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AN ACCOUNT
OF
EARLY VICTORIAN WOKINGHAM
TOWN AND PARISH

Compiled from Original Documents and Authenticated Sources.

EARLY VICTORIAN WOKINGHAM
- a small market town and its parish

Contents

INTRODUCTION

This booklet grew out of a class held between 1981 and 1983 under the auspices of Oxford University Department for External Studies. The fortunate combination of an enthusiastic and hard working group of students, and the survival of some revealing documentary evidence, made it possible to consider producing a modest piece of research which would provide a portrait of the area during a short period of the nineteenth century.

The choice of the 1850s was dictated by the availability of the 1851 Census Enumerators' Books which recorded details of every inhabitant in Wokingham on the night of Sunday, 30th March 1851. We were also able to use the records of the Poor Law Guardians, parish records and local trade directories. Unfortunately very few borough records remain though a miscellaneous collection of odd survivals has provided some useful evidence.

My thanks are due to the many people who made the project possible: the librarians and archivists who provided copies of documents and patiently answered our queries - especially the staffs of the BRO and Reading Reference Library; to Oxford University Department for External Studies both for sponsoring the course and providing loan support for the publication; to Dr. Kate Tiller for constant help and encouragement; to the staff at Montague House where we met. Most of all, thanks are due to the class members whose patience and hard work have been so important in ensuring that the project reached a successful conclusion.

Joan A. Dils
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April 1984

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THE TOWN AND THE PARISH IN 1851

The name of Wokingham was shared by two quite distinct areas and communities which nevertheless had many social and business contacts, shared the same places of worship, schools and shops, and belonged to the same parish and Poor Law Union.

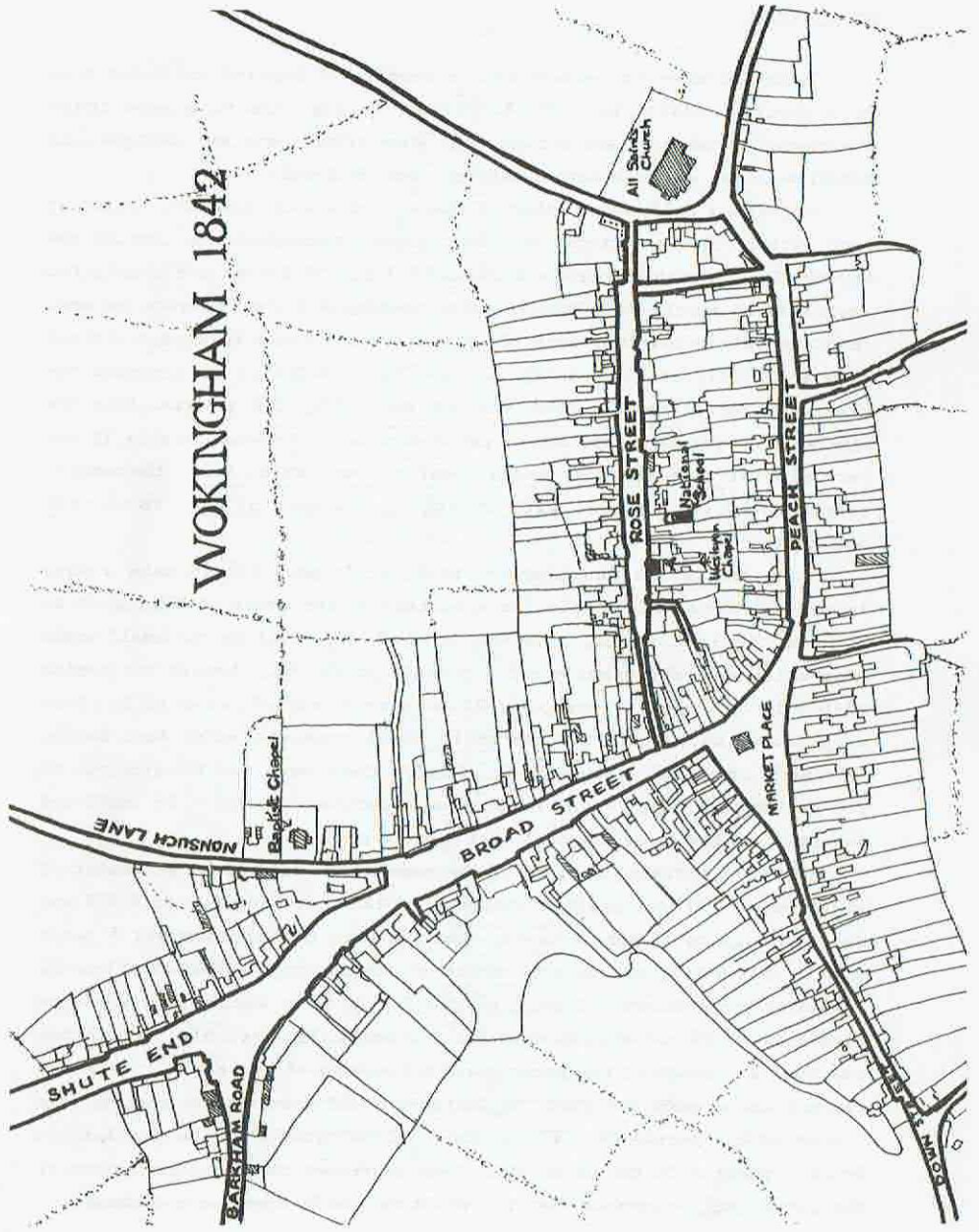
The larger in area was the parish of Wokingham, extending for 8,450 acres from the heathlands of the south to the Emmbrook Valley, and the arable claylands bordering Hurst and Ruscombe. By 1851 it was entirely within the county of Berkshire and the diocese of Oxford. A near contemporary map shows widely scattered settlements in the many farms and round small road junctions.

From west to east, almost through the centre of the parish, ran the Reading to London road known as the Windsor Forest Turnpike, on which lay the geographically small but more densely populated settlement of Wokingham Town. This had been an incorporated borough since the early seventeenth century, and still retained its alderman and burgesses who administered the town's affairs. The basic street pattern also remained essentially unchanged from earlier times, the main road from Reading entering the town as Broad Street, and meeting at the Market Place the road up from the south, then called Down Street and now Denmark Street. The old Market House stood at the meeting place with a covered area below as the focus of the small Tuesday market, and a town hall above where the town council met. Towards the east Rose Street and Peach Street ran parallel to each other towards the Church of All Saints.

However there were signs of change. The South Eastern Railway now connected Reading, Wokingham and the south of England. Ribbon development had already begun on many of the roads out of the town, particularly at Shute End, Barkham (now Station) Road and Nonsuch Lane (now Milton Road). In Rose, Peach and Down Streets, houses had proliferated around courts running back from the streets to accommodate an increased population. Brand new buildings had appeared; the Union Workhouse in Barkham Road opened in 1850; the Railway Station and Railway Tavern catered for passengers on the new line; the Gasworks in Down Street enabled the streets and public building to be illuminated in a thoroughly modern fashion.[1]

In 1842 a local directory[2] described Wokingham as 'English to the Core - English in its clean and wholesome appearance - English in the beautiful

scenery amidst which it stands and above all truly English in the frank and hearty and hospitable manner of its inhabitants'. It is above all with the lives, work and concerns of these inhabitants that this study is concerned.



POPULATION

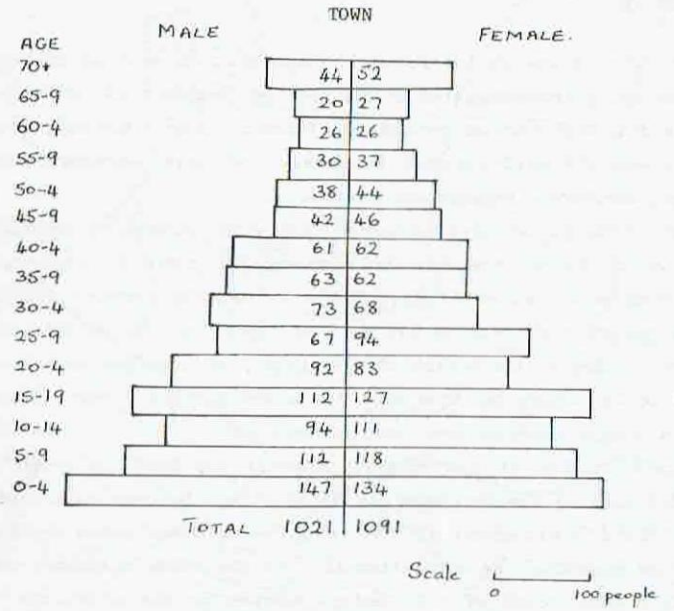
In the nineteenth century the population of England and Wales rose from about 9 million to over 32 million. During this time some towns mushroomed to become great cities while many other towns and villages lost inhabitants and declined both relatively and absolutely.

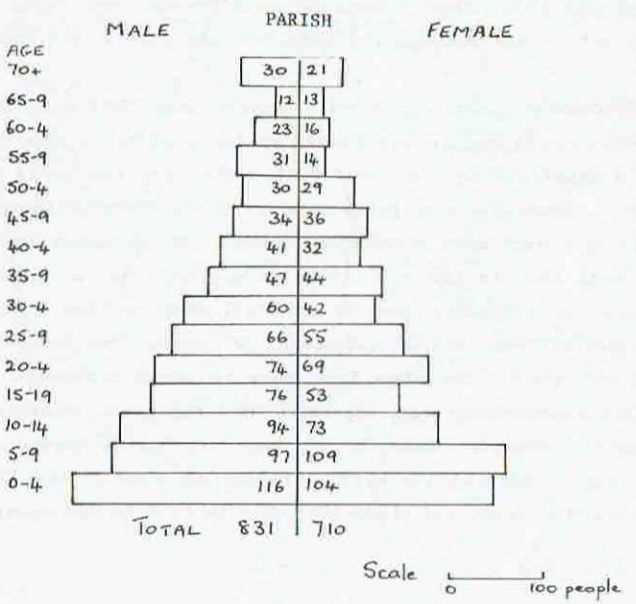
Wokingham followed neither of these courses. It expanded, faster at some periods than at others, but consistently throughout the century and beyond. The fastest rise came between 1811 and 1821 when the population increased by nearly 20%. Only in three decades did the increase between censuses fall below 10%, with the result that, though Wokingham did not grow as rapidly as the country as a whole, it slightly outstripped the county of Berkshire. The town was not declining, but it was, like the county, becoming less populous compared with other regions. In this it was very similar to many other small country towns which found themselves overtaken by communities with expanding industrial or commercial activities.

From the census enumerators' books it is possible to make a more detailed study of the population structure of the whole of Wokingham in 1851. Of the 3,752 people, more than half, 2,112, lived in the small urban area which was consequently quite densely populated, whereas the parish with only 1,541 people was generally sparsely settled, especially since many houses were grouped together in small communities at East Heath, Gardiner's Green and elsewhere. In addition there were two institutions in the parish, the large Union Workhouse in Barkham Road with 89 staff and inmates, and the Lucas Hospital with just 10 almsmen.[1]

The most striking feature of the population was the large number of young people. Almost exactly one third of the total population 1,309 was under the age of 15 and of these, over 500 were children not yet 5 years old. In this Wokingham was a microcosm of the country as a whole which had a similar preponderance of young people. One in three Wokingham women were aged between 20 and 44, the most fertile years. This youthful population was both a product of the great population boom of the early nineteenth century and a guarantee that the increase would continue. By contrast the number of old people over 65 was small, less than 6% of the population, hence a pyramid is the shape which best expresses the age distribution of the period. At the present day it would more nearly resemble a diamond.

POPULATION PYRAMID 1851.





AGRICULTURE

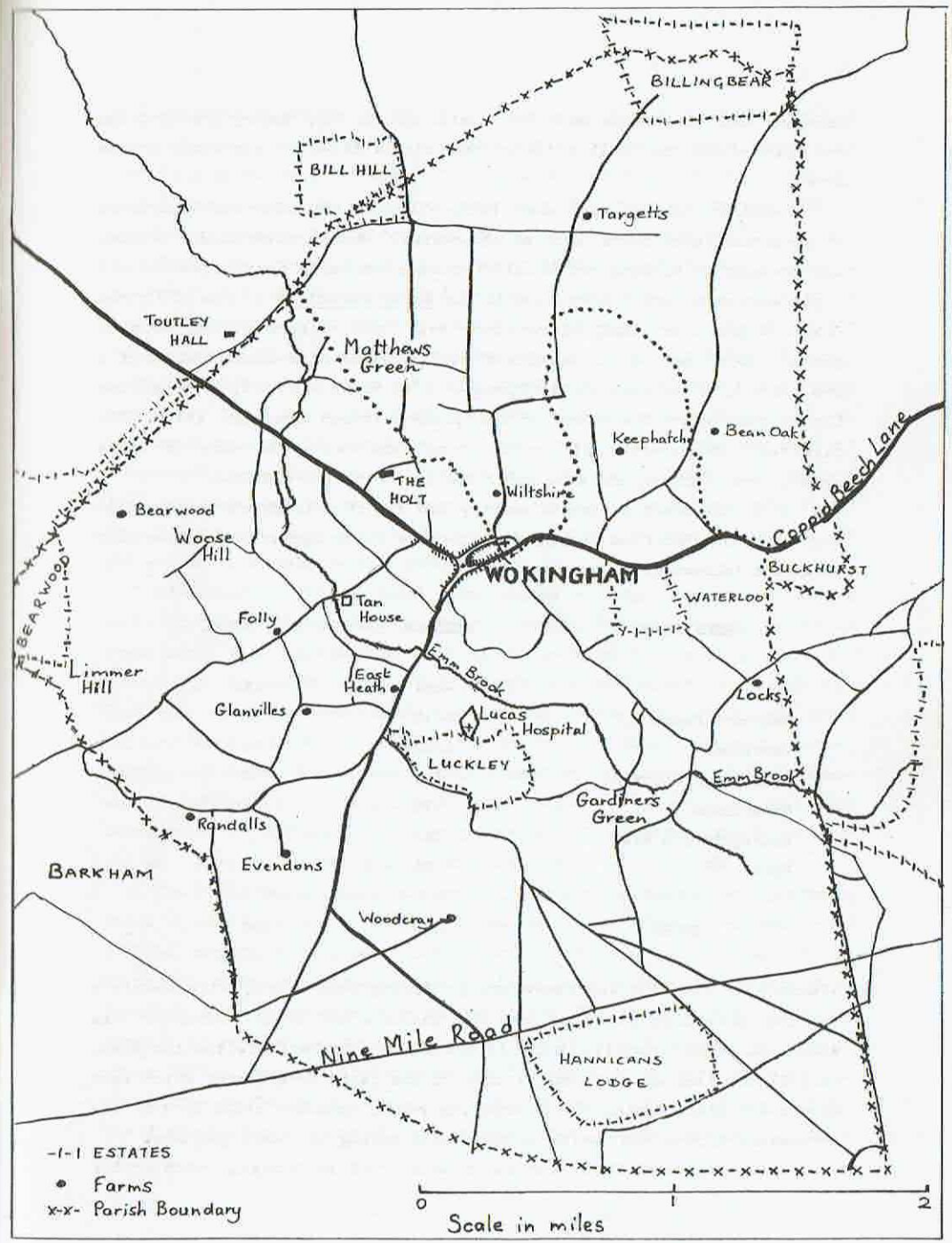
Agriculture was by far the most important occupation in Wokingham parish and the surrounding area at this period. Within a two mile radius of the town the 1851 Census records 41 farmers (one a woman), nine farm bailiffs and 419 agricultural labourers and farm servants including ploughmen, shepherds, hedgers and cowmen.

Most of the parish lies on London Clay with outcrops of Bagshot Sands, one of which forms the low hill where the town is situated. The contrasting soils caused William Cobbett, passing through the area in 1822, to remark that 'nothing can well be poorer or more villainously ugly ... There is clay at the bottom of the gravel, so that you have here nasty stagnant pools ... you get upon what is called Windsor Forest ... as barren and villainous a heath as ever man set eyes on'.[1]

By the middle of the century some of the land had been greatly improved following the Enclosure Act in 1813 and the commutation of tithes in 1839. Slater's Directory of 1850 described the Wokingham area as 'very fertile and pleasing'. An agriculturalist in the 1860s claimed that 'where there is a good depth of soil before coming to the clay, the land is grateful and productive' though he still found 'the light sands burn quickly and in wet seasons the corn becomes yellow and does not yield well'.[2]

Improvement was not universal. Luckley Court fell into disuse during the 1840s and the estate was broken up for sale by auction in 1849. The land was described as 'improved within the last few years by thorough drainage ... there are many parts capable of considerable improvements and of yielding a much more profitable income'.[3] Of Wokingham land in general it was said that in the 1850s 'the larger holdings ... have been much improved ... many holdings however are still small and badly cultivated, in some instances from want of judgement, in others from lack of sufficient capital and in not a few cases from these two wants combined'.[2]

Since improvements were expensive only the large, wealthy landowners could easily undertake them. One of these was John Houghton, the occupant of the largest farm wholly within the parish. Most of his 725 acres had been planted as woodland since 1813, and by 1846 he had spent £10,000 on



ESTATES, GREAT HOUSES and SOME FARMS IN WOKINGHAM. (after Snare 1846)

bringing lime chalk from Bath and Bristol on the GWR, having the land dug and drained and the chalk added at the rate of three waggon loads to the acre.[4]

Berkshire farmers were also 'fully alive to the value and importance of artifical fertilisers' such as phosphates'.[2] Manure from London stables was brought to Reading for local distribution while fertilisers of all kinds were regularly advertised in the Berks Chronicle in the 1840s and 1850s. A piece of land, Silverstock Bog, 'the poorest of the poor in quality, being part of the heathland' was the scene of a demonstration of a new method, advertised in The Times on 17th November 1853, of supplying liquid manure to the roots of the plant through drainage tiles. The resultant crops were said to be more than twice the size of those conventionally grown, and were exhibited at the Smithfield Show.[5]

It is difficult to assess exactly how all of Wokingham's farming land was used. The detailed survey made for the Tithe Apportionment in 1839 shows the following:-

DESCRIPTION	ACREAGE	% of TOTAL
Arable	4094	49
Meadow & Pasture	1840	22
Woodland	1291	16
Heath, Furze & Fern	689	8
Homesteads	178	2
Roads, Pits & Waste	163	2
Water	34	1
TOTAL	8289	100

Almost half the land was therefore producing food crops, with nearly a quarter providing grass or hay for animals and about one-sixth was woodland. Significantly, in the 17 years since Cobbett visited the area, only 8% remained as heathland, a sign of the rapid development which must have taken place during the intervening years, probably aided by the 'new enclosures without end' which Cobbett noted during his local journeys.

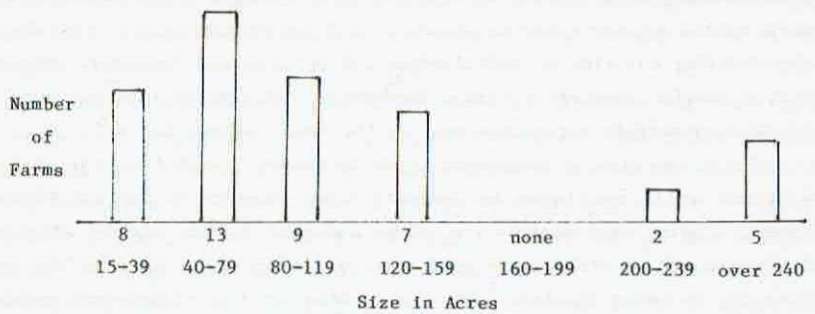
This picture of Wokingham as an area of mixed farming with arable

predominating is reinforced by other sources: Spearing regarded the soil as more suited to the growing of wheat and oats; the Census reveals an overwhelming majority of undifferentiated agricultural labourers compared with a handful engaged in animal husbandry; Wokingham's corn was sold in the Tuesday market, but cattle only at the annual autumn fairs.[6]

There was also an important trade in timber. Apart from the ancient woodland still remaining in the parish as remnants of the old Windsor Forest, a great many scotch firs, pines and larches were planted after the Enclosure Act of 1813 on areas of open heath and waste south of the town formerly browsed by deer.[7] By the middle of the nineteenth century therefore, there was a good supply of both hard and soft timber. Most was auctioned in situ for local use, but, as in the past, some was sent to London and to the dockyards at Chatham. A typical advertisement in February 1851 was addressed to 'timber merchants, Navy contractors and others' and described the sale by auction at the Rose Inn of 1800 oaks, 2230 elms and 290 ash trees on estates near Wokingham.[8]

Additionally, several local farms possessed large fish ponds, whilst at least three had sizeable brickyards, making bricks in their own kilns from local clay. Several beds of oziers existed in the neighbourhood, providing raw material for Wokingham's six basketmakers, while the incidence of willow trees along the streams together with hazel and other coppice woods, provided smaller timber for the construction of gates, hurdles and laths. The Census records 8 woodmen, 10 sawyers, 4 lathrenders and 1 hurdlemaker living in the district. There is no evidence of a hunt being based in Wokingham but four gamekeepers lived within the boundaries and were employed by the large estates to provide sport for the gentry.

The Tithe Map and local directories show that there were 44 farming units of over 15 acres in size in the parish of Wokingham during the years 1839/42, ranging from a small freeholding of 16 acres at Gardener's Green to the 437 acres of yeoman farmer William Lane. He held the freehold of Evendon's Farm in the southwest of the parish. The farms, a few comprising several properties run as a single unit by one farmer, covered an area of about 5000 acres: the median size was 90 acres and the average size 112 acres, thus perfectly reflecting the national average of 100 acres in 1851. The distribution of size of the various farms is shown in the following diagram:



The Distribution of Size of Farming Units in Wokingham in 1839
(Source - Tithe Apportionment 1839)

Only 14 of the 44 farms (31%) were freehold properties, the rest being leased, apparently often only on a renewable one year's tenancy, since there is clear evidence of rapidly changing occupancy in the directories and there are several examples of yearly tenancy agreements in the Berkshire Record Office.[9] Indeed, of the 29 leasehold farms definitely identified in both the 1851 Census return and the 1839 Tithe Award, only 11 (26%) remained in the continuous occupancy of the same farming family during the intervening 12 years; all the others changed hands at least once, some several times.

Some farms were very large businesses by Wokingham standards, with substantial labour forces, whilst others were run by the farmer and his wife alone or sometimes with the help of their children. Acreage and size of labour force is not always given in the Census, but even so Wokingham farms apparently conformed to the national average of one farm labourer to every 25/30 acres of arable and another for every 50/60 acres of pasture[10], as the following table shows:

Size of Farm in Acres	15-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-350	351-400	451-500	1000+
Number of Labourers	1	1-4	2-5	4-7	10-15	17	23	34

The largest farm shown in the Census - the Hannicans Farm and Lodge estate of 1000 acres, farmed by John Oxby, employed 32 men and 2 boys, making it the second largest business unit in the whole of Wokingham town and parish, whilst William Lane's Evendon's Farm, with 437 acres was unusual in employing 7 women as well as 16 men, another comparatively large enterprise. Few women agricultural labourers are recorded but this is not surprising since they were seasonal workers, seldom seen in the fields in winter but extensively employed on a casual basis in weeding, haymaking and at harvest time.[2]

It seems more than likely that their proximity to Reading, where much of the new machinery was made by firms like Barrett, encouraged at least the larger Wokingham farms to use some of the latest labour saving devices. However, unlike farmers in the industrial north, they really had little incentive to invest in machinery because of the very low wages paid to their labourers. The Wokingham and District Agricultural Society had been founded in 1835 under royal patronage to "encourage agricultural labourers and servants in Wokingham and the neighbouring parishes" and it was the custom each year to hold a ploughing match, followed by a grand dinner at the Rose Inn. In October 1849, 35 teams took part in the event held on Edward Allen's Tangley Farm, and at the ensuing dinner, the High Sheriff of Berkshire, after exhorting local farmers to carry out more drainage and manuring, concentrated on the problem of low wages for their labourers. "Farmers may depend on it, he said, that nothing was gained by the system of low wages; on the contrary, men cannot do the work. Labourers' wages were in some cases 5/- to 6/- a week. If they paid the men liberally, they would work liberally, for how could they expect a man with 4/- to 5/- a week to do a fair day's work? He had not got the stamina for it".[11]

Like other Berkshire farm workers, Wokingham labourers lived in primitive conditions during the nineteenth century. Some of the luckier ones lived in brick cottages in the town, particularly in Down Street. Probably the most fortunate were those employees who lived 'on the job' in the main farm buildings with the farmer's family, though they were only a small proportion of the parish's agricultural labourers.

OCCUPATIONS IN THE TOWN AND PARISH

As a market town serving a small agricultural area, Wokingham provided a useful range of trades and crafts, professional and other services for the benefit of the local farming community as well as the townspeople. The variety of occupations in the town was firmly based on supplying local needs and processing locally produced materials.

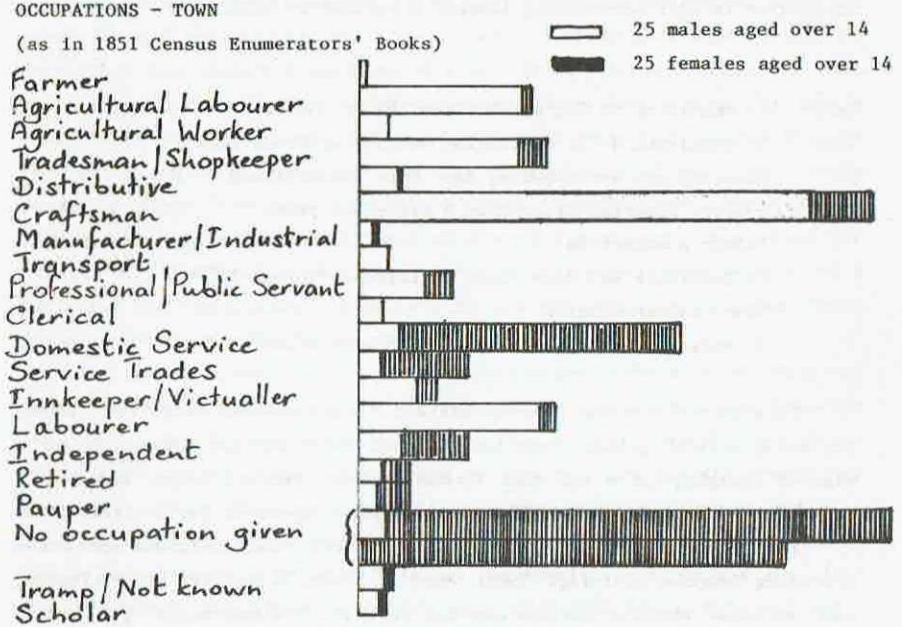
The largest number of men was engaged in various skilled crafts in which the leather trade, always important in Berkshire towns, was dominant. The census reveals 47 shoemakers, 4 harness makers and a saddler; the largest employer in the town, shoemaker George Meloy in the Market Place, had 17 men working for him, though whether they made the boots and shoes in a small factory or in their own homes in the style of a cottage industry, has not been established. Just outside the borough boundary was the Tannery on the Emm Brook. Its owner, James Twycross, employed 43 men.

Another large group in the town was composed of those engaged in the building trades. With a growing population and some new house building, this was another occupation with only local significance. Four men describing themselves as bricklayers or carpenters in the census, appear in trade directories as builders. Two of them, Robert May, called a plasterer, and William Hollis, called a carpenter, were among four local tradesmen who, according to a plaque on the church roof, carried out the restoration of the nave in 1845. One of the five plumbers and glaziers in the census was also involved in this undertaking. Two brickmakers, Robert J. May of Shute End and James Hibbert of Rose Street were part of a much larger and widely scattered local industry. Robert J. May appears in contemporary directories, along with other brickmakers in Easthampstead and Finchampstead whose brickfields have been identified. Using the London Clay which surfaced around and in the parish, local firms produced bricks for local needs, though later in the century the offices of The Times in London were built from bricks supplied by the California Brickyard.[1] Some manufacturers were only part-time brickmakers, presumably on a small scale. One such was James Kennington, a farmer, brickmaker and baker of Spring Cottage.

Some idea of the type of work undertaken by these local tradesmen can be gathered from the account present by Thomas Maynard of Peach Street, a

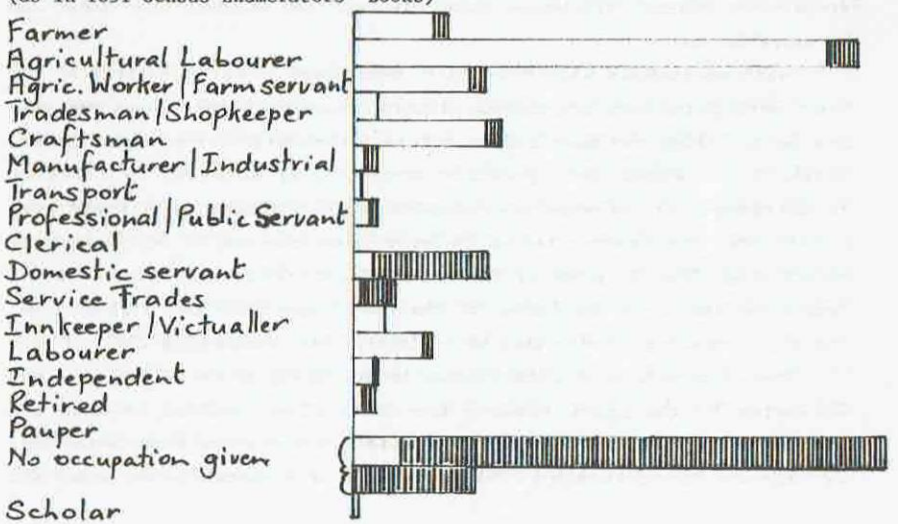
OCCUPATIONS - TOWN

(as in 1851 Census Enumerators' Books)



OCCUPATIONS - PARISH

(as in 1851 Census Enumerators' Books)



classification as used by P. Tillott quoted in A. Rogers Approaches to Local History (1977), p.101, with modifications

bricklayer in 1851 but calling himself a builder in 1862.[2]

		£	s.	d.
June	To Repairing at Cottage Occupied by Mr. Hobbs			
21st	To Repairing Walls & Witening Ceiling of Front Room)			
	Cleaning and Whitewashing Back Room and Refixing)			
	Copper. Papering Front Room 5 pieces of paper)	1	0	6
	Labour & materials)			
	To Repairing Bed Room Floor & Staircase 5 feet 3 1/4			
	Board Labour & nails		4	6
	To Raising Washhouse Chimney Bricklayer & Lab^{r} 1 day		6	0

Furniture for these houses was still provided by local craftsmen, including several joiners, upholsterers and three cabinet makers, though a sign of changing times was that Thomas Parsons, cabinet maker, was also a furniture broker. China and glass dealers also appear in local directories.

Far outnumbering these groups, however, were those craftsmen and women providing bespoke clothing. There were at least 22 tailors in Wokingham, some no doubt working for the leading drapers, but the majority in small establishments scattered round the town. Among the skilled needlewomen in the town, dressmaking was the most common occupation, with only a few strawbonnet makers, milliners, embroidresses, one solitary stay maker and an umbrella maker.

Most dressmakers were married to craftsmen in various parts of the town, some in the more prestigious streets. Among the single women was Miss Henrietta Hallet who operated from Rose Street with her younger sister, Sarah. These women were possibly economically superior to the five seamstresses, two of whom were paupers, unable to subsist by their work alone. One dressmaker seems to have seen the value of newspaper advertising. Miss Kingston of the Market Place, Wokingham, placed on her record her thanks to the ladies of the town 'especially the Misses Heath, for the flattering reports they have given to her dressmaking'.[3]

The large number of establishments producing or retailing food was dominated by the flour trades, including flour dealers, bakers and confectioners. These were predominantly small concerns, no doubt with their own specialities, though William Chambers also acted as an agent for

Huntley and Palmers' biscuits. There were far fewer butchers, possibly since local farmers would slaughter some animals themselves, if only an occasional pig. Robert Briginshaw of Peach Street was a butcher who made his own variety of sausage, though others may have done so too. The single greengrocer may reflect the ability of the local community to grow its own vegetables and fruit, except in the very crowded area of the town. Though nearly a dozen men described themselves as gardeners, there is no indication of whether or not these were market gardeners or working for private households. For more general foodstuffs, Wokingham people could patronise the ten grocers and dealers in tea and general provisions. There was apparently only one fishmonger.

All these establishments, with a much wider range of goods than the village shop, no doubt attracted customers from the surrounding area for whom Reading or Windsor were too distant. This was particularly true of the shops in the Market Place, which seems to have been the leading commercial area of the town. Here were situated the two drapers' shops of Heelas & Sons and William Crewe. John Heelas' shop was staffed by four assistants and an apprentice, all of whom lived on the premises, and by his son, John Heelas junior, who lived two doors away with his young wife and baby. According to their publicity they were linen and woollen drapers, hatters and tailors, supplying table linen and carpets, making liveries and gentlemen's mourning 'on the shortest possible notice' and 'furnishing funerals'.

Three grocers and tea dealers were also established here, along with the town's only bookseller, bookbinder, printer and stationer combined in the person of William Gotelee. The two chemists, one of whom ran the Post Office, the two hairdressers and one of the two watchmakers and jewellers in Wokingham were trading in or very near to the Market Place. In 1846 the sale of the effects of John Padbury, baker, gives an idea of the contents of one shop, with its five dozen show glasses, japan tea cannisters from 28 lb in size downwards, tin biscuit boxes, cutters, copper and tin savoy moulds, two brass pans, five dozen cake pans and so on.

In addition to retail shops, the town provided a variety of professional services. Four firms of solicitors dealt with most individual needs; supplied legal or secretarial expertise for many local institutions including the Board of Guardians, the Savings Bank and the Gas Company;

acted as registrars and town clerks, were the agents for some national insurance companies, and generally were the pillars of local society. Together with auctioneer and estate agents Edmund Dalley and James Weeks, and the engineering surveyor and draughtsman Samuel Barr, who also had an office in London, they could deal with all transactions concerning property. Two general practitioners, one of whom, James Dehay, had been in practice for 55 years, several schoolmasters, a music master and a teacher of pianoforte kept healthy minds in moderately healthy middle class bodies. There was only one veterinary surgeon in the town, James Maskell.

Humbler yet equally essential services were mainly the preserve of women. Jane Cook who ran a chimney sweeping business, with the aid of her teenage son and an eleven year old boy, was only one of several women who operated small concerns providing a 'domestic' service, mostly washing. Elizabeth Ludlow, wife of a coal dealer in Rose Street and her four daughters aged from 25 to 13; her neighbour Elizabeth Lunn, a spinster of 35 working with her mother and her two nieces; Jane Watts, a widow of 82 employing one woman, were typical workers in small laundries which employed single and married women and widows in equal numbers. Mrs. Beaton suggests that 'unless it is absolutely necessary, no lady should attempt to have the whole of the washing done at home when one servant alone is kept'.[4] The existence of 20 laundresses perhaps reflects the pattern of domestic service in the town where one servant households were predominant. The middle classes could either put out their washing to a laundry or bring in one of the four washerwomen, mostly widows and paupers and the three charwomen to help with the washing and cleaning in the home.

For women in general, however, employment opportunities had changed little from previous centuries. Accordingly to the census the vast majority, about 80%, did no work which they could describe as an 'occupation', though this may disguise the occasional or seasonal employment they did as and when they could. Spearing[5] asserts 'that women are seldom seen in the fields during the winter months; but in weeding, haymaking and harvest time, they are extensively employed'. Even without such work, caring for a home and family, without piped water, gas and modern amenities was a more than full-time job. Widows and some women with families worked from necessity; childless women may have worked from choice; for single girls there was very little choice apart from domestic

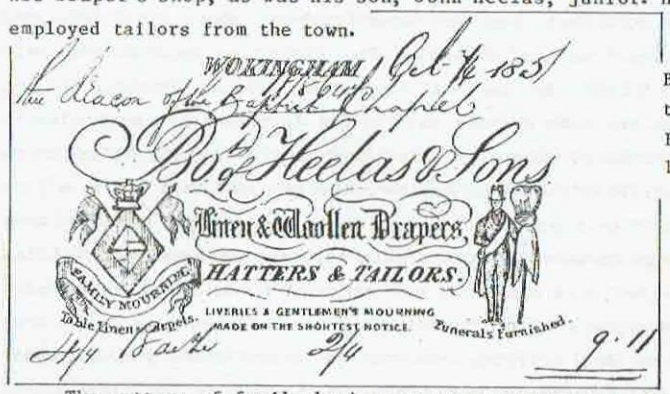
service, the service trades, or the occasional job as a barmaid or wool picker. The social distinctions are very clear. Whereas the daughters of craftsmen and labourers worked, those of the professional and well-to-do tradesmen were kept at home unoccupied, to learn housekeeping from their mothers, and the feminine accomplishments thought suitable for girls of their station.

For men, too, there is little evidence that the advent of new industries or developing local bureaucracy had much impact on Wokingham in terms of employment. The Reading to Guildford Railway which opened in 1849, employed Archibald Millar and his son Henry, aged 15, as railway superintendant and booking clerk, and William Taylor as porter; continued railway construction provided a few labouring jobs; the Gas Company, begun in 1847, was run by a Scots engineer Peter Crichton, whose son David, aged 19, was the manager of the Gasworks. The Berkshire Constabulary was represented in Wokingham by the Chief Constable, William Herring, and one constable in both the town and the parish. The formation of the Wokingham Poor Law Union created posts for the workhouse officials, though one Relieving Officer, William Collet Beechey, merely added that position onto his existing work as a private school master (and census enumerator!). Similarly, Thomas Spencer, chemist, also acted as post master; William Gotelee, bookseller, was the local collector of stamp duty; John Rogers Wheeler, solicitor, was Superintendant Registrar. There were still more people employed as local carriers, coachmen and coach builders in Wokingham in 1851 than on the new-fangled railways, and the days of the professional local government official were only just dawning.

However a few townsfolk did look beyond the immediate locality. As early as 1846 its proximity (five miles) to Twyford Station was quoted as adding to the attractions of a large farm offered for sale. The firm of James Twycross & Sons of the Tannery was variously described in contemporary directories as tanners, fellmongers and woolstaplers. The Wokingham enterprise, however, was part of a family business with branches in the textile towns of Bradford and Rochdale and surprisingly in Melbourne, Australia, a city first settled in 1835. Though engaged in the processing of leather, it seems likely that the firm was mainly concerned with the processing of wool. James Twycross regularly attended the great sheep fair at East Illesley and owned a wool warehouse in Peach Street

where he lived.[6] A number of workers, male and female are referred to as 'woolpickers' in the census, some of whom may have been employed by him.

Just as Twycross was unusual in far reaching trading connections, so he was in the size of his operations. Apart from George Meloy, employing 17 men, few other enterprises in the town comprised more than the master and one or two journeymen, apprentices, labourers or errand boys, according to the census. Only William Hollis, carpenter and timber merchant with nine employees, Robert May bricklayer and builder with six, Edward Goodchild, butcher and Edward Dalley, auctioneer and ironmonger with four, all of whom had more than one occupation, were exceptional. In addition the four draper's assistants who lived with John Heelas must have been employed in his draper's shop, as was his son, John Heelas, junior. He may also have employed tailors from the town.



Bill from Heelas to the Baptist Chapel 1851

The pattern of family businesses was a common one, though usually on a small scale, and extending to nephews, daughters and grandchildren. Two of the four employees of Clement Green, tailor, were his sons; William Beechey, baker, employed his son-in-law, William Pigg, with his two sons aged 16 and 14; Samuel Porter junior later took over from Samuel Porter senior, watchmaker, and was still operating in 1899; Thomas Salter, wheelwright, had already inherited his father's business in 1851. Joseph Motts, with no son to inherit, employed his nephew Richard Shortland as assistant baker. William Ifould, grocer, George James, butcher, and Thomas Bedford, shoemaker, all had their teenage son or sons working with them.

However, since the census only gives information on children still at or near home, it is not possible to be certain how typical was this pattern of 'following in father's footsteps'. There are some examples of children, who although living at home, were engaged in quite a different occupation.

Thomas Dehay, a doctor's son, was a printer and compositor; tailor Robert Welle's son was apprenticed to a baker, and Sarah White, schoolmistress was the daughter of a bricklayer.

A very large number of men described themselves as labourers, presumably with little or no skill. Many were undifferentiated, but others were labourers to tradesmen such as bricklayers and brickmakers, or worked on the roads, or as wool pickers. This latter group also included several women. The majority, however, of such men and women were agricultural labourers, mainly living in Down Street and Rose Street, with easy access to the farms since the town was so small.

In the parish the predominance of the agricultural labourer is more marked. Over half of the 500 or so male workers were so described. Another 54 were farm workers, a few with specific skills such as cowman or shepherd.

A significant minority of the workers in the parish were not employed in farming. Mention has already been made of the Twycross enterprise at the Tannery. Another establishment situated away from the built-up area, probably because it too needed good water supplies and produced unpleasant smells, was James Hayward's brewery on the Reading Road. It was a modest concern, dealing in malt and coal as well as producing beer. Hayward also farmed 90 acres. For all these activities he employed only 20 labourers, probably because, faced with competition in Reading and Henley from larger breweries, he had only very local outlets. Some of these were the public houses and beer sellers, with which the parish was well supplied. Most were strategically placed on the important roads.

Also in the parish lived some craftsmen, especially shoemakers, who may have worked in the town. Others, like the brickmakers and the basketmakers, were engaged in small though essential rural industries. Several retired and professional people also lived outside the town, including the Scots engineer who managed the Gasworks, and the Master of the Lucas Hospital. The Workhouse, too, lay outside the borough boundary. However despite the legal separation of the borough from the countryside, and the very different employment patterns in each area, it is obvious that there was considerable interdependence between them.

THE BROOM MAKERS

In the heathland area about three miles from the town centre were 15 households, 25 male members of which were occupied in broom making. These inhabitants like many in centres throughout England and Wales and particularly their neighbours of Tadley and Baughurst, depended almost entirely on the soil and its products for their livelihood. The surrounding heath provided birch for the brooms or besoms, the other qualifications required being patience, supple fingers and a few simple tools.[1] The broom makers, 'servile to no man', 'picked up' the trade and were a community of their own. It was thought that these families were practically heathen with many unmarried couples and unbaptised children, their dwellings containing peat erections decorated with fragments of china and looking like altars for pagan worship.[2] However these may have been the only embellishments the broom makers could afford, their pride of possession being mistaken for outlandish belief. Further refutation of the old theory is provided by the parish registers which show at least six families having their children baptised in All Saints' Church before 1851.

A day's work ran to approximately ten dozen brooms, varying in size and stacked head to tail in bundles of 12. These were despatched weekly to Reading and some exported through Bristol. Sundays were a holiday and the broom makers indulged in drinking bouts and boxing matches.[3] The four public houses conducting good trade were: the Spotted Cow, the Pig and Whistle, the Who'd a Tho't It and the Crooked Billet, the latter two remaining to this day.

These people had been left almost entirely to themselves until 1862 when, following a heath dweller's request to baptise his child, one of the local curates began visiting neighbouring cottages weekly. Education began shortly afterwards with the opening of a day school by a certain Captain Sawyer. Captain Sawyer was also active in collecting money for a church and after having raised £834 19s 3d, St. Sebastian's church was consecrated by the Bishop of Oxford on 10th December 1864.[4]

GETTING AND SPENDING

It is more difficult to make detailed judgement about local wages than it is about local occupations, though enough evidence survives to construct a general picture, especially for public servants.

The salaries paid by the Poor Law Guardians, for example, covered a wide range.[1] In 1849 the Clerk to the Guardians, John Rogers Wheeler was paid £100 per annum, but he also had a full time solicitor's practice. The Master and Mistress of the Workhouse (then at Wargrave) earned a similar amount between them, plus maintenance. One of the three Medical Officers of the Union, Edward Weight, of Shute End was paid £90, but of course had fees from his private patients. The Relieving Officer, William Collet Beechey, had the same salary. Advertisements for posts at the Reading and Wargrave District School offered much smaller remunerations: £25 to the schoolmaster, £20 to the schoolmistress and £15 to a man to teach the trade of shoemaking. The cook would receive £10 a year.[2] The relative standing of these salaries is indicated by the Vestry resolution in 1838 that £110 without the provision of a vicarage was wholly inadequate for the incumbent of All Saints' and that £400 was more appropriate.

The only record of wages paid to craftsmen is that in 1862 Mr. Spratley was charged six shillings by Thomas Maynard builder, for the wages of one bricklayer and one labourer for one day.[3] The craftsman, presuming he received more than the labourer would then earn possibly twice as much as the majority of farm labourers. Their average weekly pay in Berkshire in 1859 was said to be about ten or eleven shillings. Carters and shepherds earned a shilling more, plus a rent-free cottage, and between two and five pounds paid at Michaelmas at the end of a year's contract. On these figures the bricklayer and his labourer could earn over £90 a year between them, whereas the farm labourer would receive between £25 and £28. An unnamed labour book of the same date from central Berks is quoted by Spearing as showing an annual wage of £40 8s. 2½d. for a farm labourer whose wife also worked at the wheat and barley harvests, which he averages at 15s. 6½d. per week. "So far as means go", he commented, "the condition of the labourer may be considered satisfactory".[3] Caird[4] also considered the rates of wages in Berkshire 'contrasted favourably with some other counties we have lately

been in', though the lower wages he quotes of 7s. 6d. a week in 1851 were 'precisely the same as they were eighty years ago'. All yearly totals assume continuous work. The magistrates at Quarter Sessions in February 1851 remarked that there was 'ample employment for the labouring classes in the district though such a happy situation did not always obtain. In 1847 the Poor Law Guardians frequently found it necessary to give relief to unemployed labourers, especially in severe winter weather of January and February. Obviously the labourers earned too little to have any savings to tide them over difficult periods. Even though Caird thought Berkshire wages better than those of some other southern counties, he considered all Southern England a low wage area compared with the Midlands and the North where the demand for labour from manufacturing industry tended to raise wage levels in the countryside. This produced a situation where 'in the Northern counties the labourers are enabled to feed and clothe themselves with respectability and comfort, while in some of the southern counties their wages are insufficient for their healthy sustenance'. Though we cannot be too precise over the wages of the labourers of Wokingham, especially those on the farms, we can be reasonably certain that their situation left much to be desired.

Some agricultural labourers had a small plot of land attached to their cottage, produce from which must have been a useful supplement to their household budget. Richri Englefield rented from Blackall Simmonds a cottage and garden at Hone's Green with Abraham Lunn, and another small arable field by himself, giving him about an acre, all told.[5]

At the other end of the scale, the rentable value of the land of some farmers was well above the labourers' earnings. Edward Lane at Folly Farm paid over £80 a year for 298 acres, and George Bosley (Bean Oak Farm) with 96 acres paid over £30. The 800 acres in the parish owned by John Walter of Bearwood brought him rents of £180 a year, in addition to his land elsewhere. The gap between rich and poor was still very wide in 1851.[5]

Sales of houses and furniture of either bankrupts or people leaving the town in the 1840's and 1850's indicate the life style of these better off families. In 1846 Mr. H. George, broker, sold his house in the Market Place with 16 years of the lease still to run. The rent was £20 a year, and part was let off, bringing in £7 16s. od. The same year John Houlton, an insolvent saddler and harness maker of Peach Street, sold up the family

business established there for fifty years. The premises consisted of a 'good' garden, paved yard, outbuildings and workshops; the house with a private entrance had a front parlour, kitchen, wash-house, four good bedrooms and a cellar and the shop had a 'modern front'. John Churchman sold some of his properties in Broad Street in 1850. These were three 'substantial and well built freehold houses and premises of brick and tile' with an 88 feet frontage. Two were let to 'respectable yearly tenants at a low rent of £23.' Mr. Churchman himself lived in the third which consisted of two parlours, five good bedrooms, a kitchen, shop, offices, warehouse and cellar. Behind were the yards, carpenter's workshop, sawpit, chaisehouse, stable and granary, and a large garden stocked with fruit trees'.[6]

Like others in the town these houses were rented 'by the year' a custom which applied to many of the farms. If Mr. Thomas Dumbarton's case is typical, security of tenure was not guaranteed. In August 1850 he was given seven days' notice to leave the house in Shute End he rented from Mr. Spratley 'as tenant from week to week'[7]

Various sales of furniture give glimpses of the well appointed middle class homes of early Victorian Wokingham. An unnamed gentleman offered for sale a four-poster bed, featherbeds, carpets, glass and china, cane and windsor chairs, washing stands, bronze and other fenders, a draught board, a microscope, a grand piano by Tomkinson, a mahogony chest of drawers etc. Mr. Bleckley, a baker of Rose Street, also had mahogany dining tables, chairs, bureau with bookcases, besides mahogany and painted washstands and goosefeather beds in his bedroom. Another baker and confectioner, Mr. John Padbury of the Market Place, sold his household furniture including brewing utensils, among which was a forty-gallon copper. In his garden he kept three fatting pigs, garden implements, manure and hay, a indication that possibly like others in the town, his house was not only his home and workplace but also a very tiny smallholding.

This advertisement and several others make the point that the properties were 'plentifully supplied with excellent water'. This must have come from one of the many wells which were marked on a map of 1871, since the Wokingham District Water Company was not yet formed. However the Gas Company, founded in 1847, was already bringing new comforts to those able to afford it, which included the Baptist Church.

BILL HILL, WOKINGHAM.

MR. DALLEY respectfully announces that he has received directions from John Leveson Gower, Esq., to SELL by AUCTION, some time in this month, a quantity of ASH, ELM, OAK, LARCH, FIR, LIME, and other POLES. Full particulars of which will appear in next week's paper.

Wokingham, Jan. 15th, 1846.

COTTAGES & GARDENS, WARFIELD, Berks.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY

MR. DALLEY,

At the Hind's Head, Bracknell, on Friday, the 30th day of January, 1846, at three o'clock in the afternoon.

FIVE COTTAGES and GARDENS, situated at Warfield, near Lady Malcolm's Park, and about one mile from the town of Bracknell,—being Copyhold of Inheritance, held of the Manor of Warfield,—subject to a nominal rent, and exempt from fines, and heriots.

For particulars apply to Mr. Dalley, Auctioneer, Wokingham, Berks.

Excellent Freehold Land and Farm House,

WOKINGHAM, WILTS.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY

MR. DALLEY,

At the Bush Inn, Wokingham, on Wednesday the 18th day of February, 1846, at Two o'clock in the Afternoon,

A Most desirable and compact FREEHOLD FARM (Land-tax redeemed), consisting of 102 Acres, 3 Roods, and 8 Perches of excellent Arable, Meadow, and Pasture LAND, together with a modern brick-built FARM HOUSE, comprising parlour, kitchen, back kitchen, and wash house, dairy, excellent cellars, 6 good bed rooms, large garden, barns, stabling, cow house, and all other requisite farm buildings, situate in that part of the parish of Wokingham which is in the county of Wilts, and now in the occupation of Mr. James May.

To view the farm apyly to Mr. John Rogers Wheeler, solicitor, or to Mr. Dalley, auctioneer, Wokingham, of whom particulars and conditions of sale may be had fourteen days before the sale. The above estate is situate about a mile from the market town of Wokingham, and is distant 31 miles from London, 6 from the Twyford Station of the Great Western Railway, 8 from Reading, and about 7 miles from Windsor. The property is surrounded by excellent roads, bnd is well worthy attention either as an investment or for occupation.

The parish was blessed with several substantial and well built farmhouses, some of which came on the market during this period, and some of which still stand. Such was the property occupied by Mr. James May, which was sold in 1846, as a modern brick-built farm house comprising parlour, kitchen, back kitchen and wash house, dairy, excellent cellars, five good bedrooms and a large garden, said to be worthy of attention 'either as an investment or for occupation'.[8]

The cottages of the majority of agricultural labourers were not so attractive. A careful landlord would provide a three bedroom cottage with 30 to 40 poles of ground for a shilling a week. But others let at double the rent with little garden were described as 'hovels'.[9] A survey of living conditions in the countryside printed in the Morning Chronicle in 1849 paints a very gloomy picture of the housing of some of the agricultural labourers in Berkshire and the neighbouring counties.[10] Cold damp cottages with old thatched roofs and inadequate heating, did nothing to prevent the spread of dirt and disease. Furniture was sparse, perhaps a few chairs or stools, a table and a couple of shelves. Beds were sacks of straw in the loft, reached by a ladder. Food was a monotonous diet of bread and potatoes, with meat, usually bacon, only twice a week. The newspaper reporters admitted that not all agricultural labourers were reduced to such miserable conditions, and that many kept their cottages, persons and clothes clean, since soap and soda were cheap. But they concluded that others had ceased to struggle against the problems of poverty, hunger and over crowding. A labourer whom they interviewed at Thame in Oxfordshire said that it was possible to live on wages of eight shillings a week, but if people had only six shillings, he didn't know how they could manage. 'They can't do it sir, they can't do it'.

Even the few statistics available show how true this would have been in Wokingham, where the greatest part of the labourer's income went on food and rent. The cost of basic essentials was still high in 1851, though lower than earlier in the century. The Poor Law Guardians paid 4½d or 4 $\frac{3}{4}$d for a 4 lb loaf, 4d a lb for beef and 4½d. for 'mutton and joints for the master's table'. Shoes cost them 5s. 6d. a pair, coats ten shillings. Such amounts make wages of even eight shillings a week seem meagre. No Wokingham labourer and probably few craftsmen would have regarded as cheap the so called 'cheap excursion' to London by GWR in 1851 at 3s. 6d. for second or third class return tickets.[11]

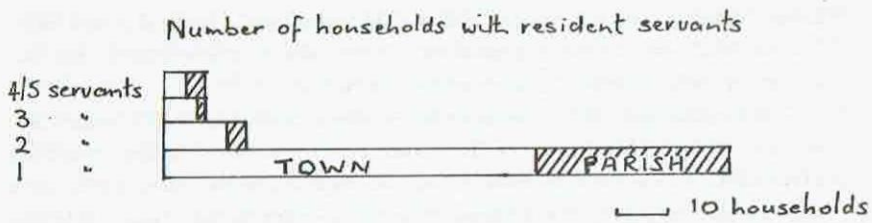
RESIDENT DOMESTIC SERVANTS

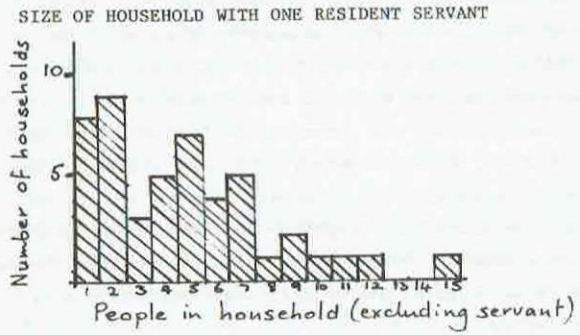
Seventy-three families in the town (15% of the total) and thirty eight in the parish (8%) employed domestic servants who lived in.[1]

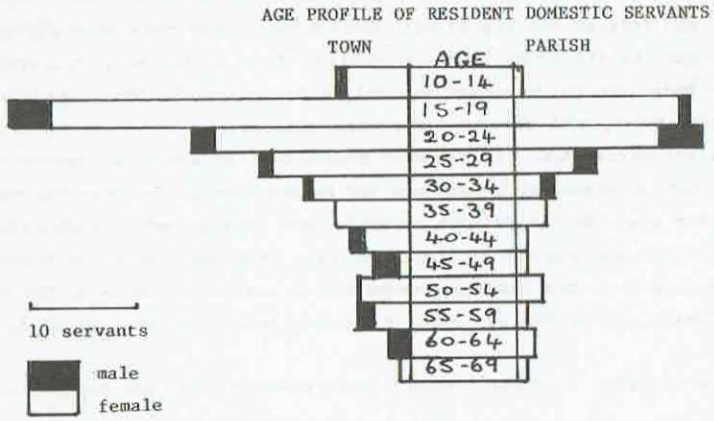
Most common was the household with just one servant. Over half of the heads of such families were retailers, shopkeepers or people, frequently elderly ladies, of independent means. This group also included socially inferior tradesmen, such as Joseph Eyles, the chimney sweep, as well as the professional middle class among whom was the Baptist Minister. The ability to employ servants provides a rough and ready guide to wealth and status. Mrs. Beaton[2] estimated that with an income of £150 to £200 a year a family could afford one servant, the least that anyone aspiring to a modicum of respectability should acquire.

To employ more required more affluence, up to £750 a year being suggested by Mrs. Beaton, if four servants were engaged. Only six families in the town fell into this category - the two drapers John Heelas and William Crewe, three solicitors - the Wheeler, Haines and Roberts families, and James Hayward the brewer. Two men in the parish, one a naval lieutenant and the other a colonel in the Grenadier Guards had five domestics, while John Werninck at the Holt and John Smith at the White House, both fundholders, had four. Income and social status were more important than the amount of work in determining the size of the domestic staff. James Hayward's household had only three adults whereas William Crewe had eight children. The same appears to be true of the families with two and three servants, who were mainly professionals, substantial farmers and persons of independent means. George Burr, a civil engineer with nine in his household, employed two servants, as did Mrs. Anna Browne who lived alone. Woolstapler William Heela with three servants for his family of four, was obviously more affluent than Thomas Spencer with two servants to serve seven people.

Most, including the single servant, were described merely as 'general' or 'house' servants. Their duties varied with the size of the household and the number of domestics, but must always have been hard and unremitting, especially where only one young girl was employed. William Collet Beechey, Poor Law Relieving officer, employed Ellen Heiffer aged 14 for a household of 15 people including his wife, eight children, his brother and sister and three boarders at his Wokingham Academy. By comparison Jane Brown aged 18, with only her mistress Susan Ormsby to care for, may have been fortunate,







though daily cleaning, cooking and making fires would have provided work enough. Much would have depended on the demands of the employer and the amount of help provided by non-resident servants.

Wokingham had only a few households where there was even a suggestion of the servant hierarchy to be found in the more affluent families elsewhere. No mention is made among the multi-servant households of a housekeeper, normally the doyenne of the community below stairs. Thirteen households employed a cook, who in some cases occupied a similar position to the housekeeper, but in others had a far humbler place, depending on the other resident staff. William Crewe's cook, Miss Brant, aged 18, must have performed many duties which elsewhere belonged to the housemaid since the three other servants were a governess, a nursemaid and a groom. Before cooking breakfast she may well have cleaned grates, dusted the living room and cleaned the hall and front steps. However Ellen Maria Wheeler's cook, Fanny Redbone, had two servants to tackle the general domestic duties including clearing dishes and washing up, while the footman may have cleaned the silver and kept the coal scuttles full. Arguably the most overworked cook was Margaret Ann Giles employed by the Rev. Thomas Morres at the Lucas Hospital where there were ten pensionners in addition to the Morres family.

The duties of the three nursemaids recorded in the census must also have varied. Emma Bird aged 15 had only one child of her employer, John Heelas junior, to care for whereas 16 year old Miss Bailey at William Crewe's had eight. In the main the nursemaid was no more than a child-minder who dressed and played with her charges. Many were scarcely much older than the children. Only one family, John L. Roberts, employed a monthly nurse for the baby, who was only a few weeks old. There was also a nursemaid to help with the other two young children.

Elliot Morres R.N. was the only householder to engage a laundrymaid, though there were several laundresses and washerwomen in the town who would have taken away the family wash or would have come in once a week to help the maid with washing and ironing. Similarly there were only two resident seamstresses since few families needed such a service on the spot. The only ladies' maid so designated looked after the unmarried sisters of James Hayward.

The majority of these domestic drudges were young and female, most

being under 25 and 90% being women. This correlates very well with the age at which most women married, i.e. after the mid-twenties, since marriage would usually preclude a resident post. Domestic service was almost the only alternative to agricultural work, in the absence of any large-scale industry, whereas for men there was a wide variety of other trades.

The family background of some domestic servants is an interesting reflection on the possible reasons why they entered such an occupation.[3] Half of those whose parents are known were the daughters of widowers. In most cases their mothers had died when the girls were in their early teens. One was Emma Lunn aged 13, whose father, James, lived in Rose Street as did her employer, William Harris. She lost her mother when she was ten. In the same street lived John Gilgrass whose daughter Lucy worked nearby at the Ship Inn. Two other girls, Phoebe Watts and Harriet Croft worked in the same household as their widowed fathers.

Where the father's occupation is known, he appears to have been either an agricultural labourer or a small tradesman, frequently a shoemaker. One broom maker's daughter, Jane Brown, left home to work for the elderly Mrs. Ormsby in Shute End. The opportunity of finding accommodation as well as employment must have made domestic service attractive to such a girl as Jane who left behind five children living with her parents in what were undoubtedly cramped conditions. Several girls came from equally large families. Rebecca Green had four younger sisters at home, Priscilla Chambers and Ellen Heiffer each had six siblings. With so many to feed, clothe and house the incentive to put daughters out to service as early as possible must have been very strong.

EAST END, WEST END

One of the most interesting aspects of mid-nineteenth century Wokingham is what can be called its 'social geography' or the contrasts in wealth, occupation and class between the different streets which made up the town. Though there are no surviving rate books on which to base an analysis of property values, a church rate levied in 1846-7 to pay essential repairs to All Saint's Church can substitute to some extent.[1] The results are shown below together with the numbers of householders eligible to vote in Parliamentary elections and those who had resident domestic servants. From these and from the occupations followed by their inhabitants, a picture of the character of different streets emerges.

Street	Total h'holds	% h'holds with domestic servants	% h'holds with a vote	Total rate-payers	Church Rate Assessments under £5	under £10	under £20	under £50	under £200
Market Pl.	40	45	38	33	4	6	12	9	2
Broad St.	47	47	17	36	1	12	12	7	4
Shute End	41	22	12	13	1	6	5	1	-
Barkham Rd.	4	25	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nonsuch Lane	15	7	0	2	1	-	1	-	-
Peach St.	96	9	7	36	11	18	7	-	-
Rose St.	148	7	5	28	14	9	4	1	-
Down St.	81	5	6	18	11	6	1	-	-

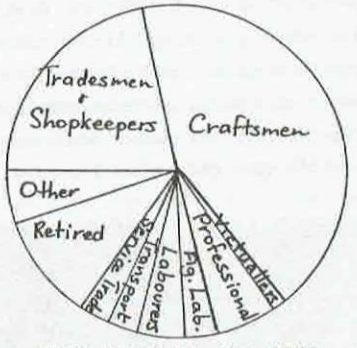
The professional middle class affluence of Broad Street and the wealth generated by the commercial importance of the Market Place are immediately apparent. In Broad Street and on the south side of Shute End lived many of the town's gentry and professional families, almost half of whom employed servants. They included on the north side of Broad Street the Baptist Minister, Rev. Harcourt, a civil engineer, George Burr who ran a small school for army candidates and Jane Creaker, baptised in Hurst in July 1750 and in 1851 Wokingham's oldest inhabitant. The most opulent building on this side was Montague House, home of solicitor John Roberts, himself an

OCCUPATIONS OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS 1851

MARKET PLACE

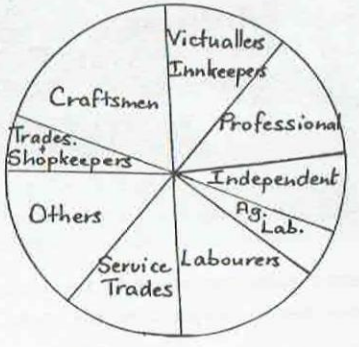
BROAD STREET

ROSE STREET



PEACH STREET AND STAR LINE

DOWN STREET



NONSUCH LANE & SHUTE END

old man of 93, but whose son Edward acted as Town Clerk among other duties. Another solicitor, John Roger Wheeler, lived at the Elms, a grand house opposite. However, as with all streets in the town, there was some social mix. The Misses Watts' boarding school was next door to a doctor, but nearby were several small establishments including a dressmaker, a basketmaker and a blacksmith. The butcher's shop remained as such until it was recently acquired by a building society. Another inhabitant was Clement Green, master tailor and census enumerator, opposite whom were six cottages for working folk. Perhaps it is significant that this was the only street in the town without a public house.

However substantial inns and flourishing tradesmen dominated in the Market Place. Many of the enterprises of this period have left enduring marks: the Heelas family of William the woolstapler, John the linen draper and his son, John junior; William Gotelee, bookseller, printer and collector of stamp duty; the Rose, the Roebuck, the King's Head and the Red Lion still quenching thirsts today. The wide range of shops and services, from shoemakers and plumbers to watchmakers and hairdressers, attracted customers despite the insignificance of the Tuesday market. William Crewe's draper's shop was packed with customers on hiring fair day. He had already expanded into the former Rose Inn in 1843 and was obviously thriving.

MARKET PLACE before 1845. The large house on the left was the residence of James Dehay, surgeon. On the right is the Roebuck Inn.

Prosperity, in fact, was general. Half the households employed at least one servant; rateable values were high and the proportion of householders with a vote the highest in the town; all children under nine, and most of those under 14, were recorded as scholars in the census.

By contrast Down Street was a poor area with the highest number of recorded paupers of any street in the town. In addition there were two Tramp Wards, one for casual paupers with two families and five single men in residence, and the other a Tramp Lodging House with two families and three batchelors. There was a high proportion of agricultural and unskilled labourers among the workforce, only a quarter of which was tradesmen or skilled craftsmen. By and large the latter groups lived nearer the Market Place whereas the poor and unskilled lived towards the outskirts of the town. There were several alehouses and beer shops, but few retail shops.

The conditions of the children was also in marked contrast to those in the Market Place. There were ten single-parent families, three of whom were grandparents bringing up grandchildren. Only two-thirds of children aged five to nine were scholars, a proportion falling to one in four in the age group 10 to 14. The remainder had no recorded occupation except eight who were in full time employment.

In Down Street the houses were noticeably smaller and more closely packed than in the streets to the west of the town, but even so it was not the most densely populated area of Wokingham. This doubtful honour belonged to Peach Street, and even more to Rose Street.

Here the building of small cottages around courtyards had already begun. At least 12 houses were occupied by more than one family in Rose Street and more people were lodgers in these two streets than in the whole of the rest of the town. In all just over half the town's population lived here. Nearly half the heads of the households in Peach Street were craftsmen and only slightly fewer than this in Rose Street. Both had a substantial number of small shopkeepers, though neither had more than a handful of professional people.

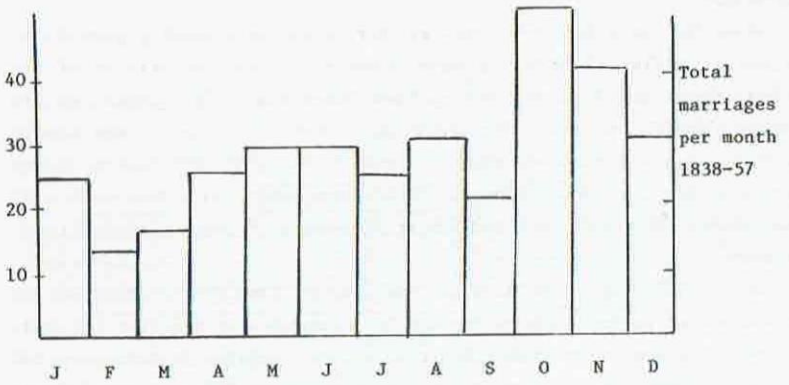
Thus in a town which was barely a mile across, there was a well established dichotomy between the east and the west ends such as one associates with large urban communities.

THE CYCLE OF FAMILY LIFE

The vast majority of the population lived as 'nuclear families' that is a family with father, mother and children: nearly three quarters of all households recorded in the Wokingham census were headed by a married man and his wife.

Most people could expect to marry, though not at a very early age. It is exceptional to find anyone under 21 marrying in All Saint's Church in the mid-nineteenth century, while the 1851 census shows that in the town among the 20-24 age group, only one quarter of the men and one third of the women were married. But in the age group 25-29 two thirds of the men and over half the women were married. Some early marriages there were, but they were few, and more common among the lower socio-economic classes than among the tradesmen and professionals.[1] George and Harriet Crane were married at 22 and 19 respectively; John and Elizabeth Sharp were only 20 and 19; all these families lived in Down Street and most were labourers. By contrast the young daughters of the house in Broad Street and the domestic servants employed by their families were still overwhelmingly single in their late twenties, though many of their brothers had found wives by that age.

In another respect marriage patterns were still largely unchanged from previous centuries in that they were celebrated in the autumn and early winter. October was the most popular month for weddings, followed by November and then December. This was a convenient time since yearly contracts with employers would be renewed at the hiring farms in late September and some stability could be assured for a time, while the recent harvest assured sufficient for a least a simple feast. More than half of all December marriages took place between Christmas Eve and Boxing Day, possibly because it was a holiday period and no working time would be lost. By contrast the period of Lent and the weeks preceding it was still avoided, less than half the monthly average of weddings taking place in February and March.



Monthly distribution of marriages (1838-57) at All Saints' Church

Two out of every three marriages in Wokingham parish church were between partners whose families belonged to the same social or occupational groups. The majority were labouring families, but the sons and daughters of craftsmen, small shopkeepers, farmers and gentlemen tended to marry with their own kind. One interesting example was Mary Ann Luke, schoolmistress of the National School and daughter of John Luke, a carpenter of Bridport, who married Paul Thomas Hill, carpenter and son of a carpenter in August 1848. She continued in her chosen profession after her marriage.

Whereas labourers and others in the lower socio-economic groups married mainly within the locality, those at the other end of the social scale often married partners from a distance. Two daughters of James Twycross, the wealthy woolstapler and then tanner, married into similar families from the North of England where he had trade connections. In 1850 Emma married John Milne, a Liverpool merchant, and in 1858 Augusta married Robert Smith, son of a manufacturer from Keighley in Yorkshire. The third daughter Eliza, married a surgeon from Arundel, Sussex.

When marriages did take place across social boundaries, usually the social differences were slight. The most frequent involved the children of labourers and those of skilled craftsmen or small shopkeepers.[1] The son and daughter of George Halfacre, carpenter, married into the family of a gardener and a labourer respectively; Joseph Frankum, a basket maker,

wheelwright.

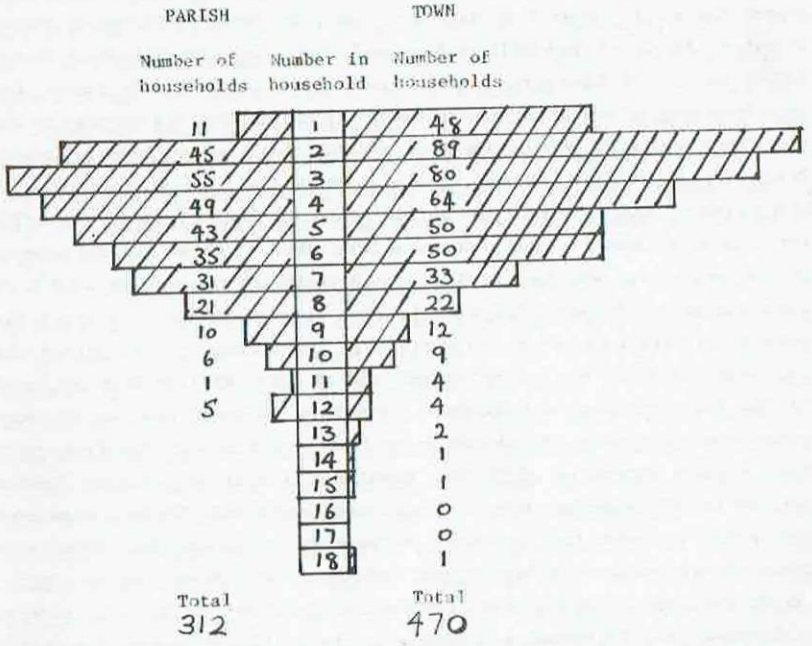
When the class difference was greater it is occasionally possible to suggest an explanation. Maria Monk, daughter of the proprietor of the Railway Hotel may have met her husband James Keete, gentleman, on his travels through the town. But there is no indication as to how Louisa Thompson, also a gentleman's daughter, came to marry the bricklayer, George Wetman; or why two tenant farmers, David Baker and William Blackwell each with about 100 acres, allowed their daughters to marry agricultural labourers.

It is not easy to be sure of the size of families at this period without access to the registrar's records, since not all families had their children baptised immediately, if at all. Two families in Wokingham had several of their children baptised together, regardless of age.[1] James Creed, baker of Broad Street and Elizabeth his wife, brought a son and four daughters to church in December 1813; James and Mary Twycross had their eldest son and twins baptised in infancy, but their six daughters and youngest son were baptised much later. The girls ranged from 16 years to nine months at their mass christening in 1837, and young James was 15.

There were few other families as large as this, though the census returns record only those children still living at home, which may not be the complete family. One clear pattern which does emerge from the census is that of approximately two-year birth intervals between the majority of surviving children in a family. The nine children of Joseph and Mary Rushton were aged 20, 18, 16, 14, 12, 10, 8, 5 and 3. All lived at home, and the four eldest went to work. Many babies however, did not survive the first year of life. Wokingham, in common with the rest of the country, had a very high infant mortality rate, though not as high as Reading or larger towns. The rate varied from 93 per 1,000 live births in the 1830s to 115 in the 1850s, though in occasional bad years such as 1843 and 1851 it could rise to 180.[2] Even the wealthy were not spared. A monument in the church records the death in 1845 of Augusta, daughter of the Vicar, Rev. Thomas Morres, aged 2 years 2 months.

Not all babies were born in wedlock, though again exact figures are difficult to assess since many were obviously not baptised. Between 1835 and 1838 over 11% of all those baptismed were illegitimate but for the next 20 years the number was only 4%. It seems more likely that fewer bastards

HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN TOWN AND PARISH 1851



plus tramps' lodging - 15 people
tramps' ward - 10 people

were being brought to be christened than that a sudden change had come over the premarital practices of the community.

Some unmarried women seem to have had more than a single lapse from grace: Elizabeth Townsend of Eastheath had four children including twins; Elizabeth Searle of Honeyhill or Hannican's Lodge had six; Elizabeth Pizzey and Eliza Cole of Eastheath each had two. Some, if not all of these, may have been part of the broom-making community and not legally married to the men they lived with. Within the town several single women in Rose Street, Peach Street and Down Street, the area with the highest incidence of illegitimacy, had more than one child. Indeed in Rose Street in the 1830s three Ladgrove sisters each produced a baby. None of these parents appears on the census. One who does is Mary Anne Nethercliff recorded as 'living in concubinage' with Henry Draycott in Down Street. Two months after the census she bore a son whom she christened Henry Draycott! He joined the four other children she had borne, only one of whom, William Draycott, aged 15, had been chistened in Wokingham. There is no evidence that any of these women ever married in the church where their children were baptised, with the solitary exception of Theresa Rushton who married Jonathon Webber Langley in 1844 when her baby girl was three weeks old. The baby died aged one month! At least four unmarried mothers and their children lived with their widowed mothers in Down Street, making a distinctive group of single-parent families. It was unusual for married children to live with parents or in-laws, only 14 examples occurring in the Wokingham census. Presumably there was no shortage of housing for married couples, but unmarried mothers found it convenient and possibly essential to stay in the parental home.

Widows and widowers, too, tended to be independent. Of nearly a 100, about a third still had unmarried but financially independent sons or daughters living with them; nearly one in five lived alone and a similar number lived with relatives. Only six families in the town had their widowed parent or in-law living under their roof.

There is a seasonal pattern of burials in Wokingham as revealed by the registers of All Saints' Church. Ironically the weeks of Lent which saw fewest marriages were the peak times, together with December, with burials. No causes for death are given in the register but the inference from the figures would seem to be that winter ailments, including possibly typhus, were responsible for the high totals, but some of the frequent epidemics

were possibly the result of water-borne diseases, which included the new visitation of cholera. During the twenty years between 1830 and 1859 some epidemic hit the area on 16 occasions pushing the death rate up to twice the average or more. Usually this lasted for a few weeks, but in 1845 (February and March) and 1855 (April and May) it was at least two months before things returned to normal. During September 1854, 18 burials were recorded, all except two in Wokingham Town, the highest monthly figure for the 20 year period. Where it has been possible to identify the address of the 11 women, two men, one boy and two infants, four lived in Peach Street, two in Rose Street and one in Down Street, the overcrowded, poorer end of the town.

In March 1846 the Vestry had unanimously agreed that since the drain in Broad Street was 'in a very filthy and improper condition and calculated to endanger the health of persons residing in that locality', it should be replaced by 'a good underground bricked barrel drain'. Obviously this was not the only health hazard in the town for in 1849 the Poor Law Guardians complained to the Vestry about the generally defective state of the drains in the town. The Vestry which had been so speedy in remedying the defects near to some of their homes, now acted far more circumspectly. Mr. Trickey Dunning, surveyor, stated 'that there were 43 open gratings and if all were covered with traps would average an expense of about 20/- each including laying etc., which would have the effect of throwing back the noxious smells up the small gratings in the houses thereby greatly increasing the evil to the inhabitants'. The meeting was adjourned to allow time for an 'efficient plan' to be devised, and when it met on October 5th at the Town Hall no further mention was made of the need to improve the drains.[2] Small wonder there were epidemics from time to time! In August 1866 All Saints' Parish Magazine produced some timely advice on the prevention and treatment of cholera, though how far much of it was practicable for many Wokingham people, still without piped water and adequate sewage, is doubtful. A map of the town in 1871 shows many houses with their only water supply a well shared with neighbouring properties, though the Wokingham District Water Company was founded soon afterwards.

However, by comparison with the nearby town of Reading, the Wokingham district was considered healthy. In his report to the General Board of Health in 1850 William Lee compared the Registration Districts of

Easthampstead, Cookham and Wokingham where the death rate was 16.2 per 1,000 in 1841, with Reading where it reached 30 per 1,000 in 1849.[3] The following report which was printed in the Berkshire Chronicle on 14th July 1849 accurately reflects contemporary views on the advantages of the salubrious environment of the town:

On the Opening of the Railway through Wokingham

We can justly refer as an instance of the healthiness of this town and neighbourhood by the singular coincidence of a party of seven persons who assembled last week to enjoy the social beverage at one of our worthy and respected neighbours in the Market Place, whose united ages amounted to 619, being 75, 80, 89, 91, 92, 93 and 99 - the ones 93 and 99 are brothers and sister and the register book of this parish records the departure from this life of many the ages above referred to.

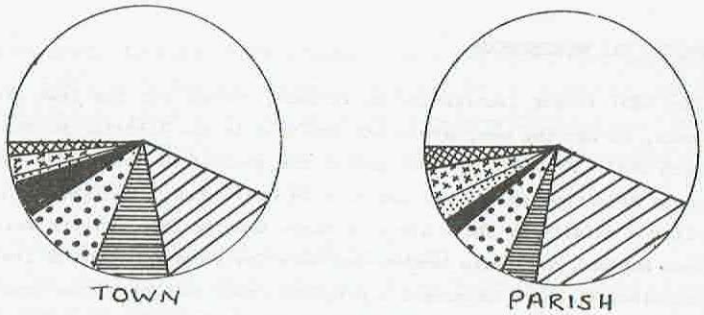
NEWCOMERS TO WOKINGHAM

The 1851 census records the birthplace, though not the last place of residence, of all the men, women and children in the district on the night of March 30th. In both town and parish the picture is remarkably similar. Just over half the population was born in Wokingham, and about a quarter came from a relatively short distance away. Considerable numbers were from Southern England, including London, but very few from anywhere to the north of Berkshire. Incomers comprised a complete cross section of the community, from those of independent means, through the occasional solicitor or veterinary surgeon, the more numerous teachers and farmers, to the large numbers of craftsmen, labourers and servants. They included almost equal numbers of men and women.

Almost twice as many newcomers originated from the South East as from South West England, but their occupations were very similar - craftsmen such as shoemakers, wheelwrights and basket makers, and both indoor and outdoor servants. Some of the latter may have been inhabitants of a former place of residence of their professional employers, and moved with them to Berkshire. Eliot Morres from Middlesex, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and his wife, a Londoner, had five servants, one born in Bath, one in Sandwich, two in Berkshire and only one in Wokingham. Wokingham seems to have been the chosen retirement spot for some men of independent means and for the more elderly of the many women from the South East. More of the professional and skilled women, such as the four governesses or teachers and three milliners or bonnet makers originated from the South East than elsewhere in the country. Of the substantial number of people born in London, women outnumbered men by two to one, though since most of the women were married without a stated occupation, it is not clear what occupation they once followed. The large number of children born in London may be explained by London-born women returning home for the birth of the first child. This was certainly a widespread practice in the country generally.

Married women also made up the majority of immigrants from the Midlands and the North, who only totalled 41 people. Among the men were both the Baptist Minister and the Anglican curate, and one of John Leveson Gower's tenant farmers, namely John Oxby of Pike's Farm.

The preponderance of newcomers owning or occupying the major farms of

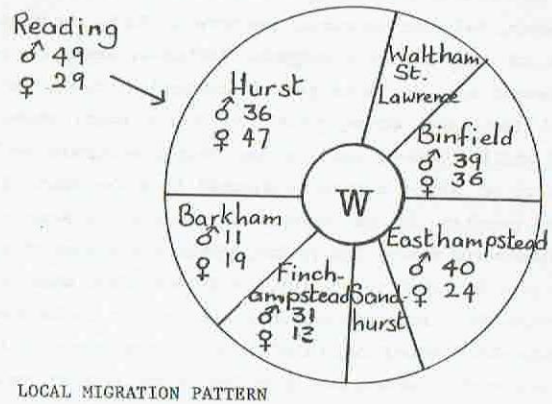


BIRTHPLACES OF WOKINGHAM RESIDENTS 1851

Wokingham — within 10 mile radius — within 20 mile radius

S.E. England — Berks (outside 20 mile radius) — London

rest of Britain — Abroad/Not known



LOCAL MIGRATION PATTERN

♂ indicates number of male Wokingham residents born here

♀ indicates number of female Wokingham residents born here

the parish is very striking. Of the 37 farmers named in the census, 21 were not Wokingham born, originating from as far as Essex, Lincolnshire, Anglesey and Scotland. They were more likely to become tenant farmers than owner-occupiers, such as Moses Fryer of Beaconsfield, tenant of New Farm who also occupied the post of Inspector of Lighting. However William Heelas, born in Luton, Beds, was the owner of Buckhurst Farm. By 1851 he was a burgess, and a man of considerable influence.

The new enterprises in the area were also dominated by incomers, which is perhaps predictable. The chief constable, William Herring, haled from London; the gasworks was staffed by a Scots engineer, Peter Crichton and his son; the only gas fitter, came from Ashton-under-Lyme, and Abraham Butler, a gas maker was a native of Farnborough. The railways like the gasworks tended to attract employees predominantly from Scotland and Northern England. The railway superintendant, Archibald Millar and his son the railway booking clerk were both from the east coast of Scotland. He may have been a ship's engineer at one time since two of his children were born at sea. Like Peter Crichton he was in his mid-forties and both men presumably came to Wokingham to fill these specific posts, though it is not known how they knew of the vacancies. Another Scot, Robert Mowatt, taught the pianoforte. Unlike the others he was married to a Wokingham-born woman.

Another engineer, also a surveyor, came from Belfast, though the rest of the small number of Irish in the town had more traditional occupations - a schoolmaster, four tailors, an embroidress and a straw-bonnet maker.

Such trades are also and more typically found among the townspeople who had been born within a ten mile radius of Wokingham and who made up 15% of the population. More than half of them came from just four villages - Hurst, Binfield, Finchampstead and Easthampstead, and the town of Reading. Of the 69 women in the group, 16 were domestic servants, 6 lived by their needles and 4 were charwomen or laundresses. One third were married with no stated occupation. The men occupied a number of trades, mostly tailors (five), innkeepers and licensed victuallers (seven) and above all leather craftsmen (11). The men in this group outnumbered women by three to two.

It is only possible to speculate on the reason for this local migration pattern. Heads of household leaving Reading often had a trade they could equally well follow in Wokingham, and in some cases it is possible to see that the family had lived in the larger town for a time.

Thomas Coates, a baker born in Brightwell had been living in Reading when his two children aged eight and five were born. Similarly a cordwainer born in Caversham lived in Reading for at least five years before moving at about the same time as Thomas Coates, sometime in the mid-1840s at a time of very high mortality in the overcrowded, unhealthy larger urban area. From the villages, migrants were attracted to new employment opportunities. Two young men from Hurst, the largest village in the area, were apprenticed to a surgeon and a shoemaker respectively, and eight girls were in domestic service. Others may have come from families living on the estates of the several large landowners with property in Wokingham, though with larger estates elsewhere, such as John Walter of Bearwood (Hurst), the Marquess of Downshire (Easthampstead) and John Leveson Gower (Barkham). Easthampstead, Finchampstead, Barkham and Hurst were all largely owned by single landowners who were lords of the manor and owned a great deal of property elsewhere in addition. Further research might indicate whether these were 'closed' villages, some of whose agricultural labourers were pressured into living in 'open' Wokingham and returned to the village to work.

This may also be one of the reasons for the very similar pattern among the inhabitants of Wokingham parish born within the same ten mile radius. Made up of almost equal numbers of men and women, they amounted to 21% of the population. Again the vast majority, nearly two-thirds, came from just five villages and Reading, the largest number from Easthampstead. They included a substantial number of broom makers for whom the parish boundary was probably less important than the continuity of the heathland from Easthampstead into the south-eastern corner of Wokingham parish. Agricultural labourers and their families made up half of the migrants from three other villages, with an occasional shepherd and carter. For the most part the unmarried women were predictably moving into domestic service on the large farms. All but five of those from Reading were farmers or farm labourers. These were two tailors, an elderly annuitant speading his last years with his nephew at Warren Farm, and the family of a brickmaker. How far the overcrowded conditions and periodic epidemics acted as an impetus to emigration from Reading is impossible to quantify, though given Wokingham's reputation for a healthy life, it is possible at least to speculate.

Some families however, seem to have been wanderers, several being agricultural labourers. Richard Alcock from Derbyshire married a Wiltshire girl, but their children were born in Romford and Ennor, Essex, Reading and Hampshire, only the baby daughter being Wokingham born. Joshua Allen, a widower, born in Suffolk, gradually moved westwards, his children being born in Watford and Middlesex. There were 12 other families where both parents were born in different localities, and the children born in at least one place other than Wokingham. Jesse Smith, a railway plate-layer had presumably moved round the construction sites, from Kent where he was born to Scarborough, Suffolk and Reading in the previous five years. Most mobile of all was the Scots railway superintendant and his Scots wife whose two eldest sons were born in Scotland, the next two children at sea and the youngest of the Isle of Man in 1846.

Quite untypical but nevertheless interesting are the two wives, two nieces and two children of professional men born in various parts of the British Empire and S. America; and a septuagenarian tramp, a native of Genoa, who inexplicably slept in a tramps' lodging house on census night.

There were two such establishments in Wokingham, one almost certainly the building which had served as the workhouse before 1834, both in Down Street. If they were typical of mid-Victorian lodging houses, then they were disreputable, accommodating the unemployed, the wanderer and the scoundrel as well as the industrious newcomer looking for a permanent place to stay. The standards of comfort and sanitation were far below what could be expected even from the workhouse, and so attracted only the really poor and desperate. Three families were to be found there in March 1851, together with eight men, mostly middle aged and without a trade, and two single girls, a servant girl from Hurst and an unemployed 15 year old factory girl from Manchester.

Lodgers formed a very small group, 2% of the population. Of the 42 people lodging with families in the town, the great majority (26) were single men under 50 years old. There were only two families, that of a music master and a navvy both lodging in Peach Street. But by contrast to the occupants of the lodging houses in Down Street, these lodgers were largely craftsmen, including six tailors. Fewer of the women had stated occupations, though there was one schoolmistress (living with the schoolteacher Mary Hart), an unmarried mother from Wargrave supporting

herself as a woolsorter, and a mother and daughter team of hawkers from Kent. Only two thirds of these lodgers were actually newcomers to the town, about the same proportion as among their landlords, though it did not always follow that incomers lodged with incomers.

In the parish 35 of the 41 lodgers were widowers or single men, at least half of whom were Wokingham born, and a similar proportion were agricultural labourers. About half of these lodgers stayed individually with a family, some of whose houses must have been extremely crowded. George Hale's landlord was a broom maker with five children at home, while the Chaplin brothers, John and William lodged with a labouring family of six. In general, incomers to the parish tended to find a home with incomers, though very rarely did they share the same birthplace.

Mobility had been a feature of the English population for centuries, and would continue to our own time. In Wokingham as elsewhere the new arrivals contributed to a greater or lesser extent to the life and work of their new community. Some like William Heelas and James Twycross became the leaders of the commercial life of the town; others were the recipients of charity at the almshouses; yet others stayed long enough to be given glowing obituaries such as that erected by the parishioners for their vicar Thomas Morres in 1877, whom they held in 'affectionate remembrance'.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE SINNERS

Church and Chapel

The 'Ancient Church of All Saints' stood at the east end of the town. The patron and rector in 1851 was the Bishop of Oxford who took the major income, that from the tithes, and leased them to a layman. It was not a wealthy living. The perpetual curate (or vicar), the Rev. Thomas Morres estimated his gross income at £162 in 1851 'minus the Income Tax', made up of the permanent endowment, the received rent from 30 acres of glebeland which was leased out, about £12 in fees for such services and marriages, £17 as Easter offerings, and a gift from Queen Anne's Bounty. £50 came from the lessee of the tithes. The Vestry considered this inadequate, especially since there was no parsonage, and Rev. Mr. Morres therefore lived at the Lucas Hospital of which he was the warden.

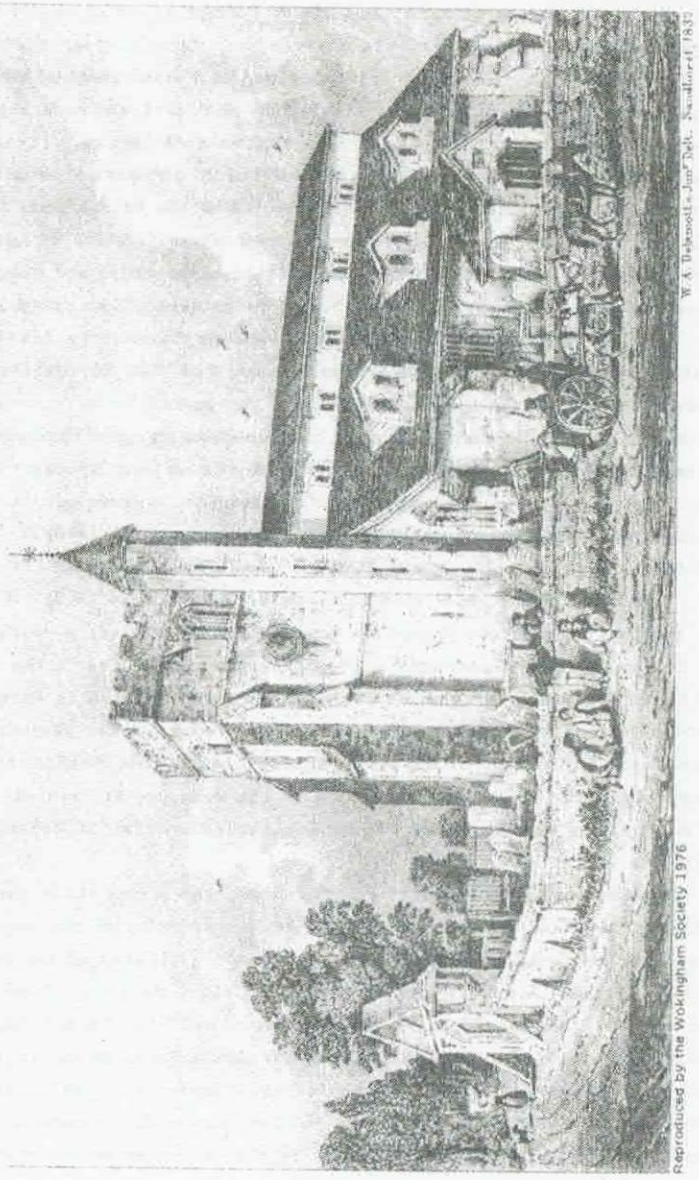
The church was by far the largest religious building in the town, with 150 free seats and 550 others. The congregation on census day was:-

	morning	afternoon	evening
General Congregation	370 (450)	241 (230)	326 (400)
Sunday Scholars	164 (215)	120 (130)	-
Totals	534 (665)	361 (360)	326 (400)

[figures in brackets denote the average for the preceding year][1]

The smaller than average congregation was attributed to the season. 'The Church is better attended in the summer as the parish is extensive'. Nearby Reading also recorded lower attendance because of bad weather and an outbreak of influenza. It is perhaps significant that within the next twenty years two parishes, St. Paul's in the west and St. Sebastian's in the south, were carved out of the ecclesiastical parish of Wokingham to facilitate church attendance.

Despite large nonconformist congregations, the census shows the Church of England to have retained the support of the majority of the population. Among them could be numbered many of the leading figures of the town and their families: James Twycross, William Collet Beechey, John Rogers Wheeler, William Ifould and J.L. Roberts, as well as several important landowners including William Lane of Evendon's Farm. Since it was the established church, there is no way of knowing how far their religious commitment went, unlike the Baptists and Methodists who presumably made a free choice. Some of the inscriptions in the church as recorded by Canon



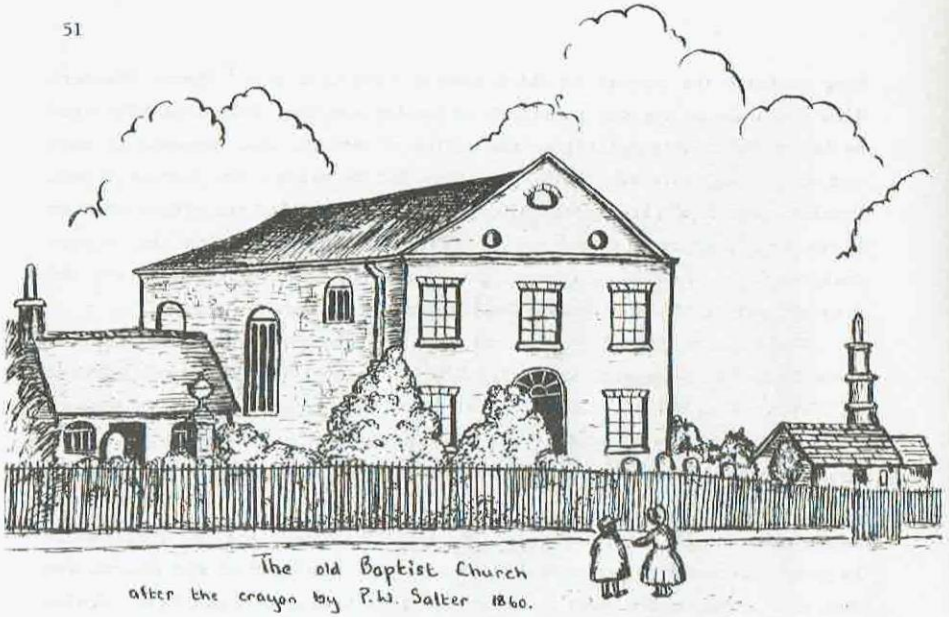
WOKINGHAM CHURCH

Long indicate the respect in which some of them were held.[2] Thomas Chambers died suddenly on his way to church on Sunday evening, July 21st 1861 aged 64 'after faithfully fulfilling the office of sexton, also Sergeant at Mace and other offices under the Corporation for 34 years'; Mr. Thomas Briant Trickey, who died 29th April 1850, 'for 35 years filled the office of Town Clerk in this corporation and discharged his duties with the utmost integrity'. To adapt a well known phrase the Anglican congregation was the greater part of the Wokingham establishment at prayer.

The Baptist Chapel in Nonsuch Lane was the second largest place of worship in the town with seats for 370, of which 148 were 'free'. Founded in 1778 with an initial membership of 18 it had gradually grown in numbers to over 100 in the middle of the nineteenth century, and many others, though not full members, regularly worshipped there. In the returns for 1851 it is recorded that the congregation at morning service numbered 192, the afternoon 151 and the evening service 169, though some of these would be people attending two or more services. The minister of the church was Rev. C.H. Harcourt who came to Wokingham from Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs in 1842. His was a very successful ministry and the church grew rapidly under his leadership.

Membership of the church was taken very seriously and everyone was expected to attend worship every Sunday. There were three services held at 10.30 a.m., 3.00 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. and also an early morning prayer meeting at 7.00 a.m. In addition to these meetings the Sunday School met at 9.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. and the children were expected to stay on through the main services afterwards. In spite of this the Sunday School was well attended. The census recorded 94 children attending in the morning and 71 in the afternoon. Discipline amongst members was very strict and those who failed to attend regularly or who behaved with 'unpropriety' were visited by two of the deacons whose duty was to investigate the misdemeanour and try to persuade the offender to repent and return to the fold.

Church records show that members often travelled some distance to worship in Wokingham, coming from Bracknell, Hurst, Arborfield, Blackwater and Finchampstead. The church had four village chapels where services were held on Sunday afternoons. These were at Finchampstead, New Mill, Sindlesham and Blackwater, and they were served by lay preachers from the mother church.



The old Baptist Church
after the crayon by P.W. Salter 1860.

The members were also concerned for their poorer neighbours. The Good Samaritan Society was run by the men of the church who visited and financially assisted the poor when they were ill. In the days before the NHS, when absence from work through illness meant no wages, this help must have been much appreciated. The women of the church had their Ladies' Friendly Society whose aim was 'to assist respectable poor women in their confinements'.

The church also ran the Baptist School in Nonsuch Lane which was originally started for poor nonconformist children but later was open to all. In 1842 a new school hall was built in Nonsuch Lane and in 1851 over a 100 children attended there.

Amongst the Baptists was an auctioneer, several retailers, a craftsman and at least two labourers. Two influential families in the town, the Heelas' and the Sales, were leading members. William Heelas senior was a successful farmer, his two sons, William Junior and John both went in to the linen trade, William founding the large Heelas store in Reading. They played an active role in local politics. Stephen Sale was a seedsman with a shop in the Market Place, George a coalmerchant in Peach Street and widow

Committee of Finchampstead Chapel

Stamp Office, Wokingham, 1840

BOUGHT OF W. GOTELEE,

BOOKSELLER, STATIONER, PRINTSELLER, PRINTER, & BINDER.

Dealer in writing, wrapping, and fancy PAPERS; Ledgers and other account books; playing CARDS with plain and colored backs; mourning-bordered message-cards and papers; Bristol boards, plain, colored, and embossed; hand screens and handles; black lines, pens, quills, ink, sealing-wax, wafers, wafer-stamps, ink-stands, slates, sponge, India rubber, rulers, pencils, pocket books, port-folios, bibles and prayer books in plain and elegant bindings, paper cases, blotting books, violin and violoncello strings, music and instruction books, tortoiseshell and other combs, brushes in great variety, scrap books, and prints.

Music, Periodicals, and New Works on the day of Publication.

Printing and Binding neatly and promptly executed.

PATENT MEDICINES AND PERFUMERY.

Cards and Hand-Bills Printed at an hour's notice.

ACCOUNTS DELIVERED HALF-YEARLY & CHRISTMAS.

			£	s	d
1840					
May 6	8 Account Books	2	"	1	4
29	1 Sheet of Double Elephant		"	"	8
June 8	1 Acct Book		"	1	"
Aug 25	3 — do — do	2	"	"	6
Oct 2	Printing 150 Bills Opening of Chapel	5	"	6	"
			"	9	6

Received Jan 28 1841
for W. Gotelee
Charles C. Pilfold

Bill for stationery supplied to Baptist Chapel 1851

Ann Sale kept a shop in Nonsuch Lane. All the family were very devoted members of the church serving as deacons, lay preachers, Sunday School superintendant and being active on all the various church committees.[3]

The Methodists[4] had two places of worship in the town in 1851. First was the 'barn chapel' in Rose Street where the Wesleyan Methodists met, and the second was a room at the lower end of Down Street used by the Primitive Methodists, or Ranters as they were called.

Methodism had come to Wokingham in 1820 when two cottages, which had been built out of a barn were bought, and the 'barn' turned into a small chapel. Here a small group met for worship and service to their poorer neighbours. The chapel was ideally situated for this as Rose Street was one of the poor areas of the town, with many families crowding into small houses. The church was small, its members drawn largely from the labouring classes and the small tradesmen. The Chapel Steward in 1851 was John Slatter, a saddler of Rose Street. The Chapel had seats for 160, but only one-third of these were filled on March 30th 1851. They had no minister of their own but were served by preachers from the Reading circuit.

Part of the cause of the small numbers of the Rose Street church was the arrival in the town of the Primitive Methodists in the 1840s. They seem to have attracted many more people to their services, and in 1850 they acquired a room described as 'a room fitted up for Religious Services connected with the Reading Circuit'. Situated at the lower end of Down Street with seating for 100 and standing room for 50 more it must have been fully occupied, for the average attendance in 1850-1 was 75 for the morning and 150 for the evening service, whereas the Rose Street congregation numbered only 36 and 45 respectively. George Day, the local preacher who served the Chapel, came from Toutley on the edge of the parish where an even smaller community worshipped. The congregation there consisted of two at the morning and 12 at the evening service on census day. The small cottage which served on Sundays as a chapel held only 20 sitting and 10 standing. John Hulme of Waterloo Lodge, a middle aged gentleman of independent means and the census enumerator for the area, described it as 'a small cottage. A Primitive Methodist who cannot write his own name.'

However, over the years the balance has been reversed. The Primitive Methodists are no more, and it is the Rose Street congregation which is strong and flourishing. The faithful few in 1851 would have been gratified had they known.

Crime and Criminals

In 1851 Wokingham was in a period of transition between the old and new ways of enforcing law and order. The town still had its petty sessions held by its own magistrates. George New, the baker, was a High Constable

for Sonning Hundred. The Wokingham Association for the Detection and Prosecution of Felons, founded in 1817, still survived. Subscriptions paid by the members were used to pay rewards for information leading to the conviction of offenders. The categories of offences listed in their rules presumably reflected the prevalent crimes of the area, and ranged from burglary and arson, through theft of livestock, wood and tools, to the destruction of fences and the stealing of vegetables.[5]

However the town and parish had representatives of the new police force which would later become organised as the Berkshire Constabulary. In Rose Street lived the Chief Constable, William Herring, a police constable lodged in Peach Street and policeman William Bilson lived in the parish.

Between January 1850 and October 1852 just over a hundred Wokingham offenders appeared before the magistrates, the more trivial misdemeanours being tried at Wokingham Petty Sessions and the more serious at the full Quarter Sessions held three times a year at Reading and once at Abingdon.[6]. Two-thirds were trivial offences, the most common being vagrancy, deserting the Workhouse wearing Union clothes, and assault. Poaching, gaming on the Sabbath and drunkenness also featured regularly. In 1851 Mary Butler, a farm labourer's wife was fined one shilling by the JP's in Petty Sessions for assault. At Quarter Sessions in January 1850 John Kelly aged 19 and Thomas Johnson aged 24 were each given two months' hard labour for stealing a waistcoat from Clement Green; Robert Brain (26) served three months for taking a silver snuff box from Frances John Baker in November 1850; Charles Mearing received the same sentence for the theft of seven fowl a year later. The only other type of offence involving Wokingham people was a case of 'uttering counterfeit coins' for which two labourers were given six months' hard labour in June 1851.

The age of one third of the offenders is known. Of these nearly 75% were under 30. Petty crime was therefore a young man's preserve. However no crime seems to have been wholly confined to one age group. Young men in their early twenties were just as likely to poach as were the middle aged. If William Critchley (20) and John Collins (21) could wilfully damage a tree, Charles Pounder (39) could break windows.

The paucity of women offenders is quite striking. Only nine were named, five of whom were charged with assault or malicious injury. The only woman accused of theft was Jane, wife of Joseph Lamden, who pleaded guilty to larceny from John Heelas' shop.

The few offenders whose occupation is given in the court records are almost all described as labourers. The only exceptions are the several victuallers accused of breaking the Beer Act. The general level of education was low. Of 39 offenders for whom information is given, 24 could read and write imperfectly, 14 not at all, and only one could read and write well.

Though the very severe penalties of the early nineteenth century no longer applied, they still seem harsh to modern eyes. David Giles (39) received six months' hard labour for the theft of three fowl in December 1849; John Kent served six weeks' for poaching, though others were jailed for three months. Despite this a few men were persistent offenders. Nimrod Halfacre served four sentences mostly for poaching; James Batten knew the inside of both the old and the new gaols in Reading where he spent seven periods for various misdemeanours; Frederick Langley (28) was on trial for a third offence of absconding from the Workhouse in October 1851.

This sorry catalogue of petty crime seems to indicate either personal inadequacy or a reaction to poverty and unrelenting work, rather than real criminal tendencies. Some men were obviously regarded as hardened offenders. George Holloway, known as 'Meggy' was referred to as a 'notoriously bad character' when he added the theft of a jacket to his crimes in 1851. William Tranter was committed for trial at the Assizes on four charges of 'uttering counterfeit five shilling pieces', twice in Wokingham and twice in Hurst. For the magistrates it was all symptomatic of a worsening situation, one of them remarking that crime was increasing in the district although there was no shortage of work. However there are occasional lighter moments as when Bennett, sentenced for game trespass, escaped while being taken to the lockup, 'and being an excellent runner, he got clear'.[8]

One interesting delinquent family figures prominently in the records. Sheba Bichri Englefield an ex-agricultural labourer, but recorded as a beer seller in the census, lived at the White Horse with his wife Jane. Most of their 10 children had left home and the district, but William and Charles were 'inn servants' a euphemism for bar-tenders. In May 1850 Bichri was charged with malicious injury at the Petty Sessions and in February 1852 his sons John, James and Charles were convicted of drunkenness. John and James were married with young families, so perhaps had returned home for an evening's drinking which got out of hand. Despite everything, Bichri lived to a ripe old age, being buried at All Saints in 1870 aged 82.

In the mid-nineteenth century the borough of Wokingham, which was almost coterminous with the built-up area, was still governed under its charter of 1612 by a Common Council consisting of the Alderman, seven capital and 12 secondary burgesses.[1] They also acted as magistrates, holding sessions twice a year for minor offences.

Though the minutes of the council meetings have not survived, the identity of the alderman and capital burgesses is known.[2] With the exception of old William Heelas of Buckhurst, they all lived in the Market Place and the area westwards from it. Had Wokingham been a larger town, they would still have been near neighbours, and would also have had close business ties, since two were woolstaplers and three solicitors.

The most junior was James Hayward who at 24 must have been one of the youngest aldermen of the town. Perhaps his inexperience resulted in an unsatisfactory time in office, for he was never re-elected, and after the sale of the family brewery and property in 1856, disappeared from the local scene.

By contrast Edward Horne at 83 was by far the oldest burgess. He, like Hayward, was a bachelor and lived in Broad Street, cared for by his niece. He described himself as a woolstapler. When he died in 1857 'in the 90th year of his age' his tombstone in the church read, 'Esteemed and respected by all who knew him'.

The other woolstapler among the burgesses, William Heelas junior aged 48, a draper, and son of old William Heelas, was a committed Baptist and, like his father, was to serve frequently as Alderman. Presumably when on official business, he was able to leave the running of the shop to his son John and the several drapery asisistants he employed. Almost identical in age was Edward Dalley, ironmonger and auctioneer, one of only two burgesses born outside Wokingham. He too had a business in the Market Place, employing four men including his brother-in-law.

The three remaining burgesses were solicitors. Francis Soames of Broad Street was to become Alderman for one term before his death in 1855. John Lamplow Roberts was to hold the office on eight separate occasions. He was also the actuary for the Savings Bank, and later Clerk to the general meetings of the Lieutenancy and Justices of the Forest Division.[3] His father aged 93 was also a solicitor living in Montague House which he had

rebuilt and would bequeath to John. Soames and the younger Roberts were also vice-presidents of the Literary Institution.

Opposite old Mr. Roberts in various well apportioned houses lived the influential Wheeler family. John Rogers, solicitor, was Superintendant Registrar and Clerk to the Board of Guardians. Both these offices he handed on to his younger brother, William Wilson, also a solicitor. The eldest brother, James, a surgeon, lived a few doors away from John Rogers.

This small group of families dominated most of the official life of the town, and through their membership of the Council, the Bench and the Vestry, and their activities in other organisations, were influential in shaping its development. They were all wealthy men, especially the Heelas', Wheelers and Edward Horne who were among the half dozen highest church rate payers in 1846-7.[4] Some were related through marriage. James Hayward senior had married Mary Jane Wheeler in 1822, and John Heelas married Dorothy Ann Wheeler in 1825. As in so many communities throughout history, economic power, political control and social influence were kept firmly in the same closely linked hands.

Outside the borough there was no single great landowner to dominate local affairs. A number of individuals owned property and great houses in or on the edge of the parish, including Lord Braybrooke of Billingbear, High Steward of the borough, and John Leveson Gower of Bill Hill. However both had their seats and main estates elsewhere. Even John Walter MP and Robert Gibson, two magistrates who lived locally, actually resided at Bearwood in Hurst and Sandhurst Lodge in Sandhurst. Only John Spencer Werninck of the Holt seems to have been normally resident in the parish though he apparently played little part in local affairs. The impression which is made by the surviving records is of a vigorous urban middle class which had more than its fair share of influence over the locality.

POVERTY, CHARITY AND THRIFT

By 1851 the New Poor Law had been in operation for 17 years. After more than two centuries the Tudor legislation giving the parish the responsibility for caring for its poor was no longer adequate and was amended to provide a new system which it was hoped would be more economical and efficient. Overall control of the administration was in the hands of the Poor Law Commissioners in London, but locally a group of parishes was joined to form a Union administered by a Board of Guardians elected by the ratepayers. Each Union was to have a workhouse, usually built in a centrally placed market town, which would house the paupers and where they would work to repay part of their keep. Conditions here were deliberately made unattractive to discourage potential inmates in the hope that the huge cost of maintaining the poor would fall.

The map shows the area covered by the Wokingham Union. Containing 15 parishes and small townships, it had a population of 13,668 in 1851.

The Board of Guardians included prominent men from each parish.[1] Of a total of 19, there were three from Wokingham, the largest unit in the Union: Rev. Thomas Morres, the vicar; William Lane of Evendon's Farm, a wealthy farmer from a well established local family; and Stephen Sale, a seedsman from the Market Place. Wokingham men were also well represented among the other personnel of the Poor Law administration, notably the Wheeler family, solicitors, who were successively Clerks to the Board. Meetings were held on Tuesday mornings in the Board Room of the Workhouse in Barkham Road and though attendance was sometimes thin, and meetings were reduced to one a fortnight in the busy summer months, the Guardians generally took their duties very seriously. One of the most important of these was the care of paupers in the Workhouse.

At first the Guardians used the old parish workhouse at Wargrave but when this became inadequate a new building designed by Mr. John Billing, a Reading architect, was erected in Barkham Road at a cost of over £6,600. The 'handsome, red-brick building' was spacious, with day rooms, working areas and sick wards. A comprehensive drainage system fed into a cess pit under the drying ground.[2] Wargrave workhouse became a residential school for pauper children.

In 1851 the Master of the Workhouse Mr. W.A. Norey (aged 30), the Matron, Mrs. Sarah Davis (aged 54), widow of the former Master, and the

The Wokingham Poor Law Union

Numbers indicate parisioners in Union Workhouse in 1851, as in Census Enumerators' books.

Born in the parishes of Wokingham Union	54
" elsewhere in Berkshire	9
" in Hants, Oxon, Bucks, Middlesex	13
" elsewhere	3
Not known	7
TOTAL	86

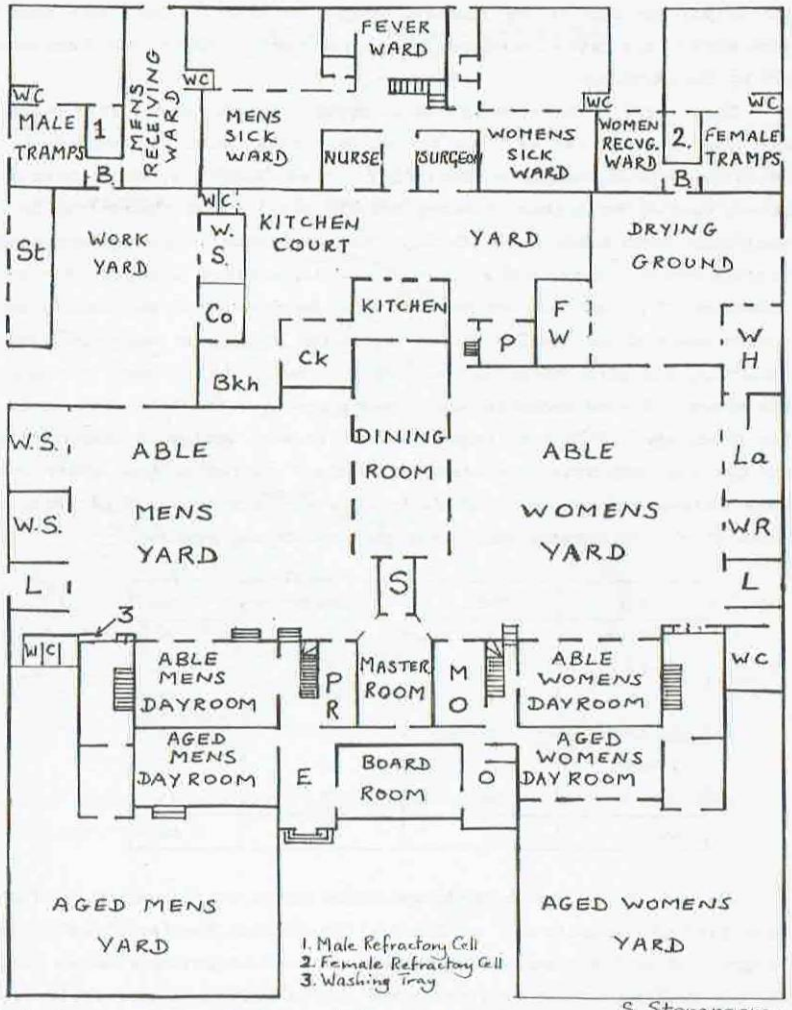
Porter, Thomas House made up the resident staff. A new chaplain, Rev. William Hirst was appointed after a protracted debate over salary, though the Chapel was only in the planning stage. The salaries were very much in line with those paid elsewhere: £60 to the Master, £30 to the Matron and £50 to the Chaplain.

There were 86 inmates on census night, 14 being under five years of age. One of these was William Burret, an orphan born in Ireland. Older children were at Wargrave including three daughters, the eldest aged seven, born at Wokingham to James and Elizabeth Wynn, themselves in the Workhouse with their baby, Esther. They were the only complete pauper family. Ten of the men had a trade, including a baker, a papermaker and a shoemaker, four had none and the rest were labourers.[3] Of the latter, three were members of the Langley family, who later in the year were convicted of 'deserting the union with clothes'.[4] Only three of the men were married. Of the women, 18 were servants, one a seamstress and two labourers. Seven of the women aged 15-29 were unmarried mothers with babies or young children and two more may have been deserted by their husbands. Most older women were widows and two were blind. In line with the national pattern, one third of all the inmates were young children or old people.

Age	Male	Female	Total
0-4 yrs	8	6	14
5-14	0	0	0
15-29	9	18	27
30-44	6	9	15
45-69	8	3	11
70+	14	5	19
Total	45	41	86

The map shows the birthplaces of the inmates, the majority of whom were from the constituent parishes of the Union. The large number from Wargrave is probably because there were several illegitimate babies born in the old Workhouse there, and Wokingham with a high population could expect to exceed the totals from smaller parishes. Those born outside this area were either the very old who had gained a settlement in a local parish, or the children of locally born women.

PLAN OF WOKINGHAM WORKHOUSE



B Bath
Bkh. Bakehouse
Ck. Cooking
Co Coals.
E. Entrance Hall
F.W Female Workshop
L Lavatory
La Laundry
MO Master's Office
O Clerk's Office
P Pantry
FR Porter's Room
S Storeroom
St Stable (Guardian
WH Wash House
WR Work Room
WS Work Shop

The work performed by inmates included stone-breaking and bone crushing. The women also cooked, cleaned and dealt with the laundry, few of them very pleasant jobs. The only time the inmates were normally allowed out was to look for work since once they could support themselves they were released.

No dietary has survived to provide details of meals, though from elsewhere there is evidence that it consisted of too much stodgy food and too little protein. At Hungerford in Berkshire the Guardians provided the following:[5]

	Breakfast	Dinner	Supper
Sun/Tues/Thurs/Sat	7oz bread	5oz beef	5oz bread
	1 pt. gruel	½ lb potatoes	1½ pt. broth
Mon/Wed/Fri	ditto	1 pt. soup	5oz bread
			2oz cheese

Wokingham Guardians bought groceries, milk and beer as well as 'necessaries for the sick'. Details of food purchases in March 1851 included bacon, cheese, rice, oatmeal, bread, beef, mutton and peas as well as tea, sugar, beer and 'Irish butter'. The basic ingredients for the dietary and perhaps a few extras are clearly evident. Sensible shoes and adequate clothing also appear in the accounts, often purchased from Wokingham town. George Meloy supplied strong men's shoes tipped and nailed, with laces, at 7s 3d. a pair and house shoes at 4s 3d. Material for clothes came from William Crewe. Some tradesmen clearly found such contracts a valuable source of trade. Coal was purchased from James Hayward; William Beechey regularly tendered successfully to supply bread; John Churchman dealt with pauper funerals charging £8 19s 0d. to bury six people, ranging from 7s 6d. for the Seymour's infant to £2 12s 3d. for John Gibbons. For the paupers, life as an inmate was austere, and despite their great need they usually preferred to avoid the workhouse whenever possible. Yet judging from the purchases of shoes and clothes they may well have been materially better off there.

In Wokingham Union as elsewhere there were always more paupers on outdoor relief, being given money or provisions in their own homes, than in the workhouse. The lowest number in any one week in 1851 was 524 in April,

and the highest 1,018 in mid-June, which gives a figure ranging from 4% to 8% of the population. The Union was divided into the Northern and the Southern Districts, each with its own full time Relieving Officer to organise the very large amount of parish relief in money and in bread, supplied as 4lb loaves. In any one week the outrelief in a district could range from 456 to 698 loaves and up to £44 in money. The two officials William Collet Beechey and John Nash must have spent a good deal of time travelling. A complaint that Mr. Nash, Relieving Officer for the Northern District, had arrived at well past three o'clock to pay the poor at Hurst, who were expecting him at one, was met with the reply that he had been delayed at Sindlesham visiting two sick paupers. The Guardians were not entirely happy that the only suitable place to pay the poor was usually the local public house, probably the only building in a village, apart from the church, large enough to accommodate the numbers involved.

The cost per head of outdoor relief was considerably lower than keeping the poor in the workhouse, yet the Guardians were reluctant to grant it. On 22nd April 1851 the Board decided it could not give relief to Mrs. Lunn because her daughter should have been able to support her, although they would take her into the workhouse. They spent an unusually long time considering the case of Amelia Goble, a 71 year old Wokingham widow. She had for some years been receiving one shilling and sixpence and a 4lb loaf weekly. She was now asked, as a condition of continuing to receive this payment, to nurse a girl confined to bed with general ulceration, for two hours a day. This entailed a journey of 3/4 mile each way, but she would have her parish relief doubled in compensation. Having tried it for a few days she claimed she was unequal to the task. Since the Medical Officer disagreed the matter was put to the Poor Law Inspector, who doubted the wisdom of using an unwilling, unqualified nurse in the case. The Board was divided about Amelia's future, though perhaps it is significant that those most prominent in urging she be given relief were landowners like John Walter Esq. who probably paid less poor rate than their tenants. With the support of a fellow magistrate he ordered the Guardians to give outdoor relief to poor Amelia. She seems to have been quite able to stand up for herself, contrary to the image of the down-trodden pauper, quoting the 'indulgence' given in the Union to other widows as sufficient grounds for similar treatment.

Resourcefulness of a different kind was shown by John Burgess a pauper of Shinfield, who asked for help to emigrate to Sydney, Australia. The Board granted £8 towards the passage money, and in November 1851 gave a further £2 towards clothing.

The total average cost of providing for the poor in the Union between 1849 and 1851 amounted to nearly £10,000, a considerable sum of money, of which a very large amount was swallowed up in administration costs. However it also provided for the Union's share of the pauper school at Wargrave, the medical treatment of paupers, especially vaccination against smallpox, and the costs of placing mentally disturbed paupers in the Lunatic Asylum at Littlemore. The cost of maintaining the poor was still high, among the highest per head in Berkshire, despite the general desire for retrenchment. The records give an impression of caring men among the Guardians for whom economy was not everything.

An older establishment was to be found in Wokingham parish for the care of the poor, namely the Lucas Hospital,[6] founded in 1663 for poor old men, inhabitants of the Forest areas of Berkshire and adjoining Surrey. In 1851 the Rev. Thomas Morres was the Master, fulfilling the qualifications of being an MA from Cambridge, as well as incumbent of All Saints', Wokingham. His stipend was £100 a year. Ten widowers or bachelors aged from 54 to 85, none of whom originated in Wokingham, enjoyed accommodation in a single room with a garden and a pension of £20 a year. The contrast between this and the workhouse hardly needs to be stressed.

Another of the charitable endowments of Wokingham was even more ancient, being a group of eight almshouses near the church founded by John Westende in 1451 for the 'deserving poor', who were still benefitting from his endowment. The five married couples and four widowers or widows living there in 1851 received coal, groceries and meat every week. Several other charities still flourished in the town providing education, apprenticeships for poor boys or financial help for 'decayed tradesmen'.[7] In the nineteenth as in earlier centuries Wokingham was a community not entirely devoid of care for its less affluent members.

Thrift

The habit of providing for future as well as present needs had been encouraged in Wokingham as early as 1819 with the foundation of the Savings

Bank in accordance with an Act of 1817. Like similar institutions in several of the other market towns of Berkshire, the Wokingham Bank had local men to act as trustees, and was able to invest its funds in a special deposit set up by the National Debt Office. In the first ten years local banks had attracted 7,000 deposits in Berkshire[8] of which the majority belonged to small investors.

Wokingham's Savings Bank was open once a week on Mondays from noon until one o'clock in the Town Hall. In the second half year of 1851 there were nearly 600 accounts held by inhabitants of the town and the surrounding villages including investments by charities and friendly societies, totalling £18,894 18s 3d.[9]

Amount invested	under £10	under £30	under £50	under £100	under £200	Total
Number of investors	200	149	108	79	42	578

The table shows that the majority of the accounts were small; what it doesn't show is that more than half the investors were women. Among the small savers were Mary Ann Webb, victualler, Lydia White an unmarried staymaker and Harriet, wife of James Wheeler, the surgeon. Each had under £5. Two more women, Sophia Churchman, a carpenter's wife, and schoolmistress Mary Ann Hart had about double that amount. Larger accounts were opened by John Brant, a draper's assistant (£26), William Churchman, victualler (£34), a farmer's wife, Mary Ridgers and a spinster of independent means, Martha Bosley. Some men and women had more substantial sums, among whom Clement Green, a master tailor (£81) and Hannah Copland, a lady of independent means, were typical. It is difficult to be certain of identifying savers from the census, but if the match is accurate, then some groups in society were both more affluent and more thrifty than contemporaries assumed. For example, a Joseph Searle had £15 invested. Several families of the same name were broom makers and Joseph was one of them. Other investors had the same names as agricultural labourers.

A number of accounts were opened for children, their parents designated as trustees. William Butler invested £20 each for his son John and his daughter Harriet; Sarah Benning from Wiltshire Farm had £2 5s. 3d. for her daughter Jane aged eight and £1 13s 9d. for her seven year old son,

George. Mr. John Heelas had invested similar small sums for each of his six children.

In addition many less affluent Wokingham people used other methods of saving which were being advocated by the government as a means of self help instead of relying on parish relief. Information from elsewhere in the county indicates that in return for a weekly sum, members of friendly societies could be guaranteed a weekly allowance in sickness, plus medical attendance, and a sum payable at the death of the member or his wife.[3] Several such insurance schemes existed in Wokingham and its district, with their money invested in the Savings Bank. The Wokingham Penny Society had £92 19s 9d., the Bush Friendly Society, which must have collected subscriptions from the patrons of the public house and others, had over £59. At Bradfield a man of 21 had to pay 14 pence a month to gain eight shillings sickness benefit, and a further 5½ d. to earn a pension of two shillings a week after age 65.[4] How many in Wokingham could afford or were willing to contribute a similar amount to such societies is unfortunately not known. But those who did so had the satisfaction of seeing their subscriptions attract interest at the rate of three per cent, in addition to which the government waived its right to levy stamp duty on any documents.

EDUCATION

Wokingham seems to have been unusually well provided with schools in the mid-19th century. Perhaps this may have been due to the higher incidence of people in trades and professions which perhaps provided a greater incentive for parents to wish to see their children educated. In any event, Snare's Directory published in 1842 says of Wokingham that 'excellent schools have been richly endowed to instruct the youthful mind in all that is necessary to render their industry available to their own and the general good'.

The largest was the National School, founded in 1825 by the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales (see Appendix 1). It was situated in Rose Street and the number attending regularly during the period 1845 to 1854 was recorded as between 90 and 100, boys and girls in almost equal numbers.

The School was supported by endowments from various local charities, by voluntary subscriptions from local residents and by the children's contribution of one penny a week. It was the usual practice of National Society schools at this time to use the monitorial system of teaching. This was a system, evolved earlier in the 19th century, in which teachers taught only a group of pupils known as monitors who then passed on their knowledge to other children in groups of about 10. It was a purely mechanical, but cheap and relatively successful method of teaching large numbers of children with the few teachers available.

In 1851, the schoolmaster was a young bachelor Irishman of only 28 named Thomas Stephen Brown, who first came to Wokingham in 1843. He was a self-taught but apparently good organist and he also became the Parish Clerk. The schoolmistress was a carpenter's wife from Wiltshire aged 30, Mary Ann Hill, who was assisted by Sarah White, a bricklayer's daughter of 25, born in Wokingham. All of them lived in Rose Street, close to the school.[1]

Also associated with the National School was the National Infant School. In 1854 there was an average of 12 scholars, who were educated until they were seven years old, when they were transferred to the National School. In 1851 the schoolmistress was a married woman of 40, Mary Ann

Hart, who was born in Wokingham. She was assisted by Maria Major, an unmarried girl of 26, who lived as a lodger in the schoolhouse; she too was a local girl.

The other large school in the town was the British School. As dissenters, the Baptists were not allowed entry to the National School, so in 1826 they opened their own small school which provided for the education of eight boys and eight girls carefully chosen from those who regularly attended the Baptist Sunday School. By 1836 the school had been opened to children of any denomination and with, it is said, great sacrifices on the part of members of the Church and with the help of the government and the British and Foreign School Society, the British School was opened in 1841 in premises opposite the Baptist Church. The cost, including purchase of land and the teachers' accommodation was £750. This school too was supported by voluntary subscriptions and the children's contribution of a penny a week. In 1854, the average number of pupils recorded was 60 boys and 50 girls, all being taught under the monitorial system. They learned English grammar, spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic and the girls took needlework; for an extra penny a week, they could also learn history and geography.[3]

In 1851, the British School was run by a young Hampshire bachelor of 29 named Daniel Rowe who came to the school early in 1847 and lived in a furnished cottage adjoining the school building. There was also a schoolmistress, a young Norfolk widow of 24, Louisa Hingle, who lived in a similar school cottage next door. The master's salary at that time was £50 a year with free accommodation, the mistress's £35. School terms were long, a week's holiday at Christmas and Easter and a month, usually August, in the summer. Sometimes if the harvest was early, the summer holiday was altered accordingly. General supervision of the school was vested in a men's committee formed from members of the Baptist Church while the girls' school had its own committee of 19 of the leading ladies of the Church under Mrs. Harcourt, the Minister's wife.[3]

In addition to these relatively large schools, there were at least seven private schools. In Rose Street at what is now number 63 and 63a was the Wokingham Academy for Young Gentlemen, described in an advertisement in the Berkshire Chronicle in 1845 as the 'Wokingham French and English Classical, Mathematical and Commercial School'. It took both day and

boarding pupils who were taught by William Collett Beechey aged 40 and his brother, Samuel aged 31. There was also a day school run by John Barlow, who was also a grocer.

The Market Place had a mixed boarding and day school on a site now occupied by Barclays Bank. Its proprietress was Miss Amelia Dehay, aged 28, the daughter of a surgeon of the same address. She was assisted by Elizabeth Chambers, 17, who lived in. They had two boy and two girl boarders aged between five and eight, three of whom were born in London.

There were two girls' day schools in Broad Street. The teacher at one was Charlotte Evans, a 34 year old blacksmith's daughter of Wokingham. The house, either 10 or 12 Broad Street, is now partly occupied by the Anglia Building Society. In charge of the other was Mrs. Fanny Newnham whose husband was a Relieving Officer. The school had existed since at least 1840. There was also a mixed boarding school run by the Misses Emma and Elizabeth Watts, aged 27 and 23 respectively. In the spring of 1851 there were two boys and three girl boarders.

The other boys' boarding and day school was in Shute End where eight boarders were in the charge of George Garratt, a 35 year old Bedfordshire man who had been schoolmaster at the British School a few years earlier. The school may have occupied what is now No. 25 The Terrace.[4]

A fascinating bill survives in the Baptist archives from 1855, showing the cost of the education of a young lady boarder at a private school in

School Bill for Miss Weeks, presented by Miss Louise Vedy 1855

Broad Street then being run by Miss Louisa Vidy. This shows charges of one guinea a quarter for general education, two guineas for instruction in Music and French and additional items for the provision of school materials, making a total of £3 12s 6d. or something approaching £15 a year - an interesting comparison with the wage of an agricultural labourer in the district. Clearly the 100 or so places in the private schools in Wokingham were not open to the children of the poorer classes.

However a total of 543 children attended Sunday School on the last Sunday in March 1851 - the parish church of All Saints had 284, the Baptists 165, the Methodists in Rose Street 34 and the Primitive Methodists in Down Street 60 - well over 60% of all the children in the parish between the ages of 5 and 14![5]

The Enumerators' Books covering the whole town and parish of Wokingham show that almost one third of the population was under the age of 15.

AGE GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	PROPORTION (%)
0 - 4	262	237	499	38
5 - 9	212	229	441	34
10 - 14	188	183	371	28
TOTAL	662	649	1311	100

It is remarkable how even was the distribution of the sexes (50.5% male, 49.5% female), and how younger children predominated, no less than 38% being under 5 and almost three quarters under 10.

In some cases the child's occupation, or the description 'scholar' is given -

AGE GROUP	SCHOLARS		AT WORK		NO DESCRIPTION		PROPORTION
	M	F	M	F	M	F	OF SCHOLARS(%)
0 - 4	17	12	-	-	245	225	6
5 - 9	113	122	5	-	94	107	53
10 - 14	81	82	69	13	38	88	44
TOTAL	211	216	74	13	377	420	32.5
	427		87		797		

These figures clearly show that if the 0 - 4 age group is excluded (with its 29 'scholars') over half the children in Wokingham under 15 - actually 53% - were receiving some kind of elementary education in 1851, a remarkably high figure in an age long before the introduction of compulsory

education. Equally interesting, and perhaps surprising, is the very low figure of children shown to be at work, only 35 in the town and 52 in the surrounding agricultural areas of the parish, representing only 11% of children between 5 and 14 years old. This may have been due as much to lack of opportunity, as to parents' objections to allowing their children working. The census may have failed to record seasonal labour, especially at harvest time.

Nevertheless it would be interesting to know the reasons why 40% of the children in the age range between 5 and 14 were neither at work nor at school. Some of the older girls may well have been helping to run households and some parents may have found school too expensive, even at a penny a week. There is some evidence to suggest that for families in the poor parts of the town this may have been the case. It seems much more likely to have been so in the southern part of the parish where, among the broom makers for instance, there was only one scholar listed among nearly 40 children. Allowance must be made for inaccuracies and omissions among the Enumerators' Returns but even so the general trends are sufficiently clear.

Wokingham appears to have had places available for around 500 pupils in 10 schools, all situated in the town itself. With 427 scholars, including a smattering of boarders from outside the district, there was still room for the school population to expand. Girls slightly outnumbered the boys showing that in Wokingham at least there was no sex discrimination in education, though the comparison may be influenced by the fact that boys tended to start working at a younger age than girls. Of the 427 scholars 189 (44%) lived in the parish outside the town, a large number since many of them had to walk several miles a day in all weathers over muddy or dusty roads. Altogether, over half the children in the parish aged 5-14 were listed as scholars.

Little is know about the quality of education given in the town's schools but the general standard of literacy among the population seems to have been quite high. An analysis of the Parish Registers for the period 1838 to 1857 has shown that just over 60% of those marrying in Wokingham were able to sign their names and that slightly more women than men could do so, though the difference was marginal. Most schools including the British and the National had quite long histories, appearing in local directories for 20 years or more. The town also profited from the expertise

of Henry Morgan, a music master from Hampshire, and Robert Mowat a pianoforte teacher from Scotland. In addition Mrs. Alfred Parr of Reading attended Wokingham weekly to teach singing and music.[6]

Thomas Readwin, almost certainly a former schoolmaster at Wokingham Academy, wrote a book in which he put forward very advanced views for the time, with his emphasis on education as a preparation for later life and the need for children to be taught to think for themselves.[7]

What is perhaps surprising is the relative youthfulness of the town's schoolteachers. Of the 17 teachers listed in the 1851 Census, only one was over 40 years old, more than half were under 30 and the average age was 31. Equally surprising, at a time when it used to be thought that people never moved far from where they were born, is the fact that nearly all the teachers had come from all over the British Isles, from Ireland to the Isle of Wight. Only six of them were actually born and bred in Wokingham.

Overall the facilities for elementary education in Wokingham in the mid-19th century were quite good and probably above the general standard for the country as a whole. There is no evidence that education beyond the age of 14 was available in the town except that, somewhere in Broad Street, a 40 year old civil engineer, George Burr from Deptford, ran an establishment where seven student boarders aged 17 to 20 from all over the country (and one born in India) were described in the 1851 Census as 'Candidates for the Army'. It seems highly likely that these young men were in the process of acquiring the necessary qualificiations for entrance to the Sandhurst Military Academy, which had been established earlier in the century. Whether this is so or not, this institution must surely qualify as one of the first attempts to provide college-type education in Wokingham.

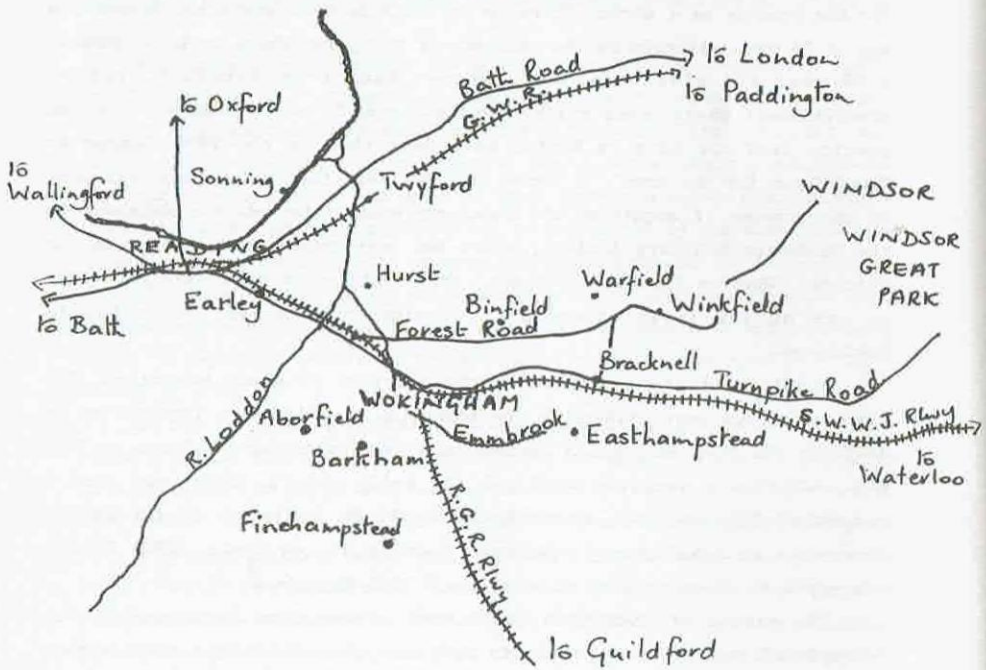
Finally, of course, there is the question of adult education. The first stirrings were evident in the formation of a Literary Institution in 1849. At the Town Hall was a reading room available from 10.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m., which was supplied with all the daily papers. There was also a parochial library from which books could be borrowed at fornightly intervals at a halfpenny a volume. Details of new books added to the library were given in each issue of the Parish Magazine.[5]

The people of Wokingham could count themselves fortunate in the educational facilities they had, in what was after all only a small market town.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

During the whole of its existence as a small market town, Wokingham was never on any of the country's main trade routes. Even in Victorian times, its communications system though having no more than local significance, was clearly quite adequate for the needs of the townspeople.

In the 1850s only one road of any importance passed through Wokingham - to London in one direction and to Reading in the other - whilst its railway, opened in 1849, provided connections to the Great Western at Reading for the west and north, and to the South Eastern and London and South Western for the east and south, facilities which were not of great use to the town's inhabitants nor to its economic development until several decades later. Neither was Wokingham on or near to any of the numerous canals constructed during the eighteenth century, though it very nearly had its own canal as a by-product of a much larger scheme.[1] However, like many other schemes of its kind, the plans never materialised.



The Wokingham Area in the mid-nineteenth century.

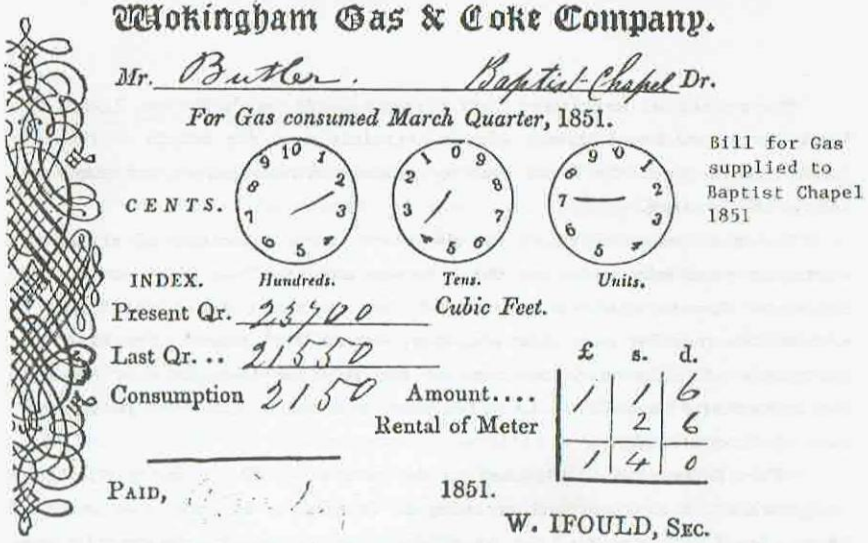
The principal east/west road through Wokingham's Market Place, via Peach Street and Broad Street, almost certainly owed its origin to the need for a link between the Royal hunting lodge at Easthampstead and the great Abbey in Reading.

The road was important to the town since a number of prominent Wokingham residents including the Alderman and the Town Clerk were among the first Trustees of the Windsor Forest Turnpike Trust which was to control the road for more than a century from 1759;[2] indeed, the first and apparently all subsequent meetings of the Trustees took place at the Rose Inn in Market Place. Turnpike gates were erected on the road just to the east of Loddon Bridge.

When Cobbett used this road in the autumn of 1822, leaving Wokingham on horseback at daylight and arriving at Kensington by noon, he described it as level and smooth.[3] It must still have been in reasonably good condition when Queen Victoria passed through Wokingham in January 1845 on her way to Stratfield Saye. Her coach with its cavalry escort reached the Market Place in one and a quarter hours from Windsor Castle, having changed horses in Bracknell[4] - an average speed of 12 mph in mid-winter when the road would have been at its worst.

There does seem to have been one other turnpike road running through the northern tip of the parish of Wokingham, although no trace of a turnpike has so far been discovered. This road was built in 1770 by a group of subscribers headed by the Countess of Leicester and the Countess of Gower and ran from London through Staines, Egham, Winkfield, Warfield and Binfield, joining the Windsor Forest Turnpike at Loddon Bridge. It is shown as a turnpike on a map of 1804 in Reading Reference Library, following the line of what is now Forest Road and is commemorated by an oval stone plaque containing the names of the subscribers, the surveyor and the date of construction, now sited in the cul-de-sac leading to the Brill Hill estate. At its western (Loddon Bridge) end it could only be entered through the Windsor Forest Turnpike gate. Cobbett used this road too in November 1822 and described it as 'a road as smooth as a die'[3] but by the middle of the century it seems to have fallen into disuse at its western end.

It seems fairly certain that all the main roads in the town in the 1850s were of gravel construction. Apparently this was true until the end of the century[5] and this was almost certainly due to the plentiful supply



Wokingham Gas & Coke Company.

Mr. Butler. Baptist Chapel Dr.

For Gas consumed March Quarter, 1851.

CENTS. INDEX. *Hundreds.* *Tens.* *Units.*

Present Qr. 23700 *Cubic Feet.*

Last Qr. .. 21550

Consumption 2150

	£	s.	d.
Amount....	1	1	6
Rental of Meter		2	6
	1	4	0

PAID, [illegible] 1851.

W. IFOULD, SEC.

Bill for Gas supplied to Baptist Chapel 1851

of gravel in the district. Gas lighting was installed by about 1848 following the opening of the Wokingham Gas Works in 1847.

The general pattern of local roads around Wokingham in the 1850s was, with few exceptions, very similar to those we have now. Their routes were laid down over the centuries by pedestrians, horse riders and carts travelling between nearby towns and villages and by sheep and cattle being taken substantial distances along drove roads to market or new pastures. Many of the road boundaries were tidied up by the Inclosure Acts of the early nineteenth century so that roads which formerly wandered across commons and open spaces in an undefined way were more precisely delineated and indeed several new roads were built in the parish during this period. Their condition varied tremendously; William Lane said 'I cannot call them very bad roads but they were not good'.[8]

During the height of the coaching era between 1810 and 1840, several coach services had served Wokingham as a stop between Reading and London and in 1844 when all the coach services on the Bath Road had been eliminated by competition from the GWR, coaches were still running on the alternative, longer route via Wokingham.

Thus, in 1847, Williams' 'Windsor Park' coach from King Street, Reading still called at the Rose Inn daily except Sundays in both directions on its way to London and back, taking five hours for the journey. But by 1850, even this service seems to have succumbed and

Wokingham had to provide its own connections with London - the 'Civility Omnibus' which ran daily except Sundays at 8.00 a.m., connecting at Bracknell with another coach to and from Windsor. In 1853 John Keck's omnibus is also shown as operating three times a week to London from the Ship Inn, increasing to six times in 1854, though whether this coach took over the service from the 'Civility' is not clear.[9]

Another interesting, but apparently short-lived service, operated in 1847. This was the 'Surprise' coach, which left the Bush Inn every morning except Sunday to connect with a GWR train to London at Slough station, the 18 mile journey to Slough and the connection to London taking two and a quarter hours. The return journey in the evening provided a similar through service from Paddington to Wokingham of two and three quarter hours.[9]

So far as goods traffic is concerned, connections with London were maintained in 1847 by William Wicken's waggon from the Ship Inn and by Crocker's waggon from the Red Lion twice weekly.[9] Both carriers took all day for the journey, staying overnight in London and returning the following day. Wicken's service lasted until at least 1850. The 1851 Census shows him as a carrier and victualler at the Ship Inn.

A local service daily to Reading, serving also Binfield and Barkham, seems to have been maintained by the Goodwin family's van from their house in Peach Street[10] to the Saracen's Head, Reading from at least 1841[11] until at least 1854. There was a more extensive carrier network in the early 1840s, but later directories do not confirm its continued existence.[11] Most services seem to have originated in the outlying villages and returned from Reading during the afternoon, passing through Wokingham in each direction.

Besides these goods carriers, there was also an extensive network of mail carts. Wokingham had an apparently very good postal service in the mid-nineteenth century, which varied very little during the period 1842 to 1854. The Post Office was on the corner of Market Place and Broad Street, now a sports shop, and for 14 years the Postmaster was a chemist, Thomas Spencer. The office was open from 7.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. every weekday and on Sunday mornings from 10.30 a.m. to 1.15 p.m. Letters from London, Bracknell, Bagshot and the south arrived every morning at 6.00 a.m., delivery commencing at 7.30 a.m. in summer, 8.00 a.m. in winter; mail from Reading and the north and west country arrived by footpost from Reading for

delivery at 7.00 p.m. Clearly, some Post Office employee walked to Reading and back every day between 1816 when the footpost started until 1857, after which time all mail was sent by rail via Reading.[12]

We have some indication of the scale of road traffic from and through Wokingham from William Lane. He submitted a detailed traffic estimate of passengers and goods likely to be carried by the railway, based on a census of road traffic carried out by men stationed at the main exit roads from Wokingham during two weeks in the winter of 1849[9]. His estimates of goods traffic for one year as total tonnage (excluding coal) in both directions were as follows:

	Agric. Prod.	Carriers Carts	Grain & Flour	Sundries	Total
Wokingham/Reading & vv.	9	25½	60	94½	189
Wokingham/Sandhurst & vv.	8¼	4½	21	59¼	93
Wokingham/Twyford & vv..	1½	-	-	9¾	11¼

Thus, on every working day, something like one ton of merchandise was being handled in central Wokingham to and from these three destinations. Lane's figures do not include the substantial London traffic via the Windsor Forest Turnpike, nor trade with Bagshot[13] because the projected railway did not go in those directions. He does, however, give the average load of the 'Windsor Park' coach as nine passengers each way through Wokingham between Reading and London, a total of 108 passengers a week. Other passenger traffic by private carriages, gigs, spring carts and on horses amounted to an estimated annual total of 1298 between Wokingham and Reading, 662 to and from Sandhurst and 279 to and from Twyford, again excluding London and Bagshot. Clearly, people and goods were on the move through Wokingham at this time.

The occupation of the inhabitants of the parish also reflect the emphasis being placed on transport in the mid-nineteenth century. At a time when nationally there was one horse to every six people, the 1851 Census in Wokingham records 14 people employed as blacksmiths, 12 grooms, seven wheelwrights, four ostlers, three harness makers and a saddler. In addition, there were six carters and carters' lads, four coachmen (one a pauper), three carriers, two coachbuilders, four mailmen or postboys, one porter and only one road labourer.

But, significantly, the railway already employed nine Wokingham people. All over the country, turnpike trusts were finding it more and more difficult to survive in the face of competition from the rapidly growing railway network. Many decayed and collapsed and others were suppressed as their Acts ran out.[14] Advertisments in the Berkshire Chronicle show profits declining from £734 in 1844 to £414 in 1850, making it increasingly difficult to find investors to lease the tolls. Direct competition from the railway began in 1856 and in the 1860s the Trust was dissolved. By then Wokingham was linked to the national railway network, though like so many others built during the railway mania, the line through the area was never economically viable.

In 1845-6 at least nine companies invited investment in routes which would pass through the town and connect it via existing lines to such major cities as Birmingham and London.[15] The proposal which eventually came to fruition was that of the Reading, Guildford and Reigate Company which was incorporated by Act of Parliament in July 1846. One of the local supporters of the project was Mr. John Houghton, farmer, of Hannican's Lodge who gave as his opinion, too optimistic as it proved, 'that with regard to its public advantage and its benefit to the country at large, no railway is more required in any other part of the kingdom'. The Company was authorised to build a line 'from the GWR at or near the Reading Station ... to join the London, Brighton and SE Railway in the parish of Reigate' by a specified route through Wokingham.[16] On 15th October 1849 the double line, nearly 46 miles long was complete to its junction at Reigate. The Southern Railway Company, which stood most to gain from any new traffic, should it materialise, agreed to lease the line at an annual rent of £41,000, which represented a return of 5⅛ % of the capital cost of its construction.[17] This as it turned out, was the finest bargain the Reading - Reigate Company could have struck as they were almost certainly the only people to make money out of the venture. Though linked with a southern railway system at Reigate, the line through Wokingham was excluded from a more lucrative connection with the rest of the country. The terminus was at Reading, adjacent to, but separate from, the GWR station. No junction could be made without the the consent of the GWR Company which understandably was reluctant to give it.

Even the take over of the smaller company by the Southern Railway in

1852 did nothing to improve the profitability of the line. An attempt to increase passenger traffic was made in 1852 by introducing a through express service to London via Wokingham and Reigate, a journey of 66 miles at a fare of 6/- first and 4/6 second class. Travellers had a bargain but the company lost about 4/- on each Reading-London passenger. Overlong working hours were demanded of employees which contributed towards inefficiency. Serious accidents resulted, in one of which in September 1855, a driver and four passengers were killed near Wokingham.[18]

Despite the problems encountered by the Southern Railway, a rival company opened yet another line to London. This was the Staines, Wokingham and Woking Junction Railway which opened to Wokingham in 1856. Two years later the Great Western Railway was at last linked to the lines passing through Wokingham by a junction at Reading.[19] It was now possible for heavy goods and foodstuffs to be brought in cheaply from the Midlands and London, while fresh produce especially meat, milk and vegetables could be sent out to the larger towns. In addition, the electric telegraph, which accompanied the construction of the local railway, revolutionised the transmission of news and information to and from the town from the early 1850's.[20]

However, despite these developments, one must conclude on balance that the railway from Reading through Wokingham to Reigate should never have been built: it never fulfilled its promise; it was put to an entirely different purpose from that originally planned and it is doubtful whether it was ever profitable in the mid-nineteenth century. Even the line through Wokingham to Waterloo, which had more commercial justification, was built at such heavy expense because of landowners' intransigeance that it too was unlikely to show a profit. There is no doubt that Wokingham was extremely fortunate to have a railway at all, given these economic facts. Later in the century the line was of some benefit to the town, contributing to its steady growth, and it became more important during the First World War because of the army camps at Aldershot. The Victorian optimism which prompted the building of so many railways of dubious commercial value is epitomised in the description of the original station at Wokingham by the South-Eastern Railway Guide of 1858; 'a large and principal one suitable to the wants of a large market town, near which the railway passes'. If the station was indeed a large one, then it was proof more of the expectations of its builders than of their business acumen.

INNS, ALEHOUSES AND THE DRINK TRADE

Victorian towns, large and small, were well provided with establishments supplying a much needed anaesthetic against the frequently intolerable conditions of the age. Wokingham was no exception, though it is difficult to be sure exactly how many such places there were. In the borough alone, the area controlled by Wokingham Quarter Sessions, there were at least 21 licensed premises in 1851 and 32 by 1854.[1]

There were three very different kinds of establishments, providing for a wide range of clients. Most prestigious were the inns, with coaching facilities and residential accommodation. Situated in the heart of the town in the Market Place they also had an important role as the venue for meetings, auctions and the like. The Roebuck was apparently the principal residential inn with five living-in staff including a cook, ostler, boots and coachman. Though the Rose had a similar number, they were merely two general servants, an errand boy and a postboy. The King's Head, despite its extensive premises, was not prospering, and by 1856 when it was sold was described as 'vacant and untenanted'.[2] Though all these inns had been licensed since at least 1777, the new conditions of the railway age may have taken away enough of the coaching trade to make at least one of them no longer viable. Certainly the newest arrival, the Railway Tavern, with a staff of barmaid, housemaid and butler, was already providing residential accommodation.

The ale houses, patronised by the less affluent, were far more numerous and scattered about the town (except Broad Street) and parish. Eight of them, and all the inns, were owned by James Hayward, junior, who at 24 inherited them and the Wokingham Brewery. The profits enabled him and his two unmarried sisters to live in some style. Even selling Hayward's beer did not provide some publicans with a decent living. Several are recorded in the census as having a second occupation including William Wickens of the Ship (carrier), James Prior of the Robin Hood (bricklayer) and James Hope of the Pin and Bowl (shoemaker).

In addition the Beer Act of 1830 had enabled tradesmen to apply for a licence to sell beer from their own houses on payment of two guineas. They catered for the poorer craftsmen and labourers since their prices reflected the very basic service they provided. Most of these premises, situated at

the east end of the town, later became named alehouses, such as William Draycott's Royal Exchange in Down Street. But he still needed to continue his trade as a gunsmith. Very few employed servants relying on their families to act as barmaids and other servants. Four took lodgers, the largest number being at the Crown in Peach Street where there were six.

Wokingham had at least one substantial brewery in 1851, that of James Hayward. Directories also list Baker's Brewery in Broad Street which continued until its purchase by Brakespears in 1913. Other very small scale brewers are listed in the census, but must have only produced sufficient to sell in their own beerhouses.

The majority of licensees were male, only three women being so described in the census. Nearly two-thirds of licensees were newcomers to the town. As might be expected, few were young men, since experience and capital, to say nothing of a wife's essential help, would be needed to run such a business. Most were aged between 30 and 50, and only two were over 60.

In contrast to the prolific purveyors of beer, there were only two specialist wine merchants in the town in 1851, a reflection of current drinking preferences, no doubt. Robert Trickey Dunning and Edward Samuel Towse both traded in the Market Place, both were Wokingham born, taking over from their fathers a long established trade. The respectable status of such substantial men in the drink trade is confirmed by the fact that Edward S. Towse and James Hayward both became burgesses, the latter also serving as Alderman.

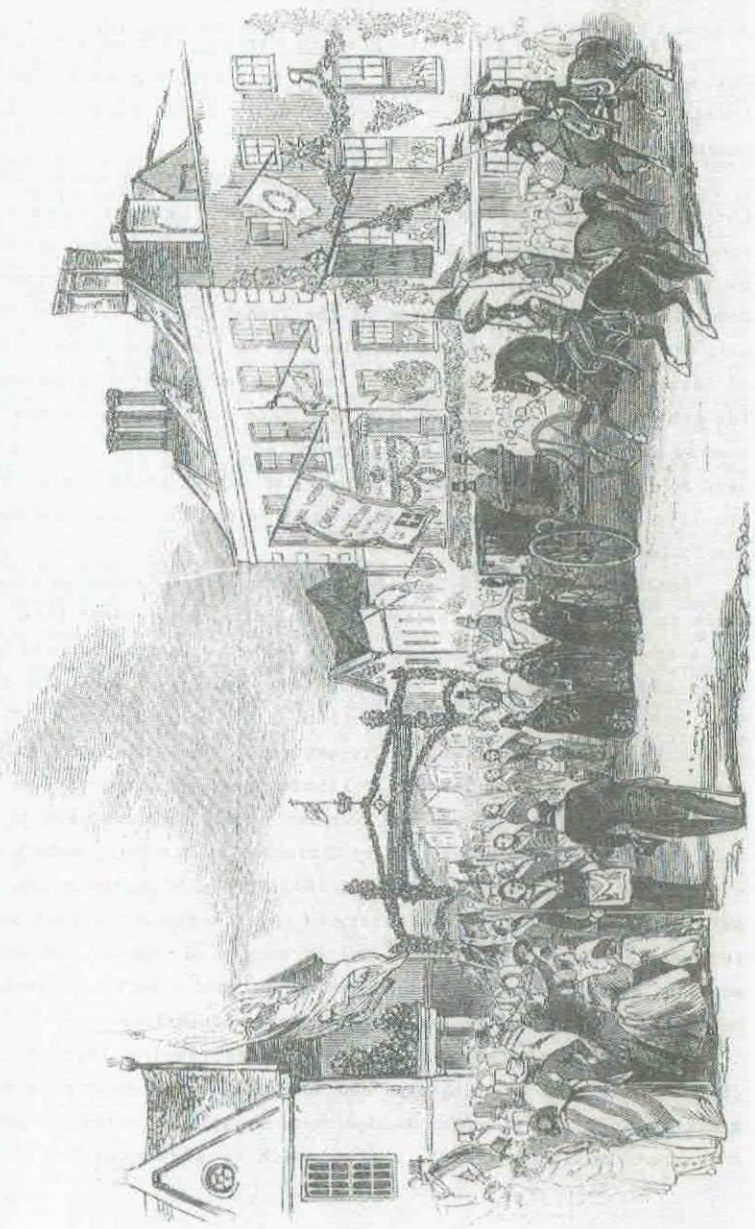
LEISURE

On February 1st 1851, the Reading Mercury carried a report on the Wokingham Town Ball held in the public hall for 80 guests, families of leading tradesmen and their friends. Dancing to the Quadrille Band from Reading continued until the early hours.

Such an event would have been the highlight of the social calendar of the elite of Wokingham, but for the rest, leisure time was less spectacularly occupied. For some, pleasure may have evolved gradually out of business. Many meetings: the AGM of the Wokingham Association for the Detection of Felons; the auction of the Windsor Forest Turnpike Tolls; the sale of furniture by auction took place at various inns in the town.[1] Some at least of the participants must have stayed on for a drink and a chat. For others a visit to the pub may have been made merely to pay in their weekly subscription to the Friendly Society.[2] Whatever the reason, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that inns and public houses were central to the life of the town as providing some of the very few meeting places available.

Another was the old Town Hall in the Market Place. In traditional style it formed the upper storey of a building, the ground floor of which was a covered market. Meetings of the Poor Law Guardians were held here until 1850, as were those of the Vestry, and from 1849 the Literary, Scientific and Mechanics' Institution. On November 19th a Mr. G. Sampson gave a lecture on 'The Chemical Properties of the Atmosphere' to 'a larger audience than the week before'. Following the suggestion that a literary institute should be set up, the foundation meeting was held at the Town Hall on December 17th, 1846, and by Christmas it was fully established with a President and a constitution. In 1851 it had 40 members who paid ten shillings a year to use the library of 650 volumes and attend occasional lectures on general subjects.[3] The formation of the Gas Company, which supplied gaslight to the streets and leading public buildings including the Baptist Chapel, made such events more easily accessible.

In 1858 the Corporation opened a subscription list which raised 1,500 towards the building of a new Town Hall which could accommodate the municipal offices and police headquarters as well as rooms for public use. A news and reading room was set up which supplemented the Circulating



Presentation of the address to her Majesty at Wokingham

Library run by Mr. Gotelee. Not far away in a former wine and spirit merchant's shop the Working Men's Club met to hear lectures on scientific and political subjects. For a weekly subscription of 2d members could visit the club every weekday from 12 noon to 2.00 p.m. and 6.00 to 10.30 p.m.[4]

However, in a predominantly rural area the rhythm of the seasons still determined much of the pattern of relief from the daily round of work. The Wokingham Agricultural Association held an annual ploughing match in October, but the high point of the autumn was, at least by 1865, the Harvest Thanksgiving Festival. The old parish of All Saint's and the new one of St. Paul's joined in a morning service attended by four hundred farm labourers 'all wearing the harvest badge - wheat ears tied with mauve and white ribbons', and their employers. Afterwards they ate 500 lbs of meat, and 300 lbs of pudding at a meal when the masters and clergy waited on the labourers and their families to the accompaniment of a band 'playing lively airs outside the tent'. Sports followed, including donkey races, sack races and climbing greasy poles with the prize of a leg of mutton at the top. The evening service concluded a 'red letter day for Wokingham' which the organisers hoped would become an annual event. One recognises the familiar pattern of turning the normal social order upside down for one day in the year at least.[4]

Wokingham, along with several villages in East Berkshire, shared in the excitement caused by the journey of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to visit the Duke of Wellington at Stratfield Saye in January 1845. The houses were decorated with flags; several arches of evergreens or artifical flowers were erected across the streets and the benefit societies paraded through the town with their banners. When the royal coach reached the Market Place, crowded with several hundred school children and many more older inhabitants, the Queen was presented with a loyal address. Even after the procession departed, 'the town continued in a state of great though pleasurable excitement' for a long time.[5]

Such events rarely disturbed the town's equanimity. Arguably the next occasion to equal the royal visit was in July 1849 when many Wokingham citizens hurried to the newly built railway station to greet the arrival of the first train on the new Reading to Guildford line despite the early hour of eight o'clock.[6]

For the rest, the more respectable tradesmen could patronise Mr.

Gotelee who supplied 'violin and violincello strings, music instruction books, music, periodicals and new works on the day of publication'. For the less intellectual souls he supplied 'playing cards with plain and coloured backs'. Home entertainment is also evidenced by the household effects of a gentleman sold in 1846 which included a draughtboard, a microscope, and a grand piano.[7] Such possessions were one more way in which the social divide in the town showed itself. Though all could share the excitement of a royal visit or a new railway, the majority of farm labourers and urban craftsmen would have had little opportunity for musical evenings or scientific investigation.

WOKINGHAM AND ITS ROLE IN ITS REGION

Wokingham had always been one of the smaller urban centres of Berkshire, overshadowed by the larger towns of Reading and Windsor, which were better situated for growth. However towns were not easily or cheaply accessible in the mid-nineteenth century, so even a small local urban centre could serve a useful function as the focus of an agricultural area around it. This is well summarised in Slater's Directory of 1850, 'Its other trade (than shoemaking) is of a local and general character assisted by the neighbouring agricultural population and a vicinage of wealthy inhabitants'.

Commercially it was no longer an important market centre, if indeed it ever had been. The Tuesday market was 'sparsely attended', proved as much by the fact that no carters ran services specifically on that day, as that the Savings Bank was only open on Mondays. If the market had been well attended one could have expected these local enterprises to have taken advantage of the extra trade potential.

It was the permanent shopping facilities which were most useful to the population of the surrounding villages. The wide range of goods and services, and the not inconsiderable choice of suppliers must have attracted customers looking for more than the limited stock available nearer home. Doubtless the wealthy patronised the leading establishments of Reading and even London, but the majority of farmers and small tradesmen would have seen in Wokingham's shops some, at least, of the latest ready made merchandise, could have bought books or had a watch repaired, could have patronised tailors, dressmakers, upholsterers and others who made goods to order.

Just as important was its function as an accessible source of professional services. Solicitors, doctors, surveyors, auctioneers could all be found in Wokingham, and were probably more important than their small numbers might indicate. The local inns were the venues for the auctions of local property and the meetings of the Turnpike Trust. It was an acknowledgement of its local significance that Wokingham was chosen as the site of the new Union Workhouse, and that it had been since 1834 the centre of the Poor Law Union. On the rare occasions when county elections were held, Wokingham was the polling centre.

Increasingly in the nineteenth century the town became a social and

cultural centre, with its many schools, its literary society and eventually its Working Men's Clubs. Methodists and Baptists from outside its boundaries worshipped in its chapels, while the Baptist Minister supplied the outlying chapels at Winnersh and Finchampstead.

The only direct evidence of the extent of its influence is the record of the Savings Bank deposits. The Cholera Fund and Friendly Society of Binfield both kept their funds in the Wokingham Bank, as did similar institutions from Barkham, Easthampstead, Warfield and Yateley. Private depositors included the rector of Binfield and his wife, a blacksmith from Winnersh and a farmer from Barkham. At least half of the names of those investing money between May and November 1851 do not appear on the Wokingham census, and many must have come from the surrounding area.

The same hinterland must once have provided the raw materials for the town's small industries, notably the leather trades and brewing. Whether it still did so in 1851 is not certain. Wokingham however, did not develop any new large scale interprises to enhance its growth, and tanning, shoemaking, brewing and wool dealing continued as significant trades locally but not important even on a county scale. Perhaps the timber trade was of a different order. Even though the town lay on a route to the South Coast and eventually on a route to London, there is no indication that this produced any dramatic change in its progress.

Yet progress, albeit modestly, the town certainly did, growing slowly in population and becoming 'the centre of a very improving locality'.[1] Like many other small country towns, Wokingham 'survived into the twentieth century'.[2]

APPENDIX 1

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL IN WOKINGHAM

In the early 1820s, Robert May, a bricklayer and plasterer living in Rose Street, owed William Binfield, a shopkeeper, the fairly large sum of £55 19s 6d;[1] But May must have been reasonably wealthy because he owned several houses in the town, one of which was a tenement on the South side of Rose Street, let at the time to one Jeremiah Gregory. It stood in the vicinity of number 9 or 11 Rose Street, the precise position being plot number 174 on the Tithe Map of Wokingham, now part of the Waitrose Supermarket car park.[2]

Possibly to raise money to pay the debt he sold the property for £135 to a group of prominent citizens consisting of the Rev. Thomas Morres, the Rev. Joseph Bockett (of Southcote near Reading), James Hayward and James Wheeler the Younger (a Wokingham surgeon), and paid off his debt to William Binfield from the proceeds.[3]

This group of gentlemen must have been looking for a suitable site to establish a National School for no sooner had the purchase been completed than work started. The finished building was said to have room for 250 children, at a cost of £1,000. The fact that sum of £1000 could be raised by voluntary contributions in Wokingham for this purpose seems to indicate an enlightened attitude among the local citizens towards education at the time.[3]

Nothing seems to be known of the progress of the school until 1842 when the Maiden School, which had been founded to educate 12 poor girls (eight from the parish and four from the town) as a result of Martha Palmer's Charity on her death in 1713, was merged with the National School. Since 1795, the Maiden School had been located at what was then number 33 Rose Street (plot number 180 on the Tithe Map) and the girls had been educated until they were 12 years old to read English and to sew, knit and spin. In 1842 this schoolhouse was converted back for use as a dwelling for the school mistress and her assistant and the girl scholars moved to the National School premises lower down the road.[5]

At about the same time, the Charles Palmer School, which had been founded by the will of this Arborfield doctor who died in 1711, was also merged with the National School. His school for 20 boys, built at or near

the back of number 54 Down Street on a piece of land owned by Richard Whitlocke's Charity (Plot number 108 on the Tithe Map, in what is now Langborough Road), was demolished and the materials used to build a small hall for a new National Infants School in the garden behind the old Maiden School. The 20 boys (12 from the town and eight from the parish) had been selected by the Alderman, Recorder, two Capital Burgesses and the Minister of the Parish Church to be educated in 'reading, writing and arithmetic to qualify them for apprentices to good ordinary mechanical trades'. When the school was merged, the Charity was transferred on condition that places were kept there for 20 boys on the same terms.[5]

By 1843, all the various charity trusts which provided for the education of the poor in Wokingham had agreed to transfer their funds to the National School so that from that time on until 1874, free instruction was provided for a number of children through yearly payments from the ancient charities established by Charles Palmer, Martha Palmer, Tickenor, Martin, How, Parker, Wilmot, and Cotterell over the centuries. Voluntary contributions continued and the rest of the scholars contributed their one penny a week.

The report and accounts of the school for the calendar year 1845 have survived.[6] They show that receipts totalled £108 5s 5 d. of which voluntary subscriptions amounted to £36 17s 6d. and the children's pence to £14 15s 10d. Sixty four subscribers, including the names of most of the prominent residents of the town at the time, donated sums varying between 2/6d. and two guineas. Principal expenses included the annual salary of the schoolmaster, Thomas Brown (£55), and of the schoolmistress. Anne Barlow (£20). Anassistant to the schoolmistress, Mary Grout, received £8 and the balance in hand at the end of the year was £10 0s. 7½d.

In 1846 the Trustees of Wilmot's Charity provided 100 for the erection fo two extra classrooms so that certain children could receive additional instruction on payment of an extra weekly sum. A new schoolmistress, Mary Ann Hill, said to have been trained at the Training Diocesan School was appointed. The school continued to occupy the same accommodation until it became too small for the growth of the town and on the opening of the new Palmer Schools by the Bishop of Oxford on 30 September 1875, it was finally sold for £275, the proceeds being put towards the cost of the new buildings.[5]

APPENDIX 2

CENSUS ENUMERATORS OF WOKINGHAM AND DISTRICT

Census District	Name	Occupation and other details
7a Wokingham Parish	John Hulme Esq.	Independent. Churchwarden
7b " "	Henry Ifould	Butcher. Collector of Taxes
7c " "	Thomas Sadler	Collector of Rates and Taxes
7d " "	Samuel J. Beechey	Schoolmaster
8a Market Place/Down St.	William Collett	Schoolmaster and Relieving Officer
8b Rose St/Peach St.	James Lane	Butcher
8c Broad St/Shute End/ Nonsuch Pl/Barkham Rd.	Clement Green	Tailor
8d Wokingham Parish and Wilts. area of town	James Chambers	Baker, Sexton, Town Sergeant

APPENDIX 3

CHRISTIAN NAMES (as shown in the census returns)

In every era certain names are popular and 1851 was no exception. For males, by far the most common name was **William**, then **John** and **James**, followed some way behind by **Thomas, George** and **Henry**. The pattern was the same throughout the town. **William** was the most popular name in Broad Street and Down Street alike. Many more biblical names occurred than do nowadays, **Abraham, Samuel, Jesse** and **Ezekiel** to name but a few. However most parents gave their sons the more common names.

Among the females, **Mary** was the clear favourite, followed by **Anne, Elizabeth** and **Sarah**, then **Jane** and **Eliza**. Fewer women had biblical names although **Hannah** and **Rebecca, Esther** and others did occur. As always some parents liked to give their offspring unusual names and in the Rose Street - Peach Street area were a **Bezia** and a **Versima**.

One surprising fact emerged from the census: that although Victoria had been queen since 1837, there was not one girl in Wokingham named Victoria, and not one boy named Albert.

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Berkshire Chronicle in RRL - abbreviation BC; Reading Mercury in RRL - abbreviation RM.

Town and Parish in 1851

1. Wokingham, a chronology compiled by the Wokingham Society (1977).
2. Snare.

Population

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3. BC September 8th 1849
4. Select Ctee of House of Commons 30 April 1846 - H of C Vol. 25, Evidence 1846, Croup 16.
5. Edward Wilkins Man His Own Benefactor (1854).
6. Petition from Residents of Windlesham to Commissioners of Woods and Forests 1837 (Surrey Record Office Acc 587/4). Kelly's Directory of 1847, Billing's Directory 1854.
7. Unpublished Notes by A.T. Heelas in Local History Collection, Wokingham Library.
8. BC February 8th 1851.
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10. G. Mingay, 'Rural England in the Industrial Age' in G. Mingay Ed. The Victorian Countryside Vol. 1
11. BC October 6th 1849.

Occupations in the Town and Parish

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2. George Spratley business records BRO D/ECb/B102/1.
3. BC Jan. 24th 1846.
4. Mrs. Beaton Everyday Cookery and Housekeeping Book 1st ed. p.544.

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2. Rev. A. Carr Notes of the early history of St. Sebastians (1902).
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4. Wokingham Parish Magazine Sept. 1871.

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3. G. Spratley business records.
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5. Wokingham Tithe Award BRO D/P154/27A.
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East End, West End

1. Wokingham Church Rate BRO D/ECb/09.

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1. Parish Registers, All Saints' Wokingham 1812 - BRO D/P/154/1
2. Wokingham Vestry Minute Book BRO D/P154/8/4.
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3. L.G. Smalley 200 Years of Christian Witness 1774-1974 and Baptist Records in the Baptist Church.
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