history of the district. It is now in the Reading Library. It consists of notes and cuttings not typed out. I have included everything of interest but have omitted the details of the history of 13th to 15th century families, which form a large part of the work.

Extracts from some articles in the Reading Mercury are included with the kind permission of that excellent newspaper.

The Berkshire Archeological Society published articles from 1920-35, many by Miss Williams, which are of great interest, and these have been included. We are indebted to this Society for printing this information.

I have not seen the Victoria County History, nor the parish records in Reading Library.

Mr. Roydon Freeman, the well known writer of sea stories, wrote articles of interest about Shinfield, most of which was published in the Parish Magazine. His sister, Miss Freeman of Cutbush House, Cutbush Lane, kindly gave me all that she had, including the tracing of a map of the district in 1756, and some photographs, and I have included all except the map and the photographs. This map hangs in the Directors room at the N.I.R.D.

Mrs. Reginald Palmer of the Grove, Hurst, whose maiden name was Cobham, lived at Shinfield Manor as a girl, and she has kindly given me information that I have included. She has an interesting account of the proceedings of *Martyr v Craig* at the Reading Assizes, 1812.

I have not had time to visit many houses, nor to check many of my statements. Much interesting information could probably be obtained from deeds, etc., but unless I get something out now, my history will never be finished.

Do not let us make the mistake of thinking that those who lived here before us were hopelessly intimidated and tyrannical. Each acted as he thought right, and a great deal of good has been passed on to us. Each contributed and played his part in moulding our countryside, which today is the result of much thought and work by many individuals in the past. Let us be up to date and take advantage of the good points of modern inventions. But let us also defend the heritage of our countryside, and live in the Christian spirit of friendship the one with another in this parish that is truly now

"OUR VILLAGE"

Old Vicarage, Shinfield
March, 1961.

Douglas Doble,
Commander R.N. (Ret'd)

Before the Romans

The land of our parish was probably covered in trees, but not so thickly as in some parts of England, for we are at the western edge of Windsor Forest. A forest is a piece of clear ground, and Windsor Forest was probably so called because it contained much ground that had only a few trees on it. Chobham Common, Sunningdale and Mortimer Common are now this sort of country. Thus it was suitable for hunting deer, as is now done on Exmoor, which is also clear ground.

The land was gradually cleared for agriculture and fields were formed - fields meaning newly broken ground.

Pre Roman remains from South Reading - once Shinfield

(B.A.S. 1932, Vol.36, p.121)

The remains of what may have been a Disc Barrow were found in 1907 at Marshalls Hill, Cressingham Road, Reading, once in the parish of Shinfield. It contained a Bronze Age burial urn. Nearby was part of a Romano-British cinerary urn, and Iron age pottery of the 6th century B.C. Opposite Wyngates was a bronze spear head. The site is an excellent one, for it is on Plateau Gravel with a southwestern slope and a fine view.

A Bronze knife was found at Northcourt Avenue nearby.

In the garden of the Laurels, Clares Green Road, Spencers Wood, Shinfield a flint implement was found in 1936 of the Thomas Pick type, and is now in the Reading Museum. BAS 1937 Vol. 41, p.38.

Roman Times

When the Romans arrived, they made a great road straight from London to the heart of the country of the Atrebatas. A new road today, but of course under very different conditions, the South Wales Motor Road, is about to be driven similarly through the very heart of our parish.

The Roman road was just to the south of Shinfield. It passed through Staines, Finchampstead and crossed the River Blackwater at the ford between Swallowfield and Bramshill, just before the river flows into the Loddon, and so to Silchester, which was then called Calleva Atrebatum, the City of the Forest of the Atrebatas.

The ford over the Blackwater can still be seen on a pleasant walk just to the south of Swallowfield. We can also enjoy a beautiful bicycle ride to Silchester to see the remains of the great City of Calleva, where the museum is well worth a visit.

The Romans were at Windsor and Maidenhead and Ruscombe near Twyford, but the flooded meadows of the Loddon probably prevented them taking much interest in Reading and Shinfield.

Part of the rim of a large Roman amphora was found in Beech Hill Road in 1921. At Farley Hill 28 Roman coins, mostly of the 203rd century were found (B.A.S. 1938, Vol. 32. p. 27). Many other Roman finds have been made in the district.

Origin of the name "Shinfield"

In Saxon times Shinfield was referred to as Selingasfeld, i.e. the fields owned by Selingas. It is stated that the "fields of Selingas and Soanas had been laid out", i.e. the fields of Shinfield and Swallowfield had been cleared. The Redingas had already taken possession of newly broken ground at Reading.

Later it was referred to as Selingefelle, then Shiningefeld, Suinghefeld, Shingefeld, and Shinfield.

An alternative suggestion for the origin of the name is that the land around the Loddon here used not to be drained as it is now, and that looking down on the flooded fields from the hill near the R.A.F. Headquarters, when coming out from Reading, the fields would shine in the sun, and so might be referred to as the Shining Fields, hence Shiningefeld and Shinfield.

Anglo-Saxon times

The Romans left Britain in 400 A.D., leaving a Romano-British population. The Saxons advanced from the south coast, commencing in Kent in 449 A.D., and drove the Romano British people west and northwest. They defeated the Romano-British under King Arthur and captured Salisbury. To the northeast though Calleva held out for some time, the Saxons advanced to the Thames and established the capital of their Kingdom of Wessex at Dorchester-on-Thames.

In 635 the conversion of the West Saxons to Christianity was begun by St. Birinus. He was sent from France by the Pope and baptised Cynegils, King of Wessex. Dorchester then became the See of the West Saxons, as Canterbury became the See of the Jutes, and York the See of the Northumbrians. Ministers were founded at Wimborne and Glastonbury. Parish churches did not exist. Shinfield was in the Diocese of Dorchester.

In 662 Wulfere, King of Mercia, a Saxon Kingdom North of the Thames, drove the Saxons from Dorchester. So Winchester became the capital of Wessex, and Shinfield came into the Diocese of Winchester.

Between 688 and 725 Ina the Lawgiver, King of Wessex, prevented Mercia getting any nearer. He also drove the Welsh (the Romano British) from Somerset, and founded a second See at Sherborne in Dorset. Shinfield came into this diocese, and the great monastery at Abingdon was founded. Perhaps the villages of Sherborne St John and Monk Sherborne near Basingstoke, received the Sherborne part of their names at this time.

In 825 Egbert became King of all the English. In 836 he conquered the Welsh (the British) by his victory at Hengist's Down on the Cornish side of the Tamar.

Danish times.

The Danes began their raids in 787. In 847 they sailed up the Severn. In 860 they captured Winchester. In 871 they captured Reading, an important Anglo-Saxon centre, and a few days later defeated the Saxon king and his young brother Alfred-born 849. But Alfred attacked them again at Ashdown, on the Berkshire Downs, and drove the Danes back into Reading. The White Horse at Uffington is said to commemorate this battle.

The Danes later drove Alfred to Athelney in Somerset, but were defeated in Devonshire, driven back, and again defeated at Chippenham. Thereafter King Alfred ruled Wessex South of Watling St., which ran from London to Chester, and the Danes ruled the North and East.

King Alfred died in 901. Lords of the Manor began to build parish churches about this time.

Moats in Shinfield

From the above it will be seen that the people of Shinfield lived in the area of fights between Britons, Romans, Saxons, Angles and Danes during a period as long as from the Norman Conquest to the present day. So it is not surprising that some of their defences still exist. Archeologists have examined the earthworks in the district, but have found it difficult to be sure of their origin.

School Green Covert or Moor Copse - Hyde End Road.

The double line of moats surrounding part of this covert are thought to have been made by early Britons to protect a small settlement and their flocks against wolves and robbers and to keep their homstead dry. The moats were once deeper and the sides steeper. There is a spring in the protected area.

Round Cutbush Orchard

There is no explanation of these moats. An earlier house may have stood there, but there is no evidence of it. In 871 the Danes from the north drove the Saxon inhabitants of Reading to take refuge in the surrounding country to the south. When Alfred first attacked the Danes in Reading from the southwest and was defeated, he was chased to the south by the Danes. Some of his men probably dug in at Shinfield. The local inhabitants may have dug in for the same reason and dug the moats at Moor Copse and in Cutbush Lane, as raids continued from and against Reading for a year. Until about 1850 there was an earth bank about 6 feet high and 100 yards long, extending into the field to the west of the Cutbush moats,

Ducketts Farm - opposite the main R.A.F. gate.

The moat here was part of Shinfield Manor.

Beaumes Castle.

South west of the site of Beaumes Castle opposite Loddon Court there are earthworks much older than the castle. These are thought to have been a protected early British settlement, the moats being filled from the Loddon.

Moats behind the Vicarage.

There is no evidence of a house having been here. It is thought that an early British encampment may have been here, but that all traces were destroyed when the clay was dug from here to make the bricks for the Church Tower. But if they were clay pits, why was the high part left in the centre, making the pits to look like moats? As there used to be a footpath to them from the lane through the Vicar's garage, perhaps a moated house did stand here, the entrance drive being along this footpath. Miss Williams thought so.

Saxon divisions of land

England was divided into Shires. The boundaries of these is sometimes surprising. Sheepbridge, Farley Hill and Diddenham were all in Wiltshire until 1844.

Shires were divided into Hundreds. Shinfield was in the Hundred of Charlton, with Wantage, so there could have been few people here.

There were about 200 townships in Berkshire. Fortysix of these belonged to the King, and the King was Lord of Shinfield. The largest house would be that of his Reeve, who supervised the King's land. There were probably about 12 scattered farmsteads.

Events leading up to the Norman Conquest

Goda, sister of King Edward the Confessor, married Drogo, Count of Mantes, and King Edward gave her many manors from Essex to Hereford, including Shinfield. He made her son Earl of Hereford.

In this and other ways the Normans infiltrated into England before the Conquest. William FitzOsbern was the principal promoter of the plan of the Conquest. One of his family had saved the life of William of Normandy as a child, and William FitzOsbern had been brought up with the Conqueror and was his lifelong friend. He was Keeper of the Conqueror's castle at Breteuil, 40 miles south of Rouen. His brother Osbern FitzOsbern was private Chaplain to the Conqueror, and had been given Bosham commanding Chichester Harbour. Thus all was ready for the Norman attack.

The Norman Conquest

In Berkshire most were loyal to King Harold and lost their land. So did Sexi who held Shinfield, called Sellingefelle in 1066. He also held Solafel Manor in Reading the name Sexi being found in Reading up to the 14th century. There were no free tenants here in 1066.

The Conqueror owed more to FitzOsbern than to anyone else for his success, and so he made him Regent when the Conqueror returned to Normandy. He was made Earl of Hereford and was given 194 manors, including Shinfield. And it was he that first ordered a Church to be built at Shinfield - as early as 1069.

He too was only in England, however, for 4 years. He was succeeded by his son Roger FitzOsbern, Earl of Hereford. But Roger was only Earl for 4 years and then was imprisoned for conspiracy.

He was succeeded by his cousin Gilbert de Breteuil, who held Shinfield before 1071. He also held estates at Ashbrittle in Somerset, which means Ash de Breteuil, where John Doble held the living in, the 16th century. In domesday he is referred to as Gilberte de Bretvile.

The Domesday Book

In 1086 the Bailiff and 6 men of the township of Shinfield and the Norman priest went to the Hundred Court at Abingdon to state it's value for the Domesday record. This reads:-

"The King holds Sellingsfelle in demesne. Sexi held it in alod of King Edward. It was then assessed at 5 hides-now at nothing. There is land for 6 ploughs-on the demesne is one. There are 8 villeins and 5 borders with 7 ploughs. There are 2 serfs and a mill worth 5 shillings and 150 eels and 5 fisheries worth 550 eels, 16 acres of meadow and woodland to render 90 swine. It was formerly worth 7 pounds - now £8."

Pigs and eels were eaten fresh or salted. No cattle or corn are mentioned. In Domesday 46 Berkshire manors were still vested in the Crown, Reading had 30 houses and Windsor Forest extended to the Kennet. Village churches and Lords of the Manor are not usually mentioned.

Late Norman and Plantagenant Times

In 1096 Gilbert de Breteuil died and was succeeded as Lord of Shinfield by the Earl of Warwick, a relation of King William II.

At the Conquest King William I had founded Battle Abbey in Sussex. He had given to it the land from Reading to Theale, Tilehurst, Purley, Sulham and Englefield. Hence the names of the present Battle Hospital and Battle Barracks in Reading.

In 1125 King Henry I built Reading Abbey and made the Archbishop of Rouen the first Abbot. He build a wall round Reading and there was a castle the site of which is disputed. King Henry died at Rouen in 1135, and was buried in Reading Abbey. This Benedictine Monastery was the third biggest of the 6 great Abbeys in England.

During the reign of King Stephen, 1135-54, Shinfield was enfeoffed to John de StJohn. He was not a great Baron like FitzOsbern, but a Knight. His father Thomas StJohn of St Jean le Thomas, near Mont St Michael, had helped King Henry I, who had given him Stanton StJohn 4 miles northeast of Oxford. John de StJohn's widow lived at Swallowfield with her second son Thomas who succeeded in 1166, and who is recorded as holding it in 1168 in the Barons Charter of Henry II.

A Pipe Roll of King Henry II records a first payment under a new assessment "Sualewefeld Schingesfeld 2 marks" = 13/4d. for each manor = equivalent to £13 in 1930.

In 1164 Reading Monastery was hallowed by Thomas a Beckett.

In 1170 the Priory of St Leonard was founded between Swallowfield and Beech Hill now Beech Hill Priory.

King John visited Swallowfield on 25th June, 1205, and also on 3rd May 1206.

In 1214/16 Sir Roger StJohn died and Swallowfield was assigned to his widow who in 1230 married Geoffrey de Spencer from whose name Spencers Wood is derived.

Shinfield, however, remained in the hands of the StJohn family for many generations. In 1254 Roger StJohn was given free warren of his lands in Shiningefeld, as a reward for going abroad with King Henry III. When King Henry returned from abroad in 1255-58 the royal children were left at Swallowfield under Dame Emma StJohn. It will be remembered that King Henry kept his wife locked up at Winchester for many years.

Shinfield was the nearest Church to Swallowfield and in 1256 Sir John StJohn or John le Despencer asked the Pope if he might build a chapel at his manor of Swalefield because of the dangers to him and his family going through the forest to Mass at the church at Sonning from robbers in the summer and floods in the winter. This request may have been made in order to have a church of his own at Swallowfield or it may have been because the churches at Shinfield, Arborfield and Barkham had leaky roofs, while that at Sonning was probably in good condition as the Bishop of Salisbury had a Palace there. The jurisdiction of the Bishop at Sonning was powerful and he owned land from the Chilterns far to the southeast. Hence the names Sunningdale and Sunninghill. When the application was approved no priest was appointed and that at Shinfield had to take charge of it. There is evidence that a simpler building of wood stood at Swallowfield long before Despencer was born. It is of interest that the churches of St Nicholas, Hurst was built because people found it impossible to get to Sonning because of the Loddon floods. Showing the slowness of communications at this time, it took 26 years to obtain the Paperl Sanction to build Swallowfield Church, which was granted in 1320.

In 1261 William de la Garston of Shinfield is mentioned in an Inquisition and Post Mortem as holding 4 acres of meadow from Robert de Sttesbroc for service of 6d. yearly.

About this time Sir John StJohn was fined for disloyalty, and John le Breton seized his land at Suinghefeld (Shinfield). The parish then came under the shadow of the ubiquitous Adam de Stratton.

In 1267-72 John de StJohn, Lord of the Manor of Bramley gave a wood at Bramley called "The Parke" to the Prior and Convent of Monk Sherborne. The StJohn's name is still perpetrated in the name of the parish of Sherborne StJohn.

In 1272, the year of the death of King Henry III, Sir Roger de Laybourne, who was then Lord of Swallowfield died and John le Despencer resumed his old position at Swallowfield, he died in 1274.

In 1318 it is recorded that raiders broke into the houses at Shennynfield and carried off cattle.

In 1331-43 Sir John de Ifield held Swallowfield in right of his wife.

In 1347 Beaumes Castle was raided, as described later.

In 1348-49 the Black Death swept across England, killing as many as a third or a half of the people.

In 1349-53 the Vachells are recorded as being at Shinfield. They had been "of Coley" and had a house in Reading. They may have been of the family of the Vache at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire.

In 1355 the King granted Swallowfield to his daughter, Princess Isabel with 18 acres and in 1357 Swallowfield Park was used for breeding the King's horses. In 1359 John of Gaunt was married at Reading. In 1360 the King's Stud is mentioned as at Swallowfield. In 1377-93 Sir William Arundel was sub tenant of Swallowfield.

In 1376 Peter de Coudrey held land at Shinfield. There is still a family named Cordery at Shinfield, derived from a corderie or rope walk where rope was made.

In 1407 a King Henry IV's Inquisition states that a half a fee of Shinfield was held by the heirs of StJohn and half by Margaret, the widow of the 4th Earl of Warwick.

In 1446 John Penyock was at Swallowfield - he had been the Parker.

In the Middle Ages Parliament did not always meet at Westminster as it does now. It was itinerant and frequently met in provincial towns. On several occasions it met at Reading, as that of King Henry IV on 6th March, 1453.

In 1504 Woodcock of the Privy Chamber lived at Diddenham Manor, Shinfield. He made Woodcock Lane as an approach to his house.

In 1509-47 King Henry VIII endowed Queen Katherine of Aragon with the manors of Shinfield and Swallowfield as part of her dowry.

In 1514 a new farm was formed at Shinfield from Abbey lands and a house called Hartley Court, erected there by Thomas Beke, son of Henry Beke, to whom there is a tablet in the Church.

In 1539 at the dissolution of Reading Abbey, a list of its property called the Book of the Charters was hidden in the flue chamber of a chimney at Shinfield Manor and forgotten.

In 1553 the manors of Shinfield and Swallowfield were separated, the Loddon divided them. King Edward IV sold Swallowfield to Christopher Lytcott, but he kept Shinfield as it "lyeth near the King's Park of Whitley".

In the 16th century most of northwest Berkshire was open land. Some enclosures were made from the wild, largely to produce wool - B.A.S. 1943, Vol. 47. Communication was along tracks which later became roads, which is why our roads are so winding.

In 1567 Edward Martyn of Shinfield was the Surveyor of Berkshire.

In 1596 Edward Martyn lived in the Manor at Shinfield as Queen Elizabeth's Bailiff of the Royal Manor of Shinfield. He built the Martyn Chapel to the south of the Chancel.

In 1603 Edward Martyn bought the Manor and the estate ceased to be vested in the King. He died there in 1604. His daughter Anne succeeded to the property.

In 1606 Sir Francis Englefield took Hartley Court and in 1609 it was held by Sir Thomas Smyth, and from 1620-30 by William Wilder.

In 1607 James Nowle of Shinfield was married to Christian Waster of Hambledon at Hambledon (Hants Marriage Licences, 1607-40).

A map of 1609 shows a road from Shinfield to Wokingham, but not from Shinfield to Reading except via Three Mile Cross.

On 5th January, 1610 Thomas Hatton of Rotherwick married Elizabeth Pither, daughter of Thomas Pither of Shinfield, either at Rotherwick or Heckfield.

In 1611 Nicholas Russell of Shinfield left money for the poor out of land in Shinfield called MANTUES or Blackhouse (Charity Bds).

In 1617 William Woolascott, aged 21 married Ann Martyn, and came to live at Shinfield Manor.

On 11th May 1618 Thomas (Charlton) of Swallowfield, Wilts, yeoman, married Joan Alexander of Heckfield at Heckfield.

In 1623 William Mansfield of Basingstoke married Amy Horn of Shinfield (This and previous para. from Hants Marriage Licences 1607-40).

In 1620-30 King James granted the small manor or farm of Hide End to Sir Lawrence Hyde, attorney to Queen Anne of Denmark.

In 1626 Mrs Elizabeth Speak left money to the poor (Charity Board).

In 1630 John Backhouse was at Swallowfield and Sir Francis Englefield built Goodrest.

In 1633 Laud was made Archbishop of Canterbury. His father was a prosperous Reading tailor who lived at Swallowfield.

In 1638 Capel sold land at Shinfield to Sir Thomas Woodcock.

On 15th April 1643, the Parliamentarian Earl of Essex brought a seige train from Windsor of 16000 foot and more than 3000 horses to beseige Royalist Reading. They travelled via Binfield, crossed the Loddon to Caversham. After about a weeks fighting Reading capitulated.

Later in the war, Reading was retaken by the Royalists. King Charles stayed at Goodrest in Shinfield next to the R.A.F. Headquarters.

As a result of the war the country around Reading was in a miserable condition. There remained "hardly a sheep, hen, hog, oats, hay, wheat or any other thing for man or beast to feed upon" (Coates).

The Woolascotts and the Hydés were Royalists.

In 1646 John Reynolds of Shinfield left money from his estate at Oakingham to Gilbert Garret and Thomas Holyer for the poor (Charity Boards).

In 1654 a local rate was authorised for road repairs.

In 1688 King James II placed 600 men in Reading to stop William of Orange but they were defeated.

Henry le Coq de St. Leger, who landed with King William III, later bought land at Shinfield for £10,000 and lived at Trunkwell House Beech Hill.

In 1689 the Earl of Clarendon built a new house at Swallowfield.

In 1697 Mrs Mary Spicer left money to teach 10 children to read the Bible and learn the Catechism and the rent of 1 acre of land in the Lords Mead for Church repairs (Charity Boards).

In 1704 the Parsonage was built on the site of the present Old Vicarage. It is possible that this might have been done because of the great storm of November 1703 which destroyed the first Eddystone Lighthouse, and which took the lead off the roofs of so many churches and houses in the south of England.

In 1704 part of the moat of the old Manor House, opposite the R.A.F. Headquarters was filled in to form a road.

In 1707 the school was built by order of Richard Piggott. The names of the Trustees of the school were Peter Floyer Esq., Thomas Holyer Senior, William Baker, John Chesterman, John Creas, Thomas Holyer Junior, Thomas Sharpe, Elisha Baker, Edward Brown and Richard Howell. The church was still in the diocese of Salisbury.

In 1719 Lord Clarendon sold Swallowfield to Thomas Pitt, a past Governor of Madras and grandfather of William Pitt the Prime Minister, who as a boy at Eton saw the present bridge built in the park. Pitt sold it in 1737.

In 1723 the Kennet-Avon Canal was started which meant that goods from the west country no longer had to go by sea from Bristol to London and then the Thames to Reading. Then also started the third oldest provincial newspaper in the U.K., that wonderful local newspaper the Reading Mercury.

In 1729 Richard Piggott's will referred to two houses in Pound Green.

In 1737 the Shinfield Grove Estate was formed.

William Woolascott left money to the poor on his death. He referred to the parish as "The Manor of Shinfield" to the "Surveyors of the Highways" and to the Kings Head at Three Mile Cross.

The layout of Shinfield in 1756 can be seen on the old map in the Directors Room at the N.I.R.D.

In 1757 the 7th Earl of Fingal married Henrietta Woolascott, who owned Shinfield.

In 1760 the brewery of Messrs. Simonds was started in Reading.

Extracts from the Shinfield Rate Book 1763-85

1763 - A gown for Beeks girl 4/-, two caps 1/4d., an apron 1/8d., breeches Steptoe 2/3d. Rate 6d. in the £.

Inhabitants: Peter Floyer Esq., James Lewington, Robert and George Bridgewater.

1763:Curate: Henry Peach

1764: Church Wardens: John Mearing and William Crent.

Inhabitants: Henry Len Hunter Esq., and John Noble (Highlands).

1766: Curate: John Ballard.
Inhabitants: Chambers Hide Badger

1767-9 Rate 1/- in the £.

1771 Inhabitants: Bernard Brocas, J.P.

1773 Curate: John Edwards

1776 Curate: Thomas Ripley

1777 Curate: Thomas Hoffman

1778 Curate: W.H. Jane

Inhabitants: D. Folkes and W. Lea.

1779 Curate: J. Golightly.

1781 Parish Clerk: James Edward Noble

1781 The Overseers in the Parish of Shinfield in the County of Berkshire desire the inhabitants to meet in the vestry at the Workhouse on Monday 2nd of July next at 6 o'clock in the afternoon in order to make a rate for the parish of Shinfield, in the county of Berkshire and Wilts. for the relief of the poor. Published the above notice in the Parish Church of Shinfield on Sunday the 24th day of June immediately after morning service by me John Edward Noble, Parish Clerk.

Vestry meeting held accordingly to make a poor rate. We whose names underwritten do agree: Daniel Headland Overseer - to make an assessment on all occupiers of houses and lands west side of the parish of Shinfield in the county of Berks after the rate of 6d. in the £ according to each persons annual rents. The last assessment was made too large with errors, leaving out the occupiers of Kibes Farm and part of Hill Farm the rate to be made adding in the new rate the occupiers and landlords names of Kibes Farm and part of Hill Farm.

Witness our hands, the majority of this vestry held at Shinfield Workhouse, 2nd July, 1781.

John Allaway, Churchwarden, John Brooks, Overseer, John Allright,

Overseer. Thomas Crease, John Allright, John Wright, inhabitants. In the new rate we find Mr Laud Kerby at Kibes Farm.

1782 A rate made on 20th day of September on the inhabitants of the west end of the said parish towards paying off eighty pounds borrowed on the Workhouse, this being the second rate of 6d. in £.
Daniel Headland, Overseer.
The rateable value was about £1,050.

1783 Alexander Cobham rated £7 Gossemeade £70 for the tithe.

In 1784 the practice of sending mails by coach was started.

There used to be considerable Common land in the parish.

Everyone nearby had grazing and woodcutting rights over Common land. It was pointed out that this land was used very uneconomically and that the system made people lazy. For example in 1791 there were so many deer in Windsor Forest that not only did the animals die from starvation, but the commoners became idle as fuel and food could be got so easily (B.A.S. 1943, Vol. 47). Therefore starting in Tudor times land was gradually enclosed by Enclosure Acts of Parliament. These acts divided the Common land amongst those who used it. If they did not want the land, they sold their share to those who did.

In 1792 the Charter Book of Reading Abbey was found at Shinfield Manor. Lord Fingal got the book and the bricklayer who found it (and possibly other things too) got rich.

In 1796 Alexander Cobham who had been a judge in India, bought Shinfield Manor. He lived there for 6 years and then in 1802 he had it pulled down and moved to the Old Rectory (now the N.I.R.D.), later renaming the latter Shinfield Manor.

In 1800 Dr. Mitford, father of Mary Russel Mitford our local authoress and playwright, bought Grazley Court, pulled it down, rebuilt it and in 1818 called it Bertram House.

In 1802 paper was made at Arborfield Mill. It was burnt down in 1861. It is reported that Bank of England notes were made there. These notes are now made by Portals. Mr. Freeman stated that this was because the Cobhams and the Portals are connected by marriage but whether or not this is true I have not had time to check.

In 1806 Messrs. Suttons started their seed business in Reading.

On 25th January, 1808, the following appeared in the Reading Mercury

Mercury: "At the general quarter sessions of the peace of this county held at our Town Hall last week, James Draper Schoolmaster of Shinfield was sentenced to be imprisoned for three months. It appeared in evidence that he assaulted John Hall, a poor man who unintentionally offended him and after beating him in a shocking manner inflicted a wound on the side of his head with a sharp instrument, supposed by the surgeons to be a chisel. It was the general opinion of a very full bench of Magistrates that he ought to have been sentenced for 6 months but in consideration of some circumstances he was sentenced to only 3 months imprisonment".

On 15th October, 1808, the following appeared in the Reading Mercury:-

"Saturday the 24th ult, a very awful occurrence happened at Shinfield, near this town; as several persons were assembled at the house of Mr. James Pither, to carry the remains of Mrs Turner, his sister, (who died in London on the 20th) to be interred in the Church-yard of that parish, Joseph Norris, a very honest industrious neighbour, being one of the company, after partaking of some refreshment, enquired what time they were to be at church? on being informed, he looked at the clock, and said we have an hour good and immediately stretched himself in his chair, and expired almost instantly - Several similar instances have taken place in the same parish.

On the 18th of July, George Simonds, labourer, went to his work at Mr. Smith's, and after eating his breakfast instantly expired. On the 4rd of August, the wife of John Brent, after walking in the garden on her return to the house, was taken in a fit, fell down speechless, and expired the same evening! - So uncertain is life."

In 1813 General Wilder bought Binfield Place, but sold it in 1818 on the death of his son in 1861, recorded on the tablet in the Church.

In 1820 Miss Mitford, aged 32 moved to the house at Three Mile Cross and began to write her famous articles about "Our Village", to support her spendthrift father.

In 1822 Great Lea Farmhouse was built.

In 1820 Sir Henry Russell went to Swallowfield, Miss Mitford called this the Great House.

In 1826 Messrs. Huntley & Palmers started in Reading.

In 1839 Sir Henry Russell, 2nd Baronet succeeded to Swallowfield.

In 1833 Brunel was prospecting for the Great Western Railway at Shinfield and on 14th March 1840, the first railway train steamed into Reading.

In 1842 Dr. Mitford died and was buried in Shinfield Church.

In 1842 an assessment of the land and owners was required for the commutation of the tithes. This was a minor Domesday Survey and an examination of the tithe map accompanying it will often reveal the names of the old inhabitants and the fields, and the changes that have taken place in the ownership, character and appearance of the land since then. The names of the old farms, ponds and woods were often taken from the surnames of their 12th century holders.

These surnames in turn were often taken from some distinguishing feature of the landscape. Thus Lambourne Farm at Iping, Sussex, was in the 12th century owned by de Lamburne, who in turn derived his name from the old English lamb's bourne or stream. I regret that I have not had time to make this examination with regard to Shinfield. Someone else might find this interesting.

In 1846 common land of 158 acres was enclosed at Shinfield, Hartley and Diddenham.

In 1847 the Parsonage was pulled down and a new vicarage built now the Old Vicarage.

In 1847 Swallowfield was separated from Shinfield and made a separate parish.

On 16th November, 1848 the Vestry Book records that "It was resolved that Mr. Fuller should be employed to value Mr. Bayfield's (the Vicar) new house and set the rateable value on the railway also i.e. that part of the Basingstoke Branch Line from the Great Western Railway running through the west side of parish, called the Berks and Hants Line".

In 1850 Grazeley was separated from Shinfield and made a separate parish. The church was built by Benjamin Ferrey, and has stained glass by O'Connor. The Vestry Book records that 15/6 was to go "for land to go to the new church at Grazeley", and on 17th October, 1850, that "the new parsonage house at Grazeley in the parish of Shinfield should be rated at £40 p.a.

In 1851 Miss Mitford moved to Queen Annes Mead, Swallowfield, where she died in 1855, being buried in Swallowfield Churchyard.

From 1851-56 common land of 351 acres was enclosed at Shinfield. In 1852 Shinfield covered 4514 acres and 1156 inhabitants. Sir Charles Russell succeeded his father at Swallowfield. On 29th July, 1852, the Vestry Book records that "the offer of a small portion of ground to enlarge the burial ground adjoining the Church by Mr. Cobham beaccepted".

By the Enclosure Act of 1855 common land at Shinfield, Browns Green and Bush Green was enclosed and bought by Mr. Cobham.

In 1855 to 1857 Shinfield Church was restored.

In 1856 prize fights were stopped at Browns Green and the Constables Lock-up and Stocks were moved from the Churchyard gate to Three Mile Cross.

In 1858 an extension was built to the school by Rev. Field's will.

In 1859 new bridges were erected near Hartley Farm (Vestry Book).

In 1860 Sir Gilbert Scott restored the gateway of Reading Abbey.

In 1861-63 common land of 56 acres was enclosed at Spencers Wood.

In 1862-74 Christ Church was built in Shinfield Road, Reading, by H. Woodyer. The tracery in the chancel arch symbolises the lifting of the veil in the Temple.

In 1862 it was petitioned that the parish of Shinfield should not be included in the Wokingham Highway District (Vestry Book 27.11.62.).

In 1866 the bridge at Kybes Lane was repaired (Vestry Book).

In 1867 a new bridge was built over the Foudrey Brook at Hartley Farm and the private bridge was pulled down (Vestry Book).

In 1868 Beech Hill was separated from Shinfield, when the church was built there by William Butterfield with stained glass by Gibbs.

In 1869 a girls school was sold and the room to the north of the clock tower was added to the school. The girls school that was sold may have been the picturesque little building in Church Lane opposite the Six Bells. It was bought by Mr. Cobham.

In 1873 as many as 21 parishes in Berkshire still had common land.

On 18th May, 1879, the Vestry Book records that consideration was given as to "which highways, not formerly turnpike roads, should become Main roads under the new Highways Act". It was decided that what is now called the Shinfield Road should be a Main Road.

On 18th August, 1881, the Vestry Book records that the Vestry consented "to the Postmaster General erecting poles to carry Telegraph wires at the side of the road from Reading to Swallowfield".

In 1883 Sir George Russell succeeded his brother at Swallowfield.

In 1884 the Reading Abbey Cartulary was found at Swallowfield.

The Vestry Book for 1887 gives details of the pond at Spencers Wood.

In 1889 the room was added to the south end of the old block of the school in memory of Rev. G.B. Hulme by his children.

In 1889 permission was given by the Vestry to erect telephone-lines on the Reading Basingstoke Road "provided that an office for telephoning was opened at Three Mile Cross" (Vestry Book).

In 1891 a footpath was made alongside the Shinfield Road (Vestry Book).

In 1897 Pound Green Shinfield was enclosed.

In 1898 Trunkwell House, Beech Hill was pulled down and the farm was renamed Trunkwell House.

In 1903 a large part of the Shinfield estate was sold to Reading University including Lane End Farm.

In 1914 Spencers Wood was made a separate parish.

After the 1939-44 war many houses were built in the fields to the east and south of Hollow Lane.

Agricultural Notes.

At the Conquest land was worked on the Anglo-Saxon system. The Lord of the Manor received a small rent in kind. The tenants cast lots for the land each spring. The land was divided into narrow strips so that no one should have more than his fair share of the best soil. A Hide was the Saxon word for the area that could be worked by one plough.

Later the Lord of the Manor worked all the land himself, dividing the country into large fields with fences. Teams of 6 or 8 oxen ploughed. These could not turn as sharply as 2 horses, the ploughman therefore swung his ox team round and left the corners unploughed. The odd pieces at the corners were of no use to the owner and cottages were often built on them. Direct descendants of these early homes now stand at Field Cottages in Cutbush Lane, below Maiden Earleigh Stud Farm, which may be an example of the cottages built at the corners of fields.

If there was doubt of the inheritance of a Lord of the Manor, or if he was disloyal the property reverted to the King. Usually the King then granted the land to someone else - on payment.

Later the land came to be worked as small homesteads of 50 acres or less. Coopers Farm was such a farm - the farmhouse that was converted into the Grange. Also Cordery's Farm round Barn Field and Pearman's Farm and Ducketts Farm opposite the R.A.F. Headquarters, also Brookers Farm at the bottom of Brookers Hill. The Tudor Cottage below Cutbush House used to be a small holding.

With the depression in the Corn Trade in 1870, small holdings began to be amalgamated into larger farms, which could be worked more economically.

Regarding Farm implements, Mr. George Lucas is believed to have been the first to have used a threshing machine here - at Lane End. The late Mr. Henry Goddard threshed with a flail on the wooden threshing floor at Ducketts Farm until 1885. He is reported to have stated that between 1850-60 wooden ploughs with 4 horses were still in use and a farmer at Swallowfield ploughed with oxen and that beans were a favourite crop at Shinfield being sown by women.

THE PARISH CHURCH

A church was first built at Shinfield immediately after the Conquest, in 1069. It was probably of flint and wood with stone quoins, i.e. stone corners and strengthening pieces. It was built on the order of William FitzOsbern of Breteuil, the chief promoter of the Conquest. Before the Conquest he had founded Lyre Abbey about 40 miles south of Rouen. So he endowed Lyre Abbey with the church that he had ordered to be built at Shinfield. Thus though the new church was placed in the Diocese of Salisbury, Lyre Abbey supplied the priests and received the tithes. Also as Lyre Abbey was dedicated to St. Mary, Shinfield was dedicated to St. Mary too.

Lyre Abbey found it difficult to collect these tithes. Further the English people resented being supplied with priests from Normandy, who spoke French. The Normans in England gradually split from those in Normandy and in King Stephen's reign an arrangement was made for one tenth of the tithes of Shinfield to be sent-in-money and for the priests to be found in England. The Lord of the Manor, John de StJohn obtained the advowson and supplied the priests. The first priest's name recorded is Sir Adam de Stratton - in 1230.

The Church that was built in 1069 does not seem to have lasted very long. It is thought that a new one was built about 1170.

The North Door

The present beautiful north door of the church dates from about this time. It is the oldest part of our church. It has nice little Norman capitals and one Norman pillar. About half of it is the original structure of chalk and stone and it is a good example of Norman work. The slender shafts on each side, one of which was renewed in 1855, support a typical long ribbed capital. Above this are the abaci and plain mouldings. The corbals at the end of the hood moulds are in the form of two old heads.

One, presumably a mediaeval replacement, is of a monk with a tonsured pate - of the type which terminates the hood moulds of many English windows. The other is the original Norman carving of a grotesque, thick lipped, wide mouthed head, as found in the earliest Norman arches.

The Sarsen in the walls of the door indicates great age. These blocks of brown material came from the bottom of gravel pits.

Nave Roof

The roof of the Nave is the next oldest part of the church. It was probably built about 1256, when it is thought that Sir John StJohn found the roof leaked. It is a fine old roof with massive king posts and braces. There was no tower then and only one bell.

In the Minister's accounts for 1280 in the Public Record Office we find that the following expenses were incurred for the churches at Shengefeld, under the account of Albert le But, proctor and bayliffe of Sir Adam de Stratton, rector, for 12 lbs. of wax for tapers for the two churches 5/6d. or 5½d. a lb.

The same amount is recorded for 1283.

Sir Adam de Stratton is the first name on the list of Vicars in the Church. Unfortunately it is not a name to be proud of - see M.W. Farr's "Accounts and Surveys of the Wiltshire lands of Adam de Stratton" - Wiltshire Archaeological Society, 1958.

He was a native of Stratton near Swindon. From 1256 he carried on a lucrative business in London, holding various posts under the Exchequer and being Master of the King's Works in Westminster and a royal favourite.

In 1276 Isabel de Forz, Countess of Aumale and Devon and Lady of the Isle of Wight, granted her manors of Sevenhampton and Stratton to Adam, who soon after became her Steward.

There is no evidence that he even visited these manors. So our first Vicar may never have come to Shinfield ! The churches were served by stipendiary substitutes and administered by reeves. He collected benefices all over England. His income eventually reached such scandalous proportions that he was known as "The great Christian Userer", and met his downfall in 1290 when all his lands were forfeited to the Crown.

In documents he is always "dominus Adam", which many translate as "Sir". There is evidence that a priest was normally addressed as "Sir". They certainly were later in Chancer.

The list of Vicars in the Church states that the next Vicar, Willns de Caple, came here in 1300

In 1291 Pope Nicholas set on foot a taxation of all papal dominions and in the valuation, Scheningfelde and Swallfeld are valued at £20 each, the tithe of which would be £2.

In 1294 the gift of the living was in the hands of the Lord of the Manor, Sir John de StJohn. At this time the See of Hereford was badly off, and the Bishop was a relation of StJohn, who, "for the good of his soul" gave the advowson of the church at Shingefeld and of the chapel at Swalowefelde to St Ethelbert's, Hereford. Hereford paid the King 50 marks for this, as StJohn held it from the King. This is why the Diocese of Hereford still appoints our Vicar.

The tithes are also supposed to have been given to Hereford. The story is that in 1302 King Edward III and the Bishop of Hereford were shooting deer - using arrows, of course - in the Shinfield part of Windsor Forest. The Bishop asked the King for assistance in rebuilding Hereford Cathedral. Later the Bishop made such a good shot at a deer that the King agreed to give him the tithes of Shinfield and Swallowfield.

The Register of the Bishop of Salisbury for 1297 contains a list of the institutions of the vicarage of Shenningfield with Swalefeld Chapel.

In the book of John Chandler, Dean of Salisbury for 1320, it is stated that the Dean visited the church of Sonnyne with the chapels of Shenningfield and Swalefeld and that Roger de Mortival, Bishop of Sarum endorsed at Sonning, a bull of Pope John XXII, granting the great tithes of Shinfield and Swallowfield for the repairs of Hereford Cathedral, viz "Grant of the parish church of Scheningfeld value £20, with the chapel of Swallefeld in the Diocese of Salisbury for the rebuilding of the cathedral so long as the work shall last. 28,000 marks having been spent in the superstructure, the whole threatened to fall and there was issued a notice to penitents who contributed to the rebuilding of Hereford Cathedral, relaxation of 60 days penance".

The Rev. Hugh Pearson in his history of Sonning wrote "Some 30 years ago the late Bishop Bloomfield showed me in Fulham Palace a bull of Pope John XXII, A.D. 1320, granting the great tithes of the parishes of Shinfield and Swallowfield for the sustenance of Hereford Cathedral The great tithes still continue in the possession of Hereford Cathedral". In return Hereford still maintains the chancel of Shinfield. In 1923 it was stated that investigation had been made to free Shinfield from this obligation, but it was found impossible. It is stated that in 1320 the Bishop of Hereford's land at Shinfield was forfeited to the King.

In 1320 the Pope wrote to Henry de Schorn, Rector of Shinfield and Cannon and Prebendary of Hereford, living in the Roman Court concerning his non residence in Berkshire. He was given concession to retain the Cannonry and Prebend as well as the fruits of the Rectory. But he had to restore half the procuration received and to pay one years fruits of the Rectory of Shinfield and Swallowfield to the Holy Land Subsidy.

In 1323 the Dean and Chapter of Hereford paid a fine of 5 marks to King Edward II for the licence of appropriating and anvening the Chapelry of Swallowfield with the Church of Shinfield.

St John's Head Plaque

This is hanging behind the lecturn. It is not dated but these plaques were usually made in the 14th and 15th centuries, so it may be our oldest possession. There is another very good St John's plaque in the church at Ampport, near Andover.

There used to be four St John's plaques in our church. They were taken away probably in 1855. This one was found in an outhouse at Hyde End Farm about 1900, by a descendant of the occupier of Hyde End Farm, then a Church warden.

Our plaque depicts St John the Evangelist. The legend was that he could not die. Attempts were made to burn him but he would not burn; to poison him, but when the poison was put into his drink it turned into a snake that wriggled out of his tumbler. These events are depicted on our plaque. St John was later transferred to Patmos and was not heard of again. He probably wrote the Revelations.

The plaque and it's frame are all made of iron and painted. It was repainted in 1957.

Perhaps they were put in the church by a member of the St John family.

The South Aisle

Some say that this was built in 1488 and some in 1526 or 1596. It has a queen post roof in the style of the 15th century and a low doorway filled in of the style of 11th century.

Miss Meta Williams in B.A.S. Vol. 35 stated that "Since it is built of brick, it is not likely to be earlier than the 15th century. But it is not likely to have been built in the 16th century. It is believed that it was most probably built when Elizabeth of York, who was very religious, was Lady of the Manor and Richard Smith was her very religious Bailiff, with whom she was on friendly terms".

The South Aisle was joined to the church by a "15th century brick arcade", which was pulled down in 1855.

The Sarsen stone used in the west wall of this aisle points to great age.

Windows

In the north and south walls are delightful obtuse headed windows of chalk. There is something very charming about these clean white windows, especially when they are dressed with flowers at festivals. There is a nice early window of stone in the north wall and a florid tracery window of the Decorative period in the Chancel nearest the pulpit. (B.A.S.)

Lost Monumental Brasses

The brasses were all lost when the floor of the church was tiled in 1855. Fortunately Ashmole (Antiquities of Berkshire) copied the inscriptions on them in 1723. They are also recorded by Burke and described by Miss Williams in B.A.S. 1931, Vol. 35, No. 2. Are they still under the tiled floor of the church?

Two belonged to the 16th century, viz:-

1. To the memory of Richard Lybbe of Tavistock, Devon, 1527. As the wool trade was thriving in Tavistock at this time, Lybbe may have come to Berkshire as a wool merchant. The name is found in Berkshire after this time.

2. To the memory of - Nelowe of Wallingford: no date, probably before 1540. Very worn when Ashmole tried to copy it.

In 1509 King Henry VIII came to the throne and Queen Elizabeth in 1558. Between these dates the church ceased to belong to the Roman Catholic Church and became the Church of England and the use of the earlier Prayer Books started.

The Steward Monument

The earliest existing monument in the church is the mural tablet on the north side of the west wall dated 1576. It is to Huick Steward, son of Mark, son of Simon, a member of a family from Lakenheath in Suffolk. Huick was buried at Shinfield on 31st July, 1575. A relation Dr. Huick a royal physician lived in Berkshire. Huick Steward may have been a boy as the crest has no helmet. The shield containing the arms hangs from the branch of a tree. They include the Royal Stuart arms to connect the name with that of the Royal family of Stuart. They also include the cross and doves of Saxon Kings and the lilies of the French Royal Family. Below is a broken sword.

There is a very good photograph of this monument on p. 101 of B.A.S., and a long explanation of the arms of the families of Steward and Huick. B.A.S. 1937, Vol. 47, P.99 has a photograph of a sketch of the arms of Steward and Martyn from the Ashmole M.S. from the Bodleian Library.

Tablet to Henry Beke 1580

A nice old worn marble tablet on the north wall reads: "Here lieth bereed the bodi of Master Henry Beke Esquier, who desesed the 23 May 1580." Underneath the tablet is a small widow's lozenge with 3 chevrons.

Opposite this is the cenotaph to him, his wife and daughter which was formerly by the tablet, but was moved to make room for the window. The cenotaph is dated 1627.

The Martyn Chapel-1596

Queen Elizabeth's Bailiff of the Royal Manor of Shinfield was Edward Martyn. He lived at the Manor House that used to be opposite where the R.A.F. Headquarters is now.

In 1596 he built the Martyn Chapel to the south of the Chancel. It's beautiful wagonhead ceiling, the squares of which are buttoned with Tudor rosettes, is still there as when it was built, but it needs freshening up. Part of the original late Tudor screen also remains.

The round arch by the organ and the round arch from the vestry to the south aisle are presumably contemporary with it, and give a clue to what the church probably looked like before the restoration of 1855. At that restoration the high pointed arch leading from the nave to the chancel was put in, and I suggest that if our church is like most others, where this high pointed arch is now there was a circular arch similar to those of the Martyn Chapel, as presumably Martyn would put his arch symmetrical with the then nave arch. Most churches now have large chancels like ours, but originally chancels were much smaller. Little Missesden Church, Bucks, home of Lady Nicholls, commemorated on the tablet in the Chancel, still has it's original small chancel.

Outside the Martyn Chapel, high on the east wall are the initials of Martyn and his wife:-

M
E M
1596

Martyn had seats put in the chapel for his family and servants. Others followed his example and had seats put in for their own families and the floor soon became covered with high backed pews. There were no seats in any churches until about 1400.

The Martyn Monument - 1607

On the death of Edward Martyn in 1604, aged 79, the monument was put up in the Martyn Chapel to him in 1607. It was moved to its present position at the west end of the south aisle at a later date. The figure of Edward Martyn and a fald stool are missing, and two alabaster female figures remain, one broken.

Martyn may have married first Katherine, daughter of John Cheyne of Chesham Bois, Bucks, and then Mary daughter of Thomas Reade of Abingdon.

The inscription was not easily decypherable in 1923, but it is believed that Ashmole copied it, when the figure of Edward Martyn was already lost. A few details of the coat of arms is given in B.A.S. 1931, Vol. 35, P.117. A good photograph of the monument is in B.A.S. 1933 Vol. 137, P. 130.

Brass to Anne Ellys - 1617

This is lost, but Ashmole in his Antiquities of Berkshire records that it existed in 1723 "To the memory of Anne Ellys, wife of John Ellys of Shenynsfyeld in the county of Berkshire Esquire, who departed this life the 17th day of September, 1617. "John Ellys lived at Ellis's farm, then about as new as Hartley Court, B.A.S. 1933, Vol. 37, P. 130, and Vol. 35 by Miss Willm.

Monument to Henry Beke - 1627

The following was written in the time of the Rev. Rice, perhaps 1920.

"The chief treasure of the church's interior is the magnificent canopied mural monument to the Beke family on the south wall opposite the main entrance. It is almost entirely of marble and alabaster and is crowned with the family arms. A knight is kneeling at a prie-Dieu with his wife and daughter opposite kneeling on hassocks in prayer. On either side two angels support a canopy hanging from a baldachino. All three figures are almost perfect. The knight is dressed in a ruff and light body and leg armour. The inscription below reads:-

Ano Dne 1627

Hic Pater Henricus, Mater Iana, et filia Eliza
Effingunter, adesturnula sola patris
Beake nomen patrum, Domus Hartley-curia, Mater
Roger Lewkenor milite nata fuit
Georgius extravit monumenta (enatus Eliza
Filius Hugonis Speke) pia iussa matris.

which means:-

Here the father Henry, the mother Jane, and daughter Eliza
Are represented, the father alone is interred.
Beake is his name, of the house of Hartley Court, the mother
Was the daughter of Roger Lewkenor Knight
George (by Eliza, the son of Hugo Speke)
Raised the monument by pious command of his mother.

John Betjman refers to this as the most original of the early Renaissance tombs in Berkshire and points to its desk kneelers, and "pretty girls drawing back curtains". The monument was carefully cleaned, restored and the lettering regilded in the 1920s by Mr. Jones of Oxford Road, Reading. This was possible through the generosity of Mrs Murdoch of Buckhurst, Wokingham, the widow of a former M.P. for South Berkshire. Her ancestors were the Bekes.

The monument was erected by Sir George Speke, by the pious command of his mother Eliza Beke, mentioned in pedigrees as "The heiress of Berkshire", as she had much property around Reading and at Hartley Court where she lived. She married Hugh Speke of Whitelackington, Somerset. A branch of the Speke family lived in Berkshire and Wiltshire for 200 years and held many manors there.

Hugh and Elizabeth Speke moved to Wiltshire in 1601. The monument has the arms of Beke, Speke and Lewkenor. It was originally by the tablet to Henry Beke 1580, on the north wall, but was moved when the window there was made presumably in 1855 when the Minstrels Gallery was taken down".

Sir Roger Lewkenor owned the famous and unique tapestry woven table carpet, dated 1564, that was sold at Sothebys in 1958.

The Communion Table - 1633

In 1633 Archbishop Laud ordered the Vicar to move the communion table from the centre of the choir to the east end of the church. Archbishop Laud was the son of a successful Reading tailor. In 1625 he records going into the country "to the house of my good friend Francis Windebank" of Haines Hill, Hurst, and he preached in the church there on 20th July 1625 and on 25th December, 1625. He was ill there from August to October 1629, and on 15th June, 1632 he swore in Mr. Windebank as Secretary of State, and later Windebank was knighted.

Presumably the choir was at the west end of the church. Is the table referred to the beautiful old table now near the door of the Vestry? Laud's order met with opposition as it was thought to have been inspired by Rome.

Brass to Thomas Hide - 1634

Another lost brass is recorded by Ashmole as existing in 1723 to the first Hyde of Shinfield, inscribed:-

"Thomas Hide Esquire expecting the coming of his Saviour he departed this life the 27th January, 1634, aetatis 82".

Brass to William Woodcock - 1642

The existence of this lost brass is recorded by Ashmole. It may have been a reused one. It may have been to the memory of William Woodcock of Diddenham and his daughters Katherine and Isabel, mentioned in "Swallowfield and its Owners". P.46. It was seen by Mr. Robertson when he toured Berkshire in 1843 (Snare).

The Civil War

The Civil war presented the incumbent with many difficulties. The bishops had been imprisoned or had fled, and ecclesiastical affairs were being dealt with by the magistrates.

The Rev. William Cozens, who had been inducted in 1633, left Shinfield. Towards 1660, considering that the living was still his, he returned, but appointed an Ana Baptist Minister, Mr. W. Stanley, a cordwainer (shoemaker), to act for him, to preach and to take all services.

After the Restoration, according to the Victoria County History, the Bishop of Salisbury in 1661, ordered the Rev. W. Cozens to return to his duties in the parish as vicar of Shinfield and Swallowfield, and forbade William Stanley, who acted for a year, to perform any ministerial acts, and the parishioners were ordered to put him out quietly if they could.

Stanley treated the Bishops orders with contempt, as did some of the parishioners, who disclaimed the authority of the bishops. He refused to stop preaching as he had been chosen by a majority of the parishioners, stating that he would stand by them, if they would stand by him, and he brought 60 men from Reading to support him. The justices were appealed to, but refused to interfere without the Kings orders.

The Report of the Corporation Act Commissioners in Reading in 1662, recorded in B.A.S. 1926, Vol. 30, P. 35, states that "Samuel Jemmatt Mayor of Reading in 1662 was reported on adversely to the Privy Council for shielding "A notorious Anabaptist preacher Wm. Stanley, a cordwainer of Reading, for conducting unauthorised services, including matrimony at Shinfield". Stanley maintained that he was authorised to do so by the suspended vicar. He was aided by "the factious parishioners and 60 stout fellows from Reading and the neighbourhood". He defied orders for his ejection by the Bishop of Salisbury. The Privy Council then ordered his arrest. The Mayor of Reading then took him into custody and refused to deliver him to the Privy Councils messenger on the pretext that he himself had a claim upon Stanley for £6. The Settlement is not recorded, but Rev. Cozens remained nominally vicar until he died in 1675.

One good thing happened at this time. In 1649 Shinfield Parish Register was started. It was kept in the chest in the church until 1946 when it was sent to Reading Library with other parochial records. It is of great interest that the first name in the Register is that of "Ann, daughter of William Goddard, baptised". Incumbents had been ordered in 1538 to keep a register of births, marriages and deaths. This order was often not obeyed, or the record was kept on sheets of paper. In 1598 orders were given for the sheets of paper to be copied into a register book.

During the Civil War the figures of many monuments were knocked off. Some were replaced in 1650, but often in the wrong position. Presumably our Martyn memorial was one that suffered and this explains perhaps how it came to lose the figures of Edward Martyn and the fald stool, and why the figures of his wife and daughter are in the wrong position.

Up to the 16th century reed instruments had been used for music.

In 1644 Parliament ordered "all organs in all churches and chapels to be taken away and utterly defaced and none other hereafter set up in their places". No music was allowed.

The Tower, Bells and Musicians Gallery - 1664

No wonder that after such restrictions, with the joy of the freedom of the Restoration, the Tower was built, three bells installed in it, and a Musicians Gallery placed at the west end of the church against the Tower wall, supported by two carved pillars.

Some records state that the Tower was built in 1630. But a brick in the outside of the western wall of the Tower to the south of the door about 8 feet from the ground is still clearly marked

"W 1664 P"

It is recorded, however, that the tower is built of the same bricks as were used to build Goodrest. This house was built in 1630. So the tower may have been built then too.

The tower is built of soft locally made bricks, and it is stated that they were made from clay from the pits in the Glebe field at the bottom of the Vicarage garden.

The Reading Mercury for 17th January, 1914, has the following description of our Tower. "To those who admire rare and choice old brickwork, this tower should come appealingly. It is brodered with rural diapering, and where man has left off, the sun and wind and rain have begun. It is a ruddy embattled pylon, not without a savour of local craftsmanship, not without marks of the restorers care. Its bricks are worn in places like long red sponges that soak up the rain. It clearly is nearly 400 years old, and to add to its charm its fittings are in keeping with it. There is an ancient door, scarred and weather beaten, set in the bottom and facing the path from the gate. This door is riddled with shot, by whom cannot now be said, but local stories ascribe it to the pranks of an early 19th century sportsman on an occasion of over conviviality. The doorway with its red brick escutcheon shields, is after a Norman pattern. The keyhole is worn to bigness and rounded by many unlockings of long gone parish clerks and vergers. The tower itself has been restored within the last few years, and wisely. Even unsightly iron bands are better than its downfall, which may have suddenly followed the widening fisures.

And so the cemented cracks and bands of the wizard century must not be looked for. At a distance the solid beauty, warm richness and regular lines of this old pile may be appreciated".

John Betjman states that bricks have been better and longer used in Berkshire than anywhere else, brickfields having existed in the county since the 14th Century. In his wonderful descriptive way he continues: "the bricks of Berkshire are seen at their best in crisp winter sunlight, when they seem to glow like fires, and, as the sun goes down, to hold the light more warmly than the sunset". Look at our Tower from the west at sunset and you will see how true this is.

The three bells are still in the tower. They are inscribed:-

"Hope in God - 1664". "Rejoice in God - 1664". and "Honour the King - 1564".

Royal Coat of Arms - 1660

Over the belfrey door hangs a splendid specimen of the Royal Coat of Arms dated 1660. It is painted on oak, and in 1923 was stated to be in a perfect state of preservation. In 1855 it was moved. It might have hung in the front of the Musicians Gallery as in the photograph of the Musicians Gallery in the church in Devon. These Royal Coat of Arms, which are found in so many churches denote the supremacy of the monarch as opposed to the Pope. Their story was given to me in 1957 by an official of the Home Office, who wrote: "I think the position is that with the Reformation when we broke away from the Pope, the practice grew up of displaying the Royal Arms in churches to mark the Royal supremacy. During the Commonwealth, Parliament gave direction for taking down the arms of Charles I from the Speakers chair and from churches and chapels and for their replacement by the Commonwealth arms.

The Parliament that gave these directions was a revolutionary body, as was the body that, in May 1660, before the restoration of Charles II ordered the removal of the Commonwealth arms and the setting up of the Kings arms in their place. There is no evidence that this was approved by Charles II, and in view of the nature of the body that issued it, the validity of the order is open to question. But it is the best answer that I can give. The question of the use of the arms in churches was a matter of controversy some years ago and the subject of a memorandum. Its general tenor is in the Times of 11th January, 1957.

In 1697 Mrs Mary Spicer of Diddenham Manor, Shinfield, left the rent of one acre in the Lords Mead for Church repairs (Charity Board).

In 1722 the fourth bell was added, inscribed "Henry Bagley made mee", and with the names of the Two churchwardens.

Mural Tablet to Mrs Mary Floyer - 1726-North Wall

She was the wife of Colonel Peter Floyer of Uttoxeter, Staffs, who had served under Marlborough, and on retirement had settled at Shinfield. B.A.S. 1933, Vol. 37, P.130 has his pedigree. He lived at Floyers Farm between Ryish Green and Spencers Wood. He was a Trustee of the School. He died in 1731, and was probably buried in the north aisle. An inhabitant in the rate book for 1763 is named Floyer.

In 1729 the treble bell was recast and inscribed "IWF". Miss Williams MSS has more about this. A fifth bell is dated 1730 and inscribed with the name of the churchwarden, David Headland.

Mural to Thomas Hollyer - 1748 - South Wall, White Marble

His name is on the fourth bell added in 1722 as one of the churchwardens. It is also on the board in the tower commemorating the Piggott charity. His pedigree, a local name, is in B.A.S. 1933, Vol. P.130. John Betjman refers to our 18th Century wall tablets as "of beauty and dignity".

Charity Boards

Details of bequests, etc were displayed on boards in most churches about 1750, often years after the bequest had been made. This was not done to advertise the benefactor, but to ensure that the money was not misappropriated.

Details of these boards at Shinfield are in the appendix. The boards are in the Tower. Until 1947 the boards concerning the Fielde and Body bequests were on the west wall.

Mural to Rev. Edward Pordage - 1757 - west end of south aisle, marble.

Alumini Cantabrigiensi states "Edward Pordage, Adm. at Kings, a scholar from Eton, 1706, born at Waltham Abbey, Essex, matriculated 1707, B.A. 1710, M.A. 1714, rector of Bere Cracombe, Somerset, 1714-36, perhaps Chaplain in the Navy in 1734, married at St. Georges Hanover Square, 12th July, 1748, died 31st October 1757, will pcc, Sub Dean of Chapel Royal". Buried at Shinfield. Snare p 92 states that John Pordage had been rector of Bradfield, previously at St. Lawrences, Reading. He fancied he was inspired and knew divine truths clearer than the scriptures, had communion with angels and could tell good from bad spirits. He was ejected in 1654.

Church bell ringing competition - 1778

The Reading Mercury of 7th September, 1778, printed:-

"There will be given by John Brent at Shinfield Church six very good hats to be rung for at that church on 5th October. The company that rings the best round peal, to continue for 15 minutes, to be entitled to the hats. Each company is to bring an umpire and the umpire of the winning company is to be entitled to a 7th hat.

No Shinfield man is to ring or to be an umpire. A dinner will be provided at one o'clock and to begin ringing at 2. None to ring but what dine or pay for same.

Mural to Mrs Rebecca Webster died 1785 - South wall

This is inscribed:-

"This day I die, tomorrow you will go,
You know not where in hope, e'er now I know".

Mural to Edward Wayte - 1788 - North Wall of Martyn Chapel

This is a small stone tablet painted to "Edward Wayte, linnen draper, late of Bristol", who died on 23rd July, 1788, aged 33. It is in the Martyn Chapel because he was a relation of the Woolascotts. The Woolascott arms quarter Wayte in No. 4. The family relationship is in B.A.S. 1933, Vol. 37, P. 143.

Mural To Mrs Anne Hulme - 1790

This is on the opposite side of the window to the Beke monument. She was the wife of Mr. John Hulme, of Bread Street Hill, London. It introduces a name long remembered in Shinfield. She was the mother of William Hulme, a partner in a London tobacco concern.

Mural to John Webster, died 1792 inscribed:-

"Open the grave; my promise firm to keep
We both agreed together here to sleep;
In bonds of friendship, as we lived, we died,
To me everlasting rest laid side by side".

Mural to Richard Body - 1799 - South Aisle

Born 1732, died 1799, father of Peter Body, died 1804.

Barrel Organs

The music used to be made in the Minstrels Gallery by some parishioners bring and playing their own Musical Instruments there.

In 1800 there were two barrel organs in the Minstrels Gallery, played by turning a handle. Each could play ten hymns, and every 8 weeks the hymns were changed with another church. The barrel organs in some churches could play as many as 60 tunes, others only 6 tunes.

Early in the 19th century the vicar held morning service at Shinfield and evening service at Swallowfield. He drove in an open carriage, with the clerk, sitting behind him, dressed in a long blue coat with red facings and a top hat with gold band.

About this time the Rev. George Clark Gayton, husband of Elizabeth Gayton, was curate of Shinfield and Swallowfield. He was born 12th Nov. 1735, and died Oct. 1818. His daughter taught Mr. Gladstone to read (B.A.S. July 1913, Vol. 19, P. 63).

In 1803 or 1808 the other bells were added. The 1904 appeal stated that these were added in 1740 and 1780, and that one was recast in 1803. Perhaps in 1803 the bells were taken down and rehung.

In 1807 it was found that the tower was bulging, so two iron bands were placed round it at the top by the village blacksmith.

Mural to Alexander Cobham - 1809 - South side of east wall
Martyn Chapel.

This is to "Alexander Cobham Esq., magistrate, who died in 1809, aged 72". The Martyn Chapel was used by the Cobhams at this time for their family pews.

Hatchment of Cobham and Slade - West wall Martyn Chapel.

This may have been put up at this time. Motto "In coelo quies", i.e. There is peace in heaven.

Hatchment to William Hulme - 1810 - East Wall of South Aisle

Arms of Hulme, "barry of 8 or and azure, a canton argent, a chaplet gules", impaled with the arms of Brendon, "sable a lion argent with passion nails in the border".

B.A.S. 1937, Vol. 41, P. 99 states that a torn and defaced hatchment was at the west end of the south aisle, dexter half black, and that a notice in the porch stated that it was one of three of Hulme family.

Murals to Wilder family - 1797 to 1816 - North Wall, White Marble

1. "Near this spot Francis Phillip Wilder, 2nd son of Lieut. Colonel Wilder of this parish, who died on 10th Dec. 1797, aged 5 weeks.
Francis John Phillip Wilder, who died 30th April, 1800, aged 5 months,
Henry Phillip Wilder who died 17th January, 1808, aged 13 days".
2. Frederick Phillip Wilder born in La Valletta in the island of Malta, 15th December 1806, died 28th January, 1808, aged 2 years 5 weeks.
To the memory of Francis Phillip Wilder, 2nd son of Major General Sir Francis Wilder MP, of Binfield, who was unfortunately drowned in the 14th year of his age by falling from the East India Company's ship Astell into the Ganges in the Bay of Bengal 24.9.16

In 1813 Major General Sir Francis Wilder bought Binfield. Shortly after losing in 1816, his only remaining son, he died, and Lady Wilder sold Binfield.

On 8th January, 1810, the Reading Mercury reported that:-

"It is with much satisfaction we hear, that the Churchwardens and Overseers of Shinfield, in the execution of their duty, visited the Shops in the parish, and having found several loaves deficient in weight, they were seized, and given to the poor, and the penalty enforced at the rate of 5s, an ounce. - We trust that this laudable step will be pursued in all parishes, and the punishment operate as a salutary caution".

By the Vestries Act of 1818 parish records were entrusted to the vestry.

The present downpipes were put on the tower in 1820, which date is on the top of the pipe on the west wall of the tower.

Mural to Mrs Cobham - 1830 - East wall of Martyn Chapel

Inscribed "Charlotte, relict of the late Alexander Cobham Esq., died 5th December, 1830 aged 75", her remains are in the vault beneath.

In 1836 or 1838 Shinfield was transferred from the diocese of Salisbury to that of Oxford, the advowson remaining with Hereford.

Mural to E.H. Dearsley - 1840 - Westwall

This tablet is near the Martyn monument. It is to the memory of Edward, son of W.H. Dearsley, who died in 1840, aged 20. It was placed there by his mother, who lived at Hartley Dummer, Farley Hill Place, Moor Place, and Diddenham. B.A.S.1933, Vol. 37, P.146.

In 1842 Richard Body of Hyde End died and left £100 for the "annual distribution of blankets to the poor, subject to the upkeep of tablets and monuments to the memory of myself, my ancestors and relatives in the parish church of Shinfield" The money is still invested (Charity Boards).

In 1842 the Churchwardens were Charles Goddard and Thomas French.

In 1843 Snare had nothing of interest about the church.

Mural to Rev. George Hulme Senior - 1845 - South wall west end

Rev. George Hulme of Shinfield Green died in 1845 aged 58. It was surmounted by the Hulme crest and put above that of his wife.

Hatchment to Rev. George Hulme Senior - 1845 - East wall of south aisle

It is alongside that of his wife. The motto "Resurgam" means "I shall rise again". Mottos are not part of a coat of arms, and so are not registered at the College of Arms, they do not necessarily carry on from father to son. A religious father and a less religious son might have different mottos.

Window to Edward George Hulme - near vestry

Died 13th October, 1855 aged 32.

Communion Plate

The existing Vestry Book started on 17th July, 1845. It lists the plate as one Chalice, one Paten, one Flagon of silver, and one Chalice, one Paten and one Flagon of silver plate.

In 1847 Swallowfield parish was separated from Shinfield.

In 1847 the small brass was put on the north wall to Mr. E. Willes of Goodrest.

In 1847 Rev. Matthew Fielde the vicar, died. He is commemorated on the small tablet by the pulpit, which states where he was before he came to Shinfield. An extract from his will was in 1923 on a board below the Steward mural on the west wall, and is now in the tower. It provided for 6 more boys to be taken into the school, for a library and classroom, for repairs and for a clock to strike the quarters "like the one at Brighton".

Mural to General Sir Jasper Nicholls - 1849 - South side of Chancel.

Commissioned at the age of 15, he served under Wellington in India and in the Peninsular war, and was with Sir John Moore at Corunna. Died 1849.

Restoration of the Church - 1855

On 9th April, 1855, the Vestry Book records that "MR Scotts plans for the restoration of the Church were approved" - to be paid for by subscription. This was the famous architect, later Sir George Gilbert Scott, who designed the Albert Memorial in London, and restored so many cathedrals and churches, and whose grandson is the famous architect of Liverpool Cathedral, Waterloo Bridge London and the Public Telephone Call Boxes. He completely altered the aspect of the inside of the church, turning it from what must have been a marvellous old Norman and Early English church, but with many corners and with restricted views, into the present Gothic style of church, more open and more adapted to present day circumstances, which style he liked a lot. He used the coffee coloured Monks Park stone from Bath. He took away the Minstrels Gallery, and probably put in the window in the north wall to the west of the door. All the brasses were cleared away. The stone pillars and arches were inserted. Where these now stand there used to be an old 15th century brick arcade. The chancel was lengthened, a window inserted on its north and south side, and perhaps it was completely reroofed. One authority stated that the pews were put in at this time, but that the pulpit is older. The floor was completely covered with present red and white tiles. They were put over the Mitford brass, which was found later. Perhaps our other brasses are also under these tiles.

Most old churches in Southern Berkshire were "patched and added to in each century until the Mid nineteenth, when Victorian Gothic revivalists so added to them and enlarged them as to create new buildings incorporating a few old features that took their fancy". (John Betjman: Berkshire Architectural Guide, P.60).

Fortunately our church was not altered to that extent. Nevertheless, its style was completely changed. It must have been very interesting historically before his alterations, but it would have been quite unsuitable for the large congregations that we have today. While regretting that the past has gone, unless we wish our church to be a sort of architectural museum, we should be very grateful that as long as 100 years ago someone had enough foresight to make the church suitable for us today. It is remarkable too that all the work - so much - was done in about nine months.

Church repairs before this date had probably been done for years by a local builder and the Lord of the Manor's carpenter.

On completion of the restorations, the present organ was installed in its present position in the Martyn Chapel, and the family pew was moved to the chancel behind the pulpit. The organ is by Long and is undated. On 16th October, 1856 the vestry book records that "Mr. May be appointed organist for the Parish Church at a salary of £2. 10. 0d. p.a."

On 24th March 1856 the vestry book records that "Now the Parish Church is repaired and the south door stopped up, the path on that side of the church leading to the stile is become useless and will be done away with, and the wall bricked up, and raised about a foot higher to the corner". This can still be seen near the post box.

At this time the churchwardens and the vestry used to meet either at the "Six Bells Public House" or at "The Swan Inn", Three Mile Cross (Vestry Book).

The restoration was still being paid for in the time of the next vicar.

The Rev. Bayfield permanently transferred some of the stipend, possibly £600 p.a., to Hereford. It is stated that the Lord of the Manor was responsible for the repair of the church, the Rectory, the Vicarage and the Six Bells. It would be interesting to know if the Ministry of Agriculture and the University took over these duties of the Lord of the Manor when they bought the property !

Repairs to the Tower - 1863

Two more tie rods were added to the tower from east to west to strengthen it and the inside arch was built to support the west window of the tower.

In 1865 William Willes Esq was Churchwarden.

In 1866 the coloured glass of the east window was put in to the memory of the Rev. Benjamin Bayfield.

Abolition of Church Rate - 1871

On 11th April, 1871, the vestry book records that "as Parliament has abolished compulsory powers of collecting a church rate for church expenses and repairs, decided to institute 'the Church Fund' to be collected from the supporters of the church, amount to be decided by vestry meeting".

Mural to Richard Bernard Body - 1894 - South wall

R.B. Body of Hyde End died on 13th December, 1894, aged 33. His wife is also recorded on this tablet as dying in Reading on 7th July, 1933, aged 77. The tablet is below that to Richard and Peter Body.

Some Charities transferred to Parish Council-1895

The vestry book records that in 1895 consideration was given to the distribution of charities transferred from the vestry to the Parish Council by the Local Government Act of 1894.

Form of Service - 1901

On 12th April, 1901, the vestry book records that "the election of Churchwardens was considered. Mr. Ware, the new vicar, stated that he would be willing to appoint Captain Cobham on the understanding that he would agree to changes being made in the service, that more music and more intoning would be introduced. Captain Cobham declined accepting office on these conditions not knowing what he was committing himself to. Mr. Ware then said he would appoint Sir Charles Euan Smiths as his Churchwarden".

Lightening Conductor

On 15th April, 1903, the vestry book records that "the vicar suggested that a lightning conductor be fixed to the tower".

Repairs to tower and beam - 1904

In 1904 it was discovered that the tower and the massive oak beam were unsafe, and the following appeal was printed in pamphlet form and issued in December, 1904.

"To the Parishioners of Shinfield".

Dear Sir or Madam,

You are probably aware that for some months past for fear of danger to the tower, the church bells have not been rung and we have been deprived of the peal of bells, that have hitherto been such a pleasure to the parish.

The church of St. Mary, Shinfield, was built, as far as can be ascertained, before the Conquest, though there are portions that are decidedly Norman, while the south aisle was added in 1526, and the square tower and belfrey rebuilt about the same time or at the beginning of the 16th century, though the foundations are apparently much older.

In the tower are six bells, 3 cast in 1664, one in 1780, one in 1740 and one recast in 1803. In 1803 the church bells were taken down and rehung, after strengthening the tower by putting two bands round the top. Since that time nothing of any consequence has been done to the bells but in 1863 two more bands were added to the tower from east to west, and an inside arch built to support the west window of the tower.

About Easter last (1904) it was intimated to the vicar by an architect, who kindly voluntarily inspected the tower, that in his opinion the vibration caused by the 6 bells was likely to render the tower unsafe and advised that the peal should not be rung till the defective bell frame construction should be remedied and the tower strengthened.

The vicar and the churchwardens elected at the easter vestry consulted Mr. S. Slingsby Stallwood, FSA, the Diocesan Surveyor, who inspected the tower, and while expressing his opinion, that the ringing of the bells need not necessarily be attended with danger or risk of injury to the structure, advised the overhauling of the gear and the execution of such repairs and renewals as might be necessary to secure smoothness of action and minimise the effects of vibration, also the addition to the tower of two straps or ties of iron and bolts from north to south and cutting out some cracks, setting the new brickwork in cement well bonded to the old walling.

The churchwardens have obtained from Messrs. Callas Sons & May Ltd., an estimate of the cost of putting the gear into good order, with new ropes, wheels and stays, and Messrs. Callas undertake to do the work for £55. 14. 0d.

Messrs. Callas have also estimated the cost of supplying the iron straps, ties, bolts etc., recommended by Mr. Stallwood for £13. 15. 0d.

Mr. W. Attawell has estimated the cost of cutting out cracks and soft bricks and building in the new brickwork in cement well bonded into the old walling, cleaning and white-washing the interior of the tower at £23. This makes in all a total cost of £92. 9. 0d., to which must be added surveyors fees, incidental expenses of printing etc., say £15 or £20.

We now appeal to the parishioners and all other persons interested in the preservation of this old church tower, one of the oldest in the county of Berks to help to raise the sum of £120, which will enable the Parish to enjoy again the fine peal of bells, which for so many years, even counting in hundreds has been the pride of the Parish.

Contributions can be paid to Messrs. J & C Simonds, bankers, Reading, to the account of the Shinfield Church Tower fund, or to Mr. C. F. Millett, The Crofts, Three Mile Cross, Reading, Vicars Churchwarden or to Mr. Henry Goddard, Warrens Gate, Shinfield, Peoples Churchwarden.

We are,

Yours faithfully,

R.J. Wilmot Ware, Vicar, C.F. Millett and Henry Goddard,
Churchwardens.

Mr. Stallwood, or his son, whom I knew, lived in Christchurch Road, and died about 1956.

On 5th May, 1905, the Vestry Book records "Hope to have the tower and bells in order if raise enough money".

In 1908 the beautiful carved oak Jacobean Communion Table, one of the finest in existence, was found, dusty and neglected, in a corner of the tower or vestry. The lamps were cleaned on it. It was cleaned and renovated and put in the chancel as the altar.

Mrs Reginald Palmer has two postcards of perhaps about this time. One is a photograph of the inside of the church and shows a large heating stove where the lecturn now is, the lecturn in the centre of the aisle, the oak communion table (now near the door) as the altar, different lighting pendants, the old lighting pendant, now in the tower over the altar, and the ten commandments (now in the tower) each side of the altar on the east wall. The second postcard is of Church Lane, very beautiful, overhung with trees. The supports to the outside of the churchwall and the letter box are there.

First regular Collection in Church - 1911

On 21st April the Vestry Book records that it was resolved to make a collection from the congregation every Sunday morning service to form a General Church Fund.

Gas connected to the Church, -1913

On 28th March, 1913, the Vestry Book records that it was "Proposed to connect a gas main to the Church".

The church has not always been looked after as it is now. On 17th January, 1914 the Reading Mercury recorded that a robin and a thrush perched on the open windows and bats wheeled under the roof.

In 1913 the first Sidesmen were appointed (Vestry Book).

South Wall repairs

Mr. Idenden stated that about 1906 the South wall of the Church was underpinned at a cost of about £600, and South Aisle Crypt filled in.

In 1918 a District Nurse was appointed (Vestry Book).

In this year it was also decided that only parishioners were to be buried in the Cobham burial ground as it was getting full (Vestry Book).

In 1919 it was proposed to place a brass tablet in the church with the names of those killed in the 1914-18 war (Vestry Book).

About 1920 the stucco was removed from the outer walls of the Church and the Martyn tablet "1596-M-EM" was found outside the Martyn Chapel.

On 9th April, 1920, the last Vestry Meeting took place. As the Parish Council had been formed and on 4th April, 1921, the first meeting of the Parochial Church Council was held, when repairs to the church roof were discussed (Vestry Book).

In 1929 the south wall bulged alarmingly, and immediate steps had to be taken to save the building and tablets. The work was done by the firm of stonemasons that still repair our Church, Messrs. A.F. Jones of Reading. In this year also the Church Hall was built on part of the orchard of the Vicarage, and the first meeting of the P.C.C. to be held there was on 23rd April, 1930.

Repairs to the Church Roof - 1931

A printed leaflet in the Vestry Book in 1931 reads as follows:-

"The Parochial Church Council have decided to proceed with the very necessary work of stripping and retiling the Church roof, as according to expert advice, the lathes have decayed and must be renewed. It is estimated that this will cost £300.

We have an ancient and beautiful church, built originally in Norman times and restored, enlarged, and kept in order through the centuries by the gifts of generous Church people. It is our duty to keep the fabric in good order so that it may be preserved for those that come after us.

We appeal to all parishioners and friends as well as those that worship in our beloved Church Sunday by Sunday to give as generously as possible for this good work - the preservation of God's house, and a valuable possession of the Parish.

Donations large or small should be sent to either of the undersigned, or placed in the envelopes supplied herewith and brought to the church on Sunday 28th June, which will be a day of Gifts.

About 29,000 tiles will have to be dealt with 10/- will cover the cost of fifty. The children by giving a penny a week can pay for 6.

General C.C. Lucas, Shinfield Grove.
W.H. Salmon, Silverdale, Arborfield Road.
Rev. H.G. Seymour, Shinfield Vicarage.

In 1932 the cost of repairs to the roof and tower is entered in the Vestry Book as amounting to £207.

Free Will Offering Scheme

This was started in 1933 (Vestry Book)

In 1934 the Electoral Roll had 175 on it. Robes for ladies in the choir were discussed (Vestry Book)

In 1936 the Martyn Chapel was in use as a vestry. The Mitford brass was found by the font, under the tiles. It read "Here lie the bodies of George Mitford and Mary his wife. George died December, 1842" Was the font installed in 1936?

Electric Light - 1946

In 1946 electricity was connected to the Church and the present electric light equipment installed.

Altar, Processional Cross etc., - 1946-48

The purchase of a Processional Cross was discussed in 1948 (Vestry Book).

In 1948 there were 218 on the Electoral Roll.

The Jacobean Table was removed from the altar and put by the door, and the present altar table was installed, given by Lady Palmer. The Charity Boards were taken down from inside the Church and stored in the tower, as also were the Ten Commandments that were on the wall each side of the altar.

In 1949 the Church was thoroughly cleaned and redecorated, and the roof and beams treated with anti dryrot and beetle at a cost of £220. A safe was bought and the records in the Parish Chest were transferred to Reading Library.

In 1952 the lime trees in the churchyard in front of the Church were cut down.

In 1956, the pulpit was moved about 6 feet to the north to fit into the corner.

In 1957 the coat of arms of the R.A.F. was put on the north wall, by private subscription of some R.A.F. Officers, to commemorate R.A.F. Flying Training Command Headquarters being in the parish.

After much work by the parishioners to raise the money, the sum of £800 was spent in 1957 on repairing the parapet of and reroofing the tower. The external staircase was reroofed and glass put in its windows. The gratings of the belfrey louvres were renewed to keep out the birds and a very nice draftproof door built into the west wall of the tower to replace the old one which was made of bad quality wood, did not even keep out the birds, and was of no historic value in spite of legends to the contrary. This cost about £800.

Defective outside brickwork was replaced, and 2 iron bands placed round the souwest corner of the tower, about half way up.

We now are determined to maintain the great heritage that has been handed down to us through so many centuries and that has survived so many vicissitudes by the efforts of previous parishioners.

HOUSES AND PROPERTIES IN SHINFIELD

The following letter from Mr. Henry Goddard, in beautiful writing, is preserved with Miss Williams' MSS in Reading Library.

"Woodlands, Shinfield, Reading. 29th August, 1923.

The present Manor House is not the original Manor for the Shinfield estate that stood in the little paddock adjoining the old barn and buildings called Ducketts, now owned by the Reading University College near the Reading Road. The house must have been very ancient and there are facts that prove that it must once have belonged to Reading Abbey. The house was unfortunately pulled down about 100 years ago and my father helped to cart away the timbers.

Mr. Cobham bought the estate from the Earl of Fingal and was the first owner to make the present Manor House a residence, which was formerly Church property and the old barns were used for storing the tithe corn.

The old Rectory is of course the present Manor House.

There was an old Vicarage House which stood just in front of the present house, which was pulled down and the new one built about 75 years ago.

The Six Bells Public House was the present building near the church gate entrance.

The old farm opposite, where I was born nearly 78 years ago is old and must have been an immense place once according to the foundations, traces of which were discovered some years ago.

I lived all my life in the parish - Henry Goddard".

This letter shows that considerable explanation is needed to follow the history of Shinfield's buildings and the following is an attempt to do this.

SHINFIELD VICARAGES

To summarise, the Vicarage was first the N.I.R.D. building. It was then "The Old Vicarage" and later a building on the site of the present "Old Vicarage", and recently the present vicarage.

The Priests House

When the church was built about 1069, a house was built for the priest next to the church, known as the Priest's House. It may have been on the site of the N.I.R.D.

The Rectory - now the N.I.R.D.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, about 1600, the old priests house was pulled down and a new house built on the same site.

There is no record at Hereford of its being built.

When alterations were being made in the 1950's what might have been a cellar appeared about 20 feet to the north of the old kitchen in the old wing of the new building; also an old bridle and saddle fitting for a sword which disintegrated. There were no signs of a well.

In 1960 wattle walls were discovered and in the roof what looked like ships timbers, with taffrail and gunwhale fittings.

It was called the Rectory, but why I do not know, as the incumbent was known as the Vicar, and is referred to as such on the Charity Board of 1697.

In 1704 the Rectory was considered too big and a new house was built for the incumbent on the site of the present Old Vicarage. It was called the Parsonage.

From 1704 the Dean and Chapter of Hereford let the Rectory. The names of the tenants are not known, but it was noticed in 1923 that one of the bells was marked "Lady Smith's Room", which might refer to one of the tenants. There is no record of the tenants at Hereford. The cedars may have been planted by one of these tenants who had travelled abroad.

In 1802 the Rectory was sold to Mr. Alexander Cobham. Mr. Cobham, mentioned in the Shinfield Rate Book for 1783, had gone to India in 1783-84 in the sailing ship "Success", where he was a judge. He returned to England about 1796, and bought the Manor and estates of East and West Shinfield from his brother-in-law, Mr. Slade, and the Earl of Fingal. He lived at the old manor house that used to be opposite the R.A.F. Headquarters. He had this pulled down in 1802 when he bought the Old Rectory.

Mr. Cobham was a Magistrate, and as Lord of the Manor, owned most of the land in the Parish. The old rectory did not become known at once, however, as the Manor. Snare in 1839 described Diddenham House as the Manor. The latter was pulled down later, so perhaps the rectory then became known as the Manor, a name by which it is still known to many people today.

On 12th July, 1809, Mr. Cobham died suddenly as the result of an accident aged 72. He had ridden back from Reading the day before and on his death bed "He spoke about the old horse and he said that he was cantering down the back lane as he frequently did as the nearest way and he supposed the fore-foot of the horse had gone into a rut and that he had been thrown over the horses head. He spoke of the lane - the

Green Lane - with which he knew I was extremely familiar from having rode to his house that way. He found himself immediately incapable of any motion and that some people came up who brought him home". This is an extract from the copy of the proceedings Martyr v Craig by a special jury at the Assizes at Reading on 3rd March, 1812, owned by Mrs Reginald Falmer, of Hurst Grove, Nr. Reading.

The back lane is marked on the map of 1756 as running from the tithe barns by the Church, curving slightly to the south, and coming out at the present S bend in Hollow Lane, where a gate still exists today. But why was he cantering for so short a distance after coming up from the dip in Hollow Lane, when also one would have expected him to have walked his horse for at least that short tit home. He could not have been going very fast, so it is possible that the accident occurred a little further from home. For in the evidence quoted above "The Green Lane" is mentioned - capitals being used. The map of 1756 marks a "Green Lane". It runs from the R.A.F. main entrance down to the White House at the bottom of Brookers Hill.

There is a tablet in the church to Alexander Cobham and one to his wife, and a hatchment with the arms of Cobham impaling Slade. He had no children and the codicil to his will made on his deathbed, which was contested, left his property to the baby son born 25th June, 1808, then 13 months old, of his first cousin Mrs Martyr. The will also provided that the baby, whose name was Alexander Cobham Martyr, should assume the name of Cobham. This he did in 1813, becoming Alexander Cobham Cobham. The "baby" did not die until 1902, so the Shinfield property was in the possession of the same person for as long as 94 years.

It would be interesting to know more of what went on during that long life. He married in 1831. It is recorded that "in 1836 the Rectory House was empty". Were alterations being made to it, and were they done by the famous architect Soane? B.A.S. 1931, Vol. 35, P. 119 states that the house had

"the style of Sir John Soane (1753 - 1837) the back wall being the inner wall of a long hall spanned by 3 arches with a Georgian staircase". Soane was born at Whitchurch near Pangbourne, and had spent his early years in Reading. He was responsible for several buildings in Reading, including Greyfriars Vicarage in 1796, the Simeon Obelisk in the Market Place and possibly the back part of the Crown Inn.

At an unknown date Alexander Cobham Cobham moved from the Manor to the Grange and his son Captain Alexander William Cobham moved from Leighton Park to the Manor.

Alexander Cobham Cobham's mother died in 1877. The inscription on the Cobham grave shows that he was living at the Grange in 1877, and that his son Alexander William was living at Leighton Park in 1863, and possibly in 1883. So it seems that Alexander Cobham Cobham may have moved to the Grange before 1877.

Captain Alexander William Cobham only lived at Shinfield Manor periodically as his wife did not like Shinfield and spent a good deal of time at Eastbourne. His daughter Mary Jane had married the son of Mr. Hargreaves of Maiden Earley. When Mr. Hargreaves died, Maiden Earley was sold to Solley Joel, and Mary Jane and Mr. Guy Hargreaves went to live at Shinfield Manor. She remained there until she died in 1899.

Alexander Cobham Cobham had 4 surviving children. His second son Robert Gray Cobham did not marry until he was 49 and then went to live at Hurst Grange. He died in 1905 without issue.

When Alexander Cobham Cobham died in 1902, he was succeeded by his eldest son Captain Alexander William Cobham born 25th October, 1834, who served in the Army in the 44th and 24th Regiments and had gained the order of Medjidieh 5th class.

He was High Sheriff in 1868, and a JP and CA. He was Chairman of the Protestant Alliance, which low church organisation disliked the Vicar being in front of the altar and any form of a cross (even if of flowers) being on the altar. He married in 1865 and had 8 children and died on 13th May, 1913.

He was succeeded by his eldest son Alexander Blyth Cobham, born 1869, who moved to the Manor in 1913 and who in 1920, sold the house and farm conjointly to the Ministry of Agriculture and Reading University, to become the National Institute for Research in Dairying.

The Cobham male heir is his nephew Commander Anthony John Cobham, Royal Navy, born 1909.

A photograph of the Manor at this time is in the possession of Mrs Reginald Palmer, who was his eldest daughter, and who is the wife of Mr. Reginald Palmer of Hurst, now the Chairman of Messrs. Huntley & Palmer.

On the Cobham grave in the churchyard near the gate to the garden of the Old Vicarage, the following inscriptions were read in 1959:

1. Alexander Cobham Cobham (? of Shinfield, Berkshire)
born 25th June, 1808 died (? 14) (May 1902).
2. the beloved wife of (? the Grange)
born (? 20) May (18-8) died 10 (?) 1877. (This is
presumably the wife of Alexander Cobham Cobham.
3. Alexander William Cobham, Captain 44th Regiment, of
Shinfield Manor, born 25th October 1834, died 13th May ,
1913.

4. Louisa, wife of Captain Alexander William Cobham, of Leighton Park, Berkshire, born 1st May, 1842, died 3rd October, 1863.
5. wife of Middlesex born 28th June,
died.
6. Alice Celina, 3rd daughter of Alexander William & Celina Kate Cobham, born 24th September, 1870, died 28th June, 1879.
7. Henry Gray Cobham, 2nd son of Alexander William & Celina Kate Cobham, born 14th May, 1872, died 22nd August, 1931.
8. Gladys Pascoe, wife of Henry Gray Cobham, born 11th December, 1880, died 9th May 1957.
9. Claude Barton Cobham 4th son of Alexander William and Celina Kate Cobham born 18th January, 1877 died 15th August, 1900.
10. Euphemia Elsie 7th daughter of Alexander William and Celina Kate Cobham born 29th March, 1882, died 11th January, 1883.
11. Albert Scott, 5th son of Alexander William and Celina Kate Cobham, born 2nd April, 1885, died 20th January, 1886.
12. Evelyn Kate, youngest daughter of Alexander William and Celina Kate Cobham of Leighton Park, Berkshire, born
20 18 died

The staff of the N.I.R.D. arrived in 1923, and it was opened under Dr. Williams in October, 1942. In 1925 the Institute was visited by King George V, who planted a chestnut tree. Dr. Williams died in 1932, and was buried in the cemetery annexe, a plot of land that had been given to the church by Mr. Cobham. He was succeeded by Professor H.B. Kay C.B.E., who in turn was succeeded by Dr. Mattick in 1958, and by Professor Baskett in 1959.

In 1934 the Library was built next to the old garden, and in 1954 the Services building was erected at the back. H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh paid a visit in 1955.

The Parsonage - (on the site of the present Old Vicarage)

When the Rectory became too big in 1704, the smaller Parsonage was built with the bestowal of Queen Annes Bounty. There is no record of it being built in the Victoria Country History, nor at Hereford. Salisbury might be tried. It may have stood in front of the present Old Vicarage, as there is a well there. Mr. Haslett, a builder in the Arborfield Road in 1930, stated that part of the back of this Parsonage is traceable in the cellar under the front of the present Old Vicarage. He had noticed old fashioned work when doing repairs there. But the cellars of the Old Vicarage are at the back. These cellars certainly look older than the present building. Are cellars under the front of the house too? So the Parsonage may have stood exactly on the site of the present Old Vicarage. Light on this point would be interesting. The map of 1756 shows the Parsonage standing in about the same position as the present Old Vicarage.

We are lucky in being given a graphic but short description by Miss Mitford of this home of our Vicars for 150 years. She stated that it was not large, but it was picturesque. It had 3 gables, a porch, and lattice windows. In another reference she stated that the Rev. Fielde was the last person to live there in 1847 in "that little nest of peace and comfort, the little parsonage between the arching elms which enclosed it like a picture frame, with its casement windows glittering from between china roses". (Wheathoeing)

I have recently destroyed the stubb of a large tree about 20 feet in from the road in the northwest boundary hedge, also one by the garden shed, but it is strange that she does not mention the cedar, nor the old thorn tree by the gate, but perhaps the cedar was planted in 1847. I am told there used to be a Tulip tree here.

The Old Vicarage

In 1847 it was decided, for some reason, to rebuild the Parsonage. The Rev. Fielde died on 24th October, 1846. The Rev. Bayfield, who had taken up the living in 1847, went to live in the village whilst the vicarage was being rebuilt with stables erected behind it. The cost was not entirely borne by him.

Clapham's Economic History of Britain states "Rectories big enough and fine enough for a gentleman to live in had now become common, and many a gentleman parson, with a considerable independance besides one or two good livings, built his own, or his brother, the squire, built it for him". Shinfield was not so fortunate and part of the cost remained a charge to the next vicar, until 1891.

Meantime Mr. Bayfield's household lived "in a pretty white house with lime trees before it" (Our Village). They sent before them "a neat modest maid, whose respectable appearance gave a character to her master and mistress, a hamper full of flower roots, sundry boxes of books a piano-forte, and some simple and useful furniture", which so favourably impressed Miss Mitford that she had a presentment that "we shall find friends". B.A.S. 1933, Vol. 37, P.148.

The same sort of coffee coloured Bath stone was used for the quoins of the new vicarage as was used for the restoration of the church by Sir Gilbert Scott 8 years later, and it is my belief that Sir Gilbert Scott may have been responsible for the design of the new vicarage, as I believe that he was working at Bradfield and other places nearby about them. Sir Giles Scott had no record of this in 1957. No reference could be found about this in the Reading Mercury for 1847.

In 1863 the Cobham vault in the Martyn Chapel became full. The churchyard was therefore extended by taking over a part of the vicarage garden. A burial spot was chosen in the quietest place close to the vicarage garden gate, furthest from the lane, now no longer so quite owing to the boiler house built by the N.I.R.D.

In 1866 the Rev. Rynd built a room onto the back of the vicarage for a Bible class, according to the late Mr. A. Tapping. This room was also used as a sort of Church Hall. The Boy Scouts used to meet there, and in the vicarage stables.

In 1929 the present Church Hall was built on part of the orchard of the vicarage.

In 1936 the wall by the gate of the Old Vicarage collapsed.

This house ceased to be the vicarage when the present vicarage was built in 1939. The old vicarage was sold to Mr. Senior. In 1942 a fire, believed to be due to an electrical fault, destroyed the twin gabled roof and attics. The present hollow flat concrete roof was put on with the parapet round the front. Most upstairs woodwork was renewed, and the high old Elizabeth chimneys replaced by the present modern ones. The stables were turned into a cottage in which the Seniors lived during part of the rebuilding. It is believed that the building was under insured, hence the parapet only being rebuilt at the front, and a flat concrete roof being put on instead of a slate and wooden one, though this may most likely have been influenced by the shortage of labour and materials during the war. For a while the house was known as "Church Lane House".

About 1943/44 Mr. Senior sold the old vicarage to General Sir John Scobell, the heroic defender of Malta in the first half of the war, I bought it in 1953, and in 1955 pulled down the Bible Class room, which had become riddled with furniture beetle, and built the present garage. The parapet was put round the other 3 sides of the roof in 1958.

The present Vicarage

This was built in 1938-39. The Vestry Book records that the plan of the new vicarage was inspected on 18th January, 1939.

CHURCH FARM AND CHURCH FARM HOUSE

When the church was built in 1069, and given to the Abbey of Lyre, land was also given to it for its maintenance. The land was farmed by the priest, the work being done by the people that lived in the parish. A farm house was built, and there were barns, sheds, cows and pigs. The barns that are behind the church today are old and are of historic interest as they have been used for generations for storing the tithe corn and produce of the church farm.

In 1320 some land that had gone to Hereford with the advowson, was forfeited to the King.

The present Church farm house opposite the church gate was built in 1604, by the Dean and Chapter of Hereford. The building is of great historical interest to the church, and it is hoped that it will remain there for many years to come. It has a Jacobean staircase and wide dowelled floor boards. The middle room was a dairy and has a low shelf, with arches under it forming cupboards, upon which the milk churns stood. The door to the farm was at the foot of the staircase. Outside was a tread mill, traces of which can still be seen in the road (at the bend).

In 1852 Mr. Charles Goddard was at Church Farm. The tithe land around the vicarage was let to him, as it is now let to the N.I.R.D.

Mr. John McGowan was the first farm bailiff of the N.I.R.D. and he lived at Church Farm House from about 1923 to 1957, when the present tenant Mr. Davis moved in.

In 1929 Mr. Henry Goddard, who was then 78 years old and who was born in Church Farmhouse and whose father farmed it before him, and who was a Church Warden stated that it must have been a larger place at one time, as he had found traces of foundations.

In 1958 when the main sewer was being put in, some foundations, a coin, and some 14th century pottery were found.

THE CHURCH HOUSE AND SIX BELLS TAVERN

The Church House was the block of houses next to the churchyard gate.

At one time the Church was responsible for many more things in the parish than it is now - for education, for discipline, and for the general conduct of the parish. This administration was carried out at the Church House. The building contained spits, crocks, and provisions for parish feasts and seasonal activities, when the people "made merrie", when the young danced, bowled, and shot at bulls. Beer was brewed at Church House for these parish activities, and for the minstrels and bellringers, and for the medaeval plays when holiness went hand in hand with happiness, and holidays were to celebrate Holy days.

The Constable's lockup and stocks were outside until they were transferred to Three Mile Cross in 1856. The fact that they were transferred to Three Mile Cross and not to School Green shows that the centre of the village was then more at the former place, though admittedly the Pound and the School were at the latter. It was a big parish.

The first record of a Church House being built is as early as 1488, though whether the houses now at the church gate date from then I do not know. Part of them was added comparatively recently and they were enlarged a little at the back in 1954. Horses were stabled there during the church service, and a stable for this exists in front of the north side of the part now let to Mr. Beakhouse.

Many of the duties of the church for education were taken from the church during the last century, though the school is still a Church of England school. Other powers also lapsed and finally the parish duties were taken away from the churchwardens on the formation of the Parish Council in 1923.

One thing that does seem to have remained is the important duty of the dispensing of beer! The Church House eventually became just a Tavern. It was called "The Six Bells", after the six bells in the church. It was open all day, and owing to the noise of the customers inconveniencing the inmates of the church, the manor, the vicarage, and the farmhouse, it was moved to a house at the bottom of the hill, where it still is. This house is marked on the map of 1756, with the long narrow garden that it still has.

When the church house ceased to be a tavern, it was used as cottages, and these were sold with the manor in 1923. Mr. Beakhouse lived there in 1958. He used to be employed by Mr. Cobham and now works for the N.I.R.D. He said that the Inn sign was secured flat against the wall in the centre recess that looks like the place for a window.

The well was at the bottom of the hill opposite the present Six Bells. Water was piped to it from a spring near the pits at the end of the present vicarage garden.

SHINFIELD OLD MANOR HOUSE

This used to be opposite the entrance to the present R.A.F. Headquarters.

The land of Shinfield manor was the property of the King, and was held from him by various Lords of the Manor, most of whom may not have lived here until Elizabethan times. They had a bailiff, however, and a bailiff is mentioned in Domesday.

I do not know when the old manor house was built, but it existed in the time of King Henry VIII.

In 1539 when King Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of Reading Abbey, the Abbott hid the Book of the Charters of the Abbey at Shinfield Manor, from the King's officials, in a small room, where it was bricked up and forgotten.

In 1596 Edward Martyn was bailiff of Shinfield. He is recorded in 1567 as being the Surveyor of Berkshire. He built the Martyn Chapel in the church and lived at the old manor house. In 1603 he bought this house and died there in 1604. His daughter Anne, in 1617, married William Woolascott of Shinfield, who succeeded to the property.

About 1704 part of the manor house moat was filled in to form a road.

On 19th March, 1755, Henrietta Maria (died 12th April, 1808) only daughter and heir of William Woolascott, of Woolhampton, Berkshire, married the 7th Earl of Fingal and the property passed to him. The Earl of Fingal owned it in 1792 when the Book of the Charters was found. A workman who was repairing a chimney, broke through a wall and discovered a room. In it were three seats, the charter,

other books and money. The Book of the Charters is now in the British Museum. Bound in oak boards, it is a record of the properties of the Abbey, its books and relics. The following is in the beginning of the book:-

"This book was found secreted in a very concealed and unknown corner of my Lord Fingal's house at Shinfield near Reading. It was brought to Woolhampton Great House by Mr. Gul Corderoy, the steward, with several other books found by a bricklayer employed to pull down some part of the house, or rather part of a wall, in order to repair thoroughly a chimney in Shinfield House. This account I had from Mr. Corderoy on 20th June, 1792, who likewise supposes the bricklayer, who is now living in Reading, found no small sum of money, or something valuable, as shortly after that time he advanced much in the world by means of money which no one knows how he could be worth. Wrote this account 23rd June, 1792".

Alexander Cobham bought the property and the old manor house about 1796.

About 1802 he had the old manor house pulled down and Mr. Henry Goddard's father helped to cart away the timbers, some of which were built into Wokefield House. He remembered a deep well there, so perhaps the present users of the land had better take care not to fall into it. Pictures from the house, many Hogarths (1697-1764), were taken by the house-keeper to the Six Bells.

In 1923 it was described as having stood "in the little paddock adjoining the old barn and buildings called Ducketts, now owned by Reading University". Presumably this was all that remained in 1923, and I have a photograph of this barn. Part of the moat of the house still exists, and the garden and avenue can be traced.

SWALLOWFIELD PARK

The name derives from an early name Swealve for the river Blackwater which runs into the River Loddon at Swallowfield Park.

The history is dealt with fully in "Swallowfield and its Owners" written by Lady Russell in 1901.

It was part of the parish of Shinfield and the most important residence in the parish was built there in Norman times. In 1255-58 the children of King Henry III lived there. In 1355 King Edward III granted it to his daughter Princess Isabel. In 1509-47 Queen Katherine of Aragon was there. In 1553 the King sold the property to Christopher Lytcott.

Edward Hyde, nephew of Sir Nicholas Hyde of Hyde End, Shinfield, was created Earl of Clarendon. His son, the 2nd Earl married in 1670 Lady Backhouse, the widowed heiress of Swallowfield Park, and in 1689 he built a new house there. His daughter married King Charles II's brother, James Duke of York. Her daughter Queen Anne stayed at Swallowfield as a girl.

The Clarendon family continued to live there until the 3rd Earl sold it in 1719 to Thomas Pitt. A Dorset parson's son, penniless at the age of 19, Pitt had made a fortune in India, beginning by trading against the monopoly of the East India Company, and ending as Governor of Madras. The great diamond that he brought home, took 15 anxious years to sell, and was for a time with his kinsman George Pitt at Stratfield Saye. He finally agreed to sell it in 1717 to the French Regent for £125,000, but only received one third of this and some jewels.

With an unhappy time at Swallowfield, he made many alterations to the house and built the five arch bridge over the Blackwater that still exists. He died in 1726. His grandson, who became our Prime Minister, played at Swallowfield when a schoolboy at Eton. Though three peerages were created amongst his descendants, all were extinct and all his male descendants dead, scarcely a hundred years after his death. The diamond went into the crown of the French King, and is now in the Louvre. His son sold Swallowfield in 1737.

Sir Henry Russell, after a distinguished career at the Bar and as Chief Justice of Bengal, bought Swallowfield in 1820, and his descendants are still there.

John Betjman describes Swallowfield as a large Classic house of 1820 by William Atkinson, a pupil of Wyatt, built round remains of an existing house of about 1690 by Talman. Of this house there are remains about a courtyard, and a beautifully carved stone door with a rounded pediment serves as a garden entrance.

SWALLOWFIELD MILL

Mentioned in Domesday. The present mill and millhouse alongside were built about 1820.

There is a picture of the Mill in one of the publications of Mary Mitford's books. She stated in 1824, "And what a pity, as my companion observes, not that our good and jolly miller, the very representative of the Old English yeomanry, should be so rich, but that one consequence of his riches should be the pulling down of the prettiest old mill that ever looked at itself in the Loddon, with the picturesque, low browed, irregular cottage, which stood with its light pointed roof, its clustered chimneys, and its ever open door, looking like the real abode of comfort and hospitality, to build this huge, staring, frightful, red brick mill as ugly as a manufactory, and this great square house, ugly and

red to match, just behind. The old building always used to remind me of Woollett's beautiful engraving of a scene of the Maid in the Mill. It will be long before any artist will make a drawing of this. Only think of this redness in a picture! Falstaff's description of Bardolf's nose would look pale in the comparison".

The miller referred to, was Thomas Searle who died in 1828. The colour of the buildings have now been toned by the sun, but what would she have written about the proposed petrol station there.

SHEEPBRIDGE OR SWALLOWFIELD BRIDGE

Mentioned in mediæval documents. Is its name derived from the sheepwash there or from an old name like Sheepbridge? The Loddon is shallow and has a gravel bottom here. There is an interesting old house nearby with a moat. A bridle path led to the bridge from Hyde End.

KINGS BRIDGE

This is the next bridge to the west of Swallowfield bridge. It is mentioned in 12th century documents.

PRIORY FARM, BEECH HILL

Now owned by Sir Allen Lane, the founder of Pelican and Penguin books.

PRIORY OF ST. LEONARD

Now known as the Priory, Beech Hill and the home of Mr. Oliver Roskill. It was founded in 1170 and suppressed in 1400. There are moats nearby that are either ancient earthworks or the site of Beaumes Castle. Some say that

they are much older than the castle, which was to the northeast of them, and that they were probably protection for an ancient British settlement, the moats being filled from the Loddon.

BEAUMES CASTLE

The story of Beaumes Castle or Manor is as follows (B.A.S. 1931, Vol. 35, P. 144).

Nicholas de la Beche, from whose name Beech Hill is derived, was from Aldworth, Berkshire, and was tutor and guardian to the Black Prince and the other Royal children. When he died in 1347, after being married for 9 years, his widow Margery de Poynyngs was a great heiress, partly in her own right. King Edward III, whose ward she was, arranged for his favourite Gerard de Lisle to buy from him the reversionary rights in the young widow and her estates. This was a royal command to marry Gerard, but Margery was unwilling. She had a friend and lover Sir John de Dalton of Lancashire who was determined to save her from her fate. He hurried from Lancashire to Shinfield, collecting Knights and Squires, a party of 66 men on his way. Sir John had distinguished himself in the Kings service. He cannot have expected to have enjoyed Margery's estates as he must have known that the king would outlaw them both and confiscate the estates as the king would not get payment from de Lisle. Most of those in the party were men of position who had much to lose by incurring the kings displeasure. One was the Constable of the Tower and some had fought at Crecy. To inspire these men, Margery must have been quite a romantic figure.

Aldworth was Margery's usual home but on this occasion she was at Beaumes. The party raided Beaumes Manor by Redyng before dawn on Good Friday, 1347, and carried off Margery just in time to prevent the marriage. Moreover the

Kings son Lionel, Keeper of England and the rest of the Royal children were staying in the house at the time. Margery's uncle Michael de Poynnyngs, was killed. The party fled towards Basildon, Margery bringing jewellery worth £1,000, a lot of money then. A Basildon priest, and others, were arrested for complicity. John married Margery at once, for a writ described him as her husband.

The King was very angry, outlawed them all, appointed Gerard to arrest John and gave him special licence to arm his company. As no one was arrested, a month later the King issued another writ, this time to the Sheriffs of every county in England that "no one upon pain of forfeiture shall join, receive, maintain, or have commerce with John de Dalton, and to arrest him and take him and his accomplices to the Tower of London". He appointed special Commissioners to hunt the fugitives, and charged all Mayors and Bailiffs to give assistance, a reward being payable for the arrest of any of them.

The sympathy of the country was so much with the lovers, however, that no one gave them away as they rode northward for a month. Sheriffs and Commissioners ignored their movements and many landowners assisted them. By May they had reached Scotland, where they were beyond the Kings jurisdiction. The King of Scotland ignored Edwards appeal to arrest them. In due course all the party, Knights and Officers, except John and a friend, returned to London, and were pardoned by the King as he wanted soldiers for his campaign in France. Their forfeited estates were gradually returned to them, except at least one, who was imprisoned in the Tower.

Three years after arrival in Scotland the lovers risked a journey through England and crossed to Calais, where they pleaded in 1350 with the Black Prince for help in obtaining the Kings pardon. But Margery died at Calais. John later surrendered to the King and was pardoned in view of his

military service. Margery's lands were freed. John waited 20 years before he married again.

The site of the Manor is between the front gate of Loddon Court and the river on the terraced land between the moat near the river, which marks a still older building, and a kitchen garden, where tiles of the approximate period of this incident have been found.

BEECH HILL HOUSE

This is a 3 storey, square brick building of 1720, now used by an Institution.

TRUNKWELL HOUSE

From 1678 this was the home of Sir Thomas Woodcock.

Henry le Coq St Leger landed with King William III & made his home in the parish of Shinfield. He took the name of St Leger, and bought Trunkwell House and land for £10,000 and lived there.

Trunkwell House was pulled down in 1898, and Trunkwell Farm was renamed Trunkwell House.

In 1843 Snare (p.142) describes the beautiful view from Trunkwell and then states that "down a small lane" from the house was the Tweeddale Patent Drain, Tile, and Brick Manufactory. The Marquess of Tweeddale, when his daughter married the Marquess Douro, introduced a machine here, worked by horses, which made tiles from clay. There were several other such machines around, one at Whitley.

An indenture of 14th February 1681, with 9 seal tags, 7 seals extant, now in the Red House Museum, Christchurch, Bournemouth reads: "Robert Bever of Mortimer, gent, and his wife Mary and Winefred Gosnold, relict of George Gosnold, late of Beconsfield, Bucks, gent,

and formerly wife of Peter Noyes, late of Shinringfield, alias Shenfield in Berks, gent, with children John Noyes, Samuel Noyes, another, and eldest son Peter Noyes of Trunckwell in the parish of Shinringfield alias Shenfield, gent. In consideration of £1,000, a capital messnage or farm in the parish of Pamber Hants.

DIDDENHAM MANOR

This was at the bottom of Mays Hill on the left going from Spencers Wood to Beech Hill. A flint arch still remains.

It is first mentioned in the 12th century. Miss Williams thought that the Stewards might have lived there.

In 1638 Capel sold it to Sir Thomas Woodcock. In 1642 Sir Thomas Woodcock planted a wide avenue of trees as an approach to his house, which is still called "Woodcock Lane". It still runs, a wide "green road" from between the Grenadier in Whitley Wood and Three Mile Cross, across country to the site of Diddenham Manor.

In 1678 Sir Thomas Woodcock bought the whole of the Beaumes estate and moved to Trunkwell House.

In 1697 Mary Spicer lived at Diddenham.

In 1840 it was owned by Mr. E.H. Dearsley.

In 1843 Diddenham was "the Manor" of Shinfield, the old Manor House opposite the R.A.F. having been pulled down, and the Rectory (now the N.I.R.D.) not having by then assumed the "dignity" of the manor.

Snare in 1843 printed a picture of the house and described it:-

"By following the course of Woodcock Lane - a pretty green lane leading through some finely planted woods - we come directly to the old manor house of Shinfield. This building is remarkable for little else than its beautiful situation on the banks of a picturesque stream, and for being the only description of manorial residence in the whole parish. It is a plain excellently built mansion, and is now used as a farm house. At one angle of it stands an elm, greatly admired for its size and beauty - indeed the whole scenery around is singularly beautiful. Few traces are left of its former grandeur; there are, however, the remains of the fish stews, and of other accommodations which in former days, were found only in the houses of the great". We still follow the course of the lane, which after many windings, terminates at a ford of the same stream, and ascending Beech Hill, which lies directly in front, we catch a glimpse of Trunkwell House".

FOUDRAY MANOR

Its position is not known. Possibly it was near Swallowfield or at Mortimer, but the Foudray Brook runs from around Burghfield through Pingewood to the Kennet. Was this stream the western boundary of the parish?

MOOR PLACE

I have not been able to find out where this was. It was owned by Sir Owen Buckingham in 1709 and by Mrs E.H. Dearsley in 1840. It might have been at Farley Court owned by Mrs Dickinson in 1820, who was a friend of Miss Mitford. The latter describes watching a sunset from the round room at Farley Court: "the sun lingering longest on that long island of old thorns and stunted oaks, the oasis of B. (Bramshill) Heath, and then vanishing in a succession of gorgeous clouds".

PINGEWOOD

The Reading Mercury of 18th May, 1957 stated:-

"As to the name, the origin of which is obscure, in the Register of the Charters of Reading Abbey, temp Henry II, there is a reference to the granting by a member of the de Peletot family to the Abbot and Convent of Reading is an easement in PUNGE, GRAYSHULL (Grazeley) had common of pasture in mediaeval times. Further in Dugdales Monasticon, the settlement appears as PUNGE. The name PINGE therefore seems to be a later form

It may be that as in other instances, the Wood in Pingewood, is superfluous and the settlement gets its name from a British PAENGE, which itself means a wood. All the Kennet valley was densely wooded formerly, and soon after the Conquest it was disafforested as far as Hungerford. There was never a manor of Pinge, it was a tiny hamlet, like Sheffield Bottom in Burghfield, in the Hundred of Theale. It would seem, like many other "leas" and "greens" hereabouts, to have had its origin in a forest clearance, and was always wholly concerned with agrarian pursuits. Not far away was Silchester, the Roman City, but one might hazard the opinion that there were settlers at Pinge-Wood before the legions came to Britain. The Foudray Brook, a name again that eludes the expert, would supply the primitive population with water".

HARTLEY COURT

This nice house is about a mile to the northwest of Three Mile Cross. Its history starts in 1514, when a new farm was formed there out of Abbey lands, which is referred to in Leadhams "Domesday of Enclosures". In that year a house was erected there, called Hartley Court by Thomas Beke, son of Henry Beke, whose tablet is on the north wall of the church.

In 1599 Hugh and Elizabeth Speke lived there until they moved to Wiltshire in 1601.

In 1606 Sir Francie Englefield lived there.

In 1609 Sir Thomas Smyth lived there.

From 1620 to 1630 William Wilder lived there.

In 1625 Robert Smyth died, and Hartley went to his son in law Cary.

In 1709 Hartley passed from John Westmorland to Sir Owen Buckingham, who also held adjoining manors of Moor Place and Diddenham. All three were later owned by H. Plant, who sold to William Dearsley, then his son William Hanson Dearsley, who died in 1825, when his widow married Thomas Owst. In 1843 it was occupied by Mrs Cooper. Snare P.159.

The house has interesting features of the transition between the early Tudor and the Elizabethan periods. The greater part of the old house was still standing in 1931: B.A.S. 1931, Vol. 35.

It has a solar, which is reached by three stairs from the hall. This solar is panelled in the early rectangular style and the ceiling is plain. The Beke coat of arms, dated 1599, in coloured woods, is in the centre of the "principal mantelpiece, massive but beautifully carved as the others in the house". (Snare 1843).

Under the solar is a dry cellar, which is unusual in an old Berkshire farmhouse, as moats were customary, and cellars were apt to fill with water. The moat is a fair distance from the house, and runs halfway round the garden.

The old front door was the back door in 1931, and is 83 x 43 x 3 inches. Its heavy key is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. It opens onto a flagged passage showing the house to be one room deep, and suggesting the usual later division of the hall into two rooms.

Two staircases close together were discovered in the 1920's, when putting in electric light.

The third story, once probably one room, is divided into three, and opening out of the middle room is a large dark cupboard, probably the sleeping closet of the senior servant.

Snare stated that the house has a modern front, with a hall spanned by a wide four centred staircase and rooms built on each side of and over it. The entrance to the hall was then at the outer end, and a light Georgian staircase at the other. The fireplace in the hall may have been in the solar.

In 1858 Edward Bradford was at Hartley (Vestry Book: 25.3.1858).

Lady de Bathe (Lily Langby) died there in 1929. Was she there when Oscar Wilde was in Reading Gaol?

Sir Henry and Lady Head lived there in 1931, and thought that Hartley had been altered by Sir John Soane as it is his style, vide his favourite arrangement of the window woodwork.

Snare continued, P.159, "It is an ancient house with a modern front in forming which it would seem that many old rooms must have been dismantled, for a beautiful and massive carving, evidently the mantelpiece of the hall, is still

preserved in a storeroom at the top of the house. That it was the principal chimney piece appears evident from the exact correspondence with the architectural design with that of the other chimney pieces in the house. In the centre is the coat of arms of the Bekes in inlaid coloured woods dated 1599. Several other antique ornaments, a carved door etc., may be seen in what is now stable".

B.A.S., 1932, Vol. 36, P. 92 states that when the Misses Kemble of Wokingham left Hartley in 1899, there were four staircases to the first floor. The article explains where they were and suggests that they were blocked up in the time of Mr. Vallange or Captain de Bathe:-

"Besides a Georgian staircase there is one each side in the passage from the back door to the kitchen. One led to the front landing and the other to the little passage that opened on to two old rooms at the back of the house, one facing north and one south. The only way to these rooms in 1899 was by going through two bedrooms and then to the other end of the little passage. Now (1932) there is a passage from the front landing taken off the two rooms that were passage rooms".

"Another staircase led from the kitchen to the front landing and from there to the attic. The panelling etc in the solar was thickly painted and varnished. The one room at an angle of the house, that Miss Mitford speaks of, was pulled down, but its chimney was left. It is on the south side, and once when a workmans tool fell into it, a boy was let down to pick it up. Bees used to build in it when we were there. The plan in the Benyon estate office showed these stairs open, so they were blocked and the panelling was cleaned in the time of Mr. Vallange or Capt de Bathe"

It was owned by Major Ian Skimming after the second war until 1960, who modernised it, lowered the ceilings, and pulled down the modern N.E. corner room.

THE OLD BELL INN, GRAZLEY

The Reading Mercury of 28th December, 1957 stated:-

"In an old inn called the Old Bell at Grazley, after rebuilding had taken place, the landlord and his wife were disturbed by noises in the bar parlour as of hammering and of furniture being shifted; they found chairs had been moved out of position. This occurring repeatedly, their scared children were taken at night by a neighbour. A bag of old coins was eventually found amongst thatch from the former roof, stacked in the yard; the landlady put some of the coins in a desk which she could not open again, and afraid she gave it away. The rest of the hoard was distributed amongst customers, and the disturbances stopped".

GRAZLEY COURT

Published letters of Mary Russell Mitford read:-

"It was situated in very pretty pastoral country about 3 miles from Reading. The house, which had been built as a country gentlemans residence in the time of Elizabeth or James I had lost station in the neighbourhood - had fallen out of repair and was only tenanted by agricultural labourers. The estate was supposed to have a defective title; and Dr. Mitford having bought it (and 80 acres in 1800) for a few hundred pounds, had determined on restoring the house and making it his home. And wise would he have been had he never attempted more.

There was a romantic character about the old house, for the loss of which no amount of modern accommodation could compensate. That old sitting room, with its large sunny, oriel window, and its walls wainscotted in small carved panels, was worth a dozen of the formal commonplace rooms of the new house. There was a large oaken staircase with a massive balustrade and broad low steps, such as are safe and easy to childhood and old age. Then there were expansive fireplaces, with highly architectural chimney pieces adorned with old fashioned busts and coats of arms. Above all there were two secret rooms in which priests and cavaliers had been known to hide".

But the misguided father of Miss Mitford, finding the work of adaption too slow and expensive, suddenly decided (in 1802) to raze the old house and build a new one (a little further back from the road and to remodel the garden). The Court was demolished and 'Bertram House' (so named to indicate to posterity that its owner was a scion of the Mitfords of Bertram Castle, Northumberland) rose upon the ruins. This was a real tragedy for we might now have another Ufton Court".

A medal commemorating the centenary of the 1688 revolution was put under the first brick. It took 4 years to build.

What happened to this house? Was it burnt down? A modern building appears to occupy the site now. It is again called Grazley Court. Mr. Brooke of Brooke Bond Tea lived there recently.

THREE MILE CROSS AND MARY RUSSEL MITFORD

The Will of William Woolascott, say 1740, refers to the Kings Head at Three Mile Cross.

The main road from Reading to Shinfield used to be via Three Mile Cross and Church Lane. In those days Three Mile Cross was Shinfield Village, and it remained so for long after the present main road was built from the Merry Maidens to Hollow Lane. Thus when Mary Mitford refers to "Our Village", though she meant Three Mile Cross, we in Shinfield, today can truthfully feel that she is writing about Shinfield, though the site of "our Village" has changed.

Dr. Mitford, her father, had to move from Grazley Court to Three Mile Cross in March 1820, owing to financial difficulties. His daughter had to earn money by writing to support her parents. And well it is for us that she had to do this for she produced some of the most soothing and gentle though vivid, descriptions of the countryside of our parish;

another example of the way difficulties so often produce good.

Shinfield may be unique in having such detailed descriptions of the life of its people from 1818, when she began to write, to about 1850. Her book "Belford Regis" is about life in Reading 1802-06, where she lived when Grazley Court was being rebuilt.

Her stories, mostly written for magazines, are combined in various editions, under the name of "Our Village". Place names are sometimes false; the Swan Inn is referred to as the Rose; Reading is B; Arborfield Hall is called "the great house at Arberleigh". The names of the people are true, though the more influential have false names. Mr. W.J. Roberts "Extracts from Mary Russell Mitford", published in 1913 has a nice frontispiece of her house in Three Mile Cross, and pictures of Three Mile Cross in 1913, of Woodcock Lane, of "the house of seven gables", Shinfield Cottage, and Shinfield Churchyard.

Dr. Mitford died in 1842. He and his wife were buried just inside the door of Shinfield church. The brass record was covered by the new tiles in 1855 and was discovered in 1936. It reads "Here lye the bodies of George Mitford and Mary his wife. George died day of December, 1842". Perhaps our lost brasses similarly lye under the tiled floor of the church.

In 1851 Mary Mitford moved to Queen Annes Mead in the road to Kings Bridge in Swallowfield, where she died in 1855. She was buried in Swallowfield churchyard.

Snare describes Three Mile Cross in 1843.

The Kings Head Tavern referred to on the Charity Boards, where the Church Wardens used to meet, is now the Swan Inn.

The George & Dragon opposite the end of Church Lane became a private dwelling house about 1957. The village school opposite the Grenadier was built in flint in 1861 by H. Woodyer (built Christ Church in 1862).

GREAT LEA FARM HOUSE

Built, southeast of Hartley Court, in 1822 by Mrs Ann Body. Her name with the date is on a brick in the outer wall.

VILLAGE SCHOOL

This attractive flint building opposite the Grenadier was built by H. Woodyer in 1861 before he built Christ Church Reading in 1862.

WHITLEY LODGE

* Snare, P.160, states that Thomas Owst lived there in 1843.

HILL HOUSE, SPENCERS WOOD.

The residence of Commander G.H.C. Askew, R.N.

STANBURY HOUSE, SPENCERS WOOD

This belonged to Mr. Allfry of the Brewing firm, and then to Mr. Allen whose daughter moved to (? Culham), Oxon, and then to Chipping Norton. It was pulled down in 1960.

HIGHLANDS, SPENCERS WOOD

Roque's map of Berkshire, published in 1761, shows a house here. It might have been a farm or a hunting lodge. The present stables and coach house might have been part of this as the date 1762 still appears on an outbuilding.

John Noble lived here in 1764, when it was referred to in the Church Wardens Rate Book as Highlands.

In 1825 it was bought by Captain, later Admiral, Mackallar, and in 1830 Mr. Carter lived here.

In 1835 the property was bought by William Merry, Private Secretary to Lord Palmerston. One can imagine that he would have been more interested than Sir John Cowray of Arborfield Hall when Queen Victoria passed on her way from Reading to Stratfield Saye to visit the Duke of Wellington in the 1840's.

William Merry shut off the old front door and added the front part of the present house. This resulted in its assessment being increased in 1839 from £37 to £78 p.a. The Shinfield Church Wardens accounts recording the assessment had previously described it as "Property in the west side of Shinfield", and once as "Property in Spencers Wood". It was first described by the Church Wardens as "Highlands" in 1847.

William Merry took a large part in the building of the Church at Grazeley in 1850, but died in that year, when he left Highlands to his adopted daughter, Miss Crowdy.

About 1908 she sold it to Mr. Horton who made more additions to the house, pulled down the school at the inner gate and built a bungalow there.

In 1914 he sold it to Mrs Cookson, who died in 1934 and her daughter, Miss Cookson, then sold it to Major Maynard.

In 1935 it was bought by its present owner, Mr. M. F-G.S. Magill

John Betjman describes the house as a "late Georgian style stucco residence".

SHINFIELD COURT

This house halfway along Church Lane, used to be known as Church Lane Farm, and Mr. Johnson and his son who was Mr. Cobham's bailiff lived there. The son still lives (?Mount Pleasant) in Reading. About 1903 Colonel Simonds bought it and built onto the house. It is now occupied by the well known racing motorist Mr. A.G. Whitehead, who farms there.

FLOYERS FARM, RYEISH GREEN

Colonel Peter Floyer lived there in 1726 to whom there is a monument in the church. It is the small unnamed farm on the tithe map of 1862 between Ryeish Green and Spencers Wood, owned by the Rev. George Hulme in ? 1814. Mrs Thorp lived there in 1871. B.A.S. 1933, P. 130.

The piece of ground to the east of where the Reading boundary crosses Whitley Wood Road was known a hundred years ago as "The Graffage".

"THE MOATED HOUSE" - possibly behind the Vicarage

Miss Williams stated in her records in Reading Library in 1923 that this house "was evidently built on an enclosure where the common slopes down to the common fields near the lane to the Basingstoke Road and the bridle path to Reading. The site is easily found at the end of the field opposite the Vicarage. There are the remains of a deep moat behind it hidden by trees".

She was clearly referring to the moats in the trees behind the present Vicarage. Having asked Mrs Wood, who has lived in Shinfield for more than 70 years, it seems that by "the lane leading to the Basingstoke Road", she means Church Lane. Mrs Woods stated that the footpath leading from just east of Shinfield Court to the road in which is the "Engineers Arms" used to be a bridle path, and that about 6 cottages once stood alongside it.

Some think that these are not moats but only clay pits used for the bricks for the church tower and Goodrest.

THE SCHOOL HOUSE IN CHURCH LANE OPPOSITE THE SIX BELLS INN

The book of Berkshire Charities published in 1839, records that an infants school was then in existence.

In 1843 Snare stated that "an infant school has been built and is entirely supported by the Rev. George Hulme, within his own grounds, adjoining the church".

It is my suggestion that this might refer to the building in Church Lane opposite the Six Bells. This building was probably later used as a girls school, as it is recorded that in 1869 an existing girls school was sold, and it is stated that Mr. Cobham bought the building opposite the Six Bells in 1869.

THE HYDE FAMILY

Thomas Hide was buried at Shinfield in 1634 aged 82.

In 1614 Sir Laurence Hyde, of Norbury, Attorney General to King James I was knighted and given the manor farm of Hide End in Hyde End Road, which included Badgers Farm in Cutbush Lane.

His brother Sir Nicholas Hyde, the Chief Justice, came to live at Hyde End Farm later, and his descendants lived there after he died there in 1631.

Edward Hyde 1609-74, a nephew of Sir Nicholas, became Lord Chancellor in the reign of King Charles II, and was created Lord Clarendon. His daughter Anne Hyde married the

Kings brother James Duke of York, but died in 1671 before the latter became King James II in 1685. She was the mother of Queen Mary and Queen Anne.

In 1670 the 2nd Earl of Clarendon married Lady Backhouse, the widowed owner of Swallowfield Park. The 3rd Earl lived at Swallowfield until he sold it in 1719.

Another branch of the Hyde family lived at Badgers Farm in Cutbush Lane. The last of them, Hannah Hyde, great granddaughter of Sir Nicholas, married Augustine Badger in 1721.

HYDE END FARM

Hyde End Farm was originally the small manor farm called Hide End mentioned above - called after the Saxon word Hide, which was the area that could be worked by one plough.

In 1614 King James I granted it to the Attorney General, Sir Laurence Hyde, and the name was spelt Hyde End.

His brother Sir Nicholas Hyde, the Chief Justice, lived there until he died in 1631, followed by his descendants, and a larger house was built. Sir Nicholas daughter married James Duke of York. Doubtless her daughter, Queen Anne, visited Hyde End as a girl, when she was staying with her uncle at Swallowfield.

In the 19th century Mr. Richard Body was at Great Lea Farm and a cousin, another Richard Body was at Hyde End Farm, to whom there is a tablet in the cellar of the present house which was built about 1810. He died in 1842.

Miss Williams states that "someone must have made the drive instead of an old bridle path to Hyde End House, brought it round to join Spencers Wood Road, planted the avenue of pines that probably mark the new direction, and

built Hyde End Cottage, where members of the Body family lived when Hyde End Farm was in other hands. R.B. Body lived there in 1888. R. Body was at Hyde End about 1890" (B.A.S. 1933, Vol. 137, P. 146). Colonel Max Robinson lives at Hyde End Lodge.

BADGERS FARM - now Cutbush

This was part of the manor farm of Hide End granted to Sir Laurence Hyde in 1614, and some of the descendants of his brother Sir Nicholas Hyde, lived there, the last male of whom died in 1713 without issue. Shinfield church register shows that the sister of the latter, Hannah Hyde, great granddaughter of Sir Nicholas, married Augustine Badger in 1721, and they lived owned, and farmed here, as did their son John Hyde-Badger.

The latter was the last of the Hyde family at Shinfield. Manns History of Reading published in 1815 states that:-

"John Hyde-Badger was a gentleman farmer and mathematician and had many relics of the Clarendon family, including a curious pair of gloves worn by Lord Chancellor Clarendon when at Court and several articles that had belonged to Queen Anne. His hall was hung with many pieces of armour used in the civil war and was much visited by people to see it".

He died in 1790 and was buried in the family vault at Shinfield.

Snare stated that 1843 "Mr. Cobham also owned a smaller manor granted by King James I to the Hydes". Whether he refers to Badgers farm or not I do not know.

The old part of the house is Jacobean, 1603-25. The barn may be older. It had mullioned windows and a moat.

There is nothing of interest in the deeds. The map of 1756 shows, extending eastwards over the garden, a larger house than the northern portion that existed in 1923. This was pulled down and the present house built about 1777. Much of the house and barns were rebuilt with the old material about 1925. It is well worth preserving. The chimney is built outside the wall and it has wooden gutters and down-pipes.

An island on the Loddon on the property is still called Badgers Island. There is a moat in the orchard that may be part of a Saxon encampment, or the remains of an ornamental garden. I have a photograph of the house taken about 1903.

BROWNS GREEN

Just to the east of Badgers farm on the north side of Cutbush Lane is a triangular field. I presume that this is what used to be called Browns Green, on which was a gypsy encampment. There was also a pond there formed out of a gravel pit. It was enclosed under the enclosure act of 1855. The east end of Cutbush Lane is still called Gypsy Lane.

Some barefist fighters lived with the gypsies, and after barefist contests had been made illegal, members of the London sporting world arranged for fights between London prize fighters to take place at Browns Green, when a large number of people drove down from London for them. The late Mr. Henry Goddard and Mr. Harry Stevens of Parrot Farm are said to have played truant from school to see the last fight in 1856.

CUTBUSH LANE

In the map of 1756 the present front garden of Shinfield Grange is marked as common land and called Bush Green. It was enclosed in 1855. Only one tree is marked on the green,

and that is in the position of that of the old whitethorn tree that stood in 1930 on the left of the drive gate. This bush seems to have given its name to Bush Green and to Cutbush Lane. The tenant of the small homestead farm behind Bush Green trained the thorn bush in the shape of the Prince of Wales feathers, hence the names. The tree appeared to be well over 200 years old in 1930, and still retained its shape.

I have a photograph of Cutbush Lane taken early in the century.

Swains Rope & String Factory used to be in Cutbush Lane where Ovens Cottage stands opposite the University Garden gate. The property extended away from the road in a long narrow strip which was used for stretching the rope. A photograph of such an old rope walk appeared in Country Life of 12th September, 1957.

SHINFIELD GRANGE - in Cutbush Lane.

The small house that forms the central part of the Grange is marked "1655 G.G.S", which might refer to a St John owner. It was occupied by the tenant of the homestead farm mentioned above.

Alexander Cobham Cobham bought it in 1857, built onto it and moved there from the Manor, on the death of Alexander Cobham Cobham in 1902, Mr. A.C. Cobham's second son Mr. Robert G. Cobham, who previously lived at Hurst Grange, bought Shinfield Grange. He made some alterations to the house but died in 1905.

His widow lived there until about 1908 when she let it to Sir Eric Palmer and added a drawing room. About 1910 to 1919 Sir Eric bought the Grange, and about 1937 added the porch and cloakroom with the bathroom above.

On his death it was sold to the present owners, Reading University. I have some photographs of it taken about 1903.

OLD NAMES NEAR SHINFIELD GRANGE

In 1353 the 4th Baron de StJohn died and his property in Shinfield reverted to the King. In 1354 the Kings Reeve (Bailiff) sold $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres in Risshemede for 3/-. This was probably the water meadow now called Rushy Meadow near StJohn Copse, near the Grange.

The same reeve sold half the herbage (hay) off 10 acres in Ryershe for 4 pence - now Ryeish Green.

The footpath from the Grange to Arborfield Hall passes Ivy Lake Bridge, Calves Lease Meadow, and Lords Meadow (the Lord of the Manor's), and Millfields to Hunting Ford where the footbridge over the Loddon leads to the ruins of the little church of St. Bartholomew, said by some to be 13th century. It has a 7 hundred years old yew tree, thought to have been planted when the church was consecrated.

A little further on are Pudding Lane and Greensward Lane.

Between Cutbush and the University orchards was Crabtree Pyghtle, a pyghtle being a small enclosure.

Pigwash Lane runs between St. Barnabas Church and Browns Green. Perhaps pigs were washed in the pond on the green.

East of the Grange near the Loddon is a covert called the Devils Garden, possibly because years ago someone tried to cultivate it and found the ground too sour.

ARBORFIELD HALL

This is not in Shinfield, but is included for interest.

In 1200 Richard Bullock was Lord of the Manor of Arborfield.

In 1384 Richard Bullock was Lord of the Manor of Arborfield and Sheriff of Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

In 1557 Thomas Bullock left ornaments and vestments to Arborfield Church, which is now the derelict Chapel.

In 1589 Thomas Bullock's grandson sold the Hall to Edmund Standen whose descendants held it in the time of Mary Russell Mitford. The Hall in her time was probably built about 1654, and she refers to it as "the old house at Aberleigh". She relates how, leaving her carriage at Loddon Bridge, she climbed the stile, crossed the ploughed up park by what had once been a drive and there stood the Great House "a beautiful structure of James I time whose glassless windows and delapidated doors, form a melancholy contrast with the strength and entireness of the rich and massive front..... a great part of one side is laid open, and the splendid chambers with their carving and gilding are exposed to wind and rain".

The old house was demolished in 1835, shortly after the above was written, except for the stables and laundry, which survived till 1926.

In 1843 Snare (P.155) visited it and stated that " The boat house upon the Loddon is still there, as described by Miss Mitford, but the splendid old pile that was crumbling to decay was pulled down by the Lord of the Manor in 1835. On its site he built the present picturesque mansion in the same style but smaller". (Slightly summarised).

The estate had been sold to Sir John Couroy, Controller to the Duchess of Kent, who had been pensioned off, it is said by Queen Victoria when she came to the throne because of his influence over her mother. He retired to Arborfield

and in 1842 built a new Hall on or near the site of the old Manor House. He was a great organiser and turned over all the 320 acres to a depth of 22 feet, threw down hedges and banks, constructed a square box that he called a bigots hole to receive the drainage of 40 acres, made farm roads, erected new buildings, including a machinery barn still existing with a steam 10 H.P. steam engine, which drove a threshing machine, and a straw and root pulper. There are many tablets to his family in the ruined little Church.

When Queen Victoria passed through Shinfield on her way to visit the Duke of Wellington at Stratfield Saye, he forbade his employees to leave the premises to see her, it is said.

In 1851 the farm was favourably commented on by Sir James Caird on a national survey for the Times.

In 1854 he died and his son sold the estate to Thomas Hargreaves, who added to it in 1864, which date appeared on the front wall. It had 2 wells in the cellars. Lights were put along the river for one particular evening's entertainment, which have been a most picturesque from the pretty boat house which still exists.

In about 1925 the Hargreaves sold the estate to Mr. Guthrie Allsebrook, who now lives at Shinfield Grove.

In 1938 monuments to E & W Standen dated 1639, and a stained glass window of about 1780 were moved from the little ruined chapel near the Hall to the present church.

In the 1939 war the Hall was severely damaged. About 1955 it was bought by the Ministry of Agriculture for the N.I.R.D., and in 1957-58 it was demolished and the stone and bricks were probably used for road making at "Bracknell New Town".

THE ROAD BY THE BRIDGE OVER THE LODDON

In 1843 Snare stated that the road had been recently raised on the Shinfield side of the bridge as the old road was flooded in winter.

The piece of ground to the north of the first bridge on the Arborfield Road (the third bridge being that across the Loddon) was known a hundred years ago as "Yarks".

SHINFIELD POST OFFICE

This house, built about 1850, ceased to be the post office in 1959. It used to be the home of Mr. Cobham's estate carpenter. The last holder of this post was Mr. Idenden, who still lives there. He came to Shinfield in 1887, took on in 1903, and served in the R.N.A.S. in the 1914 war.

The small picturesque building at the end of his garden was his workshop. Before that it was a paint shop, and earlier had been a blacksmiths forge.

POUND GREEN

The local pound, for putting stray animals in, was in what is now Mr. Idenden's garden. It was about 20 feet square. The north side of the pound was Mr. Idenden's workshop mentioned above. The foundations of the other three walls can be seen to the south of Mr. Idenden's workshop in his garden. The green was enclosed in 1897, and the pound was pulled down about 1908.

The triangular piece of land to the north of the workshop between the roads, belongs to the church.

Two houses in Pound Green are referred to in the will of Richard Piggott in 1729.

A most picturesque cottage with pointed windows stood to the west of this land, which was where Mr. C headgardener and under gardener lived. Mrs Reginald Palmer has a picture of it. It was pulled down in 1950, and the present house of Mr. Lord erected, who is the head gardener of the N.I.R.D. - next to the present Police Stn.

Behind this house there were withy beds at one time which were used for basket making. The ground was later dug out for gravel. Hops were once grown in the glebe fields opposite the Six Bells.

SHINFIELD CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL, AND SCHOOL GREEN

The history of the school has just been written so well by the Head Master, Mr. J.E. Jackson to commemorate the 250th anniversary of its foundation, that I will not repeat it here. But a history of Shinfield would be incomplete without a reference to the school, so here are some facts.

The earliest reference to Shinfields educational charities is in 1697, when the will of Mary Spicer of Diddenham Manor, Shinfield, ordered 6 acres of land to be held "in trust that the vicar and other parish officers should receive the rents and apply them in teaching 10 poor children to read the Bible and learn the Catechism".

Mr. Snare states that Mrs M Snips made an endowment for 15 poor children in 1697. The Charity board refers to Mrs Mary Spier and 10 children.

In 1707 the school was built on School Green by Richard Piggott citizen of London, son of William Piggot of Shinfield.

In 1847 Rev. Wm. E.F. Fielde left £2,050 for the school, and for clothing the boys and to give each boy a bible on leaving and 6d. a bun and glass of wine to each boy on 30th May, and for a clock outside the school to strike the quarters like that at the Brighton National School. (Charity Boards) This extension to the school was built in 1858.

In 1889 an extension was built under the will of Rev. G.B. Hulme.

In 1893 improvements enabled a Government grant to be obtained on recognition as a Public Elementary School.

In 1947, as £9,000 was needed to retain the school as a non aided school (Vestry Book), the County Education Committee took over some control of it in return for which they built 3 classrooms, opened in 1953.

HOLLOW LANE AND SHINFIELD ROAD

The latter road did not exist at one time and to get from School Green to Reading one had to go down Church Lane to Three Mile Cross.

In 1704 part of the Manor Moat was filled in to form a road, so perhaps this road was made in 1704.

I have a photograph, and so has Mrs Palmer of the road in 1903. Snare describes its beauty in 1843 as follows:-

"A noble avenue of oaks commences at the back of the church. At first it follows the course of a rather steep acclivity, but at the distance of about half a mile, exhibits a very perceptible inequality, indicating the site of the old Manor House attached to the property of the Cobhams and pulled down by them about 50 years ago. It assumes a singularly beautiful appearance as it approaches Shinfield Green, where we with difficulty catch a glimpse of the delightful retreat of Goodrest, which now stands before us".

LANE END FARM.

I have a photograph of this in 1903.

THE BLACK BOY INN

When tobacco was a novelty, tobacconists put the effigy of a negro outside their shops, because tobacco was grown by negro labour in America. As the negro outside the Black Boy is smoking a long pipe, the figure might well have once been outside a tobacconists shop. Mr. William Hulme of Shinfield was a tobacco merchant.

But as the figure is dressed up, it may have been that of a negro in a visiting fair that gave the inn its name.

There is yet another explanation. Colonel R. Thompson, Sheriff of Berkshire in 1719, lived at Coley Park after a career in Jamaica, and he probably had a black boy as a servant, as was fashionable then. A relation of his lived at Whitley Wood, and they also may have employed a black boy, who was seen in the district, and so gave the inn its name.

The name Black Boy was also applied to King Charles II when he was not called Old Rowley and other names.

The famous railway engineer, I.K. Brunel stayed there in 1833 when prospecting for the railways near Reading. He met his partner several times at Shinfield, and recorded in his diary that the "Black Boy" was a beautiful place in hot weather. ("I.K. Brunel" by L.T.C. Rolt).

There used to be a blacksmith opposite the Black Boy.

SHINFIELD GROVE

This is between the Black Boy and the R.A.F. Headquarters.

Miss M.E. Williams in the Berks Archeological Journal, reprinted in St. Mary Shinfield monthly magazine for March 1935, stated that a number of tablets, a stained glass window and 2 hatchments in the church are all connected with former owners of Shinfield Grove.

The earliest tablet is to the memory of Mrs Rebecca Webster of Shinfield Green, a patch of common adjoining the Shinfield estate,

Mr. John Webster, citizen of London, and Rebecca his wife had purchased in 1737 a little farm on the edge of the common, which they developed into the Shinfield Grove estate, and where they lived for many years. Turnpike roads and tree planting being then two great interests of rural life, they planted trees, chiefly oaks, along the roadside bordering their land, while Lord Pingal planted oaks along the other side, forming the avenue, now Shinfield Road, so enthusiastically admired, 50 years later, by Mr. Snare. The scenery of this part of his journey forcibly brings Miss Mitfords descriptions to mind.

Mr. John Webster died in 1792. He left his property to his children John, William, George, and Anne (the late Mrs William Hulme). A tablet dated 1790, is dedicated to Mrs Anne Hulme, wife of Mr. John Hulme, of Bread Street Hill, London. Their son William Hulme was a London merchant and partner in a tobacco concern. He married the daughter of John and Rebecca Webster.

William Hulme belonged to the Evangelical Party. He built Holy Trinity Church, Reading as a proprietary chapel. His 3 sons all followed their father to Balliol and the Church. His eldest son, Rev. George Hulme, succeeded to Shinfield Grove. He had been Chaplain and Private Secretary to the King of Hanover, and had married Elizabeth Breedon of Bere Court, Pangbourne.

The Rev. George Hulme's daughters one buried in the Churchyard. "Emily, his eldest daughter was born 31st October, 1811, and died 21st May, 1895. Maria, his second daughter was born 19th January, 1813, and died on 10th December, 1885.

The Rev. George Hulme died about 1888, and in 1889 his children gave a piece of land as an extension of the School House, as recorded on the School building, in his memory.

The Rev. George Hulme's son, Mr. G.B. Hulme, returned from abroad in the 1920's and died at Shinfield. His daughter, Miss A.M. Hulme gave to the church in the 1920's the hymn books and register used by her father in his Sunday School. Where are they now? When she was young the parish clerk was still in office, and always wore the Windsor uniform, as Shinfield was in Windsor Forest.

Emily Hulme lived at the Grove until she died in 1895, when the house was rented by Mr. Robert Hargreaves, who lived there, with his brother Mr. Guy Hargreaves until 1902. There was an organ in the house.

Mr. Vincent Mortlake Holl Beeier lived at the Grove from 1902 (he was a Church Warden) till his death about 1917, when it became a Nursing Home. The present owner, Mr. Allsebrook bought it about 1920. It was used by one of the first detachments of the W.R.A.F. General C.G. Lucas then lived there, and finally Mr. Allsebrook went there, when he left Artonfield Hall, and he lives there now.

The small Copse on the hill at the back of Shinfield Grove is called the Buzzy, perhaps from the old English bosky, meaning bushy.

SHINFIELD LODGE

This was built about 1814. The Rev. George Hulme bought some land that was being farmed by Farmer Thorpe, Miss Mitford refers to Farmer Thorpe in Wheathoeing as "of the great enclosures and prosperous owner of a cock in a million". He may have had a house there already Miss A.M. Hulme stated "the old house was much nearer the road, close to where the stables are now; Shinfield Grove is very much older". About 1885 it was bought by Mrs. Thompson.

About 1904 Shinfield Lodge Estate was advertised for sale, and for that purpose was divided into various lots.

An extract from the brochure advertising the sale is reproduced below:-

"SHINFIELD LODGE ESTATE"

1. It is only on few occasions that such an unusually attractive Freehold Residential and Sporting property as this, possessing so many essential surroundings of a

Gentleman's Country Seat has been brought into the open Market for Sale, within a convenient distance of the County Town of Reading, with its splendid service of trains to London (which can be reached in about 45 minutes), and all parts of the Kingdom. From several points on the Estate where the land rises to the altitude of 263 feet above sea level, extensive panoramic views may be had over the lovely Kennet Valley and the adjoining rural scenery, with the Hampshire Hills in the distance.

2. The SOCIAL ADVANTAGES are excellent, there being a number of gentleman's seats within driving distance. There is also a good County Club in Reading.

3. The HUNTING is very good, being within easy reach of the meets of the Garth and South Berks Fox Hounds, and the Berks and Bucks Staghounds, while by a short rail journey, Meets of other well-known packs are within reach. In fact, hunting can be enjoyed 6 days a week.

4. The SHOOTING (which is let for this season), is exceptionally good for the size of the Estate, and more can generally be obtained in the District. Capital Fishing can also be obtained.

5. GOLF can be enjoyed on the celebrated Ascot, Crookham and Huntercombe Links, also on the new links at Wellington College and at Reading.

6. The EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES are excellent, Reading being especially well-provided with high-class schools, as well as having a University College, which is directly affiliated to Christ Church College, Oxford.

7. CHURCH, POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES are within easy reach.

8. The handsome Ornamental and other TIMBER on the estate (which is of considerable value) and iron and wood fencing, together with such fixtures as belong to the Vendor will be included in the Sale, but certain Tenant's fixtures etc. (a schedule of which will be produced at the Sale, and may previously be inspected at the Auctioneer's Office can be purchased by valuation if desired, in the usual way".

The estate was bought by Mr. Bateman, and from 1912 to 1919 he rented it to Mr. Guy Hargreaves. In 1919 he sold it to Mr. Reid, who lived there until about 1939, when it became part of Leighton Park School, and was then taken over by the R.A.F., of which it is now the Headquarters of Flying Training Command, whose A.O.C. is responsible for all flying training in the R.A.F..

GOODREST

This is just the Reading side of the R.A.F. Headquarters, and is now Leighton Park Junior School. It was built in 1630 by Sir Francis Englefield, of bricks made from clay taken from the pits at the foot of the Vicarage garden. He called it Shinfield Park.

In the Civil War, in 1643, when Charles I was beseiging Reading, after the battle of Newbury, the King stayed there. The King stated that he had enjoyed a good rest there, and so Sir Anthony renamed the place Goodrest.

In 1843 Snare, P.162, refers to "the delightful retreat of Goodrest embosomed in its plantations, built in the ornamental Gothic style, the property of E. Willes Esq", who is commemorated on the brass on the north wall of the church dated 1847.

SHINFIELD RISE OR GREEN

This is opposite Goodrest and was common land until the Enclosure act of 1855, when it was brought by Mr. Alexander Cobham. Snare states:-

"Pursuing our way from Goodrest we soon reach the Shinfield Turnpike Gate, and emerging from the avenue, find ourselves on Earley Wood Common. This is an open tract of heath, the road across which, after skirting the plantations for some distance, brings us to the outer park gate of Whiteknights".

THE MERRY MAIDENS INN

The figures on the inn have the appearance of the Caryatides, the female figures at the Parthenon at Athens. The figures here may have been inspired by the arrival in England of the Elgin Marbles in 1812.

The name Merry Maidens may come from the fact that the Druidic circle of stones in Cornwall is called the Merry Maidens, the maidens there having been turned to stone for dancing in a ring on Sunday.

GALLOWS COMMON

Prisoners from Reading Gaol were hanged in public here in 1793. The elm at the corner of Elm Road and Elm Lane is called the Hanging Elm. In 1937 it appeared to be more than 200 years old, so was thought to have been the tree used as the gallows. The cart carrying the prisoner used to stop at an inn in Silver Street and the hangman and the prisoner had a drink.

The last man to be hung was surprised to find himself there. He had been condemned to death several years before. But he was a handy man and made himself useful doing skilled work in the prison. So his execution was unofficially postponed. A new Governor on taking up his appointment looked at the records, however, found out about it, and ordered him to be hung the next morning.

After 1793 hangings were carried out in public outside Reading Gaol. The Hanging Elm may have been used as a warning to highwaymen not to molest travellers on the adjoining turnpike road. The turnpike gate was between Elm Lane and Whitley Wood Road. The first turnpike road in England was constructed in 1663.

And so we come to the end of this incomplete history. It has rather been a list of facts than a literary work. But it has stated something about most periods since people started to live here. And it has shown again that England was not only for the privileged few, but that opportunities existed for all - for Shinfield has produced from the children of her soil no lesser three than an Archbishop of Canterbury (Laid), a Lord Chancellor (Hyde), and a Prime Minister (Pitt). For a parish like this to have filled the three highest offices in the State is no mean achievement.

May we end with a beautiful description of what Shinfield looked like in 1843 (Snare P.161):-

"The Parish of Shinfield in regard to picturesque beauty may vie with any in Berkshire. From the church, which rises from a commanding eminence, the eye ranges over a vast tract of hill and dale, beautiful diversified with copse and thicket and dark green woods. In the valley below the gentle Loddon is seen winding on in bright tranquil loveliness. A little further and just peeping from their sylvan covert are the gables of Arborfield Manor House, and in the distance may be seen, curling above the summit of the thick woods by which it is screened, the blue smoke of "Our Village". whoever has once gazed on this scene will be at no loss to account for the enthusiastic expressions of admiration which strike forth on every page devoted to this delightful district in the work of her who viewed and described its beauty with the eye and the heart of a poetess".

Appendix 1

Charity Boards in the Tower of Shinfield Church

1. Benefactions to Shinfield Parish

- 1611 Mr. Nicholas Russell of Shinfield left by will 20/- a year out of land in Shinfield called MANTUES or Blackhouse to be given to the poor by the Churchwardens on St. Thomas day.
- 1626 Mrs Elizabeth Speak left by will £4 to be laid out in stock the interest of which to be given to the poor by the Overseers on 2nd July.
- 1646 Mr. John Reynolds of Shinfield left by will 20/- a year to be paid out of his estate at Okingham to Mr. Gilbert Garret and Mr. Thomas Hollyer and by them and their heirs given to the Churchwardens and Overseers to be distributed to the poor.
- 1697 Mrs Mary Spier left by will £6 a year for teaching 10 children to read the Bible and learn the Catechism. The Vicar, Churchwardens and Overseers to be Trustees. The rent of 1 acre in the Lords Mead to be applied to the repairs of the Church.
- William Woolascott Esq gave £1. 15. 0d. a year to be distributed to the poor which live in Shinfield Manor only by the Overseers. To the Surveyors of the highways £20 a year for maintaining the Clappers. To the Vicar 1/6d. a year for registering the accounts, to the Churchwardens 2/-, to the Overseers 2/-, to the Surveyors 2/- a year for seeing the accounts registered.

Time out of mind 8/- a year have been paid out of the publick house at three mile cross the sign of the Kings Head to the Churchwardens to buy for 2 poor widows each of them a wastcoat.

1729 Mr. Richard Piggat gave the rent of 2 houses in pound green to be laid out by the Trustees of his charity school in cloathing yearly as many poor old people as the same will be sufficient for each man to have a grey coat and each woman a gown and petticoat of dyed serge.

2. Details of the School - 1707

The school was endowed by Richard Piggat with £42 a year for ever for teaching 20 poor children of Shinfield to read and write and learn accompts and cloathing them against ye 30 day of May yearly for ever and placing them to Trades. The Bishop of Sarum and Vicar of Shinfield for ye time being supervisors over ye Trustees being 10 and when reduced to 3 by death they shall by deed settle 7 more to make themselves 10 and so for ever.

Trustees:	Peter Floyer Esq	Thomas Holyer Junior
	Thomas Holyer Senior	Thomas Sharp
	William Baker	Elisha Baker
	John Chesterman	Edward Brown
	John Crease	Richard Howell

3. Bequests by Richard Body

Extract from the will of Richard Body Esquire who died March 6th, 1842. I give and bequeath the sum of £100 unto the Churchwardens of the parish of Shinfield and their successors upon trust to invest the same upon Government or Real securities and to vary such securities from time to time as they shall deem fit, and to pay and apply the interest and dividends as may be necessary from time to time for and towards the sustenance and repair of the Tablets and monuments to the memory of myself, my ancestors and relatives in the Parish Church of Shinfield aforesaid.

And if any surplus of the said interest dividends and annual produce shall from time to time remain after the said purposes have been effected, then upon trust to expand such surplus in the purchase of blankets and to give and distribute such blankets to and amongst such of the old infirm and industrious poor of the said Parish of Shinfield as the said Church Wardens or their successors shall think most deserving thereof.

The above money was invested in the 3% Consolidated Bank Annuities in the names of the Rev. Mathew Fielde, Vicar, and Charles Goddard and Thomas French Churchwardens and the annual dividends are £3. 2. 4d.

4. Bequest by Rev. Fielde.

By the will of the late William E.F. Fielde Esq., bearing date 22nd February, 1847 the sum of £500 was bequeathed for the disposal of the Vicar of Shinfield and Trustees of Piggott's Charity School and as an addition to this Charity in the following manner, viz:-

For investment in the Public Stocks of Great Britain or real security in England with power to vary the security at pleasure and out of Interest pay £5 annually to the Master in addition to his Salary for the Education of six poor Boys whose parents reside in the Parish of Shinfield ... £300
(In the event of this object not being carried out £2 out of the Interest accruing from this sum to be laid out Annually in books for a Library and £1 for Coals and the residue for keeping the Library and other parts of the Building in repair).
For building a Classroom and Library for the use of the Boys ... £120
For immediate repairs of School house, School room and premises ... £ 30
And for the erection of a clock to strike the quarters like the one at the Brighton National School the said clock to be placed outside the School house. ... £100
Also the Reversionary Interest of £700 on the Death of his wid ow Mrs Anne Fields to be appropriated as follows:- Viz:-
For increasing the Master's salary in consideration of six more boys whose parents reside in Shinfield being added to the school ... £400
For repairs of school premises and classroom and clothing the additional six boys on the 30th May in each year ... £300

Any surplus of interest from this trust money to be given in rewards of merit to Boys of the school generally on the 30th May in each year.

And further (By a Codicil of the above Will) the Trustees are directed out of Interest upon the £300 after decease of the Widow to provide Bibles for each additional Boy on leaving School.

Sixpence to be given to each additional Boy on the 30th May annually.

And a Bun and a glass of Wine to each of the Boys of the whole School on the 30th May in every Year.

Appendix 2

Holders of the Benefice of St. Mary's Church, Shinfield

As stated on the brass plate in the Church.

Year of
Institution

1280	Sir William de Stratton
1302	Willus de Caple*
1310	Stephus de Thunets
1316	Henricus de Schorne
1320	Thomas de Boselcure
1321	Johes Andrew
1340	Hams de Stokitone
1349	Rogerns de Pottesmore
1381	Phillipns Newport
1390	Johes Cachepoll - resigned
1391	Johes Robyn - exchanged
1414	Vicentius Tydnlsyde
	Johes Hay
1421	Willus Bayly - exchanged
1423	Johes Ridelere
1425	Thomas Malmesbury
1426	Willus Holyok
1429	Johes Baron - exchange
1451	Thomas Sullam - resigned
1460	Edwardus Fox - exchanged
1475	Johes Bawdwyn - exchanged
1479	Thomas Knokyn
1502	William Marlow - resigned
1517	Johes Bromwich
1523	John Bygge
1538	Nicholas Walwey
1543	Richardus Benson - deprived
1554	Edmundus Tyler
1563	Johes George
1582	Phillippus Kyrwyn

Year of
Institution

1604	Johes Greene, deacon M.A., Presented by King James I. Pro. hac. vice by lapse.
1611	Abraham Warrock, B.A.
1625	John Handman Thomas Hasket
1633	Gulielmus Cosyn
1651	Mr. Springett
1656	James Phipps
1676	John Okes
1723	Nicholas Rogers, A.M.
1737	Thomas Hensleigh, M.A. resigned
1747	Edward Ballard, D.D.
1771	James Jones, A.M., D.D.
1824	Mathew Fielde B.A.
1847	Benjamin Bayfield
1867	Henry Nassau Rynd, M.A.
1891	Morris Williams, B.A. - resigned
1900	Reginald J Wilmot Ware, B.A.
1905	James William Steedman, M.A. - resigned
1908	Herbert Llewelyn Rice M.A.
1927	Goodwin Purcell, M.A.
1930	H. Gordon Seymour, B.A.
1946	Sydney Albert Andrews.

* "Willus" is abbreviation for "Williamus".

Appendix 3

Record Books of Parish of Shinfield

The oldest have been deposited at Reading Library but the following registers are at the Church as well as current ones:-

Baptisms: 1813-49, 1850-86, 1886-1915

Banns: 1797-1849, 1897-1946

Marriages: 1813-42, 1837-1910, 1910-22, 1922-35, 1935-46.

Burials: 1813-1907.

Appendix 4.

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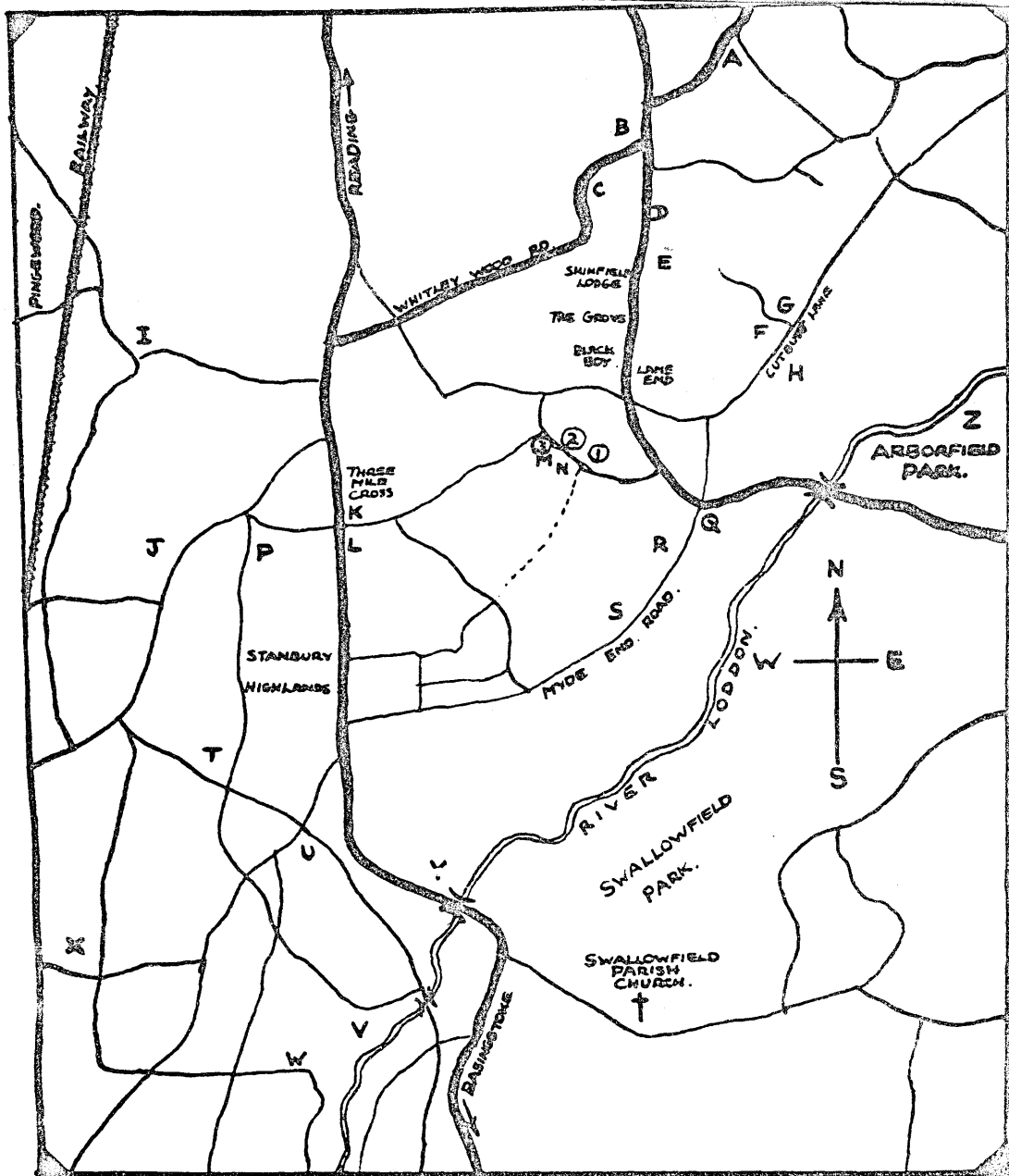
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Notes given by Mr. A.T. Lloyd and Miss Freeman.

The Victoria Country History is abbreviated "V.C.H.".



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| <p>A. GALLOWS CONNOR.
 B. TURNBULL GATE.
 C. GOODREST.
 D. SHINFIELD GREEN.
 E. SHINFIELD OLD MANOR.
 F. CUTBUSH
 G. BROWNS GREEN.
 H. SHINFIELD GRANGE.
 I. HARTLEY COURT.
 J. GRAZERY COURT.
 K. MISS MITFORDS HOME
 1820 - 1840.</p> | <p>L. CONSTABLES LOCK-UP AND STOCKS.
 M. MOATS.
 N. CHURCH FARM HOUSE.
 O. OLD RECTORY
 P. OLD VICARAGE + PARSONAGE.
 Q. NEW VICARAGE.
 R. WOODCOCK LANE.
 S. POUND GREEN.
 T. SHINFIELD SCHOOL.
 U. MOOR COPSE MOATS.
 V. DIDENHAM MANOR.</p> | <p>W. FOULDRAY MANOR.
 X. BEAUMES CASTLE.
 Y. PRIORY OF ST. LEONARD.
 Z. TRUNKWELL HOUSE.
 A. SHEEPSRIDGES.
 B. ARBORFIELD CHURCH.</p> |
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