

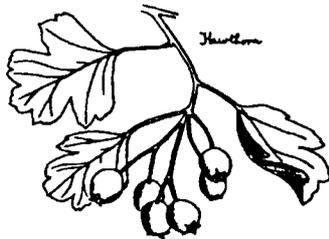


The Finchampstead Society

Price
£1

HEDGEROWS are an essential and characteristic feature of the English landscape. They are among the oldest surviving monuments to our past, many following boundaries and field patterns that were established centuries ago. The abundance of native plant species that are found in ancient hedgerows are remnants of species once common throughout the countryside and serve as a haven for animals and plants unable to exist in modern monoculture fields.

When the History and Heritage Group of the Finchampstead Society was founded in the late 1970's, it was apparent that this living record of our local history was fast being lost. Many hedges had already been destroyed for the enlargement of fields, road widening and building. It was therefore decided to make one of our first projects a survey of the hedges of Finchampstead. The aim was not only to record the existence of hedgerows



and the tree species in them, but also to see if some measure of their age could be obtained.

In this we were encouraged by a report published by M.D. Hooper of the Nature Conservancy in 1971, in which his results suggested a link between the number of woody species in a hedge and its age. It was shown statistically from a survey of more than 200 hedges of known age that on average one extra species was added each century. Although the limit of accuracy was put at around 200 years due to wide variation, this method could be used as a guide to the relative ages of different hedges. Armed with this information and much enthusiasm, 24 members of the Finchampstead Society met outside St. James's Church on July 17th, 1979, for the first survey of hedges in the immediate vicinity. The work has been gradually extended in intervening years by small groups working mainly in two's and three's, to cover the entire network of lanes and footpaths as well

Hedgerows & Local History in Finchampstead

as the field hedges of most of the farms in the eastern half of the parish (Church Farm, Warren Crest, Wick Vale Farm, Ridge Farm, North Court Farm, Manor Farm, Larchwood Farm and parts of Rectory Farm) and Bulloway's Farm in the west.

Survey Methods

HEDGES and boundaries were identified on the Ordnance Survey map (6 inches to 1 mile), numbered and allocated to groups, each group containing at least one person proficient in species identification.

Permission was obtained from landowners to walk fields where hedges could not be reached from public rights of way. Hedges were surveyed along



their entire length in measured 30 yard sections, the number of woody species in each section being recorded, as shown in the specimen record sheet. Other relevant details, such as adjacent woods, gardens, ditches, gates etc. were

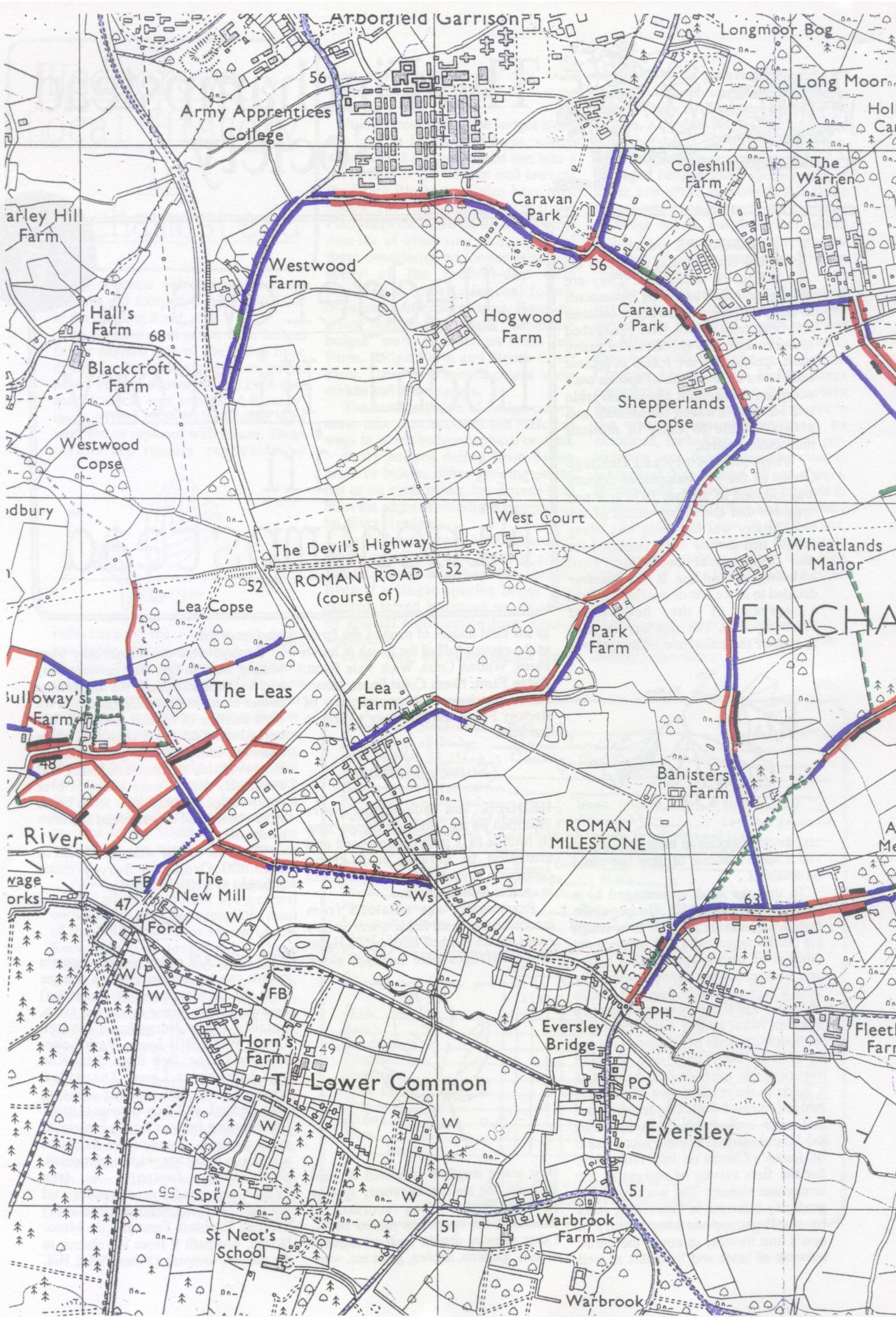
also recorded.

Surveys were carried out only when hedges were in full leaf, between May and September. Initially the results were colour coded with a different colour for each number of species from 1 to 10+ and plotted on the 6 inch O/S maps showing individual 30 yard sections. However, this became confusing and eventually results were averaged over entire hedge lengths, three broad bands were chosen and colour coded as shown on the map.

The final results were transferred to 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey maps enlarged to a convenient size.

Results

THE COLOUR coded results of species counts can be seen on the map. Hedges with the highest counts (7-10 species) mainly border minor roads and lanes, notably White Horse Lane, Church Lane, Wick Hill Lane, Park Lane, Hogwood Lane, Dell Road, Fleet Rise and Longwater Lane. The Rides, however, show little evidence of having been hedged until they became built up, the existing hedges being mainly of garden origin. Some of the footpaths also have stretches with high counts, particularly footpath 8 (see "Finchampstead Past, Present and Future", Finchampstead Society, 1977) between Banisters Farm and the Manor House, footpath 9 from the church to the village, footpath 15 from Wick Hill,

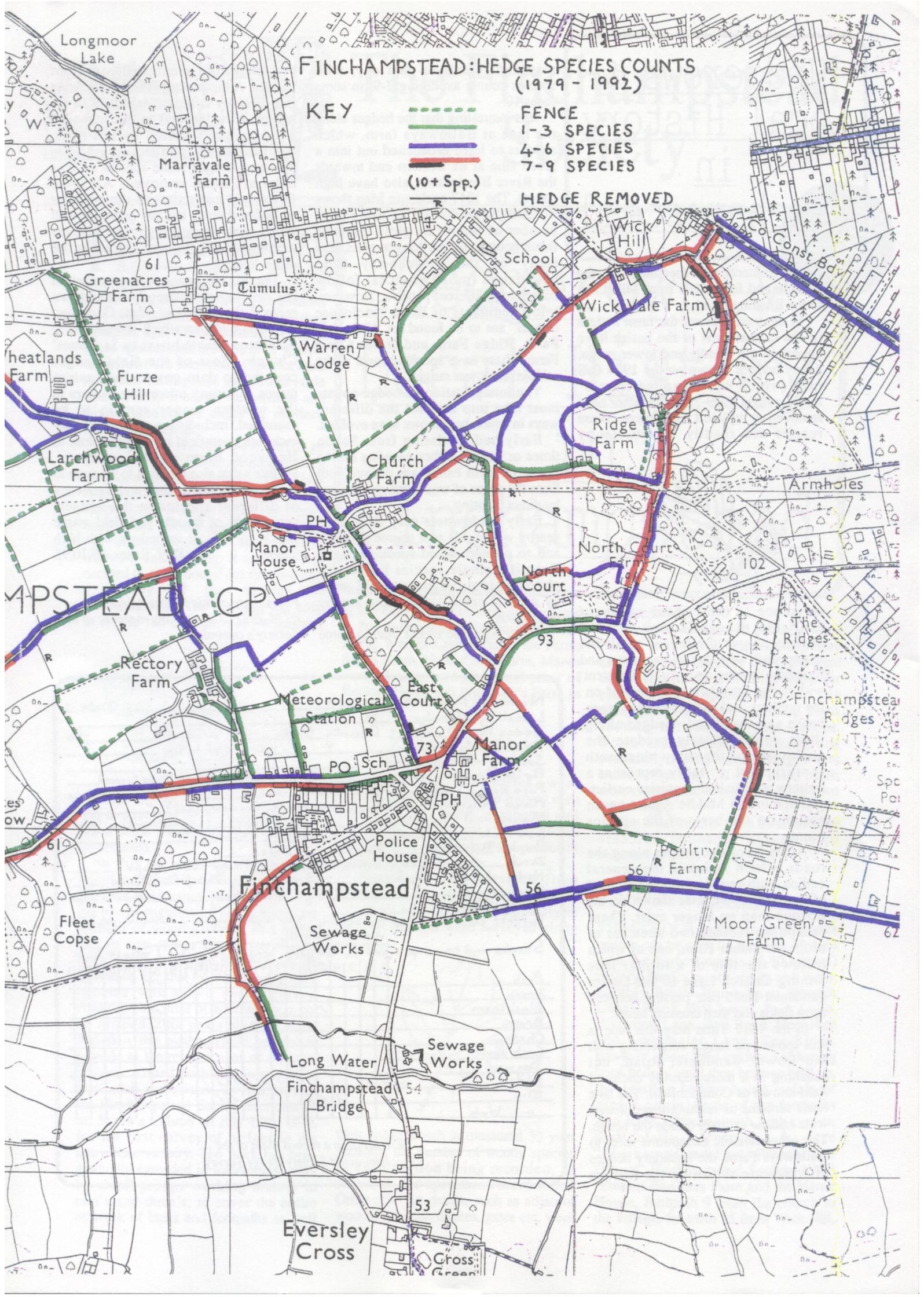


FINCHAMPSTEAD: HEDGE SPECIES COUNTS (1979 - 1992)

KEY

- - - - - FENCE
- 1-3 SPECIES
- 4-6 SPECIES
- 7-9 SPECIES
- (10+ Spp.)

HEDGE REMOVED



Hedgerows & Local History in Finchampstead

which connects with footpath 14 to the church, and footpath 3 from Mill Lane to the Reading Road.

In contrast most of the farm hedges in the eastern part of the parish have counts in the middle and lower range. Many hedges shown on the 1974 O/S map (which was compiled from 6" maps revised 1909-32) have either been removed or replaced with fences. These results are readily explicable by



reference to the various old maps available. Rocque's map of 1752 already shows the layout of all the major roads of today as trackways and footpaths serving an open field system with hedge boundaries, surrounded on the northern and eastern sides by open heath and woodland. Hedges along these routes clearly predate the enclosures of the early nineteenth century, and probably represent a system established centuries earlier, perhaps in the Middle Ages or even earlier on the basis of the species counts.

Apart from the hedges along the roads, which maintain the general outline, with very few exceptions most of the field boundaries shown on the Rocque map no longer exist. These exceptions include two stretches of hedge on Manor Farm, one of which follows the line of a former lane joining Church Lane to the Lower Sandhurst Road first passing between open fields and then crossing heath.

In the 1817 Tithe Map this lane is still shown, no longer connecting with the Lower Sandhurst Road, but finishing in a more recently enclosed field known as Commonfield. The lane itself remains as nothing more than a wide hollow or ditch beside the hedge. The other notable exceptions refer to Bulloways Farm, the boundary hedges of which are shown on the Rocque

map and remain to this day, with species counts averaging 7-9, in some cases 10.

It is interesting that the hedges along the lane at Bulloways farm, which appears to have broadened out into a green lane at its western end towards the River Blackwater, also have high counts. The 1817 enclosure Map shows Finchampstead divided up into a large number of often tiny plots. Most of these boundaries no longer exist, and many of the present-day field boundaries (mostly fences) follow completely different patterns. However, a few remnants of these "inclosure hedges" are to be found on Wick Vale Farm, Ridge Farm and North Court Farm. These have species counts in the middle and lower ranges.

The interpretation of hedge counts must take into account the different ways in which hedgerows have evolved.

Early hedges dating from Saxon times or before, either growing on the flat or on earth banks, are derived both from the edges of woodland clearings or by direct planting.

Early landowners may have used nearby woodlands as a source of plants and so planted mixed species hedges. Even if a single species hedge was planted, mixed hedgerows would result by gradual colonisation from nearby woodlands.

Either way, the oldest hedges come

to contain the greatest diversity of species. An important factor influencing this diversity is the management of the hedge. A hedge that is not managed soon becomes stifled by tall trees, resulting in fewer species, while in managed hedges some species such as elder are often removed. All these factors add uncertainty to the precision of hedge dating, but the principle still holds that, on average, the highest number of species are found in the oldest hedges.

The original parish of Finchampstead has developed apparently around two centres: the Manor of West Court and the Manor House which is believed to have been situated next to St. James' Church. Most of the field hedges counted to date cover this eastern manor, but many interesting features in the western manor remain to be examined, including a number of pre-enclosure open-field boundaries close to Hogwood Farm and West Court. Further work also remains to be done to evaluate the distribution and frequency of different species in the hedges, particularly of spindle and field maple which only occur in hedges with high counts.

D.N. Salter, 19.10.93

For a copy of this leaflet, telephone 0734-732157 or ask any member of the Society's committee

Name of Recorder/s DNS, AH; Date 2
 Locality of hedge Manor Farm
 Hedge Nos. 13, 13a-a; County Berks; Grid ref. _____; R. _____
 Age of hedge (if known) _____; Origin of hedge _____
 Sources of information _____
 Parish Boundary Hedge _____; Trees present _____; Hedge to wood _____
 Pure hedge (one kind of shrub predominant) _____; species predominant _____
 Mixed hedge (several kinds of shrub equally predominant)
 Management: Hand clipping _____; Machine clipping _____; Laying (recent) _____ (origin _____)
 Soil: Clay _____; Sand _____; Gravel ; Other _____
 Bank: Both sides _____; One side _____; None _____
 Ditch ; Hedge across slope _____; Hedge down slope
 Hedge damage: Burning _____; Spray _____; Dutch Elm disease _____
 Adjacent garden _____ Pylon or wires crossing _____ Gate or open River/stream _____
 Further comments Hedge 13c: 16 yds only. Dist 16 yds of range 13c. closed (enclosure only). Hed

Shrubs and trees present in 30 yard length of hedge (please tick)

	13a					13																
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Ash																						
Beech																						
Blackthorn																						
Broom																						
Cherry																						
Crab apple																						
Dogwood																						
Elder																						
Elm																						
" Wych																						

Extract from a record sheet of the
Finchampstead Society Hedge Survey