



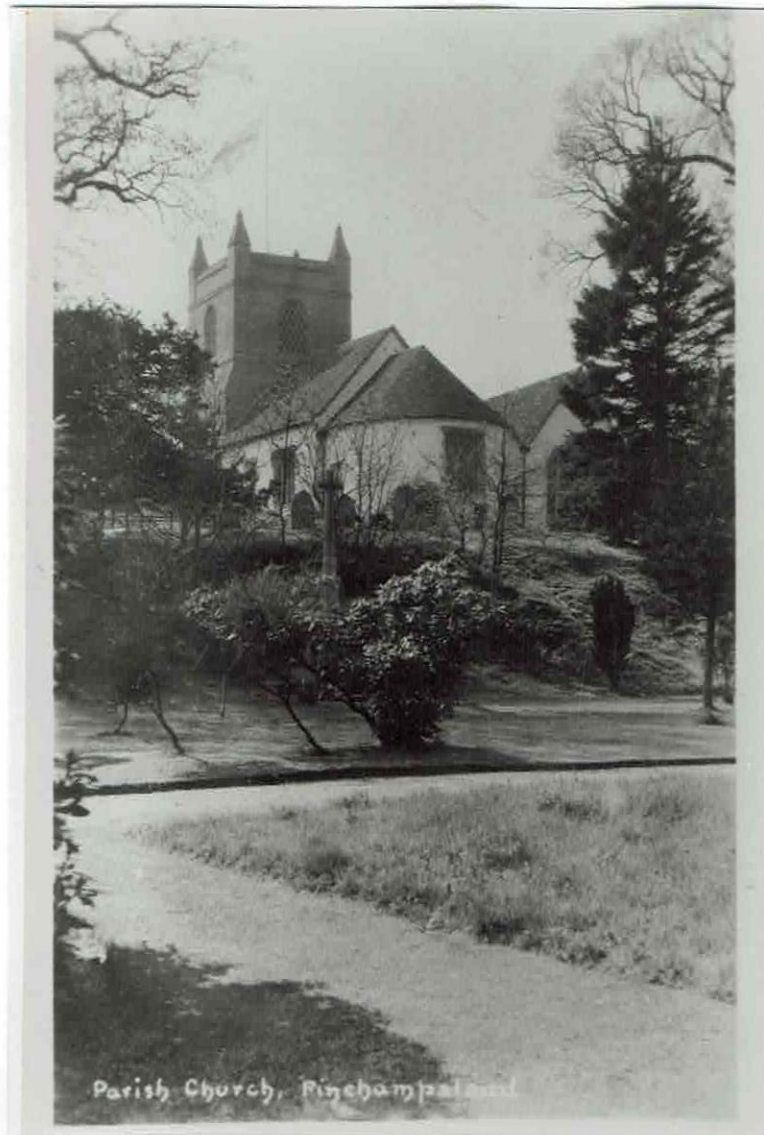
PHOTOGRAPH BY HOWISE PARNELL
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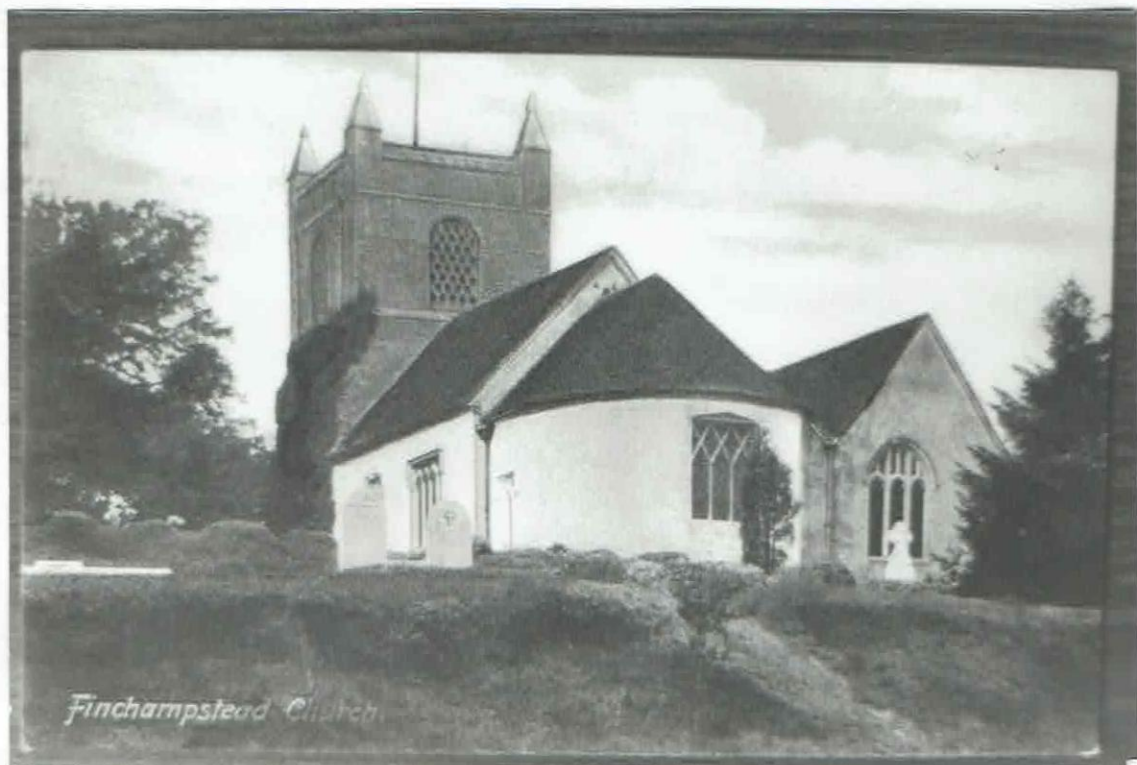
3176 Finchampstead Church

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EARLY 1900'S



Parish Church, Finchampstead



Finchampstead Church

310761 1425



1425. Finchampstead Church.



Finchampstead Church.

FROM BERKSHIRE RECORD OFFICE

THE RECTORY,
FINCHAMPSTEAD,

Dec. 9th.

MY DEAR PARISHIONERS AND FRIENDS,

Before thanking you for the affectionate address so kindly presented to me on Tuesday last, I feel it my bounden duty to offer my heart-felt thanks to God, in that he has prolonged my life to the entry of my 80th year and the 50th of my ministry amongst you, and for the innumerable blessings vouchsafed to me during my long life.

To God's special mercy I owe it that I was permitted to meet you at the Church on the 8th inst. I am much moved by your esteemed token of respect in commemorating the event, by placing "a Treble"—to the Peal in our Parish Church—and the record it will convey with it.

It is a great happiness to me to know how many kind and dear Friends I have in my Parishioners and to find how sincere has been the union between Pastor and Flock for so many years.

Let me hope (under God's blessing) that the Friendship that has hitherto existed may be unbroken during the time I may yet be spared and allowed to prolong my ministry amongst you.

That God's blessing may be with you and protect you thro' life is the devout prayer, my dear Parishioners and Friends, of

Your affectionate old Rector,
E. ST. JOHN.

To the Rev. Edward St. John, M.A.,

Rector of Finchampstead,

December 8th, 1885.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

We, whose names are hereunto attached, desire to offer you our hearty congratulations on the attainment of the 80th year of your age, and the 50th year of your Ministry. In commemoration of these events we have subscribed together to place a Treble or Sixth Bell in the Tower of Finchampstead Church, which we trust you will value as a token of our affectionate regard for you.

Yours faithfully,

Attride, C.
Attride, W.
Baker, R. (Mrs.)
Barker, D.
Barker, W.
Barney, H.
Beauchamp, S. (Mrs.)
Beechy, S. (Mrs.)
Bell, T.
Bishop, G.
Brakespear, L.
Bristow, J.
Bristow, — (Mrs.)
Brookes, C.

Burrett, H.
Bye, C.
Collier, A.
Croucher, I.
Davies, R. (Rev.)
Dawn, C. E. (Mrs.)
Dean, J.
Dixon, R.
Edge, H. P. (Rev.)
Farrer, W. J.
Garrard, B. W.
Giblett, J.
Goddard, C.
Goddard, Jesse

Goddard, J.
Goddard, M.
Goddard, M.
Goddard, M.
Goddard, W.
Goswell, A. (Mrs.)
Goswell, G.
Goswell, M. E.
Goswell, W.
Goswell, W.
Harding, J. A.
Harris, C. E.
Hoare, E.
Hopkinson, A.
Hopkinson, C. (Mrs.)
Hurn, J.
Howard, F.
James, W. J.
Johnson, C.
Kelsey, J.
Kelsey, R.
Leveson Gower, J. E.
Lyon, W.
Mason, C. (Mrs.)
Mason, G.
Mason, G.
Mason, H.
Mason, J.
Mearing, R.
Mears, —
Milam, H.
Miles, W.
Miles, W., Junr.
Mozley, T. (Rev.)
Mulford, E.

Neville, H.
Newcombe, W.
Newport, C.
Older, F.
Parson, J. Campbell (Rev.)
Pigg, W. B.
Relf, J.
Ritchings, E.
Roberts, A.
Roberts, P.
Ryder, R.
Sexton, J.
Simonds, W. H.
Simmons, H. A.
Simmonds, A.
Stanbrook, J.
Stewart, Genl.
Spinks, W.
Spratley, A.
Spratley, F.
Townsend, T.
Vass, C.
Vass, H.
Vass, I.
Westall, W.
Westall, W.
Wetherall, F. P.
Wetherall, C. (Mrs.)
Wheeler, W. W.
White, R.
White, W.
Willmott, H. R.
Winkworth, C.
Winstanley, J. (Mrs.)
Yeomans, L.

The Bell bears the following Inscription.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

and in commemoration of the Rev. Edward
St. John, M.A., Rector of this Parish,
attaining the 80th year of his age this
Bell was given by some of his Parishioners
and Friends.

Anno Domini, 1885.

G. Bishop, Hon. Sec.

CHAP. (1678) 'for lessening the importation of linen from abroad
III seas, and for encouragement of the woollen trade.' It pro-
A.D. 1710 vided that 'no corpse shall be buried in any shroud or other
thing than what is made of sheep's wool only,' or be put in any
coffin lined with anything but sheep's wool only, under a
penalty of 5*l*. This Act was repealed by the 54 Geo. III. in
1815, although the Act of 1678 had been practically dis-
regarded some years before. The last entry of such burial
in the Finchampstead register was on July 19, 1793, in the
case of 'Elizabeth, the wife of William Beck,' who was
'buried in woollen.'

THE VESTRY MINUTES

The earliest minutes which are found in the parish chest begin only from March 25, 1848. There is nothing in the parish chest of an earlier date, except a few old musty highway and poor rate accounts.

Under date of January 17, 1852, there is an entry in the vestry minute book which reveals the manner in which the parish business of Finchampstead was conducted at that time. It is as follows:

'Resolved, to meet at the hour of 6 o'clock in the evening, on the last Thursday in every month, by the inhabitants of the parish of Finchampstead, at the sign of "The Greyhound Inn" in said parish, as per agreement made on the 15th January, 1852, and signed by the principal ratepayers of the said parish.'

This arrangement appears to have continued until 1861. I have been informed by a parishioner who used to attend these meetings that the parish chest was removed to 'The Greyhound' during this period, and was accessible to anyone. We cannot therefore be surprised that the parish records are so lamentably deficient. There are no terriers of church or parish property; no churchwardens' accounts; and the register of baptisms, marriages, and burials from 1609 to 1653 has disappeared.

It is difficult to imagine what business the vestrymen so assembled could have found to occupy them. Judging from the minutes which record their proceedings, the formation of a

club for the extermination of sparrows seems to have been a subject in which they took great interest.

CHAP.
III

These frequent 'vestries' at the public-house may have been an agreeable excuse for a convivial meeting; but they are in striking contrast with the efforts made in later years to form a 'vestry' once a year, when it has been difficult to bring together a sufficient number to make a quorum.

A.D. 1852

It seems scarcely necessary to add that the rector of the parish does not appear to have attended these 'meetings.' Possibly the absence of a proper vestry may have had something to do with these somewhat irregular proceedings, as the only place available as a vestry was, and still is, the church tower, which is not suitable for vestry meetings, and is equally unsuitable for the use of the clergy, as it is a thoroughfare for everyone going up to the organ gallery; and until a few years ago it was also used as the 'bell-ringing chamber.'

The only interesting objects in this vestry are two oak chests, one of which was intended for the parish records, and bears the initials 'B. L. and I. T.,' and date 1690. The other appears to have been a vestment chest; it has a sloping top or lid, with the initials 'R. H.' and flowers carved upon it. It is 5 feet long by 1 foot 11 inches wide and 2 feet deep. They are mentioned in the terrier of July 21, 1783 (Appendix, No. 76).

THE CHURCHYARD

The original churchyard, we are told in the terrier of 1783, contained 'rather more than a quarter of an acre.' But according to the Tithe Commutation Report of January 3, 1844, it contained 2 roods 12 poles.

There are two yew trees of great antiquity at the north-east and south-east angles of the church.

In 1866, according to a resolution of the vestry dated August 16 of that year, an addition was made to the churchyard by including in it the piece of ground at the western end, on which two almshouses then stood, which will be more fully described under the head of 'Parish Charities and Lands.' The present boundary wall of the churchyard, opposite the

CHAP.
IIIEPITAPHS IN CHURCHYARD—*continued*

Sparvell, Elizabeth, wife of above, 1892, Jan. 9, æt. 88.	Twine, Martha, his wife, 1859, Feb. 8, æt. 75.
Stephenson, Sarah, 1869, Oct. 24, æt. 95.	Walden, Caroline, daughter of James and Anne, 1812, Feb. 2, æt. 6 weeks.
Stephenson, James, son of Sarah, 1878, Sept. 29, æt. 59.	Walden, Jane, 1817, Sept. 1, æt. 31 years.
Spratley, James, 1879, Feb. 29, æt. 79.	Webb, John, 1710, May 5. An hour- glass and cross-bones on headstone.
Spratley, Ephraim, 1862, Jan. 6, æt. 56.	(Described in Register as 'Wheeler,' and as the first body 'buried in woollen' in Finchampstead.)
Spratley, Charles, 1862, May 17.	Westall, William, 1887, Nov. 21.
Spratley, Elizabeth, wife of James, 1883, Oct. 18.	Westall, Sarah, his wife.
Spratley, Jemmie, 1887, Nov. 12, æt. 62.	(W.) Flora Eleanor, 1863, July 10, aged 40 days. ('Buried with us in Baptism.')
Spratley, Jonathan, 1888, May 6, æt. 60.	Wood, Emma, 1891, Dec. 24, æt. 29.
Toms, Lydia, wife of Thomas, 1805, Oct., æt. 76.	
Twine, Thomas, 1849, May 24.	

THE JUBILEE OAK

On the little green in front of the principal entrance to the churchyard stands an oak tree, which was planted on June 21, 1887, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession. The tree was planted with great ceremony in the presence of the late rector, the Rev. Edward St. John, who was then in his eighty-first year, the principal inhabitants, and all the children of the parish. It is hoped that some day a memorial stone may be placed near this tree, to record its origin and preserve it from destruction.

THE RECTORY

The earliest description of the rectory which I have been able to obtain is from a terrier in the Diocesan Registry of Salisbury, dated January 1, 1608. There is no terrier of church property in Finchampstead either in the parish chest or in the possession of the rector.

There are other terriers also at Salisbury for the following years :



Finchampstead Church.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAYSTON BIRD
1939.

EPITAPHS IN CHURCHYARD—continued

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LIST OF RECTORS

- 1299 HENRY DE LA HUESE
1311 JOHN DE GRANTHAM
1317 ADAM DE ULVETON
JOHN OLIVIER
1361 HAMOND DE LA SOLER
1391 WALTER KENARDUSLEY
1393 ADAM STAKPOL
1395 WALTER HARDEN
1401 JOHN LONGLEGH
1415 JOHN LADD
1432 JOHN FIETHAM
1455 WILLIAM JAMYS, B.A.
1466 WILLIAM MYTTON
1487 WALTER DUDSTON
1503 JOHN DAVID
1505 JOHN BROMWYCH
THOMAS HICKLING
1564 WILLIAM GILL
1592 SAMUEL MARSHE
FROM 1645 TO 1660 NO RECTOR
1660 THOMAS BRIGHT, M.A.
1682 JOHN BRANDON, B.A.
1709 RICHARD ROGERS, M.A.
1738 ST. JOHN ROGER, M.A.
1744 ELLIS ST. JOHN
1786 ELLIS ST. JOHN, M.A.
1809 HENRY ST. JOHN
1842 EDWARD ST. JOHN, LL.B.
1892 ROUTH TOMLINSON, M.A.
1912 EGERTON CORFIELD, M.A.
1931 RICHARD D. WELLER, M.A.
1952 W. E. WOOSNAM-JONES, B.A.
1957 LESLIE DARBY JONES, B.A., HON.C.F.
1962 DENIS T. CROSSLEY, A.K.C.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION

of the

Parish Church of St. James

FINCHAMPSTEAD,

BERKSHIRE.

WITHIN THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD.

Edited by

The Reverend Leslie Darby Jones, B.A., Hon. C.F.

Rector of the Parish.

(1957-1962)

Published by the

Parochial Church Council of Finchampstead

1957

Sp

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES.

THIS Church, dedicated to St. James, is of undoubted antiquity and although it has undergone considerable alterations from time to time it still retains the walls of the original church which may well have been built as early as the Conquest or possibly even before that time. After the Conquest (1066) the Normans engaged in an intensive programme of building and simple Saxon churches were gradually made more elaborate. Thus it came about that this church more or less took its present form in 1150.

Standing by the Font and looking towards the Altar you see the whole of the original Norman church—Nave, Chancel and Sanctuary. The Nave was lit by three slit windows each side high in the wall. Above the Font, to your left, you can see one of the original slit windows exactly as the Normans left it. It will be realised that the original windows had no glass in them.

The Altar stands in the Sanctuary. You will notice that the East end of the church is semi-circular—this is known as an Apsè and is a rare feature in English churches. Many Norman churches were built with Apsès but the majority were “squared-off” in later construction. Observe to the right, in the wall, an arched recess; this is known as a Piscina and is where the Sacred Vessels are cleansed after the Holy Communion. This Piscina was discovered in 1855 when certain alterations were made to the Church. Its date is assigned to the early part of the 12th century and is believed by some authorities to be unique.

The Font is of great interest and would seem to be older than any other part of the church. It may well be credited to the year 1030 thus being the original Font of the church. The base upon which it stands is modern (1855). To the left of the Font, in the wall, is a pre-Reformation Holy Water Stoup only discovered in 1915. In 1885 the churchwardens had an offertory box placed in the wall and unwittingly cut right through the top of the Stoup.

The Pulpit is probably James I's reign when the pulpits in most churches had their origin. It has some finely carved tracery panels and cresting (circa 1450) and most probably was constructed from a pre-Reformation Screen in the church of which now no trace remains. The panels of the Chancel roof would have formed part of the Canopy over the Screen. The woodwork in the Nave roof is a good example of carpentry of about 1450 with moulded tie-beams and wall plates. The Chapel or North Transept, too, has a massive timbered roof of about the same date with cambered tie-beams and moulded wall plates.

About 1375 a small Chapel was added on the north side. The builders in making the two arches leading to the Chapel knocked through the original outside wall and cut in half one of the original slit windows which can still be seen above the arches. They also replaced the original arch between the Nave and the Chancel with

a much larger one. The Chapel was enlarged to its existing size about 1475 and a separate entrance in one corner constructed in 1590, presumably by Thomas Harrison, Esquire, of East Court, whose initials, with date, are on the lintel outside.

The window above the Altar was put in during the 14th century as was the window in the Nave towards the west end of the church in the south wall. The other window in the south wall is more modern, possibly Victorian. The stained glass is modern.

Near the Lectern on the wall is a brass memorial to Henry Hinde, dated 1580. Hinde, evidently a man of much tact, was Purveyor at Court to four monarchs, Henry VIII; Edward VI; Mary and Elizabeth. There is also, on the south wall of the Nave, a 17th century brass depicting Elizabeth Blighe who died in 1635. In the chapel hangs the personal banner of General Sir John Watson, V.C., G.C.B. (the former decoration being won in the Indian Mutiny). Formerly it hung in the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

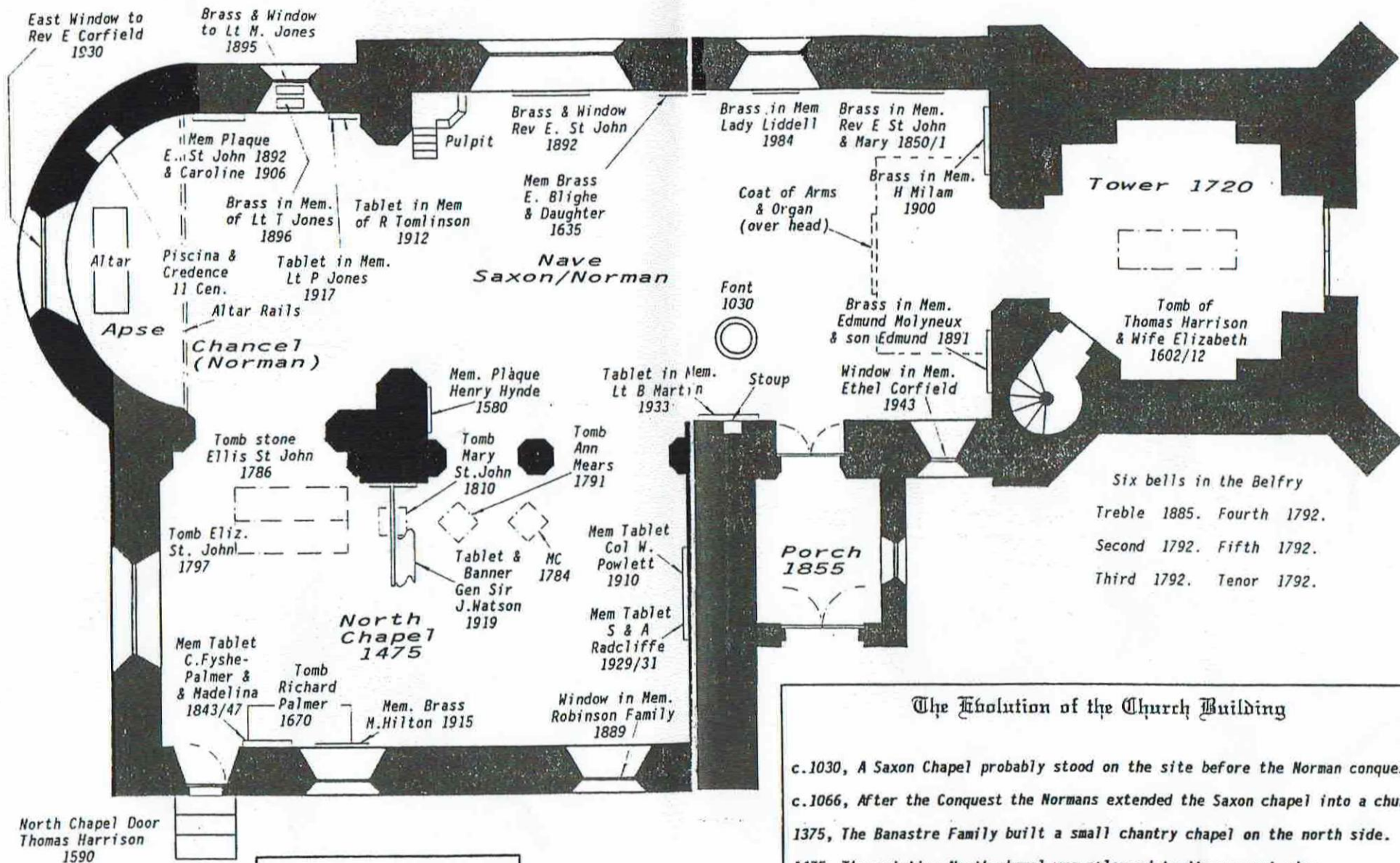
The Church plate consists of a Chalice and Paten of silver dated 1591 and the Church registers date from 1653, all previous registers having disappeared.

A list of known Rectors of Finchampstead, beginning in 1299, is in the porch (which is 19th century). The names of the Rectors prior to 1299 are unknown.

The organ, a Compton, is placed at the west end of the nave, being enclosed in a fine oak casing, made by a parish craftsman in the old tradition in 1952. On its front is a panel bearing the Royal Arms of England. Cromwell ordered all Royal Arms to be taken down and destroyed. When Charles II was restored to the throne all the Royal Arms went up again and the loyal churchwardens of Finchampstead wasted no time about it as it will be observed the panel bears the king's initials—C.R. (Carolus Rex) and is dated 1660.

The magnificent red brick tower was built in 1720 and the bricks of which it is built were made out of the ground once forming part of the glebe land, then known as ‘Bricknells’. Observe the lovely openwork lattice windows in the four sides of the tower. There are six bells, five dating from 1792 and the sixth being added in 1885 in commemoration of the Reverend Edward St. John, Rector, on attaining the 80th year of his age.

Such then is an abridged description of the antiquity and history of the Parish Church of St. James, Finchampstead. But above all it is the House of God, a place wherein the faithful men, women and children of this ancient and historic parish have knelt in prayer and lifted up their voices in sacred song and psalm to Almighty God right down the centuries. Will you, before leaving these sacred precincts, kneel down in thankfulness to God for the witness of those now passed on and also in prayer for us who now, proudly and gladly, bear the sacred trust of caring for this ancient church and bearing our witness for Him from whom all good things do come?



St. James Church
Finchampstead.
Drawn J. Neave.
1994.

The Evolution of the Church Building

c.1030, A Saxon Chapel probably stood on the site before the Norman conquest.

c.1066, After the Conquest the Normans extended the Saxon chapel into a church.

1375, The Banastre Family built a small chantry chapel on the north side.

1475, The existing North chapel was enlarged to its present size.

1590, Thomas Harrison added a north door in the chapel & a nave porch, etc.

1720, Thomas Johnes, using locally made bricks, built the tower.

1855, Extensive restoration carried out by Mr. Clacey & Mr. Morris.

Finchampstead

Church

and its Manors

Finchampstead Church and Its Manors

The Church is filled with them - filled to overflowing yet they do not take up any space. It may be the strength of the worship which enables them to re-enter this Earth's Sphere. How could it be otherwise when so large a part of their life's interest had centred around this building?

The vision of the foundations of the Celtic and Saxon Church are not clear. They may not have been identical with the Norman building.

When, for four generations the Norman Banastres were the Manor Lords, with Sir William Banastre the male succession ended. To his eldest daughter, Constance, wife of John De La Hoese, he gave the Manor of East Court, alongside the Church, to his daughter, Agatha, married to Peter De La Hoese, the Manor of West Court, to each, in turn, the right to appoint a Rector. The first known incumbent of St. James's, was another De La Hoese.

After the Banastres the Manor Lords of East Court came and went in quick succession. The Will of Henry Hynde, dated 1580 tells us that he purchased East Court, together with the advowson and nearly Two thousand acres of land from a Thomas Coward. Hynde's Memorial hangs on the West Wall of the Chancel. The Epitaph reads:

"Here lyeth buried Henry Hynde, Gent, Lord of the Manor of Finchampstead Easte Courte. Pervayor to Kinge Henry the Eight, King Edward ye Sixt, Queene Mary, King Philippe and Queene Elizabeth, of their stables, who for his true zeale in religion, his faythfull service to his Prince and country and his hearty love to his neighbours was as a perfete memmor to his ensuinge posterity to imitate who departed this XXXIII day of December 1580."

Years later a boy playing with others round the Church points to the St. John tomb. "A Great Saint is buried in the Churchyard", 2nd boy "One of the greatest", Passer-by "Who is It?", Boys "Saint John.

How History can be perverted!

white silk flag inscribed in gold letters "Unbought, Unbribed, Unpredjudiced". Mr Palmer in an open carriage drawn by six horses, highly decorated."

Return must now be made to the Manor of West Court for a determined man has stepped out of the shadows. A vacancy has occurred at the Parish Church. It was the turn of West Court to appoint. Ellis St. John, the then owner, without any ecclesiastical training appointed himself as the twenty fourth incumbent. In 1744 he was ordained at Sarum as Deacon, and Priest four days later. Four St. John Rectors follow him in direct line to cover a period of 185 years.

The age of the Parson/Squire had arrived. A time when a farm labourer reared a family on twelve shillings a week with the aid of a pig and vegetable plot, when a ton of hay cost Four pounds and a horse could be kept in perfect condition on Ten shillings (50p) a week.

And what of the personal touch? These Parson/Squires ruled their villages and every man, woman and child was known to them for miles around, much as it had been in the age of the Norman Banasters. No limit was set on their pastimes. The Rev. Henry St. John even purchased a pack of foxhounds. For four generations they served the Church from West Court but the fifth was bidden by his Bishop to reside nearer the Church. The Rev. Edward, therefore, left West Court and built a Rectory on the opposite hill to the Church.

At the close of his fifty years of service to the Parish a sixth bell was presented to the Church in his honour and the summing up of his Ministry in his eightyth year is in the following words: "It is a great happiness to know how many kind and dear friends I have in my parishoners and to find how sincere has been the union between Pastor and flock for so many years".

Hynde must have changed greatly during his lifetime as in his early days he, together with Thomas Cromwell, had signed the Death Warrant of Hugh Farrington, the last Abbot of Reading Abbey.

Hynde desired to be buried in his Parish Church. He left the Manor of East Court, together with his entire property to "My beloved Son-in-law, Thomas Harrison, in consideration of the good love, friendship and aid I have always found in him". To his daughter, Katherine, "My gold ring with deathhead engraved". To a servant a legacy for attending to his fishponds, but where are those fishponds now?

This beloved Son-in-law, Thomas Harrison was born in 1530 and died in 1602. It is believed that amongst much other work in the Church he added the beamed roof of the aisle and also gave the Elizabethan chalice, used in the communion service. His initials, T.H. are carved on the North Porch.

It was in the year 1592 that Harrison appointed the Rev. Samuel Marshe to the Rectorship. Marshe was the first of the Finchampstead Rectors to hold a degree, having matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford. He was later to become a Canon of Sarum.

Marshe remained Rector for fifty years, until the day when Cromwell's soldiers barred the entrance to his Church, Marshe being unable to subscribe to the suppression of the Book of Common Prayer. Seeing the end of his service to his Parish approaching, he hid the Elizabethan chalice at West Court, with the Roman Catholic family of Tattershall.

Thomas Harrison died in 1602, and was succeeded by his wife as "Ladie of the Manor" until their son, Thomas, came of age. Thomas Harrison was followed by his son, and grandson. Neither

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lived at East Court, but on their property at Hurst. The Grandson built a set of Almshouses for the poor of Finchampstead, but no trace of them remains.

The Harrisons were impoverished through their loyalty to the Stuart cause and in 1661 Sir Richard Harrison sold the Manor of East Court to Richard Palmer of Wokingham.

The Cromwellian era was over, the time for rejoicing had come. Back on the altar was the chalice. The Stuart Arms had been raised aloft, never to be taken down again, even with the coming of the Hanoverian succession. Lion and Unicorn rose supreme.

But one person was missing. Since the expulsion of Samuel Marshe there had been no incumbent. It was the turn of West Court to appoint, but the Tattershalls, being Roman Catholic could not do so and to Samuel Marshe's half brother was given the honour of appointing the Rev. Thomas Bright, M.A. to the living. It seems that Finchampstead had not forgotten its old Rector.

But this period of rejoicing soon came to an end. The plague years were upon the land. Only the Fire of London saved the City, exterminating the rats which carried the disease from building to building.

From his church Richard Palmer may have watched the red glow in the sky over London. As a lover of books, with his own library, he would have grieved over the destruction of the quantity of books housed for safety in the vaults in St. Paul's Churchyard, but to which the fire had spread.

Richard Palmer's alabaster tomb is in the North Aisle of the Church. He was the XIX and last Manor Lord to live in the old house. Could it have his life long wish to own the Manor of East Court?

His daughter Mary asks in her Will that she shall be buried with her ancestors in Finchampstead a strange request, until it is discovered that all Palmer Deeds were signed "Palmer alias Underwood". The Will of Richard Palmer alias Underwood is dated 1594, the 36th year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and mentions "My body to be buried in the Churchyard of Finchampstead" and a gift to the poor of the parish of 6/8d. Amongst his possessions were seven bullocks valued at £5. 6s. 8d, thirty sheep at £2. 5s. Od. All his possessions were left to his son Richard. Is it any wonder that the daughter of the later Richard should wish to be buried at Finchampstead. Her desire was granted for Mary Palmer lies buried in the Chancel. Her brother Doctor Charles Palmer under the Tower. It was this Doctor Palmer, the son of Richard Palmer of the tomb, who left the East Court property to his cousin, Henry Fish, on condition that he added the name of Palmer to his own. The Fish Palmers moved to "Cowdries" in the village, renaming that dwelling East Court House.

Of the third generation of Fish Palmers the reading Mercury gives a picture:

The Reading Mercury, April 1819

TRIUMPHANT MR. PALMER

"Grand procession in honour of Charles F. Palmer, Esq. Celebration of the triumph gained over his adversaries.... ladies and gentlemen who intend honouring the procession by their attendance should be requested to assemble at the Hatch Gate ... the whole to proceed in the following order through the Borough of Reading. A gentleman on horseback with a white wand, three trumpeters mounted, three standard bearers mounted, each standard inscribed "Purity of Election", the horse cavalcade, band of drums, fifes and bugles, etc., three large orange flags with suitable inscriptions, electors and friends of Mr. Palmer, military band, magnificent

white silk flag inscribed in gold letters "Unbought, Unbribed, Unpredjudiced". Mr Palmer in an open carriage drawn by six horses, highly decorated."

Return must now be made to the Manor of West Court for a determined man has stepped out of the shadows. A vacancy has occurred at the Parish Church. It was the turn of West Court to appoint. Ellis St. John, the then owner, without any ecclesiastical training appointed himself as the twenty fourth incumbent. In 1744 he was ordained at Sarum as Deacon, and Priest four days later. Four St. John Rectors follow him in direct line to cover a period of 185 years.

The age of the Parson/Squire had arrived. A time when a farm labourer reared a family on twelve shillings a week with the aid of a pig and vegetable plot, when a ton of hay cost Four pounds and a horse could be kept in perfect condition on Ten shillings (50p) a week.

And what of the personal touch? These Parson/Squires ruled their villages and every man, woman and child was known to them for miles around, much as it had been in the age of the Norman Banasters. No limit was set on their pastimes The Rev. Henry St. John even purchased a pack of foxhounds. For four generations they served the Church from West Court but the fifth was bidden by his Bishop to reside nearer the Church. The Rev. Edward, therefore, left West Court and built a Rectory on the opposite hill to the Church.

At the close of his fifty years of service to the Parish a sixth bell was presented to the Church in his honour and the summing up of his Ministry in his eightyth year is in the following words: "It is a great happiness to know how many kind and dear friends I have in my parishoners and to find how sincere has been the union between Pastor and flock for so many years".



MRS JESSIE WELLER

REV. RICHARD D. WELLER

1952.

RECTOR 1931 - 1952.

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH MAGAZINE
JULY 1975

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

July 1975

I hope that all readers will support the Church Fete in the Memorial Park on Saturday, the 14th July. Our contribution to the Diocesan and central funds of the Church is now over £2,000 each year, which means that before we can begin to find our own parish church running costs and gifts to charities, we have quite a hurdle of fund raising to surmount.

This year is also a Quinquennial Inspection year and, as the result of our Architect's latest report, we know that we must do repairs to the stonework of the Chancel arch and the east window in the North Aisle. Generous support for the Fete is needed to meet these expenses, and I hope that gifts of merchandise will be forthcoming for the stall-holders before the day, and that you will bring your friends to the Fete, which opens at 2.15 p.m. and promises to be bigger and better than ever before.

Following up my last month's letter, I can report that Appeal against the Church Commissioners' decision to carve Finchampstead in half, as a preliminary to a further (as yet unspecified) reorganisation, is going ahead. To avoid any misunderstandings, I should like to make it clear that this Appeal is not in any way an appeal against St. John's Church. It is simply an attempt to safeguard the future of St. James's Church and its continued existence as a parish church.

The Finchampstead Church Mission in Nine Mile Ride seems both much too near St. James's, Finchampstead, and much too far from St. Paul's, Wokingham, to be an appropriate place to build up a new parish centre. The equidistant point between the four existing parish churches is at the road junction called "The Throat" near Gowrings Garage, and a parish centre there could serve a good-sized population in Eastheath and Wokingham Without. A parish centre there would not threaten the survival of Finchampstead ecclesiastical parish. If the currently proposed Scheme goes ahead, it would take but one further stroke of the Queen's pen to reduce our thousand years old benefice and parish to the status of a village district with a chapel of ease instead of a parish church, a church committee instead of a P.C.C., stripped automatically of its possessions, funds, properties and rectory, with only occasional services at the church when busy clergy based elsewhere in a group or team could fit in a visit.

It seems to me that the Lord's work would be better done by use of the Church Commissioners' own resources to finance a new parish centre in a strategic position, rather than by an attempt to commandeer the buildings and population of an existing parish, leading to the drawing of totally artificial boundaries round those buildings which were not designed as a parish centre.

Confirmation classes are in session again and I shall be glad to hear from parents who would like their children to be confirmed. If we can have a preliminary talk about it during July, I would hope to run regular classes after the holidays for a Confirmation in Advent.

Yours sincerely,
Dennis Crossley

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH MAGAZINE
JUNE 1979

RECTOR'S LETTER

July 1979
June

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

Those of you who made representations to the Church Commissioners against their proposed scheme for the formation of

4

a new parish and benefice of California by carving a large chunk out of Finchampstead parish will be dismayed to have heard from the Commissioners in the last few days that they intend to proceed with the scheme. Notwithstanding the strong and cogent objections made from the people of Finchampstead, against this needless and destructive reorganization of boundaries, the Commissioners appear to have been convinced by reasons put forward by the Diocese for making the proposal.

Those reasons which were never clearly put to us, varying from Archdeacon to Archdeacon, seen now to be the very reasons which were so vehemently denied by Archdeacon John Brown when he spoke at the meeting organized by the Finchampstead Society in the Memorial Hall in March, 1978. Those of you who were there will remember that the Archdeacon in summing up after questions stated categorically that, despite what his predecessor had said, there had never been any discussion about teaming or grouping. You may also remember that he criticised us for suggesting that the proposal had wider implications, both in terms of area and in terms of the future in Finchampstead parish.

What do we now find? Not only that the main reason for the scheme is to enable St. John's to enter as a partner with parochial status into a new grouping of parishes, but also that there is no assurance in the Church Commissioners' statement that what they describe as "the residual area of Finchampstead parish" would continue to constitute a viable benefice, although such an assurance is given to Barkham. This kind of double talk is upsetting wherever it occurs, but it is the more upsetting in this context because the Church hierarchy used to be the last place one would expect to find it.

Why should we have a Pastoral Committee's boundary drawn through the heart of Finchampstead's ancient parish? The kinship of the Finchampstead Rides area is far closer to St. James' Church and Finchampstead Parish than to either St. Sebastian's or Crowthorne. Why on earth undo the links which St. John's Mission and the Nine Mile Ride section of the parish have with the remainder of Finchampstead in order to link them with

July 1979
3

CHURCH NOTES

The Ven. J.E. Brown
Archdeacon of Berkshire

Beech Hill Vicarage,
Reading
Berkshire RG7 2BD
Reading 882569

June 5th 1979

Dear Editor,

In view of the quite unnecessary implied suggestions of deceit on my part that appear in the June edition of the Finchampstead Magazine, I should be grateful if you would publish this as it stands in your next issue. I am referring mainly to paragraphs 2 and 3 of Mr. Crossley's letter.

1. Mr. Crossley is quite correct in saying that I stated categorically at the public meeting in Finchampstead in March 1978 that there had never been any discussion about teaming or grouping. I would only wish to alter this by saying that I said there had never been any formal discussions about teaming or grouping. I was emphatic about this rather than vehement, and I was speaking the truth.
2. It is also true that the Church Commissioners suggested, during their consultations with the Diocese in December 1978, that a wider pastoral arrangement - "a new grouping of parishes" as Mr. Crossley puts it - might be the best way forward, with St. John's as an equal partner in any discussions that might take place about this. The Commissioners also made the point, which now appears in print, that there is no reason at all why the parish of Finchampstead should not take part in any future discussions of a pastoral nature. One of the things I said was that if such talks ever did take place they should happen between clergymen of equal status and between church councils of equal standing.

I fail to see what the problem is. I also fail to understand the accusation of "double-talk". My statement stands as a truthful statement of events up to March 1978, when I made it; and now

St. Sebastian's and Crowthorne under one Rector, and destroy the historic benefice of Finchampstead which is older than all of them. It is a topsy-turvy kind of judgement which sees this as a sensible arrangement. The scheme has been aptly described to me as a "masterpiece of bureaucratic steamrolling."

In years gone by, I am told, the P.C.C. had to argue its case in London to be allowed to install the new lights in the Church. More recently the P.C.C. had to go to Oxford to argue before a London Q.C. in order to be permitted to arrange the chancel in the open-plan way we have it today. In the Church of England the old adage is still true; "God helps those who help themselves." The scheme will become law in about a month's time unless we exercise our statutory right to appeal. The P.C.C. has already resolved to appeal, and in my separate capacity as incumbent I shall be doing so too. Individuals who made representations to the Commissioners can also appeal, and I would urge them to give notice of appeal within the 28 days time limit. We can then decide in the next three months how best to join together to co-ordinate the grounds of appeal.

Yours sincerely,
Dennis Crossley.

FINCHAMPSTEAD PARISH MAGAZINE
AUG. 1979

30

Aug 1979

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Rectory,
Finchampstead.

20th July 1979.

Dear Editor,

It is not every month that our Village Magazine is graced with correspondence from so eminent a personage as the Archdeacon of Berkshire. Such a rare occurrence prompts a response, and I feel that I must make a reply to the Archdeacon as he takes me to task over comments I made in my June letter.

I can understand the Archdeacon's feeling uncomfortable at the position in which the Church Commissioners' statement has placed him, but I am surprised that he should react in quite such an over-sensitive manner as in the first paragraph of his letter to you. I neither intended nor implied any suggestion of deceit on the Archdeacon's part, nor have I questioned his veracity. The "double talk" to which I referred in my letter relates to the Church hierarchy of which the Archdeacon himself forms only part: he may perhaps be described as the left hand which does not (or did not) know what the right hand was doing.

If the truth of the Archdeacon's denials of discussions about teaming or grouping depended upon the addition of the word "formal" to describe the discussions, it is cold comfort for Finchampstead who certainly have liked to have known of any discussions. I find it significant that the Archdeacon has retreated into formalities, thereby tacitly admitting that there were indeed discussions about grouping prior to March 1978, albeit not formal discussions.

The Archdeacon says that it was the Church Commissioners who suggested in December 1978 that a wider pastoral arrangement might be the best way forward. The Commissioners themselves, however, say, in Paragraph 9 of their statement dated the 15th May 1979, that "the Diocese... had come to the conclusion that while in the future it might be desirable to propose that the incumbents of certain benefices should be enabled to assist each other more fully by being

4

the Church Commissioners have added their own comments on how the future might go. No-one reading the Commissioners' letter with any regard for the English language can say with Mr. Crossley that "the main reason for the scheme is to enable St. John's to enter as a partner with parochial status into a new grouping of parishes." The main reason for the Commissioners' commendation of the scheme is simply that they think it is a good one as it stands, and they say so.

3. With regard to the future viability of the parish of Finchampstead, at the public meeting to which Mr. Crossley refers I refused to forecast what the future might be for any of us. Mr. Crossley's complaint that the Church Commissioners give no assurances about his parish is surely exaggerated in the face of the following passage from their letter: "The Commissioners see no reason why the creation of the proposed new parish should disrupt or threaten the viability of the ancient parish of Finchampstead." It is noticeable that the idea of the non-viability of the ancient parish of Finchampstead has only ever been raised by Mr. Crossley and some people in Finchampstead itself. With regard to Barkham, of course they have an assurance, for they have recently accepted in faith and gone through all the uncertainties of pastoral change, and have come out on the other side happily and vigorously.

Sir, I am not in the business of breaking down, but of building up, and especially of building up in the Faith of Jesus Christ. In this situation my ambition is so to enable people to grow together in Christ across parochial boundaries and free from the constraints and limitations that such boundaries and status symbols produce that there will be a real revival of spiritual understanding and of Christian witness and love. And why, for the sake of our God who allowed himself to be stripped of all status in the world, must the people of Finchampstead suppose themselves to be excluded from all this growth in Christ? They are far from being so excluded in my mind.

Yours very sincerely,

John Brown

associated in a group ministry it would be desirable in any such grouping that California should have a minister of full incumbent status". I cannot believe that the Diocese could "come to the conclusion" without having formal discussions within their counsels. In fact the Commissioners refer to the Diocese having "reviewed the matter on more than one occasion".

It is also cold comfort to find the Archdeacon publicly admitting that he fails to see what the problem is. Perhaps a little less insistence on formality and a little more application to the views expressed from the people of Finchampstead would help his understanding. Understanding of the English language also seems to be a point of difference between the Archdeacon and myself. I can only say that, despite what the Archdeacon says, I can find no commendation of the Scheme by the Church Commissioners in their statement of the 15th May. Indeed, I detect a note of some reluctance in their going forward with the Scheme. They do not say that the Scheme is a good one as it stands, as the Archdeacon suggests, but merely that it "could be regarded as complete in itself". I still find the following sentence from the Church Commissioners' statement the one upon which their whole reasoning in favour of the Scheme logically rests: I quote from Paragraph 13;

They accept however the conclusion of the Diocese, who have reviewed the matter on more than one occasion, that, as indicated earlier in this statement, it is desirable that the area should be accorded parochial status now, and thus be enabled to enter with that status into any consultations that may take place in the future with regard to the form of ministry and parochial organisation that may be most suitable in the longer term for the wider area of which the new parish will form part".

Finally, I am not exaggerating but simply stating a fact when I say, as I did in my June letter, that no assurance is given in the Church Commissioners' statement as to the future of the benefice of Finchampstead. The Archdeacon quotes what the Church Commissioners say about the parish not the benefice. I should have expected him to know and to notice the difference. The Archdeacon should not be surprised that, as present incumbent of the benefice, I should be the person chiefly concerned about its viability for the future, and that it should be the parishioners of Finchampstead itself who share this concern.

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Crossley.

Village church in screen drama

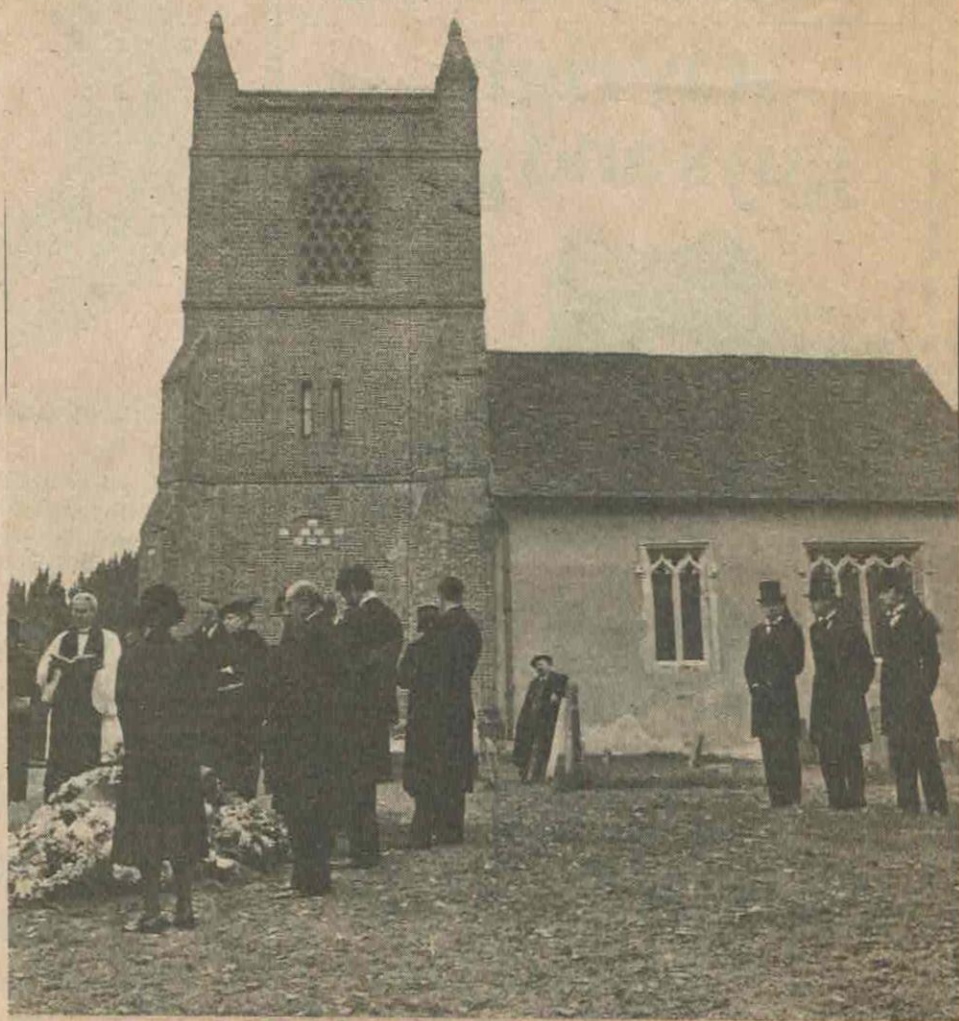
FINCHAMPSTEAD Church is to be featured in London Weekend Television's production for Love For Lydia tomorrow evening.

Filming took place at the church last October and one of the scenes in the drama is shown on the right. Viewers will be able to see shots of both the interior and exterior of the church.

The Rev Dennis Crossley explained, "when the film crew arrived to do the shots inside the church, I disapproved of the outfit worn by the 'vicar'. I told them this and ended up by lending them my own surplice."

Although he was unwilling to disclose exactly how much the church coffers received for the loan of the site, Mr Crossley described the fee as generous. All the money was put towards the church restoration fund — all work which is now completed. (See Page 31 for full details).

H. E. Bates' Love For Lydia is being shown on London Weekend Television in 13 episodes.



WORKINGHAM TIMES, MARCH 29, 1979.

That's snow business

Weather hits stars at church

IT WAS enough to try the patience of a saint when snow held up the production of London Weekend Television's series "Bless Me Father" last week.

Filming for the second time at Finchampstead Parish Church the programme's stars, Arthur Lowe and Daniel Albineri, were unable to record the afternoon session as snow had covered the church during their lunch break. During the morning, filming went ahead in bright sunshine.

Spring

With a grave expression and, knowing that they could not alter the weather, the production staff postponed the recording. As part of the programme is recorded outside, it is hoped that the episode will be finished before signs of spring appear in the church grounds. If they fail to do this, the original title of the episode, "The Season of Goodwill", may have to be changed to "The Two Seasons of Goodwill!"

Apart from last week's filming at the church, the opening episode was also recorded there.

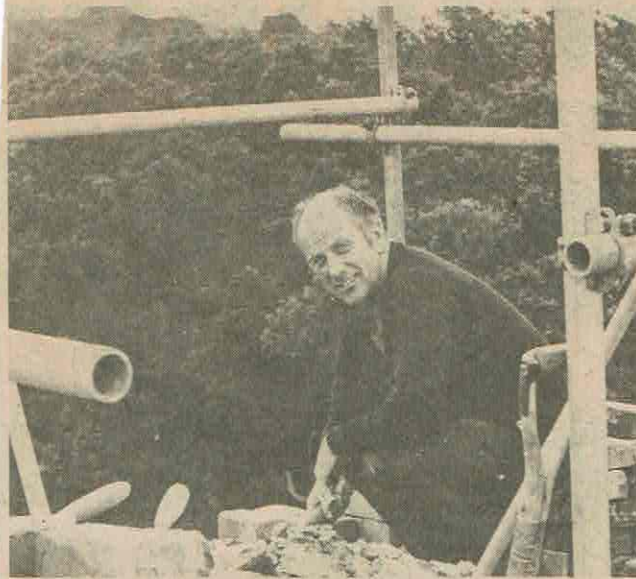


ARTHUR LOWE and Daniel Albineri take a stroll with a few friends in the grounds of Finchampstead Church.

March 29
1979

Sept 15 WOKS TIMES

End in sight



STEEPLEJACK. Mr Ernie Butler hard at work repairing the north west pinnacle of Finchampstead Church.

RENOVATION work to the old pinnacle at Finchampstead Church will be finally completed later this month.

It was 10 years ago that renovation first started on the church — when the south west pinnacle was struck by lightning. The steeplejacks who were called in to carry out repairs examined the rest of the sixteenth century church and discovered that the north west pinnacle and the north aisle were dangerous and badly in need of repair.

No sooner had the church Rector, the Rev Dennis Crossley put out a plea for help from the parish than all the villagers rallied round to help raise the necessary £3,000 estimated for the repairs.

"Everyone was marvellous. We are still short of that amount but there are still two more fund raising events to go," explained Mr Crossley. He said that a Square Dance has been arranged in the Memorial Hall on Saturday evening and that Finchampstead Flower Festival will be held on September 23, 24, and 25.

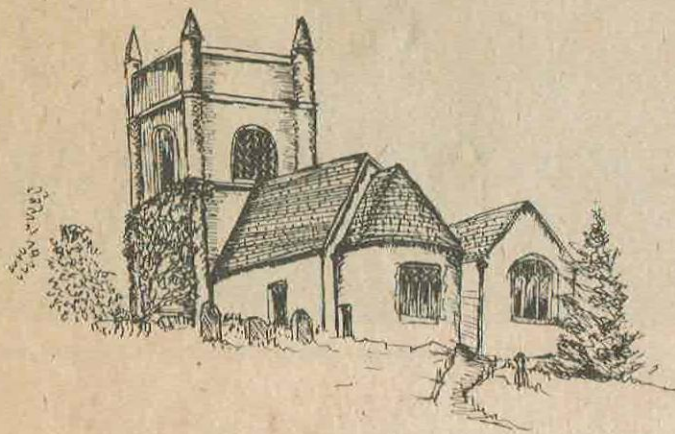
Church funds were further boosted when London Weekend Television applied to use the church for filming some of the scenes of its new 13 episode series "Love For Lydia". Although Mr Crossley declined to say how much the

company paid the church he said that it was "generous."

In July, villagers decided to go a step further in giving the church a new look and started to clean the headstones in the grave yard. They were astonished to find one stone dating back to 1702 as up until that time the oldest headstone in the church was thought to have been laid in 1710.

On September 23 there will be a service at the church to mark the completion of renovation work and the pinnacle will be available for members of the parish and visitors to look over the church the following day.

Finchampstead Church



Thy praise and glory loud we will resound
 To all the listening nations round
 And with our tongues and voices raise
 To thee O God our songs of praise. (Bible motto)

The church at Finchampstead stands high on the top of a hill, in a place which was once used as a Roman signal station. It stands alone, commanding a vast stretch of field and forest from the edge of Finchampstead ridges, and looking over the Blackwater into Hampshire. In 900 A.D. a Saxon church was built on the site after an old pagan temple had once been built there. It was made of wood, wattle and thatch. In 1150 the Normans built a church here, part of which remains. The font, with slanting bands and rows of balls round it is Norman, and so is the

chancel apse, with a pillar piscina and an aumbrey.

Brick church towers are a feature of Eastern Berkshire and many of them date from the 17th. Finchampstead church tower is one of these. The church walls are white under red roofs, and inside are mediaeval arches of all shapes and sizes, high and low, wide and narrow. There is a blurred figure among leaves and scrolls painted on the chancel arch, and fragments of what may have been the old screen in the pulpit. The initials T.H. over the entrance door of the North Chapel probably refer to Thomas Harrison, who in his will left legacies to the poor of Finchampstead.

A tablet commemorates a lord of the manor, Henry Hyde, who supplied the stables of Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth, and there is a little brass portrait of a lady of Charles Stuart's day, holding her small daughter by the hand. The mother, Elizabeth Blighe, is decked with bows and lace and a winged headdress, and her daughter Jane is clutching a spray of flowers.

On a stone in the churchyard dated 1821, is this epitaph to John Banister:

When this you see
 Pray judge not me
 For sin enough I own,
 Mend your lives and
 Judge yourselves
 Let other folk alone.

■ ARTIST Grice of Wokingham pauses at St James', Finchampstead, for this week's sketch in our series on places of worship.



Your local churches

THE OLDEST part of St James' Church at Finchampstead is the bowl of the limestone font which carries the date 1030 and is pre-Norman, but the stem and base of the font are modern. The body of the church is Norman.

The modern pulpit contains some 15th century tracery, probably from an earlier screen and there is a rare 12th century pillar piscina. The east end of the chancel is a semi-circular apse, uncommon in English churches.

The date over the doorway to the north chapel is 1590. Alterations to the church were carried out in this year and a door also with the date 1590 was removed. This is now the door to the nearby Queen's Oak public house. The plate consists of silver gilt up and paten dated 1591 and chalice, paten and flagon dated 1854. There is also a 17th century pewter flagon.

The outer walls of the church are cemented in contrast to the tower which is brick. The roofs are tiled.

There is an altar tomb to Richard Palmer, once Lord of the Manor of Finchampstead, who died in 1670, and in the church hangs the tattered banner of General Sir John Watson, an Indian Mutiny VC who was once churchwarden here.

The Devil's Highway, part of the old Roman road from London to Silchester, passes north of the foot of the mound on which the church is built. This mound is reputed to be a Roman earthwork, but has not been excavated. — *Rebecca Thatcher.*

3D
15c

ST. JAMES CHRONICLE

FINCHAMPSTEAD



St. James' Church Finchampstead

MARCH 1985

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

In Lent during March we shall sing the Benedicite which includes the words "O ye Ice and Snow, bless ye the Lord". With our Organist having broken his shoulder blade at the threshold of the churchyard, on his way to play for the Deanery Bellringers' annual service, I may be singing parts of the Benedicite with muted voice this year.

Full marks are awarded for honesty and good-neighbourliness to the car driver who skidded into the oak handrail and accidentally damaged the post and rail. He telephoned from Bracknell to let us know that he had been the cause of the damage while on a car treasure hunt with a social club. He has volunteered to settle the repair bill. Well done Sir! Full marks also to the churchman who chipped out a footpath alongside the handrail with an ice axe.

After all services on two Sundays in February we have held a special additional collection for the Ethiopian famine relief appeal. How wonderful it was during the school half-term (on the day after Quinquagesima Sunday) to receive a visit from five children who brought a plastic shopping bag holding all sorts of envelopes and packages containing money they had raised for Ethiopia.

I enquired the sources of their gifts: one said pocket money, another change left over from choir pay after buying sweets, another money from parents, and another money given in to the Sunday School teacher at Sunday School. Congratulations and thanks to those children; N, J, J, E and L. Well done all of you!

Yours sincerely,

Dennis Crossley.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, FINCHAMPSTEAD

CALENDAR FOR MARCH 1985

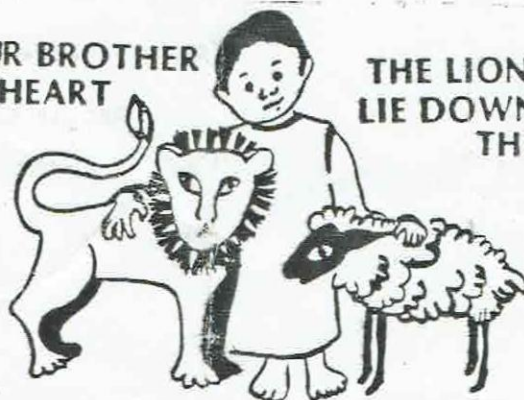


from The Times

Holy Communion every Wednesday at 10 a.m.
Sunday School every Sunday (except the 10th and 31st March)
from 11 a.m. until 12 noon at the Manor House.

<u>3rd Lent II</u>	8 a.m. Holy Communion (Series II) 11 a.m. Parish Communion 6.30 p.m. Evensong
<u>10th Lent III</u>	8 a.m. Holy Communion (Series II) 9.30 a.m. Young Families' Communion (Followed by Coffee at the Manor House) 11 a.m. Mattins 6.30 p.m. Evensong 7.30 p.m. Over 11's Group - Manor House
<u>14th Thursday</u>	2.15 p.m. Mothers' Union meeting - Rectory
<u>16th Saturday</u>	7 p.m. Mid-Lent Concert in church
<u>17th Lent IV</u>	<u>MOTHERING SUNDAY</u> 8 a.m. Holy Communion (Series II) 11 a.m. Mattins 3 p.m. Mothering Sunday Family Service 6.30 p.m. Evensong
<u>19th Tuesday</u>	2.15 p.m. Pram and Pushchair service
<u>24th Lent V</u>	8 a.m. Holy Communion (Prayer Book) 11 a.m. Mattins 6.30 p.m. Evensong
<u>25th Monday</u>	10 a.m. Holy Communion - Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
<u>31st Palm Sunday</u>	<u>Distribution of Palms</u> 8 a.m. Holy Communion 9.30 a.m. Sunday School Service (Followed by Coffee at the Manor House) 11 a.m. Mattins 6.30 p.m. Evensong

...FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER
FROM YOUR HEART



THE LION SHALL
LIE DOWN WITH
THE LAMB

ABC of Churches

Finchampstead

Finchampstead is on the Berkshire/Hampshire border, 10 miles SW of Reading on the B3348 in the Blackwater Valley between Arborfield and Sandhurst. Leave the M4 at Exit 11 for the A327 to Arborfield.

Although the church of St James dates in part from the twelfth century, it stands on a site of greater antiquity. The Roman road connecting Staines and Silchester (otherwise known as the Devil's Highway) passes through the village and the steep banking to the east and south of the church is part of an ancient earthwork. Just how old this site is cannot be determined with accuracy for it has never been excavated: it may have been ancient when the Romans came.

Whatever the history of the site it was clearly a prominent one for a church which in its original form consisted of nave, chancel, and apsidal sanctuary and dates from about 1150. At first it had deep splayed round-headed windows but these were replaced in later years to admit more light, although some blocked-up remains can still be seen. Contemporary with this period are the font with cable-like carving and the piscina: this stands on a fluted pillar and was rediscovered during restoration work in the last century.

Two hundred years later a chapel was added on the north side; it was enlarged in 1475 and an outside doorway was inserted in 1590. This doorway bears the initials T. H. and may well refer to Thomas Harrison who was Lord of the Manor at the time.

Meanwhile the fabric of the church had probably been affected by changes due to the Reformation; some of the carving incorporated into the pulpit may have been salvaged from the rood screen when it was dismantled. The last significant addition to the church was the sturdy brick tower with corner pinnacles erected in 1720. It houses a ring of six bells; the last bell was added in 1885 to commemorate the eightieth birthday of Edward St John, Rector of Finchampstead for fifty years, and one of a family that ministered to the parish for nearly 150 years.

A brass memorial commemorates Henry Hinde who died in 1580. He had held the office of Purveyor at Court and had managed to retain it during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth, no mean achievement in those days. Nearby hangs the banner of General Sir John Watson which came from the Chapel of the Order of the Bath in Westminster Abbey. He won the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny and is buried in the churchyard, having served for some years as churchwarden.

Leslie Grout



St James, Finchampstead.

Photo: Studio Carr

CHOIR NEWS

We were very pleased to admit Mark Carroll to full membership of the Boys' Choir at Evensong on Sunday 10th February. We hope he will enjoy his music with us.

On Saturday evening, 16th March, we are planning a mid-Lent Concert. The Choir music will be supported by two visitors. Miss Linda Woollacott is a soprano soloist from Reading who sings with the Sainsbury Singers, and Mr Simon Payne from Abingdon is a bassoonist. We anticipate a very pleasant evening's music and warmly invite you to attend. A retiring collection will go to the Choir Robe Fund.

The Choir is to sing Stainer's "Crucifixion" this year on the evening of Good Friday. An open invitation has been made to interested singers to augment the Choir practices on Thursday evenings. Baritone and Tenor soloists have been invited.

We much regret that Derek Barker, our Organist, has suffered a broken shoulder bone. Derek had kindly agreed to play for the Bell Ringers' service and fell on the ice outside the church. We were indebted to Mr Alan Pearcey for playing at such short notice, and at the Sunday services on the day following. Undaunted, Derek is already back in action, and our plans remain unaltered.

ST. JAMES'S YOUNG PEOPLE

Young Families' Communion on the second Sunday of every month at 9.30 a.m.

Sunday School

For children ages 4 - 11

Every first, third, fourth (and fifth) Sunday
11 a.m. until 12 noon in the Manor House.

Infant Class - Ruth McCrum 732660

Senior Class - Brian Robson 733203 (Sunday School Leader)

Over Elevens Church Group

Every first, third, fourth (and fifth) Sunday

11 a.m. until 12 noon in the Manor House.

Second Sunday 7.30 p.m. until 9 p.m. in the Manor House.

Joy Hood 734318

This month - Sunday, the 10th March - To make something for Mothering Sunday. Please bring 20 pence towards cost of materials.

Under Fives Church Group

A short Pram Service for mothers and pre-school children

Every third Tuesday in the month at 2.15 p.m. in church,
followed by Coffee and Biscuits in the Manor House.

Penny O'Neill 734632

MOTHERS' UNION AND WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, was the first of the African countries to gain its independence from Britain in 1957. Kwama Nkrumah, its first leader, had almost bankrupted his country by the time a coup overthrew his one-party government in 1966. Miss Eileen Burt showed us many and interesting slides of her visit there in 1965. Today, someone to whom Nkrumah was a teen-age idol, Flt.Lt. Jerry Rawlings, still struggles with the glaring discrepancy between Ghana's abundant natural resources and her actual poverty. The resilience and cheerfulness of Ghanians have been sorely tried by ten years of drought, recent bush fires and the added burden of Nigeria's expulsion of one million Ghanian refugees. In all this there has been a phenomenal growth in the spiritual churches and many look to them to represent those values that others seem to have forgotten.

It's a busy time for our diaries. "At Homes" will be on the Tuesday afternoons of 5th and 19th March and 2nd April to study the CMS project on Lebanon, "Where is Jesus". Slides and tapes give a good picture of the destruction and fear that is Beirut. The usual Thursday morning "At Home" is on 28th March.

Crowthorne M.U. has invited us to a film on bereavement, followed by an "Any Questions" panel on 5th March at 8 p.m. One of the team is Mrs Pat Peirson, M.U. Diocesan Prayer Representative, and we look forward to her being our speaker at the March meeting on Thursday 14th March at 2.15 p.m. at St. James's Rectory. Corporate Communion will be on Wednesday 20th March (10 a.m. at St. James's Church), the day I see in my diary that Spring begins!

Barbara Dunn - Eversley 734607.

Back in the early 1980's Berkshire Family History Society had an on going project to transcribe all Berkshire Churchyards & Cemetries & gather in all those valueable inscriptions which due to natural elements and in the name of progress where Churchyards are being cleared, they were being lost forever. However in Finchampstead we came in the former category and at that moment in time being stuck with my own Family History I approach the Rector with a view to transcribing St James Churchyard. I was delighted to discover that a Lady in 1956 had transcribed the Churchyard & I was able to use her book to cross check all references. We shall always be indebted to this lady because many of the stones had become illegible in that 30 years due to the weather elements. I worked hard on this project & was able to compile the book of M.I.'s which is on display. However the task was'ent without problems & intrigues and the grave which held my facination most I think was the circular one in Section "J", in the new part of the Churchyard.

I decided to take this opportunity to share with you just how one can get hooked on family & local histories, and how often one can be on the wrong track altogether & how sometimes it takes years of patience and research to come up with the right answers. This I think will be borne out with the following.

I like so many other people in Finchampstead knew the circular grave existed, it had always been there this circle of kerbstones, 8ft in diameter, no inscriptions, and the middle just grassed. The late Miss H.Taylor also was very intrigued by this & it was a very dear wish of hers that I should solve the mystery. I started by talking to the older generation in the village , by displaying pictures & a plea for information at all Church functions & by generally making people aware of its exsistance. The answer that came back most frequently was that it was a child/children, atradeqy possibly connected with fire & no body could dateit at all. As it was surrounded by graves of the 1940 era, I assumed wrongly that it too dated from that period. It was only talking to Lady Liddell sometime later that I discovered from her that it was in exsistance when she first knew Finchampstead in 1900. This put an entirely new light on it altogether, and gave the reason why nobody could remember the occassion. Both the late Lady Liddell & Mr Mearing said it was a child/childrens grave and again a tradeqy. I followed on wuth this theory & I sought help from the County Archivist at Shire Hall and also Daphne Phillips who was until recently head of Reading Reference Library, and is an authority on local history. At Shire Hall I researched Finchampstead Records for possible clues of deaths of children between the years 1881to 1900. (1881 was the year this part of the Churchyard was opened) I came up with a possible ans. of a group of children all of whom died of Diptheria in Nov. 1892. They were on Nov 3rd Florence Ann Wallden aged 12. Finchampstead

Nov 11th	Voilet Maud	"	"	5	"
Nov 11th	William John Wetherall	"	"	5	"
Nov 16th	Arthur Wallden	"	"	14	"
Nov 28th	Edith Gatehouse	"	"	24	"

I discussed this with Adam Green the County Archivist at the time & he felt I may well have found the answer. He suggested that perhaps these children may well have been buried in an isolated part of the Churchyard away from their family graves as the Victorians considered that if you died from an infectious disease you were still infectious after death. He suggested a mass burial and also thought looking in local papers for an epidemic at that time. This I did in conjunction with Daphne Phillips, who not only researched this for me but also looked up in national & local newspapers for any deaths by misadventure i.e. fire between the years 1881 & 1900. Nothing came of this & although I liked the theory, I was never really convinced, and kept a very open mind on the whole thing.

However last November at a Churchyard Trust bring & buy I was talking to Margaret Mearing who in the course of conversation on the circle grave told me that Miss Vass' Father was gardener to Mr Arthur Frazer Walter of North Court, and she'd understood that the round grave once had railings around the outside and a rose bed in the centre in memory of a child of the Walters family, and that Mr Vass had to tend it as part of his duties as Gardener. (I must just add here that Miss Vass was known to many of us as "Teacher Nellie" at Finchampstead School. In the meantime it was also mentioned to me that there is a circular grave in Bearwood Churchyard. I took the opportunity to visit Bearwood Church a fortnight ago when they had a Flower Festival & after looking at the flowers I asked one of their stewards if indeed there was a circular grave. "Yes" came the answer & she guided me to it. Imagine my delight when I discovered not only was it very similar to ours but it had a plaque on it dedicated to Arthur Frazer Walter & his wife Henrietta Maria. Although the middle is filled with flagstones & it is much bigger than ours, the kerbstones are identical. Thrilled with this information back I went to Shire Hall. I looked at the Burial Register for Finchampstead from 1881 onwards again & discovered the burial of Antony Walter son of Arthur Frazer & Henrietta Maria on January 21st 1890 aged 7 months. I then looked at the Baptisms for 1889 & found Antony son of Arthur Frazer & Henrietta Maria Walter bapt. on August 18th 1889. Also included was the child's birth date of May 24th 1889. I am quite convinced in my own mind that I now know whose grave the circular one belongs to. I have still a little bit more researching to do before drawing final conclusions. I intend to research the Walters Family a bit more with regards their connections with Finchampstead. I had a long discussion with the Rector of Bearwood & he was able to give me a lot of useful information which I intend to follow up. One thing he told me that Arthur Frazer Walter left Finch. in about 1896 to take up his inheritance at Bearwood House, which explains the burials in both Bearwood & Finchampstead. But why Circular Graves. Anyone any suggestions?

Oliver Buckland

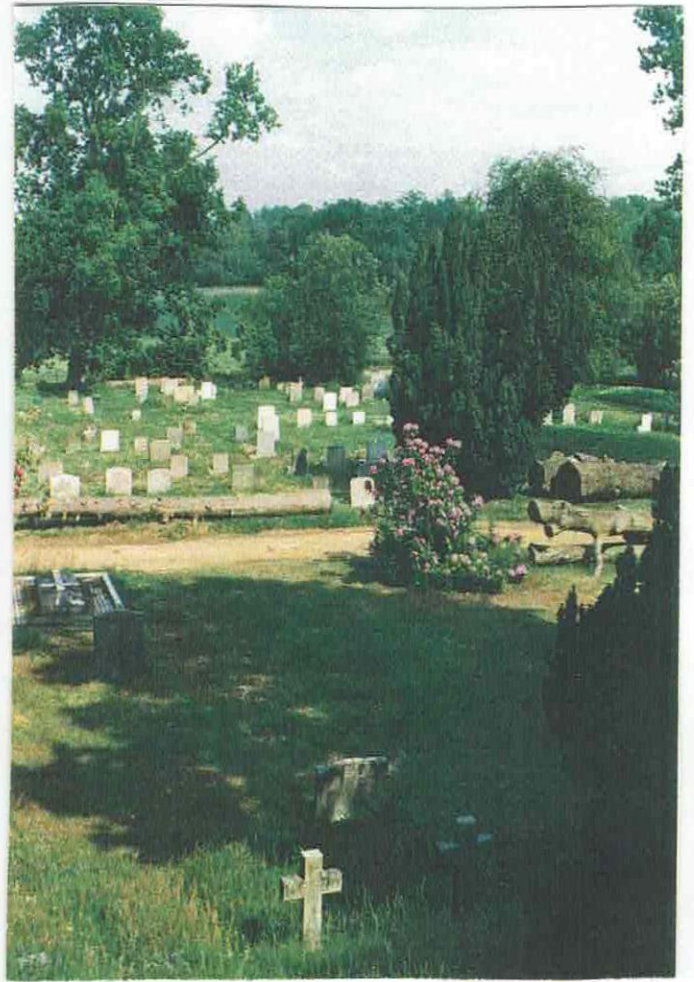


Storm damage

1987



1990's



Stone damage still
visible



INTERIOR OF CHURCH
1989



ALTAR



VESTMENT CHEST



STONEMASONRY
WORKS
100, N. 1st St., St. Louis, Mo.
ESTD. 1880

FONT
C. 1030

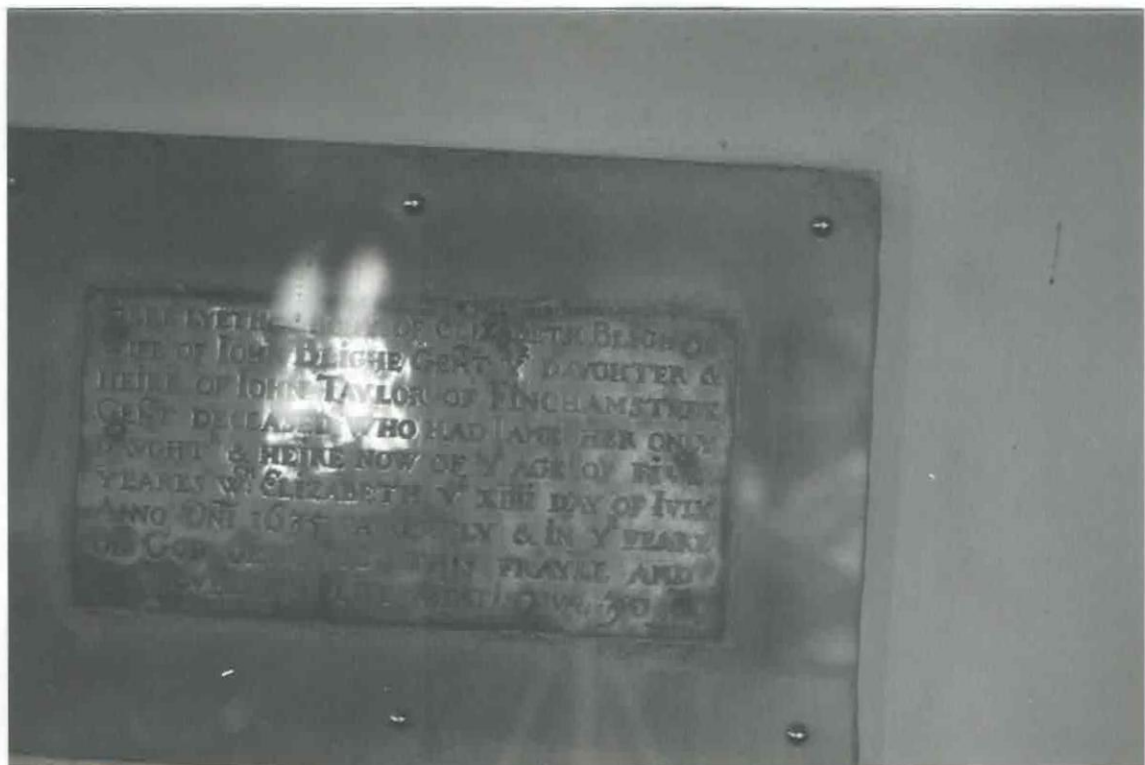
WITH NEW BASE IN 1855



HENRY HYNDE
LOAD OF THE MANOR OF EAST COURT
DIED DECEMBER 1580.



ELIZABETH BRIGHE
DIED 1635



Finchampstead Church

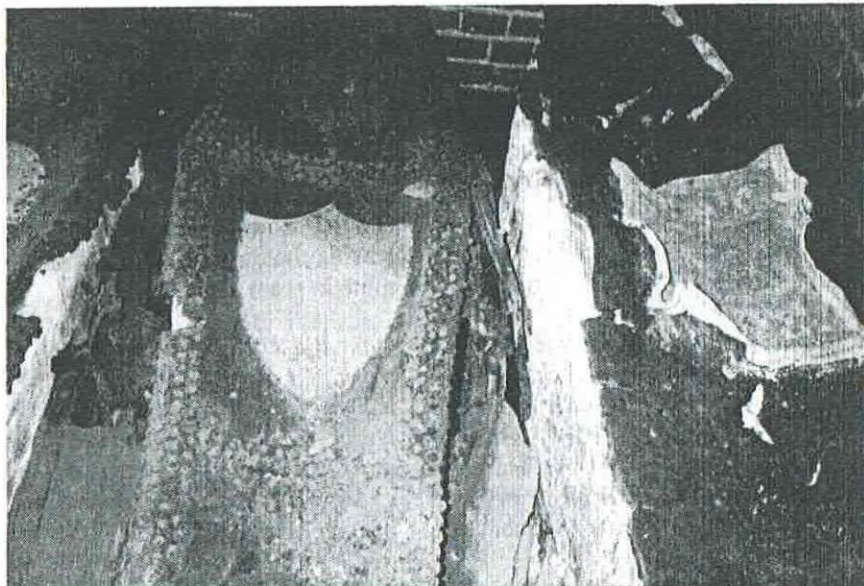
by Olive Butchart

Like most parish churches, St. James at Finchampstead has been repaired, renovated and rebuilt over the years, but recent building work has uncovered a new and exciting part of the Church's history. While builders were renovating the floorboards in the North Chapel they uncovered a vault beneath the floor.

The village of Finchampstead is on the Hampshire/Berkshire border 10 miles south west of Reading in the Blackwater Valley between Arborfield and Sandhurst. Its ancient Church, dedicated to St. James, stands on a hill, reputed to be the site of Roman earthworks. It overlooks the River Blackwater and is near the line of the Roman Road from London to Silchester. It's thought a religious sanctuary was here before Roman and Saxon times, but the first recorded date

of a Church on this site is 1123, although the font has been dated at 1030. The Church building consists of an apsidal chancel, north chapel, nave, north porch and west tower. The exterior, except the tower, is plastered and the roof is tiled. Major alterations were carried out in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Recent research by the Wessex Archaeology Society gives reason to believe that as much work was carried out in the fourteenth century as in the other centuries. The magnificent brick tower as we know it today was built in 1720 and the north porch was added in Victorian times.

On the evening of February 11, 1991 two members of the North Hants Historical and Archaeological Society, accompanied my husband and me to the



Church to examine and photograph a vault which had recently been exposed when builders were renovating the floorboards in the North Chapel. We had to organise a visit in a great hurry as the builders had delayed work to allow us to carry out an investigation.

The vault itself is beneath the middle of the Choirstalls. The entrance revealed three damaged coffins, all at one time lead lined and originally encased with wood. They had disintegrated to an advanced degree. It is possible however to make out the ornate brass and iron chrysanthemum studs on the lids of the coffins. Standing in front of the tomb looking due west the left hand coffin has an inscription Mary St. John.....1810. The centre coffin, and the largest, probably contains the remains of a male.

It bears a lead shield plaque which has been subjected to oxidisation and deterioration. The third, similar in size to the left hand coffin might suggest another female interment. Again the lead plaque on the coffin was illegible. From the position of the coffins within the tomb and the structure itself there is every reason to believe that there may be a further tier of coffins below. The eastern end appears to be blocked off, possibly to prevent further entry.

I think this proves without doubt that the vault belongs to the St. John family, recorded in William Lyons book *The Chronicles of Finchampstead* as being in the north aisle of the Church. The St. John family were very prominent in Finchampstead from the early eighteenth century until the end of the late nineteenth century. Their family home was at West Court and for four generations

they were Lords of the Manor and Rectors of the parish, which spanned over a period of 148 years. Mary St. John was the fourth daughter of the Rev. Ellis St. John, who died in 1810. My belief is that the middle coffin in the vault is indeed the Rev. Ellis St. John, who died in 1786, and the right hand coffin his wife Elizabeth, who died in 1797. If there are three other coffins below these I would suggest they belong to the three daughters of Ellis and Elizabeth. There are six stone plaques around the north aisle bearing the inscriptions to members of the St. John family, which probably led William Lyons to believe that the tomb was also there.

The succeeding generations of St. John's are buried in the Churchyard. There is just one exception and that's the only son of Ellis and Elizabeth, Ellis St. John Junior, who married Ann Bannister and inherited the living from his father in 1786. He died in 1809 and his son Henry succeeded him. The only information I have is that Ellis St. John Junior died at Kings Arm Inn at Oxford. I have found no burial records for him at Finchampstead.

The damaged vault entrance has now been repaired, the floorboards replaced and the choirstalls are back in position, leaving the St. John family to rest once more in peace.

Olive Butchart, born and brought up in the village of Finchampstead, Berkshire, is married with two grown up sons. She has always taken a keen interest in local and family history and has been the Finchampstead Church archivist for the past ten years.

SEASIDE MEMORIES



The seafront at Southsea, 1924. Mr McHugh is the youngster in the straw hat between the two ladies in the front, second and third from left.

St James' Church, Finchampstead: Choir Outing, 1924

WHEN I was seven-years-old it was time for "preparation to sing in the choir".

For this we would go to the Rectory to practice scales and learn "pointing" for psalms, taught by Mrs Corfield, the Rector's wife. We would be rewarded with a biscuit or a finger of cake.

These lessons continued until you were eight-years-old, then you joined the choir.

Each time we went to choir practise, (once a week), or church, twice on Sunday plus "festivals", we would be credited with one penny. I think this was paid to us at Christmas and at the time of the choir outing which was during the summer holiday.

My first outing was in 1924. Our destination: Southsea.

The excitement was intense. We had to be up very early to leave at seven am for, although it was not a very long journey, the speed limit for "charabanes" at that time was 12 mph; this can be seen painted on the chassis in the photograph.

The charabanc had three steep steps up the side to the seats. There was a door to each set which went from one side to the other, no aisle and collapsible canvas hood, fastened to the top of the windscreen and secured to the front wings with a long leather strap. The tyres were solid rubber.

In the party were my sister Nora, now sadly just departed; my brothers Fred and Eric and of course, myself.

Amid great excitement we were at last ready to leave. The engine was coaxed into a crescendo of noise and vibration and we were away.

We soon learned that once in top gear, it was just possible to hold a conversation, providing you raised your voice enough. When, however, the driver had to change down it was a little difficult. Should he have to drop down to bottom gear (which was quite often), it was almost impossible.

We did not, however, have to get out and push uphill which, at that time was a common occurrence; this of course being done by the men.

The wonder, at travelling at this speed, (12 mph) and comfort (solid tyres), was unbelievable. As this was the first time in my eight years I had ridden in anything other than a pony and trap, a cart or waggon and as we were going to the sea, which I had never seen, the excitement was almost unbearable. The nearer we got to the sea, the more excited we became until the shout went up "the sea!"

Until the charabanc stopped by the beach and sea, I could not make out what was what. But then, there it all was — the beach, the sea, as far as the eye could see, with waves and the wonderful pier.

I think Nora, who was then about 13-years-old, was assigned to look after Eric and me, but we soon got lost. We went to paddle in the sea and collect seaweed and shells. We then went to explore the wonders of the pier. Everything

was new to us, the amusement, competitions, music, Punch and Judy, telescope — it was all pure magic.

Next on to the town with its shops, traffic, trams and so many people, it was amazing. We had never seen anything like this; our little village had no shops at all, to see more than six people at once was a crowd and traffic consisted almost entirely of horses and carts.

The favourite shop in Southsea was Woolworths, which, at that time boasted that nothing cost more than sixpence. All of us would buy something for Mother and the smaller ones at home.

Back now to the beach to paddle and play until 6 pm when the charabanc returned to pick us up. The journey home was enjoyed very much. As we passed through some villages the children would cheer, clap and wave, hoping they would be thrown some pennies. The strange scenery was also very much appreciated.

We arrived home about 10 pm, rather dusty as lots of the roads were still gravel, very tired but very, very happy!

A A McHUGH,
Wokingham Road,
Earley.



READING CHRONICLE
MIDWEEK
JANUARY 1991

Reading Chronicle Midweek, 50-56 Portman Road, Reading. Telephone 503030. Published by the Reading Newspaper Co Ltd., and printed by the Reading Newspaper Printing Co Ltd. at their registered office, 50-56 Portman Road, Reading, Berkshire. Telephone Reading 503030.



7/14/19
Cemetery



View of Westport
from the road

PULPIT WITH MID-1400'S
TRACERY



BANNER OF
GEN. SIR JOHN WATSON, VC, GCB
FORMERLY IN WESTMINSTER
ABBAY.





ROYAL COAT OF ARMS
C.R. 1660.





1991
MOTHER'S UNION STANDARD
FLANDERS CROSS ON RIGHT



FLANDERS CROSS

FEBRUARY 1991
INVESTIGATION OF THE CRYPT.
(CAROL ROBINSON & BETTY HEE)



INTERIOR OF CRYPT.



FAMILY VAULT OF THE ST. JOHN FAMILY
UNDER NORTH AISLE.

COFFINS BELIEVED TO BELONG TO
REV. ELLIS ST. JOHN, HIS WIFE, ELIZABETH
AND DAUGHTER, MARY.



3 COFFINS OF ST. JOHN FAMILY



COFFIN CLOSE-UP



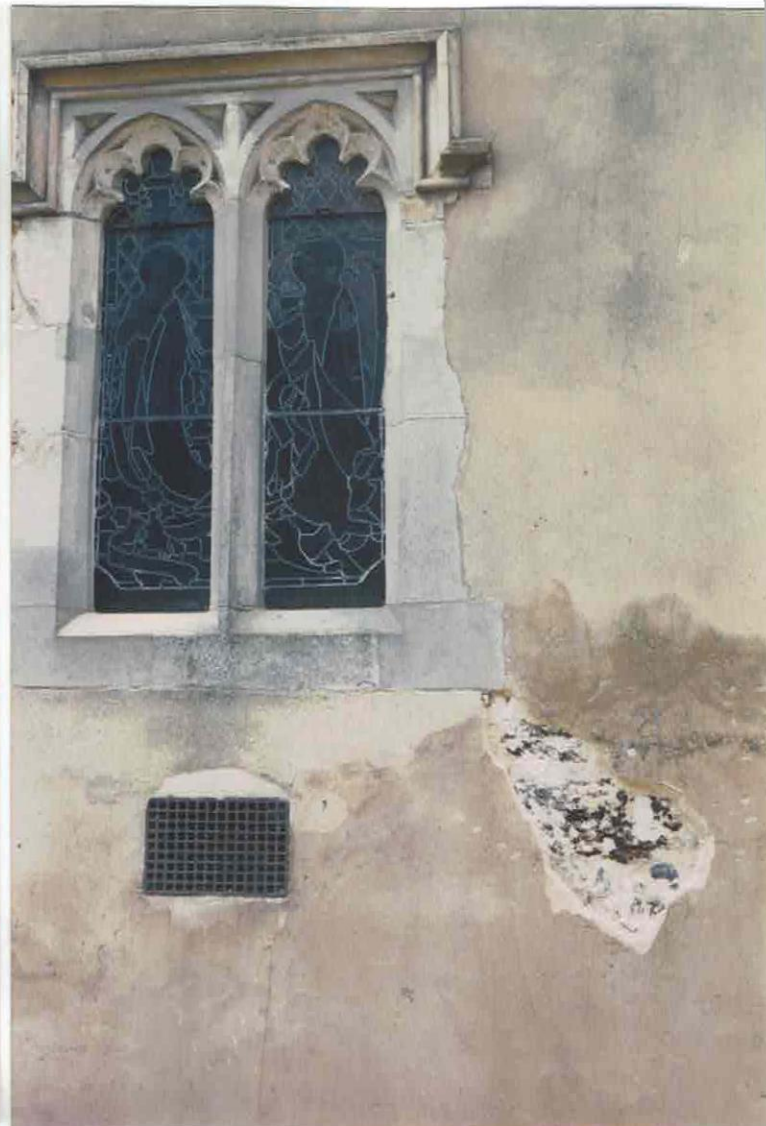
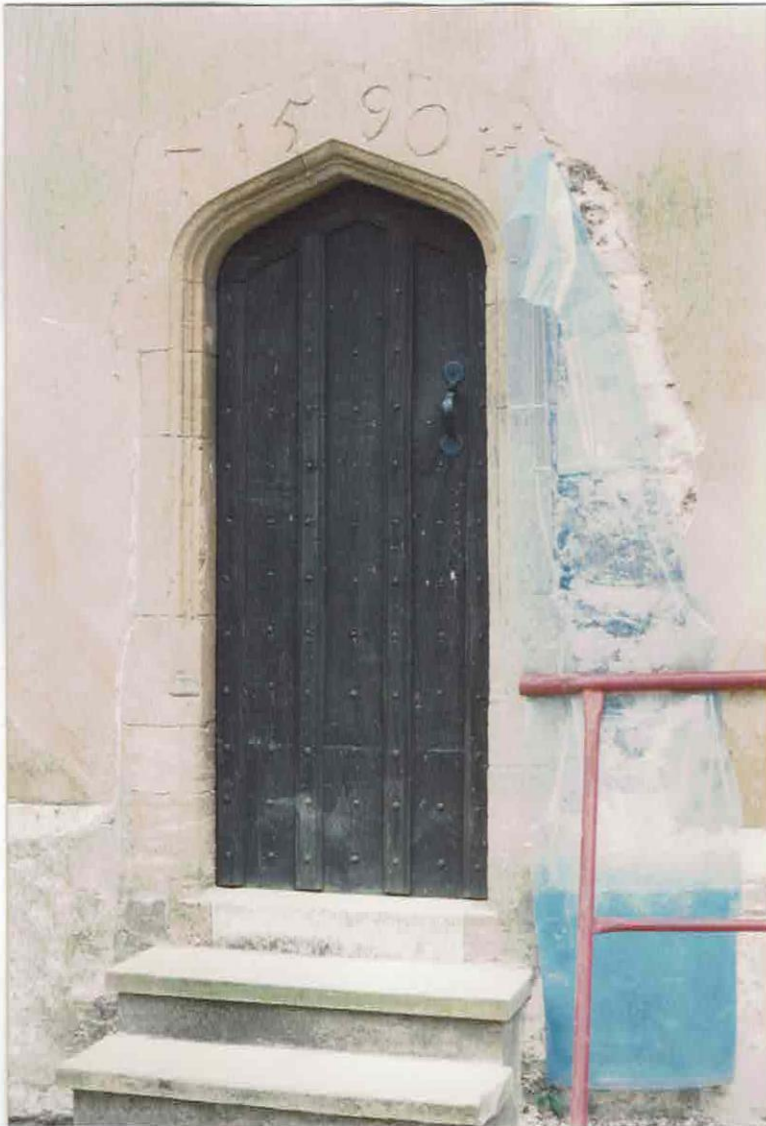
OLD WOODBINE PACKET
AT BOTTOM OF PHOTO



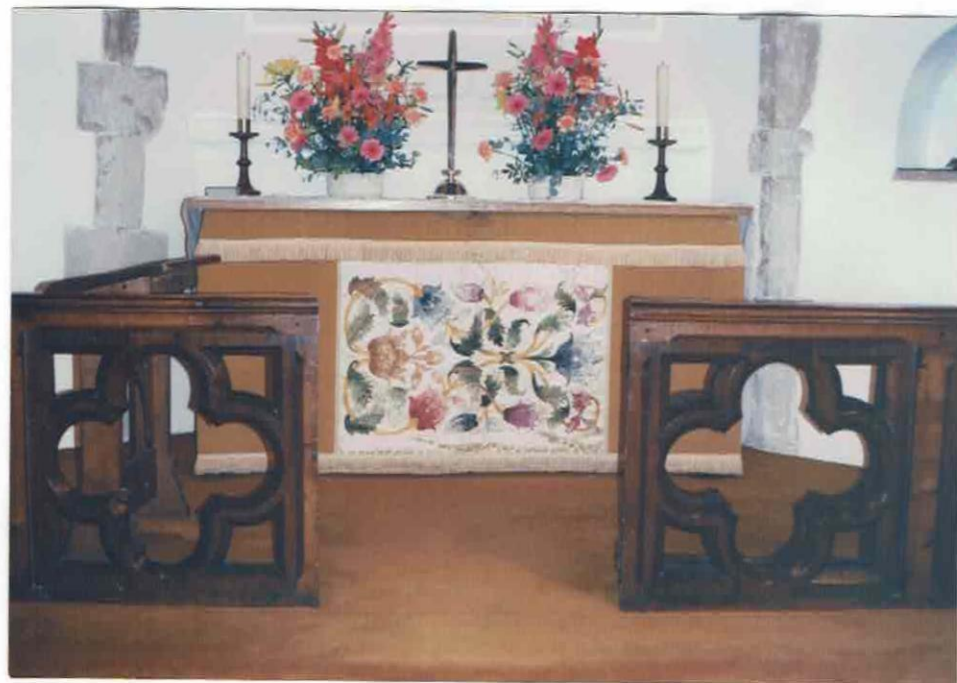
A CORRODED CREST



EXTERIOR RENOVATION WORK
MAY, 1991

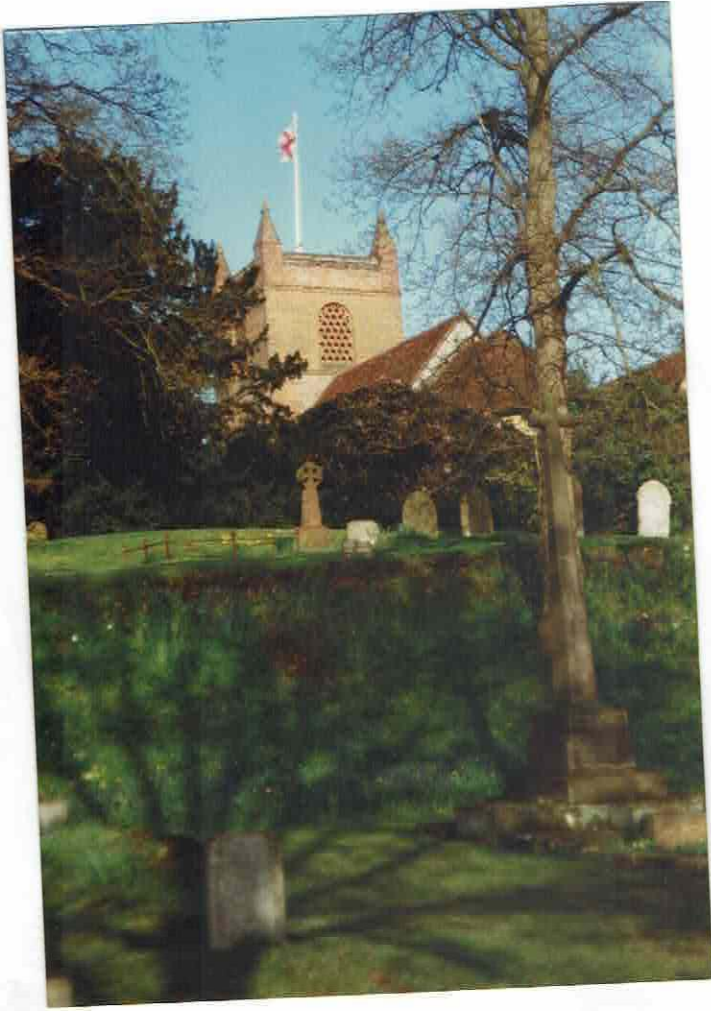


ST. JAMES' PATRONAL DAY,
25th JULY 1992.





1992



1992

NEW EXTENSION
TO THE MANOR
HOUSE



REPLACEMENT CONIFER
DONATED BY
THE FINCHAMPSTEAD
SOCIETY

CIRCULAR
GRAVE
(POSSIBLY A
WALTER CHILD)



MAY, 1993
OPENING OF FINCHAMPSTEAD CHURCH AREA
'HERITAGE PROJECT'

(MOLLIE HARLE, PARISH CLERK AND THE REV. CROSSLEY.)



SEPT. 1997
FLOWERS FOR
DIANA, PRINCESS OF
WALES.

Wokingham District Council may, by means of a low interest loan, contribute towards the expenses of repairing or maintaining a listed building or building of local or historic interest; these loans are not available for regular maintenance works. If you would like further information please contact the Planning Department.

Works to Listed Buildings

It is an offence to carry out unauthorised works to a listed building. This would include alterations or extensions, full or partial demolition of the building.

To authorise works to listed buildings, Listed Building Consent is required, this is obtained from Wokingham District Council's Planning Department.

Local Plan Policies

Just as conservation areas are protected by policies in the local plan, so are listed buildings, these seek to control the appropriate use of listed buildings, if a change of use is being considered.



*Door
and
Window
details
from
Finchampstead
Church*

Further information is available from:
URBAN DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION TEAM
WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL
PLANNING DEPARTMENT
Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG11 1WR
Contact: Ian Washbrook (0734) 778781
Harold Sanders (0734) 778747
Lisa Burton (0734) 778747

Produced by
Wokingham District
Council.
Planning Department.
May 1993.



Finchampstead Church Conservation Area



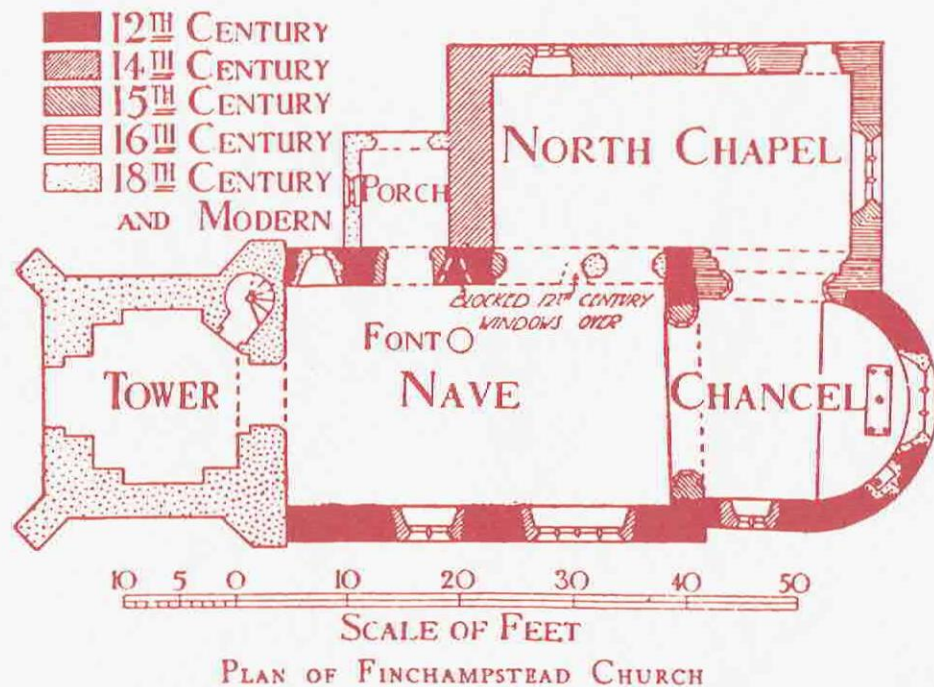
Finchampstead Church Conservation Area was designated on 29th April 1993. This leaflet explains the responsibilities of Wokingham District Council and property owners within the Conservation Area.

History of the conservation area

The conservation area contains some ancient features of the settlement of Finchampstead. The mound on which the Church sits is a man-made earthwork, thought to be medieval or possibly Roman construction. However, its date has yet to be confirmed by excavation.

There is evidence of a Roman Road; the 'Devils Highway' at the northern edge of the conservation area. Excavation has shown that the course of the road is slightly south of the line shown on the Ordnance Survey map; a small stretch falls within the conservation area.

The Grade I Listed Church of St James forms the focal point of the conservation area. It has been altered and extended many times to keep pace with the growth of the village. The plan below shows the various periods of the main fabric of the Church.



The oldest parts of the Church are the Chancel and the Nave which date from 12th Century; the Chancel was widened in the 15th Century. The transept was lengthened in the 15th and 16th Century. The date over the door of 1590 indicates when it was last enlarged. The Tower was added in

1720. Built in English bond brickwork, it replaced an earlier tower which was probably wooden. Another of the main features of the conservation area is the green to the north east of the Church. It contains an Oak that was planted in 1877 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. The tree gives its name to the pub, which is also a listed building dating from the early 17th Century. The pub may have formerly been part of Church Farm which served Finchampstead Manor.

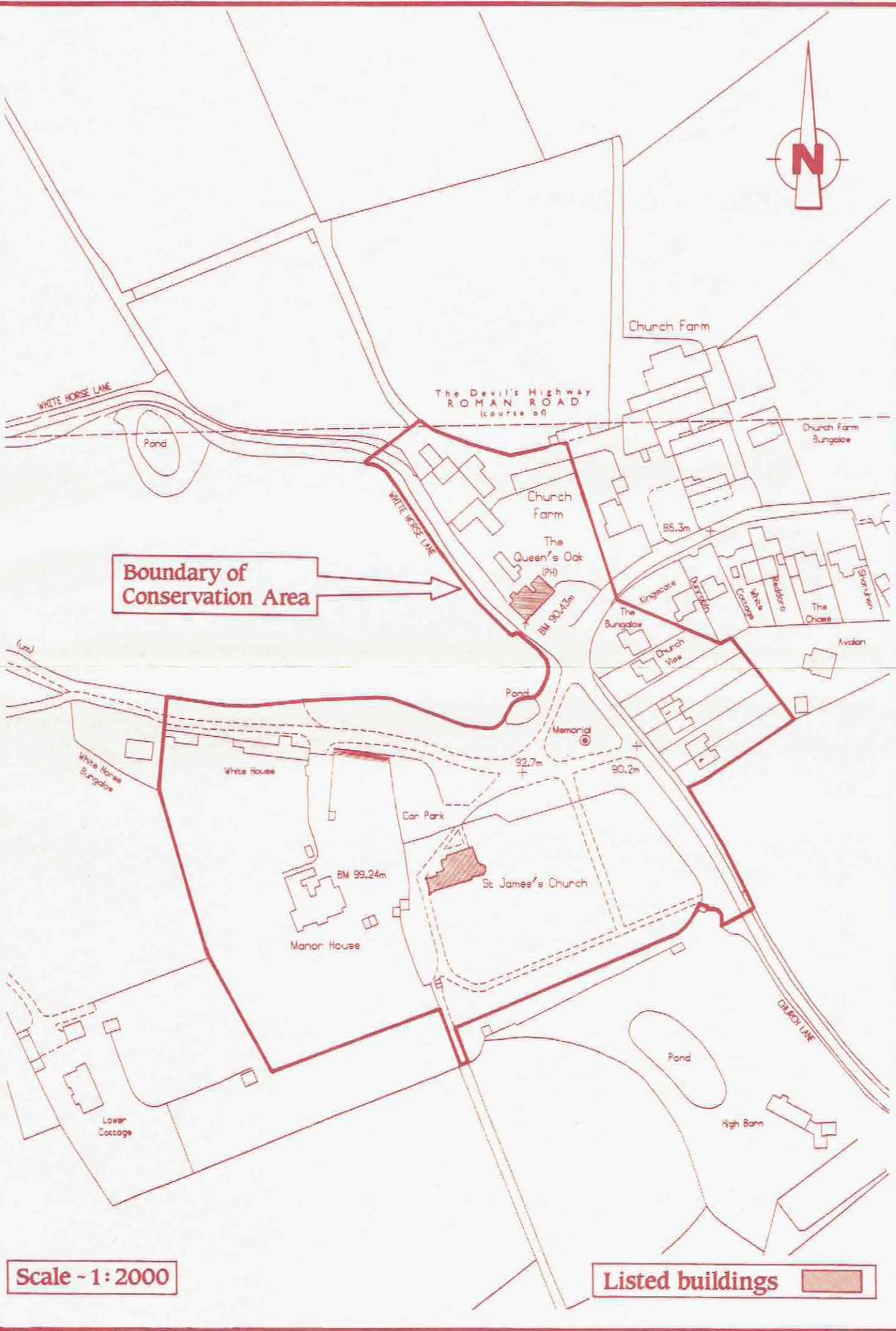
A wall, with a 17th Century doorway, with double four-centred arch and hood mould over, is reputed to be the remains of the former Manor House East Court. This wall is also listed. The Manor of Finchampstead, and the manorial rights were divided into East and West when Sir William Bannister left the Manor to his two daughters: Constance was left East Court, and Agatha West Court. Thereafter the Manor was always divided in two.

Improvements to the Conservation Area

What can owners/occupiers of buildings within the conservation area do, to help preserve and enhance it?

- ❖ Seek advice from the Planning Department on any changes proposed to buildings/front boundaries.
- ❖ Keep gardens tidy and trees and shrubs trimmed.
- ❖ Retain existing front walls and repair sensitively - Removal of walls may require conservation area consent, check first with the Planning Department.
- ❖ Keep buildings in good repair, including regular painting of exterior woodwork and rendering.
- ❖ Keep out-buildings in good repair.
- ❖ Seek advice from the Planning Department on the erection of new out-buildings; these include sheds, garages, greenhouses, conservatories; these may require planning permission and listed building consent.

In addition to works that individuals can carry out, the Planning Authority has a duty to prepare proposals for enhancement of the conservation area. For example, small improvement works around the greens.



Boundary of Conservation Area

Listed buildings 

Scale ~ 1:2000

Conservation in Wokingham District

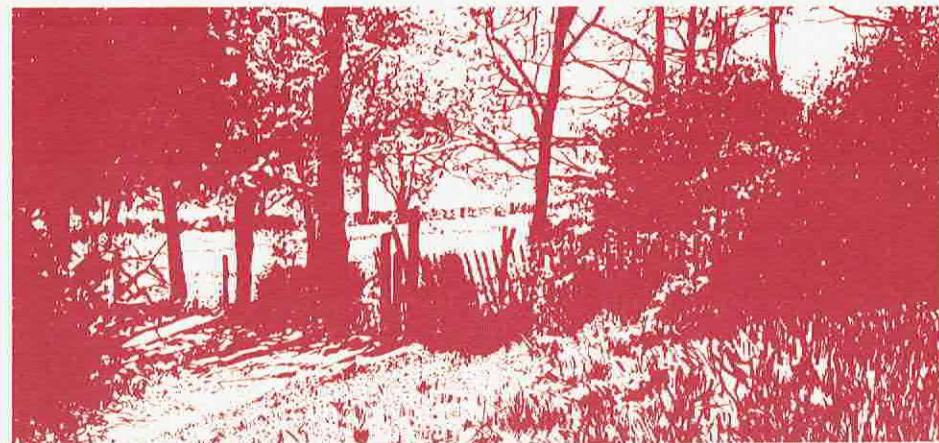
Wokingham District Council wishes to preserve and enhance those parts of the District that are of special architectural or historic interest; certain areas are worthy of special protection and are therefore designated as conservation areas.

What is a conservation area?

The character of conservation areas can vary considerably, but they are normally historic areas centred on a concentration of listed buildings. All the elements of the area are important in creating the character including street patterns, open spaces, trees, and groups of buildings.

The designation of a conservation area means that the planning authority can exercise stronger control over the development of the location so that it's special character can be protected and enhanced.

Once a conservation area has been designated it is a requirement that the local authority formulate and publish positive proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area.



What does designation of a conservation area mean?

- ❖ **Control of demolition**
Buildings within the conservation area cannot be demolished without the consent of the planning authority.
- ❖ **Control of works to trees**
Apart from those trees already protected by Tree Preservation Orders, no works can be carried out on trees within the conservation area without giving notice to the planning authority six weeks prior to the work being carried out.
- ❖ **Advertisements**
A high standard of control on the display of adverts is in force. New advertising must be in keeping with the character of the area.
- ❖ **Local Plan Policies**
Additional control is also applied through the local plan policies. These state that all the features making up the character of the conservation area will be preserved and enhanced. The design of new development within the area, must be sympathetic, and in keeping with the existing character, giving special regard to the setting of listed buildings.
- ❖ **Listed Buildings**
Conservation areas usually contain a number of listed buildings. These are buildings that because of their special architectural or historical importance are placed on a nationally recognised list. Listed Building Consent is required to alter or demolish a listed building.