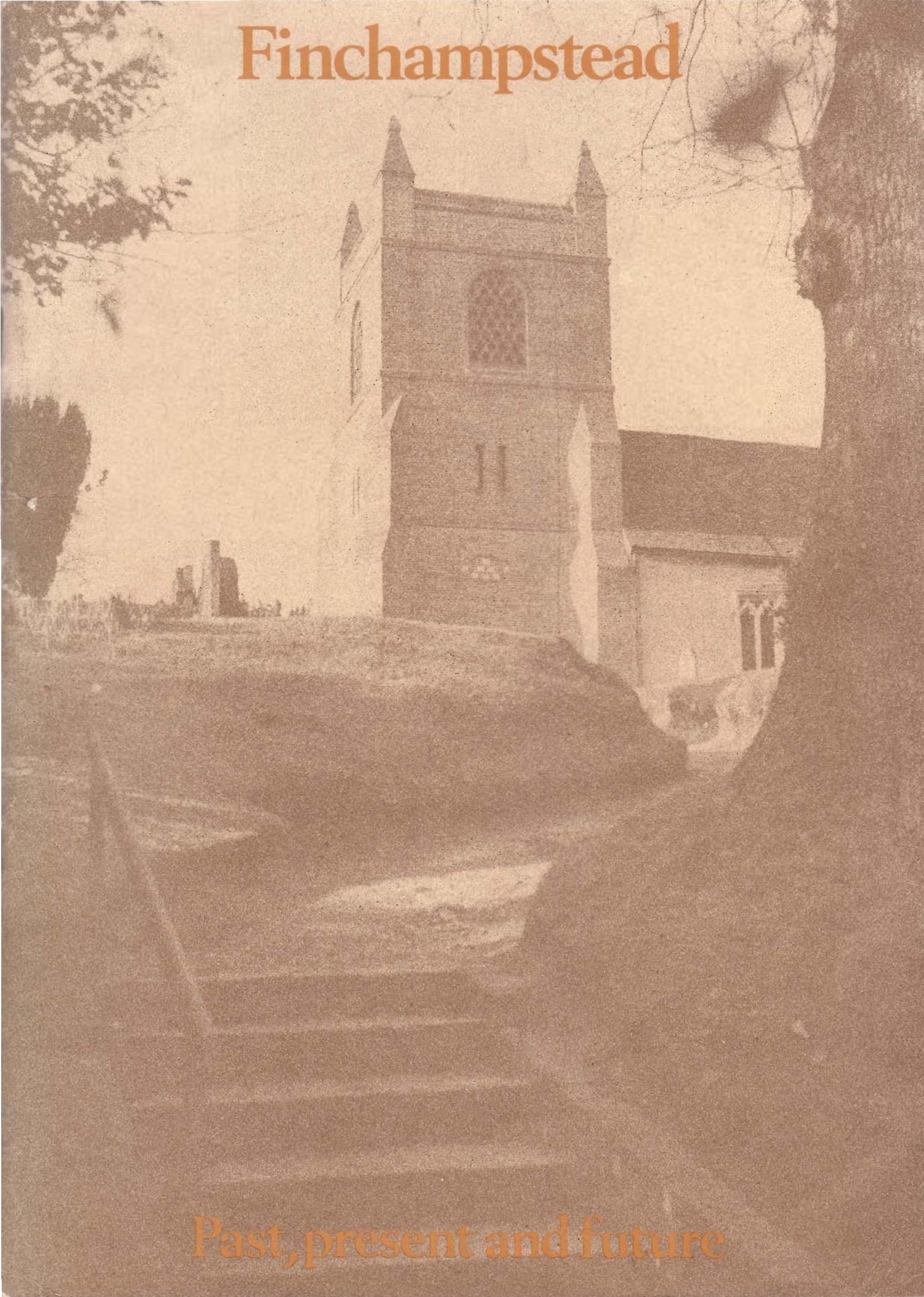


Finchampstead



Past, present and future

Finchampstead

past, present and future

A study of the Parish of Finchampstead
published by the Finchampstead Society
in Jubilee Year, 1977

Editor: Sydney Paulden

CONTENTS

Page

Introduction: Towards a balanced community	4
History and heritage	7
Footpaths and bridleway network	22
Landscape — the visual scene	25
Wildlife, trees and plants	33
Housing	45
Agriculture and industry	53
Traffic and transport	55
Education facilities	59
Community amenities	63
Recommendations for action	70

Cover design:
John Spencer, Allied International Designers

Towards a Balanced Community

This is the most comprehensive picture of Finchampstead ever presented during its long history. Every resident should find it of value and interest, for it covers those aspects of the Parish that affect the lives of us all.

The ten sections have mostly been contributed by members of the Finchampstead Society, some with relevant professional qualifications, others pure amateurs in the field, but all having learned to cherish Finchampstead through living here.

Some of the facts presented are of vital importance to the community. Others, although less weighty, add to a resident's enjoyment of the Parish through a more intimate knowledge of the surroundings and their history. Readers of these pages will discover how many people live in Finchampstead, what sort of work they do, the kind of housing they want compared with the housing they get. They will learn of the growth of the education facilities, the worst accident spots, the extent of the network of footpaths and bridleways and the plans for The Ridges.

A major fact that is stressed is the illogical way in which the Parish has been divided into Green Belt and White Belt land. There are recommendations for action to have this matter put right.

Much of the material will enrich conversation in Finchampstead from now on, for it investigates: why one part of the road over Fleet Hill is always wet; how Henry VIII was alleged to have brought the Court of Windsor to The Ridges to accuse Katherine of Aragon of immodesty; how half of Finchampstead was sold to save *The Times* newspaper; which buildings are scheduled as Monuments; which trees bear preservation orders; what drastic changes are to be expected from the gravel digging on our side of the Blackwater.

Need for information

This document arose from the need for more information about the whole Parish than could be found in any other single publication. The Finchampstead Society was formed in 1975 when it was realised that there were several development programmes planned for Berkshire, the Blackwater Valley and for specific areas such as The Rides. These plans would have a major impact upon the Parish and our community. The Society's objective was to find out how these plans would affect us and to influence the planners with our recommendations before the details were finalised, so that the interests of this community

would be taken into account.

The Finchampstead Society has currently over 100 active paid-up members. There are many more residents who are sympathetic to its aims, judging from the massive support for the various functions that the Society has organised. It has held several public meetings to debate planning projects and Rights of Way amendments. Most of the funds to finance the production of this document were raised in June 1976 through a sponsored Bigshotte Walk and a Barn Dance on the Memorial Park playing fields. The Committee of the Society consists of ten people with diverse occupations who come from different parts of the Parish. They have included an accountant, architect, builder, foreman, haulier, housewife, journalist, pilot and solicitor. A special effort has been made to represent the views and interests of the whole community.

When the Society first made approaches to the planners responsible for the future of this area, it was told: "Finchampstead is a special case, for we all wish to conserve its natural amenities and its rural character. But it would be most helpful if we had some facts to go on". The planners welcomed an in-depth look at Finchampstead by the Society, for no one else had the resources to carry this out.

At the same time, the planners at county and district level were asking: "What do you think of our plans? What do you think of your own parish amenities? How adequate are the education facilities, the housing projects, the transport services?". Pamphlets, questionnaires and mini-exhibitions were all asking questions and there was a dire lack of facts on which to base reasonable answers.

Not a Village Plan

That is why this document was produced. It is not a village plan. It is not a blueprint for the future. It is a statement of what the Parish is — its strengths and weaknesses, its past, its present and the trends discernible for the future. It is not protectionist, for it does not preach against all change regardless. It is an enquiry from the point of view of a desired balanced community, and as such it should be of general interest to residents, planners, visitors and all those interested in rural England.

The Society has no axe to grind other than the interests of a balanced community and so every resident of the Parish is entitled to become a member to make the Society as representative as possible.

The Wokingham District Council's view, as we see it.

There is little guarantee of conservation of the special rural character of Finchampstead so far as official documentation is concerned. The Parish is currently entirely reliant on the District Planning Department's attitude as expressed verbally by its officers, and an interpretation of Government directives.

The Green Belt in the south of East Berkshire (including part of Finchampstead) has not been approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment. This is because this region comes within Planning Area 8, for which new plans are being formulated, and the Minister is unwilling to approve Green Belt designa-

tions in advance of the final decisions on the whole area.

In the meantime, the District Council's Planning Officer, Mr R. Reynolds, and his Development Control Officer, Mr R. Gillingwater, are applying Green Belt policy, on the instruction of the Council's Planning Committee.

However, a study of the provisional Green Belt area in Finchampstead shows that it follows a convenient line on the map (see page 37), but is very much an illogical designation in relation to the truly rural amenity areas of the Parish. The Green Belt Area currently begins only along the line of the B3016 road — Finchampstead Road from Wokingham to the War Memorial and down to the Greyhound pub. It is provisionally Green Belt to the East of this line — taking in the developed sites of Kiln Ride, Nine Mile Ride and even the whole of Crowthorne. To the West of the line, the area is 'un-notated' or, as formerly known, 'White Belt', with no statutory protection from development. This White area includes almost the whole stretch of the Parish's farmland, the area round St James's Church and even the land around the Memorial Park and both sides of Fleet Hill as far as the Tally Ho. Only a tiny portion of the Village itself, therefore, is in the 'provisional' Green Belt.

Again, the District Planning Officer follows a policy, verbally stated, on the treatment of the White Belt

section of the Parish. (It follows a general policy laid down in a Department of the Environment directive, 122/73). He maintains: "Development will only be permitted in rural areas which is appropriate to the area, such as farm buildings, playing fields and so on. There will be no sporadic development outside the confines of the Village and the Village will only be subject to building that 'infills' and 'rounds off'. We don't want to see the Village expanded or extended along Fleet Hill or towards Eversley in ribbon development. All development within the Village will have to take account of the special character of the Village".

These policies are likely to be upheld so long as the overall Structure Plan for Berkshire prepared by the County Council planners does not force excessive growth on to the District Council, but there is no long term guarantee.

Finchampstead, therefore, feels itself extremely vulnerable to undesirable development, in the absence of more binding statutory measures that will conserve the rural nature to be enjoyed by all residents and visitors. In former days, a population of agricultural workers could fight to conserve their land and their jobs, but nowadays, with so few families actually dependent upon the land for employment, the non-agricultural residents of the Parish have to take the responsibility of watching over the rural character of their surroundings.

Planning authorities and framework

Since the re-organisation of local government in April 1974, the Wokingham District Council has been a Local Planning Authority in its own right, responsible for development control, such as the determination of planning applications, building control and the preparation of local plans as a back-cloth against which to regulate development. The Planning Department in Wokingham has a staff of 41 people, headed by the Chief Officer, Mr R.E. Reynolds. The department has three sections — Development Control, Local Plans and Building Control.

Finchampstead is part of Wokingham District and has a Parish Council, elected every four years, with every registered voter in the parish having the right to vote. There are 9 members of the Parish Council and one officer, the Clerk to the Parish Council. The PC currently levies a local rate of 0.8p per £ of ratable value of Finchampstead property. Any planning proposals that affect the Parish are submitted to the PC for comment, but the PC has no statutory power to control development. It has a measure of responsibility for local footpaths, stiles, signposting and footway lighting. The Finchampstead Parish Council acts as Trustees for the Memorial Park land.

Finchampstead falls within the boundaries of Planning Area 8, an area designated for growth in the 'Strategy for the South East' published in 1971. This document envisaged rapid, large-scale growth in the south-east during the next ten years and an Area 8 Sub-Regional Study was published in September 1975. Berkshire County Council agrees that the area is capable of accepting growth, but now believes that the drop in birth rate and the decrease in migration

into the area have changed the situation, so that there is no longer any need to provide for growth on such a scale. Now, a 'Strategy for the South East Review' has been published by the Government and this suggests that as the growth is not likely to be so great, policies from now on should be aimed at reducing the flow of people and industry from London.

A draft Central Berkshire Plan is being produced and it is expected to recommend Limited Growth Strategy. The District Council believes that apart from existing commitments like Wooshill and Lower Earley, there will be a 'presumption against any other release of land for housing or employment'. This Structure Plan is also likely to suggest that Planning Area 8 be no longer given growth status.

Early in 1976, the 'Issues Report on The Rides' was published and, following public consultation, a draft Local Plan for The Rides is to appear. This will be concerned with the detailed development of the area and will act as a policy document for the District Council for the next five years. It will have to be accepted by the County Council as conforming to the policies for the whole of Central Berkshire. The Rides Plan is considered especially necessary by the District Council because in the past few years there has been considerable development in the Rides area of a haphazard nature, all of which was rejected by the District Council but won on appeal to the Department of the Environment. The District Council therefore wishes to channel future development within an accepted, controlled plan.



Lea Farmhouse displays a mural painting of St George and the Dragon on the extension to the original half-timbered Tudor building (Listed Building No. 20/13).

This Thatched Cottage in White Horse Lane dates from Tudor times, when the lands round it were common fields for the use of the village cottagers. The lane was still known as Commonfield Lane until the 1970s.



History and Heritage

A knowledge of Finchampstead's history is essential for a full appreciation of present-day Finchampstead. It also underlines the need for the greatest care in planning to ensure that the character of the Parish is conserved as a heritage for future generations. The Parish boundaries and many of the major landmarks have been unchanged for centuries and every resident will be able to identify, close to home, some location that has been the scene of fascinating events in the past. The Romans passed through in their thousands; English kings and queens held the Parish dear as a favourite hunting ground. From Saxon times to the beginning of this century, it maintained the character of a single huge estate.

The name of the Parish derives from three Old English words: *finc ham* and *stede*. These meant simply *little bird, home* and *settlement* and most probably described the homestead of some early tribe that settled in an area where there were many little songbirds, as there still are. However, it is also suggested that *Finc* or *Fyng*, as is sometimes seen in old documents, was the actual name of the tribe that resided here.

Pre-history

There is ample evidence that Finchampstead was the site for iron smelting in the Iron Age. It is not unusual to unearth slag when digging in the fields, particularly close to the Blackwater. Just north of the Blackwater, there is a deeply gouged stream known as the Redwater because of the bright red tint from the seams of ore-bearing earth, clearly visible in its banks. In earlier times, the locality was covered in fine forest oaks, which made excellent sources of timber and charcoal for smelting the ore.

Close to Warren Lodge is Berkshire's largest barrow, known as Bell Barrow. It is 100 ft in diameter, 8 ft high and has a berm (between barrow and its ditch) that is 40 ft wide and 3 ft deep. There are traces of a bank and ditch round it, which have been levelled on the Southern edge by farming through the years. Its origin remains a mystery. In May and June, 1967, an excavation was carried out with the permission of the owner of the land, Miss Isabel Vaughan-Morgan, by Mr T.S. Turner, at that time Head of the History Department of Bulmershe College of Education. Dr C.F. Slade acted as a consultant on the site. It was definitely proved through a study of the reversal of the layers of sand that the site was largely of human construction. Unfortunately, the only artefact uncovered was a small sherd, identified as medieval. Further excavation in 1968 failed to produce any further evidence. No burial remains were found that might have confirmed the mound as a Bronze Age burial barrow, as had always been imagined locally. It may have been an Iron Age British camp, as used up to Roman times from about 300 BC, or it may even have been a gun platform of more recent construction.

A smaller barrow was recorded in 1963 by the Archeological Division of the Ordnance Survey that lay close to Bell Barrow. It had a diameter of 25 ft, with a surrounding ditch just visible between the larger mound and the electricity pylon. Unfortunately,

ly, on a second visit a year later to inspect the barrow, Mr H.W. Copsey, an expert in the barrows of our local counties, found that all traces of it had disappeared and the land was under grass. An excavation of this second mound might have helped to determine the original use.

Roman Finchampstead

Finchampstead was on a major thoroughfare in the Roman period. One of the Parish's most interesting historical features is the stretch of Roman road, known as the Devil's Highway, that crosses from East to West. It was the main road from London to Silchester and then on to Bath. In 1841, a farmer unearthed one of the original Roman milestones whilst ploughing a field between Wheatlands Manor and Shepperlands Farm. It was removed for safe keeping to the garden of Banisters, where it remains today — a Grade II listed monument of historic interest. Tests have shown that it was hewn from quarries in the area of Bath.

The Devil's Highway is marked clearly on the OS maps, but digs as recent as 1976 have indicated that some sections of the road in the West of the Parish are slightly misrecorded. Presumably the highway passed north of Heath Pond, and some believe the little lake was in fact formed when the rivulet that feeds it was dammed by the raised road. The Devil's Highway passed north of the foot of the mound on which St James's Church is built and followed a line to West Court, which can be clearly seen across one of the intervening fields in dry weather.

The published line for the road derives from a study carried out in the early 19th Century by cadets from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Digs up to June 1976, carried out by staff and students of Bulmershe College, proved that the road does coincide with the OS line between Wheatlands Manor and Pond Field. The true alignment eastwards, however, strikes White Horse Lane (formerly 'Commonfield Lane' and before that 'Church Lane') at the lane's abrupt right-angle turn. A search in the hedge at this point reveals a platform that represents the surviving trace of the original road. The line continues under the lane, passing just North of Church Farm barn. By walking a few yards down the right of way to Warren Lane and looking at the hedge profile towards the farm, a distinct levelling out in the slope can be seen, making a kind of platform, marking the line which has been confirmed by aerial photographs.

On the line that continues up Wick Hill, in the garden of Ridge Farm parallel to the present lane, there is a distinct 'cutting' known as 'The Dell'. It was a dumping ground until cleared by the present owner. It does not appear to be a natural feature and, by virtue of its position, can reasonably be associated with the Devil's Highway. The projected line was confirmed on Wick Hill in June 1976. The owner of Wick Hill Lodge, Mrs P. Francis, permitted an excavation in a paddock that revealed a laid feature of gravel and pebble similar in appearance to those previously encountered on the known line. This align-

ment then proceeds through 'Blencathra' to strike Roman Ride. Probing revealed the presence of a wide band of hard material about 18 inches below the surface just to the north of the Ride, but no conclusion could be drawn, as there is so much natural gravel.

The most recent research has three results of particular interest. First, the date and structure of the road can be identified, for the dateable pottery stratified with it suggests it was here by the year 130-140 AD. In the Pond Field, the stretch of road is of two distinct makings, varying in width from 17 to 28 feet. The Devil's Highway may well represent the 2nd century civil development of the province rather than the 1st century military conquest.

Secondly, the digs have proved the existence of iron workings from bog iron in the parish during this period. Anyone finding slag should note the spot and bring these to David Stafford's attention at Bulmershe College, as they might help to pinpoint the site of the furnaces.

Thirdly, the digs prove a Romano-British settlement from approximately 130 to 400 AD, although the excavation of any of the settlement's buildings would be a lengthy and expensive procedure.

It is a serious misfortune that it is no longer possible to walk the length of the Devil's Highway through the Parish. A one-mile stretch of the old road was blocked by a decision at a hearing held in 1953. Previously, there was a through path from Heath Pond to Rhododendron Corner on The Ridges, but evidence was accepted to the effect that paths 38 (from Wokingham to The Ridges past Ridge Farm) and 37 (The Devil's Highway and revised as path 34 in 1976) had never been public rights of way at this point. It appears there could have been a misinterpretation of the terms 'Public Carriage Rights' and 'Private Carriage Rights'. These referred to the maintenance of roads for carriage use and did not affect public pedestrian rights. A Parish resident is also disputing the location of the exact point at which the Devil's Highway was officially declared a Private Road in 1953.

Caesar's Camp, at the extreme eastern end of Nine Mile Ride and outside the Parish, was never a Roman site, but dates from the Iron Age. There is a former site at Wickham Bushes. In Finchampstead, however, recent aerial photographs have shown promising signs that there was a Roman roadside settlement, offering evidence of iron working in the fields close to Wheatlands Manor — where the Roman milestone was first discovered. The Department of the Environment has now placed a Preservation Order on those fields to permit careful excavation in the future, and archaeologists have been asked not to carry out any digs on the Roman Road at that point for fear of disturbing valuable evidence on the settlement. So much new evidence is coming to light about the Roman, and earlier, occupation of Finchampstead, that it is essential for the utmost care to be taken in preserving sites that might yield valuable results in the future.

Medieval relic

The slope on the road on Fleet Hill, close to the Old

Coach House, is perpetually wet, and ran with water even during the severe drought of the summer of 1976. This is the flow from a well that is known variously as Dodswells or Dozell's Well, which is thought to be a corruption of the name "St Oswald's Well". St Oswald succeeded to the kingdom of Northumbria in AD 633. He acted as 'godfather' to Cynegils, who was king of the West Saxons and therefore ruler of the inhabitants of Finchampstead, at the time when Cynegil was received into the Christian faith. Oswald then married Cynegil's daughter.

It must have been about this time that the Finchampstead well was named in honour of Oswald. Its existence is noted in documents as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries, when the Saxon Chronicles describe how a well in Finchampstead boiled up and streamed with blood to the great amazement of the beholder. (Could this be the local red iron ore again?) It was believed at that time that such an event was always the precursor of a national calamity. In 1872, the well was accidentally destroyed by a labourer who was engaged in deepening the ditch alongside it. There is no real evidence that St Oswald actually came to bless the Finchampstead well, as many wells were named in honour of the saint in the West Saxon kingdom.

The water of Dodswells is reputed to have miraculous properties for the cure of blindness and, at the time the "Finchampstead Chronicles" were published in 1895, there were people in the Parish who could remember how pilgrims came to the well from great distances, dipping their handkerchiefs into the water to bathe their affected eyes.

There is no doubt that the well's disturbed waters should be channelled into a recognisable course, to prevent the constant stream over the road surface and to re-establish this historic connection with the Parish's medieval past.

Feudal Finchampstead

Finchampstead was the personal holding of Earl Harold at the time he was killed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. As the spoils of war, the property came into the possession of William the Conqueror. Harold's shires had been divided into 'Hundreds' — parcels of land that could provide 100 warriors or contained 100 'hides' or 100 homesteads. A 'hide' was an acreage that could be ploughed and cultivated by one man during a year. Harold's Hundreds were divided further by William into Manors, each with a Lord of the Manor who held his own court.

In William's "Domesday Book", compiled in 1086 as a guide to all properties to simplify the task of raising taxes, "Finchampsted" is recorded within the Hundred of Cerleton that was given to the Norman Baron, Henry de Ferieres. The entry stated:

"The King holds Finchamsted in demesne. Earl Harold held it (from Edward the Confessor) for a fee then assessed at 5 hides. He not only paid this geld but rendered form (entertainment) in Radinges (Reading). There is land for 15 ploughs. There are 6 serfs and a Mill worth 7 shillings and 6 pence (in annual rent) and 4 acres of meadow and woodland to render 200 swine. It is and was worth 8 pounds."



Some real facts about the Roman road, the Devil's Highway, that crosses Finchampstead, have been revealed in digs carried out by staff and students of Bulmershe College.

LEFT: a dig on Mr Marshall's farm, "The Larches" in White Horse Lane, in 1974 exposed the road's long-buried surface.

BELOW: an aerial photograph betrays the line of the Devil's Highway beneath a cultivated field. The tent marks the spot where a dig in 1973 proved the existence of the road on its way to Wheatlands Manor.



The assessment of the Manor to support 200 swine was based on the large oak forests that provided the acorns as principal fodder. The only other Manor in the Royal Forest that exceeded this number was Sonning, assessed at 300 swine. Selngefelle (Shinfield) and Bercheham (Barkham) had 90 and 40 swine each, whilst most of the others had 20 swine or less.

The Mill was not the present 17th Century New Mill but an even older one located a hundred yards or more upstream.

William the Conqueror introduced Forest Courts for those forest areas, including Finchampstead, that were directly under his rule. They deprived the forest dwellers of many of the rights enjoyed by the rest of the country and inflicted very harsh punishments. Poachers of deer suffered mutilation and later, under successive monarchs, death. Anyone found poaching venison in Windsor Forest was sent straight to the "cole hole" at Windsor Castle, a notorious dungeon for those awaiting trial at a Forest Court.

After William, Henry I was the owner of Finchampstead, who granted it to the Lords of Aldermaston. A century later, it came into the possession of Alard Banister. It was Alard's grandson, William Banister, who died with no male heir. The Manorial Rights were divided, in the year 1276, equally between William's two daughters, Constance and Agatha, thus creating West Court and East Court. It is believed that the original Manor House became East Court and was located alongside St James's Church. This would be logical, as it was common practice in those days for the Lord of the Manor to have a church built close to his Manor or to build his Manor close to an existing Saxon church, which he would extend to reflect his own superior status.

During this period, the Royal Forest was sub-divided into four Bailiwicks for simpler administration. One was called Finchampstead Bailiwick, and this was further broken into four Walkes: Bearewood, Easthampstead, Sandhurst and Bigshotte. These all met in the centre at Bigshotte Rayles, that was located on what is now the East Berks golf course in Crowthorne. The Rayles was a fenced area used by the keepers of the Walkes to enclose and count the deer jointly. This is why the Parish of Finchampstead (which made up the Bigshotte Walke) has the strange, elongated eastern tip that ends in a point on the estate alongside the golf course. This gave access to the Rayles for the Bigshotte Walke deer keeper.

The forests of Finchampstead were highly valued over centuries by the English monarchs for their hunting. Bigshotte actually signified a "Big Shoot". This royal sport, pursued right up to the time of Elizabeth I and beyond, was not always a hit and miss affair. From the Bigshotte Rayles the herded deer could sometimes be driven below The Ridges in Finchampstead or Standing Hill in Sandhurst, where the monarchs (the king and Queen were wont to have their own individual standings) could aim down at the passing deer.

Tudor Finchampstead

The Ridges may have been the scene of one of the most fascinating events in Tudor times. Henry VII was hunting with his sons, Prince Arthur and the

younger son Henry, in Windsor Forest out of the hunting lodge at Easthampstead, when news came that the Spanish Infanta, Katharine of Aragon, had arrived in the vicinity on her way to marry Prince Arthur in London. The English royal party rode out to greet her and it was arranged for the bride to remove her veil as her coach drove past, so that the Prince could have sight of her face.

Prince Arthur died young, shortly after the marriage, and it was Henry who ascended the throne as Henry VIII. He married his brother's widow. However, when he later wanted to have his marriage annulled, he claimed that Katharine had acted immodestly by permitting her husband-to-be to see her face prior to the marriage. To prove his case, he took the whole court out from Windsor to Easthampstead Lodge and then to "The Ridges" to re-enact the scene.

Residents of Finchampstead picture in their imagination the sight of Katharine's bridal party crossing the ford on Longwater Lane and riding up to The Ridges where the English monarch and the Prince awaited her, with a fine view of her progress from the river. However, on the map of 1607, the only "Ridges" marked is the high point in Camberley, now a built-up area on the A30. Further delving into the archives is needed to reconstruct the true story.

There is another legend connecting Henry VIII with Finchampstead. It is said that he paid fond attention to the younger of two sisters who lived at East Court and visited her frequently at her home. The elder sister was in love with the king and jealousy led her to commit suicide by throwing herself down from a gallery in front of the king on his arrival one evening, thus spoiling her sister's chance of becoming Queen of England.

The English Civil War

Battle, Reading, was the scene of a battle between the Roundheads and Cavaliers, supporters of Cromwell and King Charles, but Finchampstead has its own historic note of these times. The Roundheads intercepted the Reverend Samuel Marsh, Rector of the Parish, in 1645. He was commanded to sign the Solemn League and Covenant, but the old man, for fifty years the Rector, refused. He snapped the quill that was put in his hand and was thereupon banished from the church and expelled from the Parish forever. For the next 15 years Finchampstead had no Rector.

It was in 1660 that the Reverend Thomas Bright was installed, during the reign of King Charles II, at the Restoration of the Monarchy.

The Enclosure Awards 1817

Enclosures are shown on maps of Swallowfield, Arborfield and Oakingham as early as 1607, but Finchampstead remained open heath and woodland until as late as about 1752, with final completion of enclosures by 1817. The second half of the 18th century saw a great move towards enclosure of land because of the newly introduced methods of farming, including crop rotation, agricultural machinery and selective livestock breeding. Enclosure meant not only the fencing-in of common land, but the amalga-

mation of the earlier strip fields into larger units. The result in the nation as a whole and in Finchampstead, which was no exception, was the virtual elimination of the small landowner, who could not compete with the bigger owners. It is interesting to make a comparison between the maps of John Norden of 1607, Rocque in the Strand of 1752, the Act of Enclosure of 1817 and the map that accompanied the sale of the Bearewood Estate in 1911.

In 1607, there is practically no enclosed land in the Parish. By 1752, almost the whole of the West Court Manor (except for the Leas) and a substantial portion of the East Court Manor around the Parish church had been enclosed. The strips that remained for the poor folk were mainly on the worst land along the Blackwater. There was still, however, a lot of common ground and heathland for the cottagers to graze their cattle and goats. At that time the Finchampsteads were often called upon to drive off cattle that had been brought in to graze from neighbouring parishes less well off for common land. This open land included Longmoor, the Leas and West Wood, Moor Green and the vast expanse of heath past Bigshotte Rayles, stretching almost as far as Windsor and Guildford. There was the Common Field right in the middle of the Parish. This land within the Parish totalled at least 1,000 acres, and, by 1817, only 65 years later, it was all enclosed and lost to the humble livestock owner.

Briefly, about 400 of the 1,000 acres were retained by the Crown; 500 acres were divided between the Lords of the East and West Courts (Charles Fyshe Palmer Esquire and the Reverend Ellis St John respectively, the latter also being Rector); 50 acres were awarded to the Trustees for the Poor, 18 acres were awarded to the Glebe (the churchlands); 22 acres went to Martha and John Banister and Sir John Cope, local gentry; and the remaining 10 acres were awarded to three smallholders, including one acre to a certain Ann White.

When scrutiny is made of the names of tenants of properties in that part of Finchampstead sold off in 1911, it is noticed that all the earlier smallholding family names have disappeared from the Parish. There are no longer any Jewardines, Claceys, Taylors, Gates, Lions, Stephans, Moseleys, Partletts, Lanes, Dickens, Goodchilds or Pages. As seen in other Parishes of England, enclosure meant that former landholders first became labourers on the bigger units and then were obliged to drift to the new industrial towns for employment. Some may have emigrated or tried their luck in the still unenclosed West Country. It may not be a coincidence that the sole smallholder name visible on the later map is White — the name of the woman who gained her one acre in 1817. By comparison, many of the names mentioned as living in the neighbourhood in 1911 are still in evidence in 1977 — including Mason, Milam, Maynard, White and Dixon (whose grandfather and father were once millers at New Mill). This illustrates the extent to which the enclosures must have caused wholesale migration from the Parish.

The Walter family sells Finchampstead to support *The Times*

John Walter founded *The Times* newspaper in 1785 and it was owned and edited by three consecutive

John Walters, all of whom are closely associated with the history of Finchampstead. The first settled at Bearwood because he loved to fish in the mere there as a change from the hurly burly of London. He had the great Bearwood mansion built, which is now a school of that name. He then extended his estate eastwards as far as Yateley, through the purchase of East Court Manor from Charles Fyshe Palmer.

The second John Walter was a very beneficent patron to Finchampstead. He provided the funds to build the village school in 1854 and later, in 1861, he had the road constructed across The Ridges, lining the Wellingtonia Avenue section with Sequoia trees brought specially from New Columbia as a memorial to the Duke of Wellington. At that time the avenue was more noticeably a magnificent approach to the gates of Wellington College, which is now less obvious because of the building development round Crowthorne station and the growth of the trees in the area.

The third John Walter was editor of *The Times* when the newspaper was fighting competition from the newly launched penny papers on Fleet Street at the turn of this century, namely, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph*. *The Times* had been fivepence for a hundred years. Walter dropped the price to threepence and was then forced to seek funds to prevent any lowering of his standards. He chose to sell the Bearwood Estate, including most of Finchampstead, as can be seen from the Auction Map of 1911 (pages 14 and 15). The East Court estate was then fragmented amongst a host of individual buyers and took on the character of development that determined its present form.

The third John Walter was probably made more inclined to sell his estate when his son, the fourth John Walter, died tragically whilst still an Oxford undergraduate. He was skating during a Christmas house party at Bearwood when some of his young friends fell through the ice on the lake that his grandfather had created. The young John attempted to save them but died of a heart attack, and his father could never again look on Bearwood with the same enthusiasm.

At the auction of the Bearwood Estate, the generosity of a group of small donors resulted in the purchase of The Ridges for the National Trust. This is shown as Lot 92 on the map. G.C.H. Simon bought Heath Pond and a parcel of 35 acres of surrounding woodland on the former Poors Common, which was then given to the National Trust in the 1960s.

Conclusion

The iron age barrow, the Roman road, the Courts, the Enclosure maps and the detailed prospectus for the Bearwood auction, together with the historic buildings and the comparatively unchanged nature of our section of the Blackwater valley, all make Finchampstead a remarkably compact and valuable subject for the study of Britain's history. It is rare to find a village that is so accessible and which simultaneously so clearly reflects events that have changed British society over the ages.

St James's Church

The ancient church, which stands on the hill at the end of the Ridges, is the Parish Church of Finchampstead and is dedicated to St James, Apostle and Martyr. The origins of the church are lost in antiquity. It stands on a reputed Roman earthworks site, and it is possible that a religious sanctuary of some kind was situated there before Roman and Saxon times. Domesday Book mentions the "Parish" but not the church itself. The first recorded date for the church and Advowson is 1120, but the stone Font (right) is dated 1030. The apse is definitely a later Norman addition, indicating that there was at least a Saxon church before. The existing civil Parish boundaries are still those of the original church parish, so the links between the history of the church and of the community as a whole are very strong.

The church is visited by many people as an historic place of refreshing calm, appreciated for its beauty and peace, as the Visitors' Book bears witness. It is a small but well-loved and well-cared-for building, symbolising the continuity of Finchampstead. It is both an ancient monument and an active Christian church in which inhabitants of the Parish take pride.

The pleasant shapes of the walls and red tile roofs of the church surmount the hill above the churchyard, which retains a character of rural seclusion. Many of the memorials and graves are of several generations of families with descendants still living in the Parish. The oldest tombstone in the churchyard is that of John Webb dated 1710, although there are older brick graves in the upper churchyard near the hollow yew tree. The date 1590 carved in stone above the grey oak door of the North Aisle Chapel marked the completion of the building of the church, although alterations were made later.

Inside the porch the list of Rectors dates back to the thirteenth century and includes four of the St John family, who were also Lords of the Manor. Just inside the church is the carved stone Saxon font, and on the wall above are the window reveals of the original rectangular flint-walled church of Saxon or early Norman times. Earl Harold owned the lands of Finchampstead before he became king, and thus, after his defeat at the Battle of Hastings, ownership passed to William the Conqueror. Half a century later the Norman apsidal chapel was added, though the chancel arch would have been lower and the windows smaller than at the present day.

In the fourteenth century an archway was cut through the nave wall on the North side for the addition of a chantry chapel. This was extended in the sixteenth century when a communicating archway was cut through the chancel wall and the 1590 doorway and East window were added. This chapel then contained an altar to the Holy Trinity. The whole building is covered with a fine mediaeval roof of substantial timbers. There was a tower at the West end, probably of stone and timber. The present brick tower was built in 1720 and incorporates a fourteenth century stone window.

The large colourful stained glass windows on the South wall of the nave picture events associated with the Epiphany. Between these windows is the



Church interior

exquisite small brass memorial to Elizabeth Blighe. The pulpit contains carved wood from the roodscreen which once spanned the chancel arch. To the right of the altar is a mediaeval piscina with carved stone pillar set in the wall for the rinsing of the Communion vessels. At the West end, hung on the light oak panelling of the organ case, is the Royal Coat of Arms, first displayed in the church in 1660 at the Restoration of the Monarchy. The modern stained glass beside the porch door depicts Finchampstead family people of an early part of this century who worshipped in the church and served king and country.

All parishioners within the boundaries of Finchampstead have "rights in the Parish Church" and are within the cure of the Rector and Benefice of Finchampstead. The population is indicated by the Parliamentary Register of Electors as 3,750, to which an estimate of the under-age population needs to be added. The Parish population is about 4,600 and so, for the purposes of the Best Kept Village Competition, Finchampstead is classed with parishes of over 4,000 population.

The Parish church is well used as a place of Christian inspiration and worship, with the three main traditional Prayer Book services of the Church of England held each Sunday: Holy Communion at 8 a.m., Mattins at 11 a.m. and Evensong at 6.30 p.m. There is a Parish Communion and a Young Families' Communion once a month. The set of six bells is rung

each Sunday by parishioners. The Prayer Book in use in the church is an edition of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer which has the Revised Psalter, pointed for chanting, bound in at the end as an aid to congregational singing.

In times past the officers of the church were also officers of the civil parish. The Churchwardens have been superseded in many responsibilities by the Parish Council, and, since 1919, in other matters by the Parochial Church Council, of which the incumbent is ex-officio chairman. Finchampstead Parochial Church Council is composed of 18 members, besides the Rector, who are elected annually by those parishioners and non-resident worshippers whose names are on the Electoral Roll, according to the provisions of the Church of England Synodical Government Measure, 1969.

The Church Council meets eight times a year and is responsible for the administration and raising of church funds. Its biggest single item of annual expenditure is £1,300 (in 1976), assessed by the Oxford Diocese and required as a contribution to Diocesan funds. As a comparison it may be noted that this is a slightly greater assessment than that expected of Bracknell parish. Managers are appointed by the Church Council for the Aided Church School in the Village, and over £100 contributed annually for the expenses of management of the school, which caters for about one hundred children. Funds are raised from a biennial Church Fete (held alternate years with the Finchampstead Memorial Park Management Committee's Fete at the Memorial Park), other social events, and by direct planned giving. The Council disburses the funds for the work and upkeep of the Parish church, and for church missions agencies and charities, to which it gives over £500 each year.

Many people take part in the care of the church and in its function as a place of spiritual activity. At Christmas and Easter every house in the parish is sent an invitation to services, with greetings from the Parish Church and Rector. There is a rota of altar flower arrangers, lesson readers and sidesmen, giving a wide base of helpers. Members of the Finchampstead Wives Club share in the care of the altar linen, and many local boys pass through the ranks of the choir. The Mothers' Union visits the church for an annual corporate service. The church school children learn to worship in the church by attending and participating in the Holy Communion service twice a term, and the Scouts and Guides attend an occasional Church Parade. Parents who bring children to Baptism are encouraged to keep in touch with their religion through the Young Families' service, at which the children help in various ways and kneel with their parents at Communion for a blessing.

Over the last twelve years a good number of re-furnishings and repairs have been carried out in the Church, some financed by Church Council funds, and others made possible by generous gifts. The external rendering has been renewed, as has the tower roof covering, and the electric lighting and heating. The organ has been overhauled and the chancel reordered with new furniture, including an altar designed and made by the local carpenter, a stall, designed by Mr Francis Stephens, an oak table and a gold-coloured fitted carpet. By Faculty granted after hearing by the Diocesan Chancellor, the choir stalls have been resited in the North aisle facing

South. The road leading up to the church has been tarmacadamed, and part of the land on the approach is currently being levelled and landscaped as a project by the Women's Institute. The liturgical beauty of the church has been enhanced by four gifts of altar frontals. In the early 1950s, the tower was struck by lightning, and again in 1965, when two of the pinnacles had to be rebuilt. The date was 25th July, St James's Day, patron saint of the church. It had been thought that the nearby trees would serve as lightning conductors, but now the tower has been fitted with a conventional conductor of its own. The roof repairs carried out externally in 1975 and internally in 1976 were undertaken by F.J. Milam and Sons Ltd. Both the father and the grandfather of the present proprietors of the firm were vergers of the church, and F.J. Milam, the founder of the firm, constructed and donated the panelled oak casing of the organ.

Longevity

Longevity has been a notable attribute of many members of St James's, such are the strength and peace that flow from the Parish community life. Lady Liddell has been a regular worshipper at the Church through half a century, and her keen interest and great generosity through the Liddell Benefaction and many other ways have greatly helped the Christian witness in Finchampstead. In 1975, Miss Denis de Vitre died at the age of 102, having attended the 11 a.m. Sunday service regularly until the last few months of her life. In the last century, the Revd Edward St John was Rector for fifty years, as the memorial tablet in the Church records. It is not unusual for forty years' service to be achieved as Parish magazine distributor or school cook.

The recent Dutch elm disease has necessitated the felling of two large elm trees in the churchyard, which had given some protection from the wind and weather to the East end of the church. The yew tree on the North-east side of the church was blown down, and the trunk found to be hollow. The yew tree on the South side is estimated to be four hundred years old. Tree foliage in Summer tends to obscure the view of the Church from the village, and it is thought that branches could perhaps be pruned or lopped to give a visual reminder of the church from the Village and Memorial Park.

The churchyard, still in use, is a model of upkeep and may fittingly be called God's Acre. The Helen Taylor Trust has collected and invested £5,000 over the five years from 1971 as an investment for the beauty of the churchyard, so that income will be available to continue the standard of maintenance now achieved. This has helped Finchampstead to win the Best Kept Village Competition for two consecutive years, 1974 and 1975.

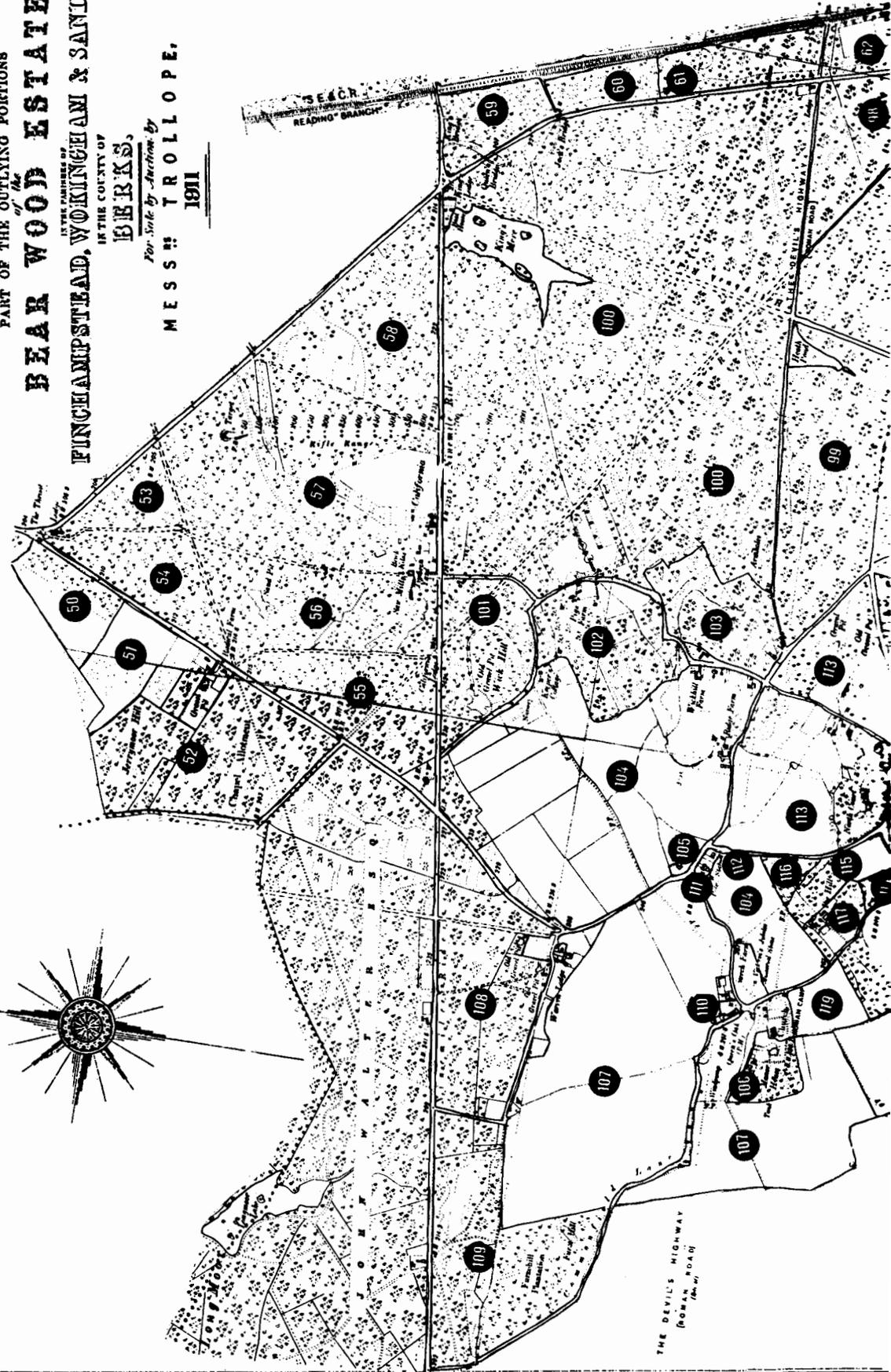
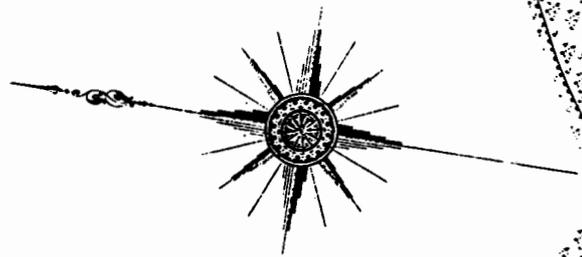
The church stands for many in Finchampstead like a spiritual castle, watching over and encouraging each generation of inhabitants, giving them identity with their forbears. If part of the failure of present-day society lies in a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity, then rural, scattered and historic Finchampstead is fortunate in its church as living evidence of the faith of ages past and as an encouragement for the ages to come.

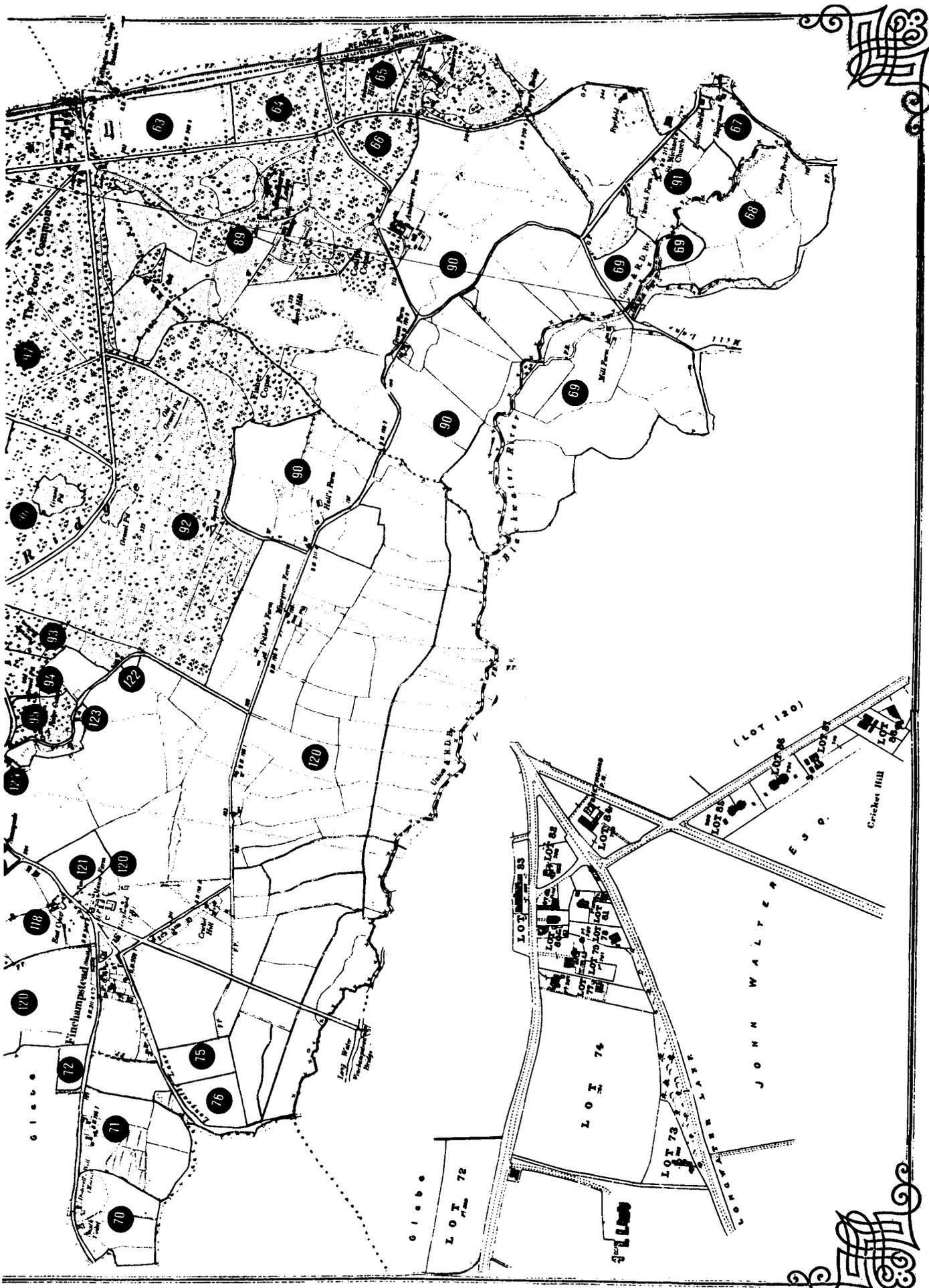


PLAN OF
PART OF THE OUTLYING PORTIONS

BEAR WOOD ESTATE,
FINCHAMPSTEAD, WOKINGHAM & SANDEURST,
IN THE PARISHES OF
IN THE COUNTY OF
BERKS.

For Sale by Auction, by
MESSRS TROLLOPE,
1911





The Bear Wood Estate Auction, 1911

In the Parish of Wokingham Without

- Lot 50 Freehold Land. 13 acres. In hand.
 Lot 51 Radical Farm. 21 acres. Let to Mr Basson at £40 p.a. Radical Cottage. $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. Let to J. Mason at 2s per week.
 Lot 52 Freehold Woodland. 45 acres. In hand.
 Lot 53 Freehold Woodland. 11 acres. In hand. Entrance Lodge let to Mr G. Macklin at 2s 6d per week.
 Lot 54 Freehold Woodland or Building Land. 19 acres. In hand.
 Lot 55 Freehold Woodland or Building Land. 30 acres. In hand. Lodge Cottage let to F. East at 3s per week.
 Lot 56 Freehold Woodland or Building Land. 39 acres. In hand. California Lodge Cottage let rent free to G. Milam as estate servant.
 Lot 57 Lot 57. Freehold Woodland or Building Land. 61 acres. Saw Mills and 49 acres in hand. Cottage let to W. Watts at 1s 6d per week. Cottage let to F. Watts at 2s per week. Cottage let to T. Brant at 1s 6d per week. Cottage let to Mrs J. Robbins at 1s 6d per week. Cottage let to D. Robbins at 1s 6d per week. Brick and Tiled Residence let to R. Munday at £20 p.a. Arable Field. 8 acres. Let to Mr Gowing at £8 p.a. Rifle Range let to Berkshire Territorial Association at £25 p.a.
 Lot 58 Freehold Woodland or Building Land. 58 acres. In hand.
 Lot 59 Freehold Woodland. 13 acres. In hand.
 Lot 60 Freehold Woodland. 23 acres. In hand.
 Lot 61 Pair of Brick and Tiled Freehold Cottages. Let to Mr Simpson and Mr White at £2.10s per quarter each.

In the Parish of Finchampstead

- Lot 62 "The Wellington Hotel" let to Mr James at £157 10s p.a. Woodland. 17 acres. In hand.

In the Parish of Sandhurst

- Lot 63 Freehold Polo Ground opposite the Wellington Hotel. 22 acres. Let to Mr J.C. James at £40 p.a.
 Lot 64 Freehold Woodland. 16 acres. In hand.
 Lot 65 The Freehold Wood known as Ambarrow Hill. 11 acres. In hand.
 Lot 66 An Enclosure of Freehold Woodland. 10 acres. In hand.
 Lot 67 Detached Freehold Villa Residence known as "Rivermead". 7 acres. Let to Mrs Chambers at £60 p.a.

In the Parish of Yateley

- Lot 68 Freehold Water Meadows. 38 acres. Let to Mr Cox at £55 p.a.
 Lot 69 Dairy Farm and Water Meadows known as Mill Farm. Creeper-clad Farm House and 34 acres let to Mr H. Butler at £66 p.a. Brick and tiled Cottage let to Mr H. Butler

at 2s 6d per week.

Water Meadows. 47 acres. Let to Mr Cobbett at £51 p.a.

In the Parish of Finchampstead

- Lot 70 Freehold Residential Property known as "South Court". $1\frac{1}{4}$ acres. Let to Lieut. Greenfield at £120 p.a. Pasture. 15 acres. Let to C. Lewis, Esq., at £11.12s.6d p.a.
 Lot 71 Freehold Cottage and Accommodation Land. 25 acres. A pair of Brick and Tiled Cottages let to M. Marshall and C. Vass at 5s per month each. A Brick and Thatched Cottage let to Miss Goddard at 1s 6d per week. Land. 24 acres. Let to C. Lewis, Esq., at £18 p.a.
 Lot 72 Freehold Accommodation Grass Land. 2 acres. Let to the Rev. R. Tomlinson at £1 p.a.
 Lot 73 Pair of Picturesque Brick and Tiled Cottages. $\frac{3}{4}$ acres. One let to Mrs Maynard at 5s per month. The other let to Mrs Milam at 1s 6d per week.
 Lot 74 Valuable Freehold Arable Land. $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres. Let to Mr Walter Holland at £6.10s p.a.
 Lot 75 Freehold Accommodation Grass Land. 7 acres. Let to Mr Thos. Dean at £7.5s p.a.
 Lot 76 Freehold Accommodation Grass Land. 7 acres. Let to Messrs Headinton & Son at £7.5s p.a.
 Lot 77 Three Freehold Cottages. Brick with Slate Roofs. Let on weekly Tenancies at a Total Rental of 8s per week.
 Lot 78 Freehold Residence "China Cottage". $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. Let to Miss Taylor at a rental of £30 p.a.
 Lot 79 The Village School and Schoolmistress's House. $\frac{1}{4}$ acre. Let to the Rector and Trustees at £25 p.a.
 Lot 80 Freehold Cottage and Shop being The Village Post Office. Let to Mr O. Goddard at £9.2s p.a.
 Lot 81 Freehold Brick and Tiled Cottage. $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. Let to Geo. Watson, Esq., at £5 p.a.
 Lot 82 Freehold Cottage Residence. $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. Let to Mr Dean at £32.15s p.a.
 Lot 83 Freehold Pretty Thatched Cottage Residence. Adjoining is Blacksmith's Shop. Let to Mr C. Attridge at £12 p.a.
 Lot 84 Fully Licensed Freehold Inn "The Greyhound". Let to Messrs Headington & Son at £45 p.a.
 Lot 85 A Pair of Freehold Cottages. $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. One is let to Mr Walter Holland at £7.16s p.a. The other is let to Mr W. Goddard at 3s per week.
 Lot 86 A Pair of Freehold Cottages. $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. Let to Messrs Attridge and Bailey at 3s and 2s weekly.
 Lot 87 A Pair of Freehold Cottages. $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. One let to Geo. Watson, Esq., at £7.16s p.a. The other let to C. Fennel at 3s per week.
 Lot 88 A Pair of Freehold Cottages. $\frac{1}{2}$ acre. One let to Mr Walter Holland at £9.2s p.a. The other let to J. White at 3s.6p per week.

In the Parish of Sandhurst

- Lot 89 Residential Property distinguished as "Sandhurst Lodge". 173 acres. The Mansion and 127 acres let to Sir William Farrer at £650 p.a.
Arable Land. 42 acres. Let to C. Lewis, Esq., at £62 p.a.
- Lot 90 Important Residential Property known as "Ambarrow". 232 acres. Includes "Groves Farm" in the parish of Sandhurst and "Hall's Farm" in the parish of Finchampstead. Let to C. Lewis, Esq., at £312.7s.6d p.a.
- Lot 91 Freehold Agricultural Holding known as "Church Farm". 46 acres. Let to Mrs H. Filbee at £51.15s p.a.

In the Parish of Finchampstead

- Lot 92 Beautiful Freehold Tract of Forest forming the South Side of the Well-known "Finchampstead Ridges". 143 acres. In hand.
- Lot 93 Freehold Cottages and Land known as Porridge Bottom. 12 acres. A pair of Brick and Tile Cottages let to Lovett and Meering at 1s.6d per week each.
A Range of Five Cottages known as "The Barracks" let to Messrs Jewell, Mulford, Jones and J. Hatt on weekly tenancies totalling £16.3s per week.
Wood and Meadows in hand.
- Lot 94 Choice Freehold Building Site. 10 acres. In hand.
- Lot 95 Freehold Residential Property known as "Ridge Cottage". 11 acres. Let to Lieut. Col. Jones at £86.10s p.a.
- Lot 96 Tract of Freehold Woodland with Gravel Pit. 38 acres. In hand.
- Lot 97 Tract of Freehold Woodland forming part of Poors Common. 77 acres. In hand.
- Lot 98 Parcel of Freehold Woodland being part of Poors Common. 28 acres. In hand.
- Lot 99 Parcel of Freehold Woodland with Ornamental Lake. 55 acres. In hand.
- Lot 100 Trace of Freehold Woodland with Ornamental Lake, known as King's Mere. 303 acres. In hand. South East corner Lodge let to Johnson at 2s.6d per week.
North East corner Lodge let to Welch, Estate Servant, free.
- Lot 101 Freehold Woodland known as Wick Hill Wood. 24 acres. In hand.
- Lot 102 Freehold Parcel of Wood and Grass Land. 26 acres. Let to G.J.M. Drake, Esq., at £3.10s p.a.
- Lot 103 Freehold Woodland. 20 acres. In hand.
Lodge let to Hunter, Rent free as Estate Servant.
- Lot 104 Agricultural Holding known as Wick Hill and Ridge Farms. 126 acres. Let to Mr Gowling at £117.15s. p.a.
Two Cottages let to Mr W. Rolfe at 2s per week. Wick Hill Cottage occupied by Keeper rent free.
- Lot 105 Freehold Cottage Residence known as "The Cottage". ½ acre. Let to Mrs Frost at £21 p.a.
- Lot 106 Freehold Residential Property known as "The Manor House". 7 acres. Let to Mrs Lethridge at £200 p.a.
- Lot 107 Freehold Agricultural Holding known as "Church Farm". 140 acres. Let to Mr Robert Ratcliffe at £140 p.a.

- "Stone Cottage" let to F. White at 2s per week.
- Lot 108 Tract of Freehold Woodland. 44 acres. In hand.
- Lot 109 Tract of Freehold Woodland. 48 acres. In hand.
- Lot 110 Fully Licensed Country Inn known as "The Queen's Oak". 3 acres. Let to Mr Pratt at £36 p.a.
- Lot 111 Three Freehold Cottages. ½ acre. Let to Mrs Goswell, Mrs White and Geo. Justice at 2s a week each.
- Lot 112 Freehold Cottage.
Let to Berkshire Constabulary at £6.10s p.a.
- Lot 113 Freehold Residential Property known as "North Court". 59 acres. Let to General Sir John Watson, V.C., G.C.B., at £250 p.a.
- Lot 114 Freehold Country Residence known as "Sunnyside". 4 acres. Possession on completion.
- Lot 115 Freehold Building Site. 7 acres.
- Lot 116 Piece of Woodland. 3½ acres.
- Lot 117 Gentleman's Cottage Residence known as "Pie Hill". 4 acres. Let to H.J. Yates, Esq., at £40 p.a.
- Lot 118 Residential Property known as "East Court". 28 acres. Let to Geo. A. Watson, Esq., at £245 p.a.
- Lot 119 Freehold Building Site. 7 acres. Let to Mr Gowling at £10 p.a.
- Lot 120 Freehold Agricultural Holding known as "Manor Farm". 424 acres. Let to Mr Walter Holland at £169.12s p.a.
Meadow ¾ acre. Let to Mr F. Gowling at £1 p.a.
Brick and Tile Cottage let to Hy Milam at 5s per month.
- Lot 121 Freehold Building Site. 7 acres. Let to Mr Walter Holland at £7 p.a.
- Lot 122 Piece of Garden Ground. ½ acre.
- Lot 123 Two Freehold Cottages. ½ acre.
One let to J. Clacy at 2s per week. The other let to A. Halfacre at £3.5s a quarter.
- Lot 124 A Pair of Brick Tiled Cottages. ¼ acre. Let to C. Vass and J. Goswell at 2s per week each.

Listed Buildings of special architectural or historic interest

Under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 buildings of special interest were listed in Categories I, II and III and at the same time further categories A and B were introduced for ancient churches and ecclesiastical buildings.

In categories I and A, all changes require the consent of the Department of the Environment. We have no Grade I buildings in Finchampstead but our Parish Church, St James's, is in the 'A' category for ecclesiastical buildings.

In Grade II, the 'listed' buildings, which may not have any major alteration without Ministry sanction, are:

*Sheet and Number
on District Council Map*

20/6	East Court
20/11	Banisters
20/11a	Roman Milestone in the garden at Banisters
20/17	West Court
20/17a	The Stables at West Court
20/21	The New Mill

The building which can most readily be seen by the general public is the New Mill, very attractively situated by the ford and footbridge over the River Blackwater.

At West Court the Stable Block (No. 20/17a on the Council list of Grade II preserved buildings) was demolished a few years ago to extend the car park. It is not clear whether it occurred due to an oversight at the Council Offices or to high-handed action by the Army, but the beautiful brick archway to the block was bull-dozed down.

In Category III, there were 16 listed buildings within the Parish, including several very attractive 17th century half-timbered houses, namely:

20/2	Garden Wall to the north of Manor House
20/3	The Queen's Oak Public House
20/4	The Church Farmhouse
21/5	Cottages opposite North Court (Poor Ridge Cottages, now one dwelling)
20/7	Baptist Chapel
20/8	The Verge
20/9	The Thatched Cottage (by the Old Forge)
20/10	Old Rectory Cottage
20/12	Oak Cottage, Reading Road
20/13	Lea Farmhouse
20/14	Shepperlands Farm
20/15	Shepperlands Cottage
20/16	Thatched Cottage, Commonfield Lane
17/18	Westwood Farm Cottage
17/19	Hogwood Farmhouse
20/20	Bullaway's Farmhouse

Of the above, Church Farmhouse was demolished some years ago and completely rebuilt.

In 1968 there was a new Act which revoked the 1947 Act and other previous legislation and a Ministry

Directive in 1974 transferred the Grade III buildings to either Grade II, in the more important cases, or they were placed on local lists kept by the District Councils. In Finchampstead, none of the Grade III buildings were upgraded to Grade II but any individual, or Society, has the right to apply to the Department of the Environment (Historic Buildings Section) for such upgrading. Buildings now on the Local List do not have the same measure of protection as Grade II buildings, where unauthorised changes can lead to fines, or imprisonment, and where grants for essential maintenance are obtainable.

A possible case for such upgrading might be the Thatched Cottage by the Old Forge, which is such a distinctive feature of the Village and has been so lovingly preserved. Of the three houses in the Village dating from before the Enclosure of Windsor Forest, this is closest to its original condition.

There are also a number of interesting cottages not included on the 1947 List which might now be put on the Local List. One such is Fair Green which, with The Verge (originally two cottages which were joined together and given a new facade) and the Thatched Cottage, are now all that remain of the pre-enclosure village centre.

The 1968 Act was then superseded by the 1971 Act, in which Section 58 empowers the Local Authority to place a Building Preservation Order on any unlisted building to prevent demolition, change of use or alteration for a period of six months, in which time the Minister of State would carry out surveys to see whether the building should be placed on the Grade I or Grade II Lists. Acts of 1971, 1972 and 1974 all deal with 'Conservation Areas' and make all buildings in such areas — whether listed or not — subject to preservation. Sonning, Ruscombe, Remenham and Wokingham Town Centre are now Statutory Conservation Areas. Finchampstead is unlikely to become a 'Conservation Area', but there is a strong case for making the former Grade III buildings — now transferred to the Local Council List — better known to the general public. Fortunately, practically all these properties are in the hands of owners who treasure their inherited beauty and who will probably safeguard them. In general, the fact that a property is 'listed' enhances its value and provides an incentive to owners to preserve the 'listed' features. Appended is a copy of the descriptive details given for the Grade A, Grade II and Grade III (now Council Listed) buildings in the Parish.

20/1 Church of St James's. Grade A Lime-washed stucco, stone dressings to windows, old tile roof. The church consists of chancel, N. chapel, nave, porch and W. tower and was originally Norman. The brick W. tower is dated 1720, 3 stages, moulded plinth, strings, corner buttresses, plain parapet with pyramidal filials on angles; the belfry windows have brick lattice tracery. The chancel has an apse with altered windows, a Norman piscina and aumbry and a flat timber ceiling. The north chapel, dated 1590, is approached from the chancel by a flat arch opening and has a 19th C opening to the nave. The chancel

arch is 14th–15th C and the nave has a timber vaulted roof with tie beams. Above the N door is a small Norman window and traces of the Norman S door can be seen in the wall. Most windows in the church are perpendicular. The bowl of the fine Norman font is decorated with diagonal roll and bead ornament. The organ is in the tower arch in a gallery with a pointed panel of the Royal Arms of 1660 above.

Externally the N. Chapel is of similar materials, the door to LH on N front is original. The lintel of the four-centred arched opening has T 1590 H carved on it. The windows are 2-light with cusped beades under drip moulds. The church was restored in 1858 and again in 1914.

Monuments: in the N chapel is a plain altar tomb to Richard Palmer of East Court, 1670. On the N side of the chancel arch is a brass tablet to Henry Hynde, Gent, Lord of the Manor of Finchampstead East Court, purveyor to King Henry VII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, King Philipe and Queen Elizabeth of their stables, 1580. A small brass to Elizabeth Blighe, 1630. The church stands on a mound with fine views to the south from the churchyard.

Note: The Manor House is a 19th C building, perhaps on the site of a farmhouse or Rectory. The only manors in Finchampstead parish were East Court and West Court.

20/2 Garden Wall to N of Manor House. Grade III. 17th C brick with weathered coping and doorway at east end with double four centred arch. To north of present house. Remains of former building.

20/3 The Queen's Oak. Grade III. Late 18th C–early 19th C, two storeys, colour-washed roughcast, 1st floor string and moulded eaves, old tile roof, flanking chimneys. South-east front has triple gabled section to LH, taller outer gables flanking small central gable, LH gable has one upper sash window over coupled sashes on ground floor, RH has 1 bay of sash windows and centre bay has small upper light over gabled porch with ogee headed opening and ledged door. 2 bay wing to RH set back. The porch was originally the church porch.

21/5 Cottages opposite North Court (Poor Ridge Cottages). Grade III. Late 18th–early 19th C, two storeys, roughly cast, old tile roof, flanking chimneys. East front has 3 bays of 2-light wood casement windows and three doors in wood lattice porches.

20/6 East Court. Grade II. 16th–17th C much altered, two storeys and attic, part colour washed brick, part colour washed tile-hanging with course of shaped tiles, probably on timber framing, tile roof, large rectangular chimney stack to NW with some old brickwork. Main section of north-east front has large spreading chimney stack to LH and 2 bays to RH with 20th C gabled dormers over two sash windows on 1st floor, the LH of which is over a half-glazed door in wood Doric pedimented porch roughly in centre. The RH upper window is a tile-hung section and is over two irregular windows on ground floor. To RH on main section is a two-storey lower wing with gable of 1 bay to RH to LH of the gable is a

timber-framed upper section and irregular windows. South-east front, 18th C has 3 bays, windows mainly 19th C. The Hall has 18th C panelling, and a staircase with turned barley-sugar balustrade and moulded handrail is also 18th C.

20/7 Baptist Chapel. Grade III. Early 19th C red brick with vitreous plinth, string at base of pediment, eaves string and window arches, slate roof. North front pedimented with bull's eye window in tympanum, 3 bays on ground floor, outer 5-pane arched radiating windows flanking arched central door in 19th C porch.

20/8 The Verge. Grade III. Early 19th C, two storeys, colour-washed stucco, brick dentil eaves, hipped old tile roof, symmetrical chimneys. North front has 2 bays sash windows with venetian shutters flanking rectangular pedimented porch, brick dentil eaves, 6-panelled central door flanked by small niches, and 2-pane windows in sides of porch. Interior: Early 19th C. Railings to road.

20/9 The Thatched Cottage (by the Old Forge). Grade III. 17th–18th C, two storeys, timber-framed, colour-washed plaster, creeper-clad, thatched roof, flanking chimneys. South front has 3 bays, 2-light early 19th C wood casement windows and ledged central door in protecting porch.

20/10 Old Rectory Cottage. Grade III. 17th C, two storeys, timber-framed with colour-washed brick infilling, old tile roof carried down over lean-to on west side, central chimney. North gable end has 1 bay of 3-light leaded casement windows with similar 2-light in end of lean-to. Remainder irregular with leaded casement windows and door on west side.

20/11 Banisters. Grade II. A 15th–16th C timber-framed building altered 1683 and early 19th C, two storeys and attic. The timber-framed house was U-shaped with wings running north. In the 17th C alteration, one bay was added at the west end and the south front and gables to east and west were faced with brickwork. This part has plinth 1st floor string, brick dentil string over 1st floor windows and a band of brickwork below eaves, coped gable ends, relaid old tile roof, two symmetrical chimneys with square shafts and modern chimney to east of porch.

The south front has 5 bays, large segmental headed 3-light leaded casement windows in wood frames, projecting central brick porch with string over 1st floor windows carried round, and hipped roof. On ground floor is a three-centred arched opening, moulded brick springers and key block, flanked by brick pilasters with caps, and above on 1st floor is a semi-circular 3-light moulded and mullioned oriel window with flat lead roof and ogee brick base with date stone at front. ("John and Hannah Banister"). The east and west gable ends have 1 bay of casement windows, the attic blocked, under drip moulds of half round bricks, the ground floor window at W end has an early 19th C Gothic cusped light. The north front has outer original timber framed gables with the space between filled in early 19th C by section with two

smaller gables. The windows of this front are irregular and mostly early 19th C. The interior has stop chamfered beams and a late 17th C-early 18th C painted staircase with barley sugar balustrade. The farm buildings include a 17th C barn of 7 bays, weather-boarded with old tile roof and central entrance, and a similar 3-bay granary on saddle stones.

20/11a Roman Milestone in Garden of Banisters. Grade II. A pyramidal stone brought from the Devil's Highway to N.E. of the house.

20/12 Oak Cottage, Reading Road. Grade III. 17th C altered, two storeys, timber-framed, colour-washed brick in-filling, thatched roof. South front has 3 bays, 3-light lattice leaded casement windows and central glazed door with small flanking lights.

20/13 Lea Farmhouse. Grade III. 17th C altered, two storeys, timber framed with colour washed brick in-filling, old tile roof half hipped to RH, chimney with four square shafts to RH of centre. South-east front has 2 bays of 19th C wood 3-light casement windows. Later extension to LH, colour washed roughcast with hipped old tile roof, ledged door with small window over and 2-light casement to LH on ground floor.

20/14 Shepperlands Farm. Grade III. 17th C much altered, two storeys, timber-framed with colour washed brick in-filling, old tile roof. Road front irregular with lattice-paned casement windows of various sizes and chimney to RH. North-east front has two gables, 17th C, timber-framed to RH, 18th C part of colour washed brick to LH, 1 bay in gable, remainder irregular.

20/15 Shepperlands Cottage adjoining copse to N. Grade III. 17th C, two storeys, timber framed with colour washed brick in-filling, old tile roof, chimney to LH of centre. North-east front has 2 bays of wood casement windows with 19th C lights and 6-pannelled flush central door in corrugated iron porch.

20/16 Thatch Cottage, Commonfield Lane. Grade III. A small 17th C cottage, two storeys, timber-framed, colour-washed brick in-filling, thatched roof. Irregular casement windows, some lights leaded, and ledged door.

20/17 West Court. Grade II. Originally 17th C on older site, altered 18th C and later, two storeys and attic, brick, plinth, 1st floor string, moulded and coved eaves cornice, painted quoins on S front, hipped tile roof. West front has main section with central projecting two storey brick porch, string and eaves carried round, hipped roof with upper sash window over a wide 6-pannelled double door with arched radiating fanlight. The porch is flanked by dormers, 1 bay to LH, upper sash window over a 6-light 19th C stone mullioned and transomed window, and a chimney stack to RH of porch. To LH of main block is a 19th C-early 20th C three-

storey extension, brick-tile roof and sash windows. South front with bonded quoins, moulded brick 1st floor string and similar eaves and cornice, has 5 bays of wide tall 18th C sash windows with a small dormer window over each bay. East front has 3 bays similar to south front and 19th C-early 20th C extensions to RH. On the axis of the south front is a long avenue of oak trees.

17/18 Westwood Farm Cottage. Grade III. 18th C refronting of older cottage, altered, two storeys, colour-washed brick, old tile roof hipped to LH on NE front, irregular chimneys. North-east front has 3 bays, two semi-dormers to RH, the LH of which is in the centre and is over the ledged door with pediment hood on cut brackets. All windows sliding casements. South-east front has 1st floor string and dentil eaves and 3 irregular bays of sliding casements.

17/19 Hogwood Farmhouse. Grade III. 17th C two storeys, rectangular timber framing with straight corner bracers and colour-washed brick in-filling hipped old tile roof. South front has two upper 2-light leaded casement windows near centre, the LH over door on ground floor under gabled porch which is flanked by 19th C, 3-light wood casements, one leaded 2-light in RH corner. West gable end has 1 bay, a casement window over door.

20/20 Bullaway's Farmhouse. Grade III. 17th C-18th C one-storey and attic, colour-washed brick, thatched roof, chimneys in centre and to RH. Road front has one 2-light casement to LH with thatch cut round over a 2-light casement window and ledged door on ground floor, small 2-light casement in RH corner. Lower barn or stable extension to LH weather board with thatched roof, 3 bays with central entrance.

20/21 The New Mill. Grade II. 15th C, 16th C and later, part two storeys, part one storey and attic, part timber-framed with colour-washed brick in-filling, part colour-washed brick, old tile roof, mill half hipped, large chimney stack at end of house. North front has house to LH upper part timber framed, chimney to RH, of centre with door under small porch in RH corner and one upper window over, one small window in timber framed part and 3-light 19th C casement windows. West front of mill building has gabled dormer with modern casement window to LH of centre, a door to RH of centre and a modern 3-light casement on the ground floor. The RH part of this section is built over the mill stream which runs through two brick arches. To RH adjoining and on the further bank of the mill stream is a higher section of painted weather boarding with half hipped old tile roof.

(Note: This is the official description. In fact, the RH part of the New Mill has now been extended to form a restaurant.)



Heath Pond, in Simon's Wood

The ford at New Mill



Footpath and Bridleway Network

The Parish of Finchampstead is only 4.5 miles long from East to West and 2 miles broad from North to South, yet it boasts 35 footpaths and bridleways which total 16 miles in length. This remarkable network enables the residents and the hundreds of visitors from the neighbouring areas of Wokingham, Bracknell, Camberley and Yateley, to enjoy access to one of the few unspoiled stretches of countryside in the district.

Furthermore, the Finchampstead paths are a vital link in the chain of paths which forms the Wokingham Footway of 35 miles round walk and any interruption in the Parish's paths could destroy this valuable amenity.

The Devil's Highway, the major Roman Road that connected London with Bath, via Silchester, and which runs straight through Finchampstead from East to West, is still walkable along many stretches, although, unfortunately, there are now several gaps where private land denies access. As many as six footpaths meet on the top of the man-made mound where St James's Church stands. As they originate from the need as long ago as Saxon times to link the church with every corner of the Parish, they now provide excellent access to the different landscapes that are a feature of the Parish.

The church was the focal point for the Bigshotte Walke, that the Finchampstead Society organised in June, 1976. The event successfully fulfilled two main objectives: to raise funds for publication of this document and to introduce more people to the wonders of the Finchampstead footpath network. The route of this Walke was devised as two separate halves, each 6.5 miles long and each beginning and ending at the church. By starting centrally and touching most of the boundaries of the Parish, it included views of the magnificent rolling farmlands and pastures, it took in the Blackwater River and the mixed forests of beech, oak, birch and conifers in the Eastern section of the Parish, and it rounded the delightfully located Heath Pond.

The Finchampstead walks offer a remarkable variety for so compact an area. They are perfect for bird-watching, plant and wildlife studies, fresh air and exercise as well as for the sheer enjoyment of views of Berkshire and Hampshire. Major Brian Shone, who devised the Bigshotte Walke, has produced a book, *The Finchampstead Heritage*, that serves as a guide for five historic walks, covering respectively: Ancient Finchampstead, Domesday Finchampstead, East Court Keepers Ground, West Court Keepers Ground and The Glebe Walk. These vary in length from 1.5 to 10 miles and take in notable buildings, monuments and sites of historic events.

The 140 acres of National Trust property in Finchampstead are criss-crossed with paths, many leading down from the heather plateau where the NT stone gives distances to places as the crow flies.

Official footpaths and bridleways

The Berkshire County Council Definitive Map marks

all footpaths and bridleways recognised at County level. The Parish paths are shown on the centre pages. Under the Countryside Act of 1968, County Councils were instructed to review their Definitive Maps of Right of Way every five years. The review scheduled for January 1977 caused concern in Finchampstead, for several CRBs (public paths) were to be re-classified as "Byway open to all traffic". Some of these actually crossed National Trust property and reached Heath Pond — favourite walking areas. The Finchampstead Society arranged a public meeting in the Memorial Hall on December 9, 1976, so that these changes could be openly debated.

A great deal of valuable data came to light at the meeting, the speakers including Peter Keith-Lucas, the Berkshire County Council solicitor specialising in Rights of Way, Mrs McPhail of the Committee for the Preservation of Rural England, Brigadier Orr, Chairman of the Ridges Committee of the National Trust, Robert Jacob of the Ramblers Association and Major Brian Shone, the Parish's local historian. Those points that will be helpful in broad terms during any future consideration of Rights of Way are reviewed here.

Under the 1947 Countryside Act, there were three classifications for paths:

1. Footpaths
2. Bridleways — usable on foot, horse or pedal cycle
3. Roads used as Public Paths (referred to frequently as CRBs).

There has been confusion over the third category and the 1968 Act required County Councils to re-classify all CRBs either as a "Bridleway" or as a "Byway Open to All Traffic". The Councils are given three criteria on which to base this reclassification. A path has to be declared a Byway Open to All Traffic if it meets the following three tests:

1. Are there existing vehicular rights?
2. Is the path physically suitable for vehicles?
3. If it were downgraded to a bridleway, would there be undue hardship to former users of the road?

A point stressed by the Act, is that 'suitable for vehicles' means suitable for any one motor vehicle, so that a CRB will be designated a Byway Open to All Traffic if a motor cycle is capable of using it and if there are existing vehicular rights.

Objections to these proposed classifications (and there are reviews every five years by statute) have to be made to the Regional Controller of Planning at the Department of the Environment at Charles House in London, W4. However, if a path meets all the three criteria for upgrading and yet local residents are concerned about the damage to the amenity of the land crossed by the path, due to noise or danger to ramblers, then the most effective line of action is to ask the Wokingham District Council to make a Road Traffic Regulation Order. This can be phrased to prohibit motor cycles or to stop all through traffic, so that the classification remains as a road, but the character of the walk is preserved. In the same way, a Regulation Order can prohibit the riding of horses or bicycles if it is deemed essential to restrict a road

for ramblers only. These Regulation Orders always permit the landowner to use the paths for access and the landowner can give permission for essential service vehicles, such as fire engines to fight a forest blaze, to use the restricted roads.

The misuse of a path by prohibited vehicles is, however, not a prosecutable offence. For redress against culprits, the landowner has to bring a civil action. ('Trespassers will be prosecuted' signs are bluff. The landowner has to sue.) To render improper use of paths an indictable offence, the district council would have to introduce a By-law to that effect, so that the miscreant would then literally be breaking a law. It is rare for councils to do this, and Wokingham has no such By-laws.

Any path appearing on the Definitive Map of Rights of Way published by the County Council is unquestionably open to the public. This does not mean that no other paths have public Rights of Way. Proof of unhindered public usage for 20 years (or blatantly obvious rights for less than that period) can result in the addition of the path to the Definitive Map. If the Council judges at a hearing that there is no Right of Way, then the Council cannot re-open that case unless new evidence is produced that was not in existence or unavailable of access at the time of the hearing. Although old maps show that there was a public Right of Way on paths 37 (now 34) and 38, linking Jubilee Hill, Rhododendron Corner and the Devil's Highway at Heath Pond, the closure at Armholes (now Blencathra) was accepted by the Council at a hearing in 1953 and these maps (it is claimed) cannot be used to make the Council reconsider the case, as the maps were available in the public archives at the time of the hearing. They are not deemed to be 'new evidence', even though they were not referred to at the hearing itself.

It is enlightening to learn that proof of disuse of a path does not remove the Right of Way over it. 'Once a highway, always a highway' is a maxim at law. If a landowner wishes to have a path removed from the Definitive Map on the grounds of disuse, he has to ensure that the County Council issues an order removing the Right of Way and this would normally be done only if the path evidently serves no function whatsoever due to changed circumstances since its original use.

The County Council officials responsible for the Five Yearly Review cannot personally inspect every footpath in the county each time and they rely upon feedback of information from local amenity groups, such as the Finchampstead Society, in order to ensure that upgrading or downgrading of paths, according to standard of maintenance and amenity value, is carried out wisely. On page 68 there is a reproduction of the letter that the Finchampstead Society sent to the Department of the Environment, in which the Committee gave its view on the proposed amendments and protested against the upgrading of some bridleways that, it thought, would result in a loss of peace and quiet in the National Trust forests.

Footpath usage

There is no doubt that the Finchampstead paths are a great source of interest and recreation and that they are very well used. The Finchampstead Society

organised a spot count at three points in the Parish on Sunday, December 28, 1975, between the hours of 2.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. It was cold and damp day, but in that single hour the following usage was recorded:

<i>Footpath</i>	<i>Revised Path Nos.</i>	<i>Walkers</i>	<i>No. of children</i>
Moor Green Farm —			
Yateley	17	15	
Heath Pool	34/27	80	17
Church	6/8	5	2
		100	19
Total in one hour			

The church paths, of course, carry many more people closer to the times of services.

Responsibility for maintenance

Landowners are responsible for the upkeep of stiles on paths that cross their land and they are prohibited from causing any obstruction. The County Council can on occasions provide free stile kits through the Parish Council to replace worn and dangerous units, but does not supply labour for erecting them. Assistance can often be obtained from volunteer organisations, such as the Ramblers Association, the local Scouts and the schools, and this source of labour can be very useful if properly supervised. The County Council's responsibility also stretches to maintenance of the surface of registered paths, coping with overgrowth, footbridges and any deteriorating conditions that inhibit walking. Naturally, the walkers themselves have to be vigilant enough to report conditions that demand attention and to see that the essential work is carried out by the responsible person, for councils and landowners are increasingly careful of the time and money they allocate to this type of work.

The Finchampstead Parish Council has the power to maintain paths if it so wishes, but has no bounden duty or responsibility in this respect.

Riding damage

There is a good and well-used network of bridleways that can be used by horse riders, but considerable damage is done by horses to footpaths, especially on The Ridges National Trust property. Hooves erode the light soil over a wider area than the feet of walkers and go deeper, making it impossible for the grass or heather to take a new hold. Where the ground is particularly damp as at the foot of The Ridges, riding turns paths into quagmires, impassable on foot. Some thought should be given to ways in which riding and walking can be more effectively separated for the benefit of both forms of recreation.

The National Trust Committee responsible for the property in the Parish is averse to banning riding from the whole of its territory and has, instead, attempted to keep riders off the more popular recreational area on the heather common at the top. However, notices stating "No Horses" are soon vandalised and the riders who gallop along The Ridges are probably not aware that this is against the wishes of the NT. Local riding schools have been willing to co-operate, but there are many riders who come as individuals from the surrounding areas.

Impact of development

Generally, a planning authority should consider the effect on a footpath or bridleway when making a planning permission decision, but development cannot be stopped purely on the grounds that it will interfere with a footpath. Paths cannot be diverted or closed without an order from the local authority and, even then, any change to a right of way has to be advertised in advance, giving an opportunity for objections to be raised. If development work to take place alongside a path is likely to create a danger to adults and children using the path, then the developer is required to fence the path for the duration of the work. Again, walkers have to be on their guard, for often in neighbouring areas ugly wire-netting fences have been left after the work has been completed, making the walk more like an exercise parade in a prison than a countryside ramble.

Courtesy Paths

A Courtesy Path is one where a landowner grants access without legal right of way and is able to withdraw access at will. It would, for example, be an excellent addition to the local amenities if a courtesy path could be offered as a River Walk along the Blackwater South of Cricket Hill, possibly to join up with the footpath at Moor Green Farm (No. 17). This registered path, it should be noted, is to be transposed a few hundred yards West, as it links with the footbridge over the river to Yateley and, when the next phase of the gravel digging is started, it would, in its present position, stop short at a sheet of water.

Signposting

During the last few months, the footpaths have been re-posted with new, green metal signs. Unfortunately, even these have been broken in several locations. Work on devising a more vandal-proof sign would be welcome.

Tamarak Larch and Keeper's Cottage — where there is a large chimney breast for smoking venison haunches and pig and badger hams. (Wheatlands Drive)



It is suggested that additional signs might be useful to indicate the points at which the Finchampstead paths link with the Wokingham Footway. Ramblers would also be further assisted if a copy of the Parish footpath map could be placed in a frame in prominent positions, possibly at the Memorial Hall, the National Trust car park on Wellingtonia Avenue and California cross-roads.

Condition of existing paths

Two members of the Finchampstead Society, Helen Taylor and Robert Jacob (who is a member of the Ramblers Association), carried out a survey of the footpaths in the Parish in 1975. They reported on the conditions of a number of paths that needed attention. On the whole, they were favourably impressed by the footpath access within the Parish and the good condition of the majority of paths, but the following notes are reproduced here as a guide to the type of neglect and the action to counteract it.

Path No. (See map on centre pages)

- 1 Extremely boggy at Farley Hill end at junction with Swallowfield 24.
- 1a Require signposts, stiles and barbed wire clearing.
- & 1b
- 6 Stiles between 6 & 5 and 5 and Whitehorse Lane are bad. Horses in 5 have access to the path.
- 8 Between Fleet Hill and Wheatlands Drive recently re-signposted. East side of Wheatlands Drive almost impassable owing to mud at bottom of field. Parish Council looking into ownership of this land. Think it belongs to Agates Meadow. Top end by Manor Beacon very muddy owing to horses, but this is now closed to horses as it is not a bridleway.
- 9 Church Path. Much used and needs repairs to surface as in the hollows the weather has worn deep ruts causing very slippery mud. Offers have been made to supply some gravel and this might be suitable for voluntary labour to spread it.
- 10 Requires three stiles as gates are not easy to open and unsafe to climb. The landowner has agreed to erect one stile in the middle. Needs signposting at both ends.
- 11 End near Warren Lane often water-logged.
- 13 Bridge over deep ditch was inadequate but the Council have now renewed this and fixed a handrail as well.
- 15 Apt to be very muddy at Wick Hill end.
- 17 Moor Green Farm. Application to move this path has been granted. Present stile very shaky.
- 29 Longwater Lane — Fleet Farm. First part very boggy in winter as ditches need attention. Stile still has barbed wire over it. Farmer unco-operative.
- 33 Longwater Lane to Blackwater River. Unusable as access to river is blocked.
- 30-39 Impassable on foot owing to sewage overflow. Parish Council know about this and consider path should be allowed to lapse as there are alternatives.

The Landscape

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the distinctive qualities of the visual setting of Finchampstead. A sense of community is achieved when there is a balance between the different types of buildings, the people who occupy them, the landscape setting and the open spaces.

Architectural character

A look at the map of Finchampstead will show that the greater part of the central area of the Parish is farmland. Development to date has been mainly related to two centres: the older area known as "The Village" and the land on either side of Nine Mile Ride to the north. Elsewhere, new or renovated houses have occupied infill areas between existing buildings. However, the nature of the farmland and wooded copses and the disposition of the housing groups together make up a community scene which is essentially rural. The Village itself, the adjacent verges and the Memorial Playing fields, offering views to the hill-top church and agricultural land, provide an agreeable village character. This is enhanced by the Memorial Hall, which is used daily for a wide variety of community activities.

Most of the buildings in Finchampstead are rural domestic, mainly 2-storey and built at the beginning of this century. Items of interest are the cornhouses, raised on stilts to avoid rats and floods. There are a number of buildings of special architectural or historic interest in the Parish, many listed under Categories II and III under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. St James's Church is an 'A' Category ecclesiastical building. (See section on "Listed Buildings".) Brick is the predominant building material, but many houses have rendered finishes. The traditional buildings are well preserved, some half-timbered with thatched roofs. Where extensions have been built and renovations made, the character of the original buildings has been maintained. A particularly effective renovation programme was recently carried out on the council houses that form part of The Village.

In the case of new houses, the siting in infill or wooded areas and the frequent use of traditional materials has meant that there has been no design conflict with the surroundings. There has been a continuity of architectural detailing in stone walling, timber fencing and paving. The farm buildings are of the traditional type. Where newer materials have been used, weathering has resulted in autumnal finishes, blending with the landscape. The roads within Finchampstead are country type, skirted by hedges or trees, usually with a pavement on one side only. There is no street lighting system, which would conflict with the rural character. Paths are generally tarmac or brick hoggin, which can be considered aesthetically preferable to concrete.

In 1974 and 1975, Finchampstead was twice judged the best kept village of over 4,000 inhabitants in the competition organised by the Berkshire Association of Local Councils (and was therefore ineligible to compete in 1976). It is relevant to quote from the

judges' marking sheet for 1975:

"A great deal of care has been put into the upkeep of this village, resulting in an immaculate appearance", and:
"There is a very marked community spirit in this village".

Landmarks and special locations

A visual review of Finchampstead, as distinct from the study of maps, shows a variety of environmental settings that together give the Parish an overall identity. The following notes were made by Patrick Garnett, an architect and currently Chairman of the Finchampstead Society, after he had led some treks round the Parish by members of the Society in January 1976.

The Village The row of houses, the school and the post office that border the ancient centre of the settlement are known collectively as "The Village" and they typify the village nature of Finchampstead. The council houses on this road have been effectively modernised, retaining their original character. The nearby houses have colour-wash finish, also brick, half-timbering and, occasionally, thatched roofs, and together make up an interesting village scene. The playing fields on the opposite side of the road are an important extension of The Village and from them walks open up, with splendid views, to the countryside surrounding St James's Church. The fields were purchased for the Parish in 1947 as a memorial and thanksgiving for victory after the Second World War.

The Memorial Hall and Sports Club, with its recently completed extension, are a centre for community activities. The pitches, tennis courts and children's playground provide a popular activity area for a cross-section of the local population and for members from surrounding areas. These fields also constitute the largest open space of common land serving the Parish.

Attention must be paid to the method of landscaping the banks and hedges at the junction with the road through The Village, to ensure that the open fields relate and lead on from the road and the line of Village buildings.

St James's Church and surroundings The Church of St James always has been and still is a focal point for Finchampstead. It is situated on high ground in the very heart of the Parish and commands magnificent views over surrounding areas. It is of great historical significance and also makes an important contribution to Finchampstead as a rural community. Nearby, following the medieval pattern, a local inn is sited, called The Queen's Oak. The space between the Church and the pub is a well-defined space, nicely related to the nearby row of houses.

The Memorial Cross Outstanding panoramic views are afforded from this point towards the Blackwater Valley. The only detraction is the foreground screen

of elms, of which about half have died from Dutch Elm Disease. A view is now possible of the first of the new lakes on the Hampshire side of the river, resulting from the gravel extraction programme. The lakes are already attracting a new set of wildlife and it is hoped that the special landscaping plans for this site will be carefully followed up. The Memorial Cross provides one of the few public places where such views over the whole valley can be enjoyed. Recent road and footpath improvements and maintenance of the road-side hedges have contributed to this attractive amenity.

Finchampstead Ridges The National Trust property affords outstanding views, mostly contained within tree groupings. There are splendid secondary views from and to surrounding areas, such as Dell Road. The young pine and birches grown in recent years have concealed some of the more obvious views from the heath-top, but supporters of the National Trust have been giving their voluntary labour to clear some of the less mature trees as part of a Management Plan. (See later section.)

There is concern about the line of cars parked the whole length of the hard shoulder most weekends and holidays, but this is probably a Highways matter, for the hard shoulder lies outside the NT terrain, the boundary being the ditch. The official Finchampstead Ridges car park was built in 1973, about one quarter of a mile down Wellingtonia Avenue. It is well designed and concealed in woodland. It won a NT prize for its conception, but it is too far away from the top of The Ridges to affect the parking there. It is used much more by visitors to Simon's Wood, which is also National Trust property.

Wellingtonia Avenue The views up and down Wellingtonia Avenue, which leads from The Ridges to Crowthorne roundabout, are very impressive. The Wellingtonias, planted about 1863, are giant redwoods and are still growing taller, even though they have reached a height of 108 ft and a spread of 30 ft each. There are two lines, with a total of 103 trees in all, with 80 ft between the lines and 60 ft from tree to tree. This spacing has allowed each of the originals to develop as a specimen. There is a footpath on one side of the Avenue only, helping to retain a rural character in spite of the main road.

New Mill Although called New Mill, it is one of the oldest in the country. It is situated on the River Blackwater on the very boundary of Berkshire and Hampshire and is close to the site where an even earlier mill existed at the time of the Domesday Book. New Mill is the subject of a preservation order and has been recently extended as a restaurant in keeping with the character of the original buildings. The surrounding area is a local beauty spot. The ford can be crossed and is a favourite spot for fishing.

Nine Mile Ride Nine Mile Ride is a very straight road, built by Jacobean soldiers to keep them employed after the wars. It was reputed to be the convenient length of ride for Queen Anne. It has attracted lineal development, but, for the most part, the housing is set back within copses. There is only limited potential for future development on the

South side, which is bordered by agricultural land. On the North side, however, there is no clear demarcation and no natural Parish boundary, as Nine Mile Ride continues into Wokingham Without and East-hampstead. The strong landscaping character of the woodland in the Parish's section, the recreational character of "California in England" and Longmoor Lake, plus the presence of nursery gardens, identify this area of Finchampstead as part of a rural community, and any future development should take this strongly into account. There has been a tendency on the part of developers recently to think of Nine Mile Ride as a site for purely low-cost, mass housing projects. This attitude could destroy the balance of the community and split the Parish into two distinctly different areas. (See the section on Housing.)

California Cross-roads This is the natural shopping centre for the Finchampstead end of Nine Mile Ride. The area has limited space for further development, but there is scope for improvement of the present scene there. The site is rather untidy at present because of the proliferation of badly sited signs, the lack of screening and the unimaginative and poorly maintained forecourts of some of the shops. Several of the trees have preservation orders, but this has not prevented the mutilation of one mature oak, which required pruning but which was ruthlessly cut back and is now in danger of dying.

Short-stop parking has been well organised near Edgington's store, but not at all the corners. The official car park is not so obvious or readily accessible behind the shops on the South East corner. The cross-roads is an important and busy junction and, as the only shopping centre within the Parish, it is obvious that it will have greater and greater demands placed upon it as the population increases. The utmost care should be taken to ensure that future planning recognises that these shopping facilities should relate to the needs of a rural area and the special problems associated with serving a fairly widespread clientele.

Mobile Home site, California in England This site is set back from the main road and approached by a winding made-up road. It is owned by Wokingham Council, which provides parking and toilet facilities. There is only a small adjacent piece of land for future development. The site is well-maintained and not in conflict with its surroundings. Nearby there is Longmoor Lake and a picnic area, with an entertainment building, California Revival, leased from the District Council. Another mobile home site, Robinson Crusoe, attractively situated at the Western end of Nine Mile Ride around a small lake was to be closed down, but has won a reprieve.

The Army Apprentices College This is in the North-West corner of the Parish, part of the Arborfield Garrison, which is a major source of employment for residents. Despite the number of pre-fabricated army buildings, the overall aspect relates well to its rural environment. There are extensive playing fields and individual houses in attractively landscaped surroundings. Care has been taken over the maintenance of the buildings and the site.

Eversley Bridge From Eversley, Finchampstead is

approached over Eversley Bridge. The Tally Ho pub, with its large and attractive forecourt area, is an appropriate scene to welcome new arrivals to the Parish. However, the corner is subject to heavy traffic, especially lorries, and, with a village shop and petrol station there, it is a busy and tricky area for motorists or pedestrians.

Farmland

Finchampstead's farmland, comprising such a big proportion of the total area of the Parish, determines the nature of the whole environment. The farmland lies very much in the heart of the Parish, where it is bordered by woodland. Longmoor Copse is to the North, Lea Copse to the West and Fleet Copse to the South. The result is a balanced, and beautiful, rural setting with open fields sheltered by wooded areas.

There is unfortunately no clear division today between land that can be developed for residential use and Green Belt, as was anticipated in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The Agricultural Act of 1947, however, still provides legal protection for the countryside used for farming. Equally, copses, individual trees and hedgerows can be protected by the implementation of powers vested with the County Council.

Conclusions and recommendations

Finchampstead has maintained a definite village character during its steady organic growth of population from 661 people in 1901 to 4,685 in 1975. The bulk of the land in the Parish is either farmland, wooded copses dating from the time when the area was part of Windsor Forest, or National Trust property, maintained as a valuable recreational amenity. There is, therefore, very limited potential for new building.

As with all living communities, change is constantly taking place. If this is carefully controlled, the mix can improve the flavour. The present variety of landscape and architecture achieves a desirable balance for a community. Improvements and refinements are always required, but these are most effective within the overall pattern that has been developed over recent years, which is controlled residential infill.

There is a need for a positive programme of tree care and of maintenance of hedgerows and for careful attention to the landscaping wherever change is planned.

In the book *New Lives, New Landscapes*, Nan Fairbrother writes: "Proper land-use planning is applied human ecology". This is a new enlightened concept of planning as the conscious control of environment. John Weller, in his book on rural planning, writes: "Amenity can be judged only as the balanced use of all land." This particular approach — considering the whole environment as an integrated unit — is especially valuable for a community such as Finchampstead, where the New Town Planning philosophy would not be appropriate.

As far as the heritage of Finchampstead is concerned, we cannot do better than recall the recommendations set down by Berkshire County Council Planning Department in support of European Architectural Heritage Year, 1975:

1. To awaken the interest of the European people in their common architectural heritage
2. To protect and enhance buildings and areas of architectural and historic interest
3. To conserve the character of old towns and villages
4. To assure for ancient buildings a living role in contemporary society.

The National Trust's Management Plan

History of the National Trust properties

Finchampstead Ridges were part of the estate of the second John Walter who lived at Bearwood and also owned East Court Manor. In 1863, he created the road over the Ridges leading to the Avenue, flanked by the 103 Wellingtonia Pines (*Sequoia Gigantes*). John Walter, who was the owner of *The Times* and also sat as one of the Members of Parliament for the Royal County of Berkshire, died in 1894. His son, the third John Walter who lived at East Court, moved to Bearwood and, in 1913, the outlying parts of the Bearwood Estate, including The Ridges, were sold.

In order to preserve the very attractive 60-acre open space and woodland on the South side of the road across The Ridges, the local inhabitants raised the necessary sum of money. A subscription list was sent round and many local well-known landowners contributed. These included Mr Hautonveille Cope, chairman of the Parish Council who lived at Finchampstead Place, Mr Owen Goddard of the Post Office, now known as the Verge, Mr George Watson of East Court, Colonel Jones of Ridge

Cottage, now known as New Place, and Sir John Watson. The villagers in those days played a large part in the purchase of the land. According to the late Sir Henry Watson, son of General Sir John Watson, they brought pennies, sixpences and even shillings, which were no small item in those days of meagre agricultural and domestic wages. Mr Goddard, who combined the duties of Post Master with those of architect and surveyor, undertook the earliest work on the site with Mr Rolfe, cleaning out the ditches and digging the boundary ditch along the top of The Ridges, South of the road. Colonel Jones and Mr Mearing fixed the boundary stones marking the area.

The 60 acres south of the road were presented to the National Trust in 1913 and a local committee was formed to administer the project. The Ridges lie about 300 ft above sea level and overlook the valley of the Blackwater River, with extensive vistas into Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey. Here may be found the ideal haunts for nature lovers, woodlands of Scots pine, oak, birch and chestnut and the homes of many species of birds, including the nightingale and prized

varieties, such as blackcap, flycatchers, goldcrest, kestrel, longtailed tit and lesser spotted woodpeckers. There are also many varieties of heather, holly and bracken. The granite block, with a direction plate which shows the distances as the crow flies to various landmarks on the horizon, was erected in 1927 on the instigation of Mr Heelas of Wokingham, in collaboration with Mr Dean, a retired Bursar of Wellington College.

In 1961, Mr C.G.H. Simon gave to the National Trust an area of 15 acres, including Heath Pool which lies to the North East of The Ridges, and later a further area of 35 acres now known as Simon's Wood, between the Avenue and the Devil's Highway. In 1973, a further amenity was added to the property in the form of a Car Park, discreetly hidden among the trees on the North West side of the Avenue.

Now, in 1977, yet another beautiful stretch of woodland has been added to the National Trust property in Finchampstead. It is immediately adjacent to the Heath Pool land and extends that by an extra 30 acres. It was bequeathed over three years earlier in the will of Roy Brookes, a nationally known estate agent, who used to live in White Lodge and died suddenly in his early fifties. His will was contested and conveyancing to the National Trust was not possible until the very end of 1976. Because ownership of the land has been in dispute for so long and because it was little visited previously, there are parts that have become a secret haven for badgers and foxes and other wildlife. It would be wise of the National Trust local committee to consider conserving selected areas in this new land as nature reserves,

not to be too freely accessible to picnickers.

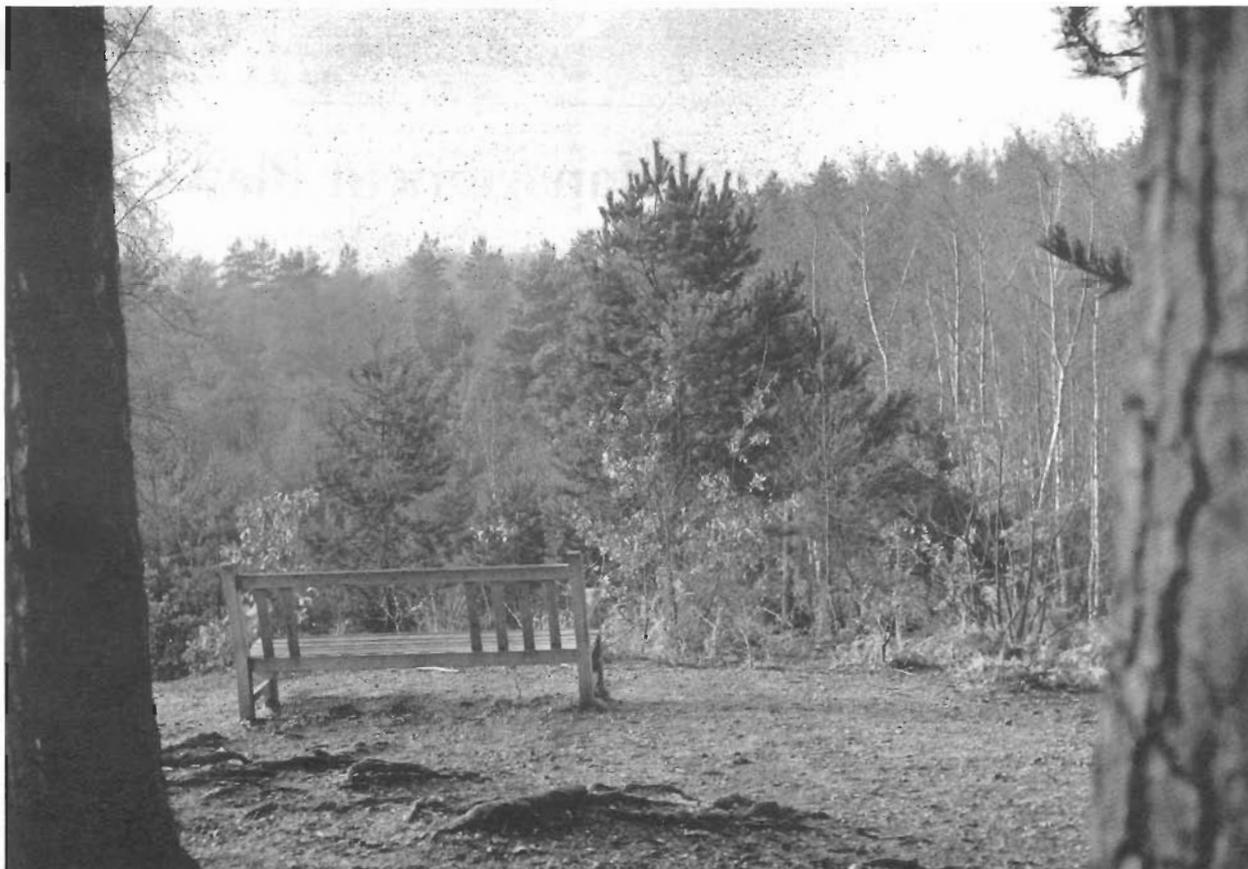
The total area of National Trust property around The Ridges is now 140 acres.

Management Plan for The Ridges, 1976

The local committee had been aware for some time that its Finchampstead properties required the preparation of a new, overall plan to ensure the survival of those features which add to the beauties of the area. It became apparent that a re-appraisal of the property and its demands was necessary, which would almost certainly entail the undertaking of tasks requiring either professional assistance or the efforts of reasonably sized volunteer working parties on a regular basis. The first of these can only be used on rare occasions as funds do not permit the extensive use of paid labour, but the Trust was very fortunate in receiving the offer of assistance from several volunteer groups. This gave the encouragement necessary to consider more ambitious ideas for maintenance, conservation and improvements to the property.

The main reasons for a management plan were that certain desirable features of the area have a finite life after which deterioration will set in. One example was the well-loved and highly characteristic pine knolls on The Ridges. How should these features best be replaced? It is also increasingly important that wherever possible, and without detriment to the amenity values, the growth of certain of the tree

The Ridges



species should be encouraged so that some of the timber, when thinned, could be sold with profit to the Trust. This has been possible during the thinning operations of the last two years.

Two National Trust Committee members, Mrs B. Case and Mr David Archer, were requested to make an ecological survey of the property to provide the background information. The National Trust Agent arranged a visit from the Scientific Adviser to the Trust, who gave his findings and views.

The survey showed that The Ridges property displays a valuable variety of characteristics. It was recommended that an attempt be made to retain this variety and, in particular, the following actions should assist in doing so:

1. The growth of heather and the provision of replacement trees for the present pines on the knolls should be encouraged
2. Erosion of the slopes should be controlled
3. The Spout Pound area is of ecological interest and should be left un-drained
4. The Western corner of The Ridges represents the largest area of saleable timber and all efforts to encourage this growth should be made
5. Some, and in specific areas most, of the rhododendrons should be removed because they smother all other growth

The Simon's Wood and Heath Pool areas are to be similarly surveyed and included in the overall plan. This is particularly important in relation to the District Council's planning discussions for The Rides.

General ecology

From the ecological point of view the areas under consideration could be divided into:

- 1 Heathland
- 2 Heathland being invaded by birch and pine
- 3 Heathland bog
- 4 Oak and pine wood of varying maturity

The whole area would probably best be classed as acid heathland which is exhibiting various stages of succession towards a climax of oak and pine woodland.

One aim of management plan

One of the aims of the present management plan suggestion is to try to hold the natural succession of some parts of the area at the sub-climax state, whilst allowing other areas to progress to a natural climax. In this way it is hoped to preserve biological diversity in the interests of nature conservation and for the aesthetic and amenity value of The Ridges.

Geological Basis

Any plan for The Ridges must take into account the fact that three geological layers are exposed at various points on the scarp slope. The area near the main road is composed of gravel, flint and chert, and is about 12.2m (40 ft) deep. In this layer it is likely that the soil presents a podsol structure with the characteristic hard pan, which should be broken up if

Wellingtonia Avenue



tree planting ever takes place in this area. The second layer, which is exposed at the bottom of the steepest part of the slope, is the yellow Upper Bagshot sand. This material is subject to a high degree of erosion due to its physical structure. In addition to great public usage, it is also exposed in this situation to the abrasive action of the gravel, flint and chert layer being washed down from above. The gravel is also pushed down the sand slope by people trying to obtain a foothold.

Underneath the Upper Bagshot sand there is the sand and clay of the Bracklesham beds. It is of course the clay fraction of these beds, in marked contrast to the gravel and sand above, that accounts for the poor drainage experienced at the bottom of the area, and also for the water-retaining property of Spout Pond.

Geology and Physiography determine the flora

Given that the location of The Ridges is in the southern part of Britain, it is largely the geology and physiography that determines the flora. For this reason it is convenient to consider the three ecological areas roughly divided by the 100m, 90m and the 75m contour lines.

100m contour and above the flat area at the top of The Ridges. Predominantly heathland, this area receives most of the public pressure and it is fortunate that gravel is the surface layer. It is also fortunate that ling grows here, since it is not only pleasant to look at, but, unpleasant to walk through, it encourages people to keep to recognised paths. If, however, heather is trampled on, it is quickly destroyed. In our opinion everything should be done to encourage the growth of ling and other heather at the top of The Ridges. To do this will necessitate the removal of the invading conifers in the heather-clad areas (and the possible treatment of the stumps with anti-fungicide). The cutting, at least twice in the peak growth season, of the bracken growing amongst the heather is necessary. Bracken does not invade good stands of even-aged heather. Gaps in degenerate heather present open areas where bracken and trees grow. Bracken in close proximity to stands of heather will also encourage further bracken growth since rhizomes can grow into the area. Stands of good bracken-free heather should perhaps be protected by "bracken breaks", which are small ditches.

There is also something to be said for sowing some areas with grasses that will stand up to dry conditions. Suggested grasses are *Agrostis tenuis* (Common Bent) and *Poa pratensis* (Meadow Grass), with perhaps the addition of a little white and red clover to provide nitrogen in the early phases.

Rhododendron At the N Western end there are patches of rhododendron. It is suggested that these are removed, or if not actually removed their growth should be kept well in check, the shrubs having little forestry or natural history value. Balanced against this is the aesthetic beauty of the flowers, but there are other areas where the flowers can be seen.

Pine Knolls Also in this top area are two of the pine-

covered knolls which are notable features of The Ridges property. As pointed out by the National Trust Agent, these trees will not last for ever and therefore some plan must be started to replace them if this feature is to continue. It is proposed therefore that some experiments be tried to establish whether young trees can be grown either from seed or transplants (8cm maximum) whilst under the canopy of the mature trees. One knoll lends itself to this experiment, as it is slightly off the beaten track, less trampled than the other knolls and at its centre has a fairly open canopy and already supports a clump of birch scrub which could act as nurse cover to pine transplants. It is very important therefore that this birch is not cut down. It may well be necessary to buy a few individual tree guards, or, if the plantings are close together, some wire to form an enclosure.

Develop new knoll It may well be prudent to manage the conifers in one plot, which are a group already, to form a new knoll. Because this is near to main paths, the thinning would need to be done discreetly so that the area was not opened up too much. In fact, it would be better to thin the trees but not to clear the ground of scrub.

Area between 100m and 90m contour lines Within this area the yellow Bagshot sand is exposed and the typical flora is birch, pine trees and scrub, with a field layer in which bracken is predominant. Whatever is done in this area, it is most important that ground cover is removed only where absolutely necessary (e.g. for making new paths), otherwise more erosion will arise.

Thinning Some scrub removal in this area should be encouraged, allowing those trees that are good specimens, or those delineating paths, to remain.

Brushing Brushing of those conifers that remain could be done at this stage. In order to encourage diversity of habitat, and to demonstrate the effect of leaving an area open to scrub invasion, it is suggested that one or two areas, especially around boggy spots, are left unmanaged. Where scrub is cut it is important to treat the cut stumps of deciduous saplings with the brushwood killer 3,4D/2,4,5T in oil (diesel oil) to prevent regrowth, especially of suckers. If this is not done, there will be double the amount of scrub in two or three years. For field management purposes, the brushwood killer should contain an oil soluble dye to mark the treated stumps.

Wood Stacks for Wild Life Some of the trunks of the brushwood will be stacked and secured in the boggy damp areas of shade to create habitats for bark and wood-loving insects, and also for fungi, mosses and lichens to live on. Conifers should not be used since they could increase the spread of pine beetle — according to Steele, conifer logs should be debarked within six weeks (Steele R.C. — "Wildlife Conservation in Woodlands" — H.M.S.O. 1972).

Path Erosion Path erosion in this area is a considerable problem and it is suggested that any new paths should "wind round contours" rather than go directly

down the scarp slopes. Different views have been put forward for controlling erosions on the present paths, and they split into two categories:

- 1 Close some of the paths and make less steep ones either by cutting completely new ones or by widening some selected narrow tracks.
- 2 Accept that the present wide tracks are unlikely to be colonised very quickly, even if closed; therefore keep them open and build "erosion stops" (a log embedded across the path at intervals, resulting in a terraced effect).

Alternatively, a zig-zag path, such as that used at the Trust property in Selbourne, could be constructed, but a great deal of labour would be required. Terraces or steps might also be a deterrent to galloping horse-riders.

Area below 90m contour (i.e. through the 80m 75m and 70m contours to an estimated 68m at the Western corner of The Ridges) Most of this area is located on the sand-with-clay mixture of the Bracklesham beds. In some areas the sand is more evident and in others the whole area is covered with deep woodland litter. Where this litter is waterlogged, little decomposition has taken place and with these conditions, together with the collection of run-off water from the heathland higher up, acid conditions have developed. From a management point of view this area presents:

- 1 The largest area of potentially saleable timber — chiefly pine and oak (much of it Turkey oak)
- 2 Areas of acid bog

Spout Pond Area The bog conditions leading down to Spout Pond are of ecological interest and it seems desirable to retain this area, which contains sphagnum and polytricum commune mosses and a few ferns. It is important therefore from a natural history point that these areas are not drained and, if anything, the

water level in Spout Pond should be raised.

Raising Water Level in Spout Pond The level of water in the pond is now fairly low compared with previous times. If manpower were available, the pond could benefit from being cleaned out, with more light let into it. The biological importance of the area, however, lies more in the boggy area than in the pool. Limited coppicing could be carried out to good effect in the bog area but this is a low priority job. Woodstacking could provide more natural habitats in this damp area.

Bird Boxes Nesting boxes for birds could also be put up in trees in warmer areas of the wood.

Drier Areas The rest of the area below the 90m contour provides the remunerative woodland and perhaps everything should be done to encourage good silvicultural practice as suggested by the National Trust Agent.

Drainage It is understood that there are considerable drainage problems in the Western corner and these need to be investigated. From the map, the Western corner should be the lowest area of The Ridges property.

Horse Riding The gateway seems to be one of the main horse entry places and, in the absence of any really effective way of enforcing National Trust Rules and keeping horses out, a realistic Management Plan must anticipate the horse-rider and the subsequent damage to tracks. Perhaps an attitude of confining the horse-rider to certain paths by taking care not to remove nearby scrub or overhanging branches from others would be useful. Without complete peripheral fencing, cattle grids would be useless.

Up to 1972, Major Brian Shone could be seen driving round the Parish on a Sporting Omnibus, pulled by a Unicorn Team of 3 horses. The coach had gun dog boxes for going out hunting.





Wildlife, trees and plants

Finchampstead has a remarkable range of habitats that support a wide variety of plants and living creatures. There are the dry, sandy woodlands of The Ridges, the areas of moist clay and extensive meadows below the church and marshy grassland along the River Blackwater. The whole Parish is well provided with excellent flower and shrub gardens and there are acid woodland ponds and Longmoor's fresh water lake.

These different habitats not only support their own characteristic wildlife, but also make it possible for wildlife to thrive that depends on different types of conditions for food and for shelter. Many birds and animals, for example, roost and rest in woods and feed in meadows or along rivers, and seek alternative feeding areas according to weather conditions and the different seasons.

Finchampstead has so many birds, small mammals, insects, reptiles, trees, wildflowers and fungi that it is an excellent area for the study of the ecology of this part of Britain. This makes it all the more imperative to conserve adequate expanses of mixed habitats and to examine carefully the effects on the ecology of any development, such as gravel extraction or natural yet harmful phenomena, such as the 1976 severe drought, with the resultant outbreaks of forest fires, and the death of so many elm trees from Dutch Elm Disease.

Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any published data on the flora and fauna of Finchampstead through the ages, so it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to the fluctuating numbers from one period to another of the various species. Perhaps at some time the Finchampstead Society could investigate the feasibility of such a survey, so that future generations would have the benefit of knowledge about today's numbers and distribution. There are frequent fears that certain species have dwindled or died out altogether, but it has to be remembered that wildlife is on the one hand susceptible to changes of weather and, on the other hand, surprisingly resilient, so that species can bounce back into prosperity when conditions have improved. Frequently the effects are delayed, which leads the layman to forget the connection between a previously poor season and a current dearth of a particular type of animal or plant. A poor season one year can restrict blossom on trees for the following year, for example, so that fewer butterflies are supported to breed for the year after that.

On the other hand, the huge flocks of siskin, redpoll and even the rare serin, that visited many parts of the Parish in 1976, were attracted by the massive crop of seed produced during the previous season by the birch trees. The tiny birds were seen together in numbers of several hundred — many more than people could remember ever seeing before.

There is still a rich variety of flora and fauna to conserve in the Parish and if we are prepared to watch over them from now on, then something of real value will be saved for the whole country to cherish in the future.

The Blackwater River Reach

The landscape from The Ridges down to the Blackwater is the only unspoiled reach along the whole of this river, with no marked development cutting the river off from the higher watershed. Seen from the river, the whole vista, and the flora and fauna of this terrain, are similar to what they have been for hundreds of years.

However, it is this unique stretch that is threatened with the biggest development changes that Finchampstead has seen for many decades. Gravel has already been extracted over a huge area on the Hampshire side of the river, and planning permission has been granted by Berkshire for similar workings on the Finchampstead side. The map on page 40 shows how much will shortly be water as the gravel is excavated and the workings fill in naturally.

The existing wildlife will be affected in three main ways:

1. A big proportion of the existing habitat and feeding places will be destroyed, as trees are removed, hedges grubbed out and fields dug away.
2. The artificially created expanses of water are to be used for recreation pursuits, that are said to include water-skiing, motor boating and general picnicking and fishing, so that noise and erosion will be caused by the people who come in for these sports and pastimes.
3. It is also planned to straighten the river upstream, so that the increased speed of the current is likely to affect adversely the breeding and feeding locations on the river bank, where many of the small mammals, water animals and birds have their habitat.

The nature of the wildlife will change in that water fowl and water-loving plants will move in. Flocks of seagulls are already congregating on the newly formed lakes; bigger numbers of Canada geese are covering the neighbourhood with their droppings and a pair of grebe have raised half a dozen young. (Possibly a pair that has moved from Longmoor Lake in the North of the Parish.)

Interdependent habitats

The Blackwater Reach supports a remarkable variety of flora and fauna and is a popular feeding ground for many birds that roost elsewhere in the Parish. At dusk each day, the observer can see how birds gather for flight from the water meadows to roost for the night in the greater safety afforded by the woods closer to The Ridges. This interdependent effect of different habitats has to be taken into account when considering any development that changes one part of the landscape. The Blackwater meadows are fairly bare of trees, as numerous oaks were cut down for timber just prior to the sale of the land along the river in plots earlier this century. The meadows are, at the same time, an essential balance to the wooded areas further North, where flat, loamy feeding grounds are in short supply.

Notable amongst the wildlife in this area are the

flocks of green plovers, the numerous kestrels, the easily audible skylarks, the ghostly, low-flying barn owls at dusk and the rare flashes of the kingfisher. The hedges abound with bullfinch, goldfinch, warblers and tits. It is the location for more swifts and martins than anywhere else in the Parish and one of the few places in this area where the nightingale has been spotted recently. The marshy terrain is the natural home of the snipe.

All the local small mammals thrive here, including rabbits, foxes, badgers, stoats, moles, shrews, mice and an occasional pole cat. It is a breeding ground for frogs and toads.

Threatened kingcups

Amongst the teasles and seed grasses, there are also iris and (unique in Finchampstead) spreads of kingcups. These very special flowers are threatened, because the provisional plans for the recreation area to be created show a car park on the very field where the kingcups grow. One suggestion is that the car park and pony exercise paddock should be transposed, so that the ponies will eventually, if it is found essential for them to be there at all, parade around a central reserve of these wildflowers.

So much grassland and so many hedgerows will disappear as the gravel is removed, that the population of adders, grass snakes, stag beetles, moths and May beetles will decline and there will be an effect further up the food chain. Unless some detailed survey is conducted of this area now, there will be no lessons learnt for the future, for no one will be able to ascertain the effect on the wildlife generally of this change of character from grass to water, from tranquil rural landscape to a scene of modern sport and recreation.

The Sandy High Lands

The Ridges and the hill on which the church stands are the best known areas of Finchampstead. The Ridges is extensively described in the Landscape section. The church hill is examined here.

The scant topsoil covers a patchy layer of gravel, resting on several feet of golden sand, in its turn underlaid by clay. Thanks to the vegetation, the soil still covers the peak, but, where there is little to stop it, the rains wash it and the sand down the sides in loose paths. Too many hedges have already been removed, but fortunately there are still some between the arable fields and pastures and here the soil stops its headlong slide and provides bed and board for many of our plants and creatures.

Most of our wild flowers which tolerate dry conditions grow here; white bryony, herb robert, stitchwort, ground ivy, mayweed, St John's wort, speedwell, toadflax, cranesbill and many others, whilst in the corners of the plough lands are herbageous borders of field marigold, poppies, hogweed and blue and purple vetch.

Our lanes are brightened by celandine, jack-by-the-hedge, blue alkanet, cuckoo pint, red dead nettle, and that dainty harbinger of summer, "Queen Anne's Lace". Our dry woods are populated by hundreds of foxgloves in June and fungi of every shade in autumn

among the birches, rowans and hybrid oaks, whilst the wet woods are carpeted with bluebells, yellow pimpernel, wood sorrel, moschatel, primrose, anemones, woodspurge and climbing corydalis below the English oaks, alders, hazels and poplars.

It almost seems as though there could have been a hostelry down the field path from White Horse Lane just North of the Roman road, a wayside lodging for travellers run by the "Bonshommes" perhaps, for here grow all the herbs valued for their curative properties; crow garlic, tansy, woundwort, bedstraw, mallow, burdock, mugwort, and dock, backed up by a hedge of sloes for wine making. Further West, off "Larch Path" — the old holly-marked track from Eversley to Wokingham by way of the church — are solomon seal and a field where centuary grows. In another, a little to the South, are large-flowered hem hemp nettle and betony amongst the circular tracks of beaten grass flattened by playing fox cubs.

Polecat and muntjak

There are badger sets in some places where there is cover and a dry bank, unless increasing use or traffic render it untenable. One can sometimes surprise a weazle, birds' nesting in the hedge or a polecat sitting up to wash its face. Where there are no badgers, there are usually hedgehogs, as they are mutual enemies. The now rare harvest mouse lives here, along with voles and pigmy shrews.

Not everyone is glad that muntjak, roe and fallow deer have been reported from end to end of the parish, but it shows that we have patches of cover throughout, so that larger animals can move freely. Hedges, besides discouraging soil erosion by water and wind, provide shelter and food for many of our long list of birds, from the wren, always so vulnerable rummaging at the bottom, to the yellow-hammer and bunting (including the rare rustic bunting), boldly declaring their presence from the top, with hedge sparrows, bramblings, chaffinches, siskins, linnets, greenfinches and friends in between. The bird population in East Anglia, for example, was decimated by the large-scale removal of hedges.

On our sandy high lands, we still have birds to whom the fields themselves are home — larks, pheasants, partridges, wheatears, pipits, fieldfares and lapwings. The latter depend on unploughed old pasture for their breeding grounds and naturally enough this is the reserve where many wild flowers also survive and the insects which live on them so that the old meadows, often pony paddocks, are a-shimmer all summer with a succession of butterflies.

A large part of our bird population depends on the trees. This should be considered when felling is contemplated. When it is found essential and replanting is undertaken — as in housing estates — forest trees felled are all too often replaced by soft woods and flowering cherries, changing the range of birds attracted and the character of the district.

Thanks to our conifers we have many goldcrests and a few firecrests. These, Europe's tiniest smallest birds, feed largely on the insects found on Scots pines but prefer to nest in Lawsonias. The next up in size, the long-tailed tit, has been seen in its northern, white-headed form amongst the more usual variety, along with the blue tits, coal tits, marsh tits and great

tits. This family belongs to the tree-cleansing squad, as do our tree creepers, nut-hatches, whitethroats, warblers (including the melodious black cap) and the three species of woodpecker, green, greater spotted and the rarer lesser spotted. During the winter of 1975-76 our trees were festooned with larger flocks of redpolls, siskins and serins than have ever been recorded before, thanks to the bumper crop of silver birch seed perhaps. Another year, when the Scandinavian cone crop failed, we had shocking-pink cross-bills hanging on our Scots pines.

Rare migrant

Other rare migrants to the parish have been a great northern diver on Longmoor Lake, a hoopoe in Warren Lane woods and a golden oriole on the Devil's Highway. We hope the cuckoo and nightingale will not become rare, but there are certainly less than a few years ago.

The church has an all-black choir of swifts, crows and jackdaws. The death of our elms has meant the gradual change of rookeries to oaks. To keep the balance we have our bird predators. Kestrels patrol the Warren Lane area, an occasional sparrow hawk wheels around the church hill and we have little owls, barn owls and tawny owls. In spring and autumn, larger birds of prey drift over on migration. We have possibly too many jays, magpies (and squirrels), now that game-keepers are virtually extinct, and our small song birds suffer. These small birds are our chief means of insect control, but where sprays are used the balance is upset. Either the birds' food is suddenly reduced or it is poisoned. We are fairly fortunate in Finchampstead, as sprays are used sparingly here. The choice of time of day for spraying and the concentration and range are important factors when using pesticides and weedkillers.

Moths and butterflies

In our dry lands we have moths and butterflies which probably start their lives on the plants which grow in our wetter woods and bogs. Among the most interesting butterflies are the white admiral, silver washed, dark green and marsh fritillaries, the purple and green hairstreaks, silver studded blue and the brown argus, and many unusual moths, including the red and orange underwings, the snout, the emperor, the lappet and several of the hawk moths, the humming bird hawk moth being a migrant. The waved black moth is unique to this district, its caterpillar feeding on a fungus that grows on dead birch branches.

We still have some well laid quick-set hedges, but this is the era of mechanisation and most are chewed off by machines. Some of our lanes have natural, mixed hedges of healthy elm brush-wood, pollarded ash, oak saplings, the ubiquitous holly, bramble, maple, elderberry, cherry, rowan, hazel, blackthorne, beech, alder, crabapple, hawthorne and the occasional dog rose — a long list indeed and one which, reckoned at the establishment of one species every hundred years, takes us back to the end of the Roman occupation. (The Romans had good ditches to drain their roads, but avoided hedges which could shelter enemies in ambush. However, a silt-filled ditch makes a marvellous seed-bed.) There are just such hedges on the E-W section of White Horse Lane where it runs over the Roman road, Ridge Farm Lane is like it.

Besides being winter fodder for the deer that were

hunted, all the old tracks round the parish are marked by hollies, no doubt the great grand-daughters of the originals, though some are six feet round the bole and must be old indeed. They have survived this long because they fulfilled a purpose—sheltering travellers, and, unlike almost every other tree, felled holly is almost useless and is reputed to bring ill luck to the feller (or "tree faller" as they used to say in Berkshire).

The parish has a fine collection of trees, both forest and ornamental, those on the church hill being planted by the St John rectors and Provost Warre of Eton (the first tenant of East Court after the Walters of Bearwood had bought most of Finchampstead) who always admonished his pupils with their last handshake, to send him back seeds from whichever post of Empire they were flung to. The trees which grow most beautifully and are most at risk are our Scots pines, our way-marking hollies, old hawthorns, wild cherry, fine beeches, Robinias beloved by Cobbett of the "Rural Rides", and our wonderful English oaks. Few of these are preserved, as most are some distance from a main road and are therefore not under surveillance. However, those which grow along the roads are of great amenity and ecological value.

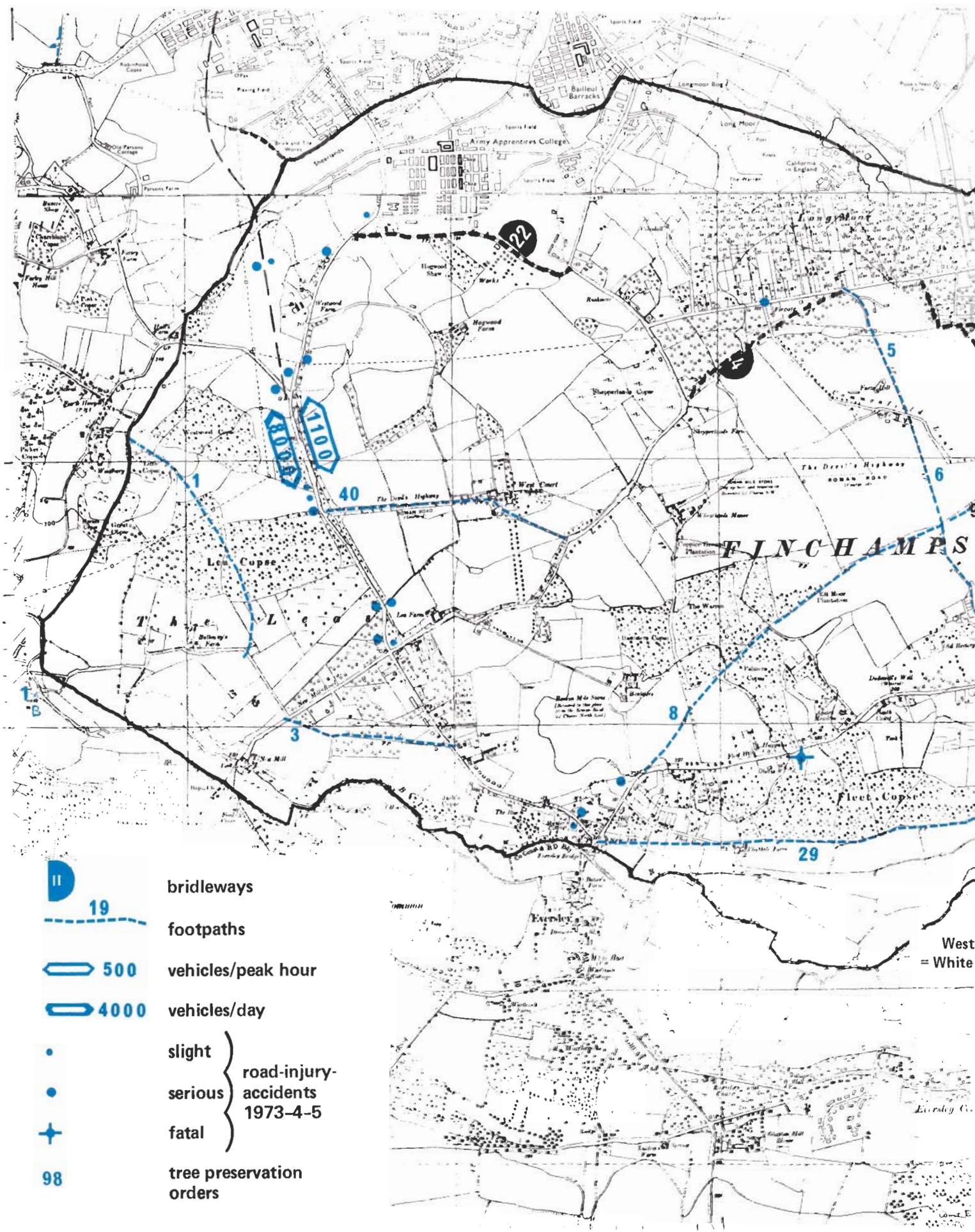
Pollution and death on the road reduce our animal and bird population. For this reason and because of the risk to our many young riders, additional traffic should not be encouraged in the central part of the area.

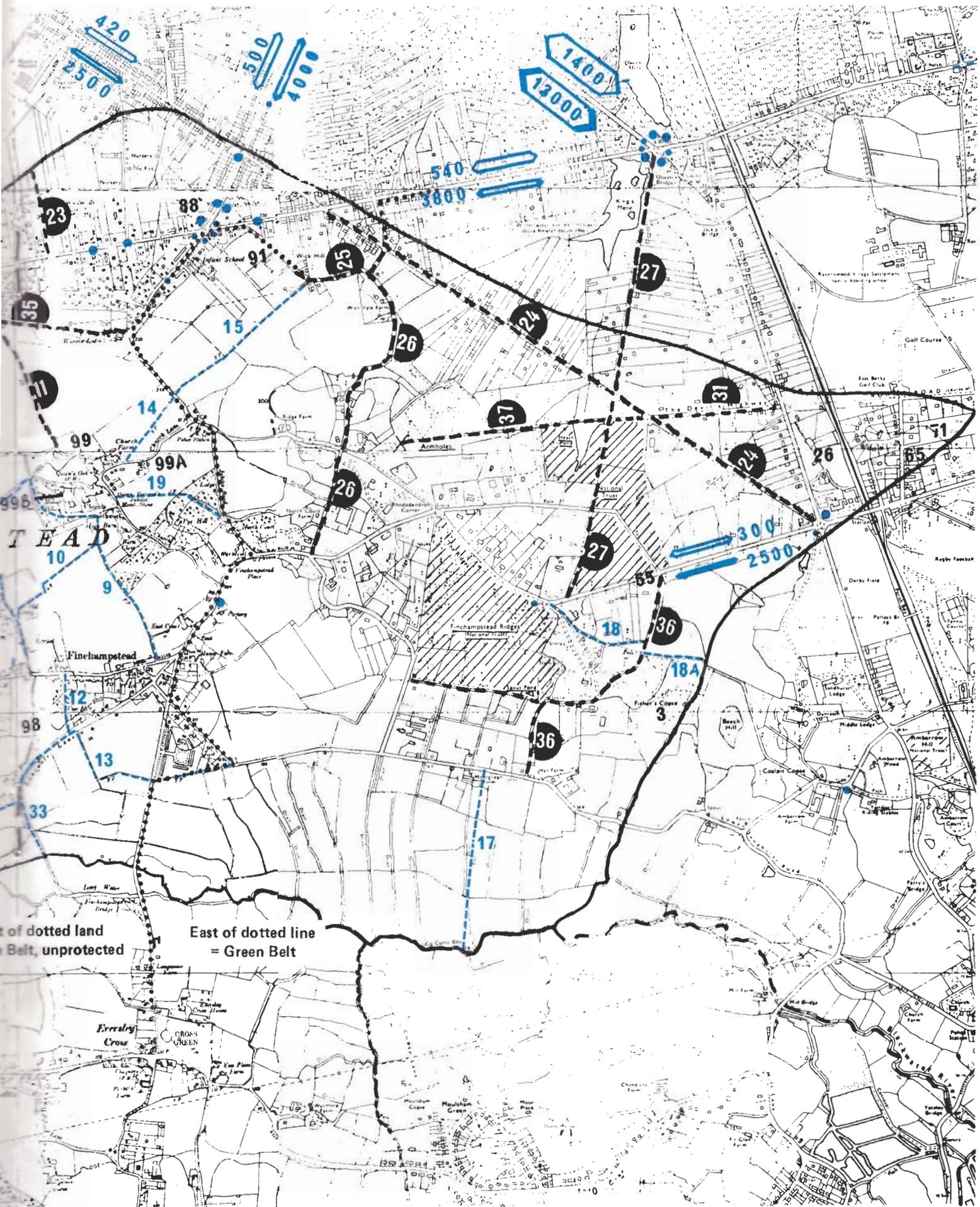
Anyone who walks our lanes and footpaths will notice how many share this pleasure. Finchampstead is becoming known as an area of natural recreation over a radius of twenty miles and the walkers are really interested to learn about the district. If we are to be granted our lovely countryside in perpetuity we must not be selfish. The visitors who come to share the beauty around us must be welcome, for it is their appreciation which earns the countryside its reprieve.

Where the clay comes out

The porous sand cap on which St James's church stands, commanding the central position in the parish, is mirrored by Wick Hill and The Ridges. Lower down these hills, where the sand peters out and exposes the almost impervious basic clay, there are springs, making an abundance of growth and thus humus, creating bogs and wet woodlands, slightly acid to the North of the parish, slightly calcareous to the South. The wetlands to the West show great iron content in the water and subsoil. Some of this leaches down through the central sand cap, turning the ditches red. The contrast between the high, dry, sandy lands and the different types of wetlands account for the amazingly varied countryside of Finchampstead.

The low, damp East of the parish is basically woodland — beech, chestnut, oak, pine and silver birch — overlaid by quite a high density of housing in its extremity. Many trees which did not immediately interfere with building have been retained and thus main and gravel roads alike are shaded by a variety of trees including those already mentioned and robinia, hornbeam, douglas fir and, of course, the famous avenue of Wellingtonias. The woodland reserved for





TEAD

of dotted land
Belt, unprotected

East of dotted line
= Green Belt

In Kilometre squares
CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED

public enjoyment by the National Trust is partly on this lower clayland, also the beautiful oak, beech and rowan covered slopes of Fishers' Copse, preserved for us by the Wokingham District Council. This is a sea of bluebells and anemones in spring.

By the railway is the largest and most interesting housing development, created by the firm who received the award for the best use of trees on a housing estate in Berkshire. To the North, the housing is continued along Nine Mile Ride. At the moment this and most of our roads are still well-treed but they tend to be suddenly thinned out on Sunday mornings. It would be a relief to many residents if a border, perhaps to include all trees twelve feet from the curb, could be preserved. Our country-style garden hedges are beginning to give way to concrete, pink brick or see-through walls in places.

Longmoor Lake

In this Northern section is California-in-England, the Council's recreation park which includes a 'night-spot'. There is a walk round the lake that was formed by the extraction of gravel and clay when the landowner of the day, John Walter, founded *The Times* newspaper and built Printing House Square. On or by this lake there is a resident population of moorhens, coot and mallard, augmented by overwintering swans, grebe, kingfishers, geese — usually Canada — and other ducks. In the summer, martins and swallows breed on the buildings nearby and the geese depart when their families are self-supporting. Toads from the surrounding country migrate to the stagnant bog at the east end of the lake for breeding, and Nine Mile Ride bears record in flattened bodies (soon cleared by foxes and badgers) of the adults going North in spring and thousands of young coming back to the dry lands in July, where they will mature for about four years before making the pilgrimage of their parents.

In spite of the present practice of filling in ponds, some of them originally quarries for the building of the Roman road besides providing refreshment for the legions, there are still newts and frogs about, as anyone with an ornamental pool knows. Out of these, and also out of California lake, come our lovely dragon and demoiselle flies, their numbers kept down by visiting herons, who also help to control the mole population. If our remaining ponds could be preserved — and their removal seldom improves drainage — many more water-loving creatures and plants of interest could be saved.

Acid bog

In the acid bog at the Western end of the lake are large standings of horsetail, one of the primitive plants whose fossilised impression, like that of the Ginko, is occasionally found in coal. Water plantain grows here, marsh pennywort, lesser spearwort and large areas of sphagnum moss — a great attraction to the deer in winter. In the drier fen nearby grow heath spotted and common spotted orchids, sundews, milkwort, helliborines, centuary and purging flax.

In the summer, three varieties of heather bloom in the open moorland beyond, first the cross-leaved heath succeeded by the more acid pink of the bell heather and, later still, the robust ling. Much more of the area was at one time covered in this way, but now

this is the residual home of the sun-loving grass snakes, slow-worms, lizards and adders. In some parts these last have their diamond markings in brown, not black, to blend with the soil. Adders do not attack without provocation and their bite is only poisonous to some people. However, anyone bitten should go immediately to Heatherwood Hospital, Ascot, or the contemporary casualty hospital. The birds of prey attracted by these reptiles are the sparrow-hawks, tawny owls and little owls. The heather honey is a great drawer of bees. Amongst the many butterflies which appear here throughout the summer are the small copper, small heath, common blue, large and small skippers, meadow brown and speckled wood.

The commonest and most lovely tree in California-in-England is our silver birch, with Scots and Corsican pines and small oaks. There is also a pair of the bedraggled looking pin oaks, scarlet in autumn, whose N American origin proclaims their age as that of the Walters' estate. Legend has it that the tenuous drooping twigs of pin oaks were used by witches for their besoms. On the clay there is almost every every variety of poplar, scented balsams, clusters of chattering aspens, fine upstanding specimens of Lombardy, white poplar and the graceful black Italian poplar with its fine sense of balance, and grey poplars, like the sea when they are first in leaf. The most arresting group of these stand in line at the bottom of Church Lane East. The wetter woods and pastures give birth to some of our finest English oaks.

As the cherry lights the high ground, fringing the woodlands with spring blossom, so the amelanchier or snowy mespil dances in the wet woods, white in spring and red in autumn. Here also are the crab-apple, sweetmeat of the deer, and breaking buckthorne, beloved of the brimstone butterfly, who with the speckled wood and white admiral starts its existence in the wet woods that ring the parish at California, Park Lane, Reading Road, Fleet Copse, Fishers Copse and Heath Ride.

New Mill

The West of Finchampstead is mainly agricultural, bounded by the giant alders and willows of the Blackwater near New Mill. Herons and kingfishers find their food here and the yellow breasts of the grey wagtail light up in the reflection from the river. Small boys lie prostrate on the bridge, heads hanging over the water, keen-eyed for loach, minnow and the small fry of river fish. Hedges on the claylands are formed of trees and shrubs which enjoy moisture; ash, alder, blackcurrant, sallows and willows, dogwood, spindle, hawthorne, oak and a large proportion of field maple, wonderfully gold and rust in autumn. A wealth of dog roses climbs amongst all these, for like their garden counterparts, they thrive on clay. There are woods but they are being cleared, with the result that the pastures are populated by bluebells and badgers. Bugle, anemones, yellow pimpernel, guelder rose, violets, wood sorrel, cow wheat, alkanet, primroses, fumitory and wood spurge all grow here but the most remarkable, unexplored feature is the number of yew trees.

A Pride of Trees

The increasing number of people who come to walk our 16 miles of footpaths are always full of

admiration for our trees. Few of them are really outstanding specimens, but the wonderful variety, their clothing of our lanes and roads, the high points from which they can be appreciated and the aptness of their grouping, make them the salient features of the Finchampstead landscape. Where there is a fair amount of moisture — that is on the lower slopes of our sand-capped hills and in the clay round their feet — we have magnificent English oaks, our most brilliant green in spring, tough and spreading, home for so many of our birds, and the source not only of the acorns for the swine who roamed here when this was part of Windsor Forest, but also of the "Wooden Walls" of Drake, Raleigh and the like.

Happily there are quite young ones coming along in field, wood and hedgerow but some of the most magnificent are in East Court meadow, between Fleet Hill and Fleet Copse, the S hedge of Green Acres Farm (F.P.5), Longwater Lane and clear-standing giant NE of Lea Farm, Park Lane.

Other moisture-loving oaks are the N American red oaks, mostly round California cross-roads, but also in the deep fosse on Wick Hill. The oak below the church planted to mark the jubilee of George V is also a red oak. There are scarlet oaks on the N side of Fleet Hill near the Tally-Ho!, turkey oaks in Church Lane S and at the W end of California lake are our two curiosities, N American pin oaks, reputed to be the raw material of witches' brooms.

A large group of hybrid oaks, which appreciate dry, acid soil on the rounded hill of Furze Copse, off Commonfield Lane, forms one of our presiding landmarks. These oaks are also often met on the borders of our roads since their branch clearance is high. Our best known specimen is the one planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee near what was then renamed "The Queen's Oak" public house.

Other common roadside trees are conifers of all kinds, the commonest being the rust-barked Scots. The three which stood in the garden of Eversley Rectory and from which Charles Kingsley slung his hammock were supposed to be the originals introduced into the district in the reign of James I. Although only one of these now remains, the species has naturalised prolifically on our sandy soil. There are some grand old specimens in Commonfield Wood, on The Ridges and above the playing field. Another conifer which has been grown as a crop is the larch in its various forms. There used to be a plantation to the N of Larch path in Eft (Newt) Moor Plantation and another which stretched from Holly Hill at the elbow of Commonfield Lane down to Nine Mile Ride through Green Acres Farm. A few individuals of these still survive along with others at Wick Vale, the approach road B.3348 to The Ridges and behind NMR school — palest green-gold in spring with deep rose cones. There are a number of cedars in the parish, both Lebanon and Atlantica Glauca (the grey-green ones) besides the softly drooping Deodar. Several in Fleet Hill near Eversley Bridge, at the White Horse, in Nine Mile Ride, the church yard and at West Court where there are two more Sequoia-dendrons.

Dotted around, mostly on the higher, sandy soil are macracarpas of funerary colour, chili pines or monkey puzzle trees whose cones contain edible nuts, grey barked Corsican firs, Leylandii and Law-

sonias of every shade much favoured as nesting places by goldcrests, the sparseley clothed telegraph poles of Douglas fir, silver firs, the festive Norway spruce (or Christmas Tree) and another spruce which stands without rival in the church yard, the oriental spruce, its spring time branches ending in the red fingers of female flowers.

Yews

Yews abound. We are told that because they are poisonous to cattle, they will only be found on enclosed land. This is true of the ancient church yard ones (and the Irish ones with them) the Chapel yew in the village, the Wick Vale specimen, the one that used to overshadow the almshouse in Longwater Lane and the many at West Court and other old houses, but what about the large spreading one in Fishers' Copse (F.P.18), the several in Reading road and nearby Claypits Wood? What was their purpose and by what were they enclosed?

One hardly notices the great number of maples on the wet claylands in the W of the parish around Hogwood until autumn lights them up in rust and gold. There are also several in White Horse Lane. The most remarkable maple grows just W of the pond against the Roman road and has elbows spreading along the hedge for the distance of 20 ft. Perhaps it has a spring behind it. Another maple ranking as a forest tree is the Norway variety. Its hand-shaped leaves end in points but its real beauty are the bunches of small golden-cupped flowers which appear before the leaves. Seen with a background of poplar, as they can be in Village Point or Church Lane S against the blue sky of April, they are superb. Sycamores belong to this family too. They grow along Fleet Hill and up the path to Primrose Cottage. There is an old one in California park and some older still on Rectory Hill coming up from the village. These are obviously suffering from petrol fumes. Other trees suffering from the efforts of internal combustion engines to surmount this hill are the very large hollies leaning over from East Court. Others like them mark all our old roads and paths. There is a line of 38 at the West end of Larch path near Banisters and a very stocky giant marking the E boundary of the parish on the Lower Sandhurst Road, just where the drove way from the river joins it.

Beeches

Other drove-way markers, for their nuts, or mast are excellent fodder, would seem to be our grand old beeches. The most impressive ones are found clustered around the Devil's Highway W of Heath Pool. The very oldest, of great growth and statuesque poise, leafed as it must have done for all of four or five hundred years in the spring of 1976 but the drought defeated it and now this grand old man lies in state. The others nearby were engulfed in burning leaf mould for almost a fortnight, roots carrying the fire underneath the bole. There are also beeches along the continuation of the Roman road down Ridge Farm Lane and near it, for we do not know its exact line here, down West Court Drive. Other old by-ways enjoying their shade are Larch Path, Commonfield Lane, Fleet Hill, Fishers Copse and Nine Mile Ride, although this last only dates back to Queen Anne. There are also two lovely ones on the church hill in the gardens of the White Horse and Manor Beacon. Copper beeches add marvellously to any group. The

view of Dell Road with the trees of New Place behind, as seen from the Memorial, is a good example, another the view of Warren Lodge from Church Farm, where limes, horse chestnut, the incense cedar with its tiered cushions of rich dark green, and copper beech are grouped around the house; a third the view of Church Lane S from the playing fields, looking across East Court Meadows.

Similar to the beech, though with a narrower serrated leaf, is the hornbeam. There is a crescent of these now unusual trees near the beeches by the Devil's Highway. Twisted, smooth and grey with strings of pointed calyxes, they were once used for ox-yokes because of their hardness. Now the more modern "fastigiata" type makes a headlight barrier on Crowthorne roundabout, and a hornbeam forms part of the S hedge towards the bottom of Wellingtonia Avenue.

Cobbett's mistake

Cobbett of the "Rural Rides" came back from America in the 1820s vaunting the merits of the Robinia as timber and indeed started a nursery for their propagation. It was not realised that this was just another name for the Locust, which already grew here as an ornamental tree, and great numbers were planted. We have single specimens and groups of these "psuedacacias" around the parish and they probably date from this time, for Cobbett was active not far from the E Berkshire borders. We tend not to notice these trees until they are hung with white, laburnum-like blossom and in the great cornucopia of bloom in 1976 they caught our eye, standing in California Park, at the cross-roads near by (where one of two groups has been badly mutilated), in the lane outside Warren Lodge, behind the Queen's Oak, at Rhododendron corner down Fleet Hill and by Banisters. They have the angular grace of a Japanese painting.

In spring our high, dry woods are edged with the lace of wild cherry or gean; our low, damp ones with dainty amelanchier juneberry (or snowy mespil). There is a mane of the former the size of forest trees down the footpath above Rectory Farm and again in Holly Hill (the agger of the Roman road above White Horse Lane). The amelanchier is best represented in Commonfield Woods, where they make a marvellous spring and autumn display and at Armholes, near the Devil's Highway and in Fleet Copse.

Also in low, acid, wet woods we find sallows of all kinds, host plant to our puss and goat moths. There are many of these "pussy willows" in California beyond the lake, a fine free-standing specimen behind Longmoor Stores and a cluster round the pond on White Horse Lane. White willows proper will not tolerate being hemmed in but make graceful, small groups at New Mill, in the damp meadows behind Wheatlands where "milkmaid" also grows and on the ditches at the base of the rounded pastures of Ridge Farm. There are also bat willows, tall and much straighter, on the W border of Dell Road and on the W border of Park Lane, E of Lea Farm. Weeping willows grace our gardens.

Poplars of all kinds

Our many types of poplar make fine additions to any group. Most of them prefer damp situations, like the five grey ones at the bottom of Church Lane E,

or the aspens in California Park. The exceptions to this would seem to be the black Italian poplar in the varied group on Pye Hill and another on the opposite side of Church Lane S with a Norway maple. There is a Lombardy crossed white poplar just E of California cross-roads looking like nothing so much as a broken besom and more whites, silvery against a stormy sky between Banisters and Park Lane.

Lombardies are best as landscape trees, giving vertical contrast with others. There is a lovely view of rounded clumps pierced with the Lombardy pencils from the lane past Manor Beacon looking W and another from Warren Lodge, looking towards Wick Hill. There are lines of Lombardies, one at Ridge Farm Lane and another at Banisters.

There are many young sweet or spanish chestnuts in Roman Ride — very suitably, since the Romans are said to have imported them — more in Wise Hill, Wick Hill and some large ones in Nine Mile Ride and California. Horse chestnuts are used in an avenue to New Place and give shade to the customers' tables outside the Tally-Ho! Few walnuts survive, although at one time no homestead was complete without them but there is a fine one behind Hillcrest, Wick Hill Lane and others from Sibera at Manor Beacon. Happily there are also young ones off Finchampstead Road, Warren Lane and in Nine Mile Ride. Alder and hazel go hand in hand in most of our wet bluebell or primrose woods, though alders seem more tolerant of acid. They are usually coppiced for bean poles, since they are so straight, as in Fishers' Copse S, East Court and Wick Hill woods, but attain larger proportions when allowed, as the hazels in Commonfield woods and Wick Hill Lane N and the large alders of the Blackwater meadows S of Lower Sandhurst Road and S of New Mill.

Waterloving ashes

Ashes are waterlovers too, though they grow in White Horse Lane and have been trimmed to form a hedge down Larch path where it leaves Manor Beacon. Finer examples are found each side of Jubilee Hill in the field hedges and in Church Lane E, in the clay to the W of the parish and down by Hall Farm in Lower Sandhurst Road.

Panicles of white blossom are carried in spring by many trees: the downy leaved whitebeam in Wick Hill Lane N, the elderberry and sloe of our field margins, hawthorn in our hedges and the line of old ones through the grounds of Finchampstead House to East Court, just N of the present road. Also by the guelder roses and breaking buckthorn of our wet woods, our crab apples near Furze Hill, Manor Beacon (F.P.8) and that mountain of blossom in the lay-by N of West Court drive in the Reading road. Perhaps the most frequently met is the rowan, whose resultant scarlet berries are such a lovely decoration before they become bird food. Certainly the rarest are the Wild Service trees which have come to light in the Park Lane area.

It seems that at one time the way of pointing out the fact that your home was a country seat was to plant a lime. They are long-lived trees and our fine ones in Fleet Hill, the approach to The Ridges and at Manor Beacon may well be around two hundred years old. Incidentally lime was the favourite medium of Grindling Gibbons.

Foreign trees

A possession which gave status was the presence of a foreign tree in the garden and we are the heirs of that excellent custom. Scattered around the parish are trees from many countries whose native conditions are relatively similar to ours. There are arbutus trees from Greece, a N American Indian Bean Tree (of which there are several at the House of Commons) and beautiful tulip trees from the same source, a Chinese Tree of Heaven, a Ginko (our most primitive tree) a persimmon, a medlar, several eucalyptus, Swedish whitebeams, figs, mulberries.

Very obviously apart from our oaks, our own native tree is the graceful silver birch — Coleridges' "Lady of the Woods". These are always considered short-lived but some of ours have certainly reached their three-score years and ten. They seem to acclimatise to wet or dry conditions, and act host to many of the smaller birds who prefer them to the oak. There are lovely birches all over Finchampstead but quite old, characterful ones can be found on The Ridges, in Fleet Hill and at California. Birch logs were the only ones which Queen Victoria would have for fires in her private apartments, "because they are so pretty", as she said. Birches and Scots pines are largely used on our housing estates and rightly so, for they are there for the asking, do not obstruct the view of traffic, are not difficult to fell when necessary, and, being native, give far more character to the place than the ornamental trees, charming though they may be. The Village street is an example of wise and colourful mixed planting with lime, sycamore, prunus, beech, ash and the school's own good old English oaks.

Tree preservation

Trees are vital to the beauty and tranquillity of Finchampstead. Their loss seriously and adversely affects the whole character of the Parish, as evidenced by the pitiful remains of so many elms killed by the Dutch Elm Disease. New trees should be planted to replace them. Now, we hear, there is even a growing threat from a disease that attacks beech trees. It is known as Beech Bark Disease and infected victims have already been felled on Pye Hill. A beetle that bores through the bark, carries fungus spores that then invade the unprotected heart of the tree. The first signs are colonies of white spots. Prompt action, including carbolic soap scrubbing, followed by a tar oil spray and then later insecticide, can save the beeches, but, like so many other aspects of the Parish amenities, they rely upon the watchfulness of local residents and their willingness to take action.

It takes so many years for a forest tree to reach its maturity, that the Parish ought to be particularly vigilant on behalf of the magnificent specimen trees that, if damaged or destroyed, could not be replaced in our generation. The main threat often comes not from disease, but from human interference (inexpert pruning or by work that interferes with their roots). Too many fine trees have been cut down without a second's thought during ground clearance, when special provisions might have been made to save them for us and for posterity.

More residents ought to be aware of the Tree Preservation Order system. A TPO is, according to a District Council Order under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1971, to ensure that "no person shall, except

Dutch Elm disease has shaken us into realising what could happen to our landscape if disaster befell other species. Whole hedges of full-grown trees stood as gaunt and threatening skeletons until cut down with great labour and expense. If trees are to be properly cared for we must be willing for the burden to fall on the rates. Trees suffer a lot of damage because of the high cost to individual owners of carrying out the necessary treatment.

Our remaining native woodlands are another anxiety. Apart from those preserved for us by the Council and the National Trust, many are in the hands of those who may not be able to afford them much longer, indeed, some are being cleared from their centres now. What then? It is this chain of woods — wet, dry, acid or neutral — across the parish which enables us to enjoy such a wonderful variety of flora and fauna.

Woodworking is now an art as well as a craft and is being learnt full time or in evening classes by many people as a pastime, a means of earning money, or as a valuable therapy. In Finchampstead alone we have many skilled workers in wood, who make staircases and doors, reproduction and modern furniture, small articles like bowls and lamps. Can we make an industry of our trees? This would enable them to earn their keep and ensure continuity of planting.

Our trees are a wonderful inheritance to pass on to future generations. Let us appreciate them, treasure them and care for them and remember that they, too, are mortal.

with the consent of the authority and accordance with the conditions, if any imposed on such consent, cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage, or wilfully destroy or cause or permit the cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting, wilful damage or wilful destruction" of any tree with a TPO.

Any sufficiently interested person, whether or not the owner of the tree, can apply for a TPO to the Wokingham District Council, which will then send a specialist to make a report on the tree's health, position, ownership and on the extent to which it is an outstanding specimen and in danger.

The TPO is applied with a description (Latin name and Common Name) and its location, accompanied by a map. In the event of any dispute on its location, the map takes precedence over the written description. It normally takes two or three months for this procedure to be completed, but an emergency TPO can be applied on the spot in the face of an immediate danger, but this then has to be confirmed in the normal way within six months.

Replacement trees protected

It is interesting to note, that a TPO applies to any replacement tree planted on the spot where a protected tree has had to be removed. Trees with a diameter of less than 75mm (measured over the bark at a height of 1.5 metres) are not usually made the subject of a TPO, nor are those that are not visible from the public highway.

There are also a number of instances where protected

trees can be lopped or removed in spite of TPOs. A tree is not permitted to interfere with essential works in connection with the supply of services such as gas, water and electricity carried out by what the Act calls 'statutory undertakers' — official workmen. Even the finest of trees are not protected if they are regarded as a danger to passers-by or to aircraft.

If a tree stands on land already included in development plans, then it can only be protected if it is specifically included on the detailed plan of the finished site.

Finchampstead at this moment has no designated Conservation Areas, in which all trees are protected, with six weeks notice required to the Council before any work can be carried out on a tree. However, there are a number of trees (remarkably few if you consider the amenity value of so many trees in the Parish) listed on the register of TPOs held at the Local Authority offices, with a copy filed with the Clerk to the Parish Council.

A TPO should only be applied for if a tree is a specimen or if there is a definite threat to its well-being. Frivolous applications cause irritation and wasted effort. If a person is in need of advice on how to

apply and whether or not a tree or group of trees is a suitable candidate for a TPO, an approach should be made to the Tree Department of the Wokingham District Council.

In the past, one of the disadvantages of the TPO scheme has been the ignorance on the part of the public as to which trees were protected. If the owner of the property on which a protected tree stood damaged or removed the tree, other residents, even close neighbours, may not have been aware of the existence of the TPO and were not able to take action to save the tree.

Fire danger

The drought of the summer of 1976 ought to have alerted us to the danger from forest fires. Scores of fires had to be fought and the Parish suddenly discovered how ill-prepared it was for such emergencies. One of the most urgent requirements is a system of firebreaks, even through privately owned woods, wide enough to permit access to fire-fighting appliances and kept clear of peat and undergrowth, so that fires do not spread unseen below the visible surface of the forest floor.

Trees in Finchamstead bearing Tree Preservation Orders

Date	No.	Description	Date	No.	Description
4.8.61	3	Fisher's Copse. This lies across the E end of Bridlepath 18. North part high and dry, a continuation of The Ridges. Beeches, Scots pines, oaks, silver birch, rowan and a fine yew. S part low and damp, coming towards the Blackwater. Hazel, alder, guelder rose.	9.1.75	71	Several trees off Ravenswood Avenue. The Scots pines and other trees covered by this order are on part of Ravenswood Estate.
6.7.65	7	Trees on the Close and Village Point, Longwater Lane. Oak at the crossroads with Cricket Hill, copper beech, yew, weeping willow, Norway maple, grey poplar.	12.2.76	88	Four oaks at California Crossroads. 2 red, 2 hybrid durmast-Engl.
5.11.70	26	Land bounded on E side by Lower Wokingham Road — now Wellington Park Estate. Here a few forest and park trees have been retained and many ornamental trees have been added.	11.3.76	91	Trees on the E border of Nine Mile Ride school playing fields. Mostly oaks but also thija, blackthorn, ash, holly. Also those between Chandlers Cottage and back of NMR gardens.
26.10.72	55	The Sequoias on Wellingtonia Avenue not already cared for by the National Trust. 32 Sequoias on N, 56 trees on S.		98	Longwater Lane and Crest Homes development. Oaks, birches, holly and pseudacacia between Wise Hill and Longwater Lane, including oaks in the Lane.
21.8.73	65	Land adjoining Gap House, Ravenswood Avenue. Oak, Lawsonia, and two Norway spruce.	7.6.76	99	Two robinias behind Queens Oak, plus the oak and ash to the E down Church Lane.
			7.6.76	99A	Church Lane E. Holly outside The Hollies.
				99B	The two Jubilee oaks on the small green below St James's Church and the one outside the churchyard gates, south of them.

Bird-spotting checklist

All the following species of birds were seen during 1975 and 1976 within the Parish of Finchampstead. (They are grouped according to family, as in "The Observer's Book of Birds".) How many have you seen? Can you add to this list?

Magpie	Redwing
Jay	Ring Ouzel
Carrion Crow	Robin
Jackdaw	Wheatear
Raven	Nightingale
Rook	Hedge Sparrow
Greenfinch	House Martin
Lesser Redpoll	Sand Martin
Goldfinch	Swallow
Linnet	Spotted Flycatcher
Chaffinch	Wren
Bullfinch	Green Woodpecker
Siskin	Great Spotted Woodpecker
Serin	Lesser Spotted Woodpecker
Yellowhammer	Cuckoo
Reed bunting	Swift
House Sparrow	Nightjar
Tree Sparrow	Hoopoe
Starling	Kingfisher
Skylark	Barn Owl
Wood Lark	Little Owl
Pied Wagtail	Tawny Owl
White Wagtail	Sparrow Hawk
Meadow Pipit	Kestrel
Tree Pipit	Hobby

Nuthatch
Tree Creeper
Goldcrest
Great Tit
Coal Tit
Marsh Tit
Blue Tit
Long-Tailed Tit
Chiffchaff
Willow Warbler
Reed Warbler
Blackcap
Whitethroat
Garden Warbler
Mistle Thrush
Song Thrush
Blackbird
Fieldfare

Grey Lag Goose
Mallard Duck
Heron
Woodcock
Common Snipe
Lapwing (Green Plover)
Common Gull
Black-headed Gull
Common Tern
Great Northern Diver
Great Crested Grebe
Moorhen
Coot
Collared Dove
Ring Dove (Wood Pigeon)
Turtle Dove
Partridge
Quail
Pheasant

This is a total of 87 types of bird, representing almost half the total number of different birds that can be seen wild in the British Isles. The majority of those on this list nest in Finchampstead, though some, such as the serins and the Great Northern Diver, have been seen feeding here during a stopover on their migrations. There are probably many other birds to be seen in the Parish that have not been reliably notified to the editor during the short period of time in which this material has been compiled.

Butterflies found in Finchampstead

	English name	Latin name	Food plants of caterpillar
	Brimstone	Gonepteryx rhamni	Buckthorn leaf
x	Brown Argus	Aricia agestis	Rock Rose or Storks' Bill
	Clouded Yellow	Colias croceus	Wild Legumes — Vetches
	Comma	Polygonia c-album	Stinging Nettle, Wild Hop
	Common Blue	Polyommatus icarus	Birds' Foot Trefoil
x	Dark Green Fritillary	Mesoacidalia aglaia	Violet or Pansy leaves
	Dingy Skipper	Erynnis tages	Birds' Foot Trefoil
	Gatekeeper	Pyronia tithonus	Grasses
	Grayling	Hipparchia semele	Grass, tussock
x	Green Hairstreak	Callophrys rubi	Gorse, Broom, Trefoil seeds
	Green-veined White	Pieris napi	Turnip, Cuckoo flower
	Grizzled Skipper	Pyrgus malvae	Wild Strawberry or Bramble
	Holly Blue	Celestrina argiolus	Fruit of Ivy, Dogwood, Holly
	Large Skipper	Ochlodes venatus	Grasses
	Large White	Pieris brassicae	The Vegetable Garden
x	Marsh Fritillary	Euphidryas aurinia	Plantain, Scabious, Honeysuckle
	Meadow Brown	Maniola jurtina	Grass, Thistles, Bramble
	Orange-tip	Anthocharis cardamines	Wild cruciferae
	Painted Lady	Venusa cardui	Thistle, Nettle, Burdock
	Peacock	Inachis io	Stinging nettle, Wild hop
x	Purple Hairstreak	Quercusia quercus	Oakshoots or Sallow
	Red Admiral	Venusa atalanta	Nettles
	Ringlet	Aphantopus hyperantus	Grass
x	Silver Studded Blue	Plebejus argus	Gorse, Broom, Trefoil shoots
x	Silver-washed Fritillary	Argynnis paphia	Violet leaves
	Small Copper	Lycaena phlaeas	Sorrel and Dock
	Small Heath	Coenonympha pamphilus	Heath grasses, Crested dog tail
	Small Skipper	Thymelicus sylvestris	Grasses
	Small White	Pieris rapae	Nasturtium, Mignonette
	Small Tortoiseshell	Aglais urticae	Nettles
	Speckled Wood	Parage aegeria	Grass, including Couch
	Wall Brown	Lasiommata megera	Meadow grass, Cocksfoot
x	White Admiral	Limenitis camilla	Honeysuckle leaf

x = uncommon

Housing

The problems created by the need for housing are severe and the solutions generally inadequate. The present housing situation in the Parish of Finchampstead highlights the difficulties which are apparent to even the casual observer. We have a duty to inquire into the facts and it is hoped that this report will serve as a small part of the inquiry.

Finchampstead is a community of people living in houses and the principal purpose of a house is to provide a home and meet the needs of those living in it. Good housing should allow people to live in a community according not only to their needs but also to their aspirations. It is the architecture in which people spend most of their leisure time and it is the major man-made sculpture. A house is a place of shape, size and dimension, an immovable permanent structure which, when erected, affects the whole visual scene. It follows, therefore, that the number of houses, their position and the style of construction are matters of importance to the whole community.

Housing cuts across conflicting interests. Theoretically, the builder in Finchampstead is in competition with the farmer so far as land use is concerned, yet the builder must eat farm produce and the farmer and his men must have housing for shelter. The Parish of Finchampstead is one of the areas upon which a heavy demand for housing has been placed and whilst the village area and farm land surrounding it have remained comparatively unchanged during the past ten years, the remainder of the Parish has seen a great increase in the number of houses and, as a result, is now overall a semi-rural area.

Housing distribution and population

In 1975 the population of the Parish of Finchampstead was 4,685. This shows a percentage increase of 18.4 per cent over the 1971 census figure, which was 3,956. In the same period, the percentage increase for the Parish of Barkham was 6.3 and for Wokingham Without 17.5. It appears that the population of the parish has a much younger age/sex structure than for the County of Berkshire as a whole.

Documents attached to the booklet issued by the Wokingham District Council in January, 1976, entitled "A Plan for the Rides", detail most clearly the distribution of housing and population within the Parish. For convenience, this booklet will be referred to as 'The Rides Plan', though, in fact, it was not a plan but an invitation to discuss the issues relevant to the planning needs of The Rides area. The plan, together with a brief visual inspection of the Parish, makes it immediately clear that the Parish forms two units. There is the original nucleus known as "The Village", roughly four miles from Wokingham town, consisting of the church, two public houses, minimal shopping and sporadic houses, divided by a band of farmland from the second unit, that is "The Rides Area", including the California junction and parts of Nine Mile Road, Barkham Ride, Finchampstead Road and Crowthorne Road.

It is one of the general conclusions of this section

that although the Village and The Rides are separated physically and in character, there is a danger in any argument that isolation means independence and that the needs of the peoples living in the areas can be considered as separate matters. This is neither possible nor desirable, for the beauty of The Village area and of the National Trust Land which forms part of it can be as much an amenity to those living adjacent to it as to those living in The Village. In housing terms, however, the following differences within the two areas are apparent. The Village is a relatively static housing area with the greater part of the housing constructed prior to 1950. This is because the local planning authority (now the Wokingham District Council) has always regarded the Village of Finchampstead as being part of the Green Belt, whereas, in fact, much of the village lies outside the area designated officially as Green Belt.

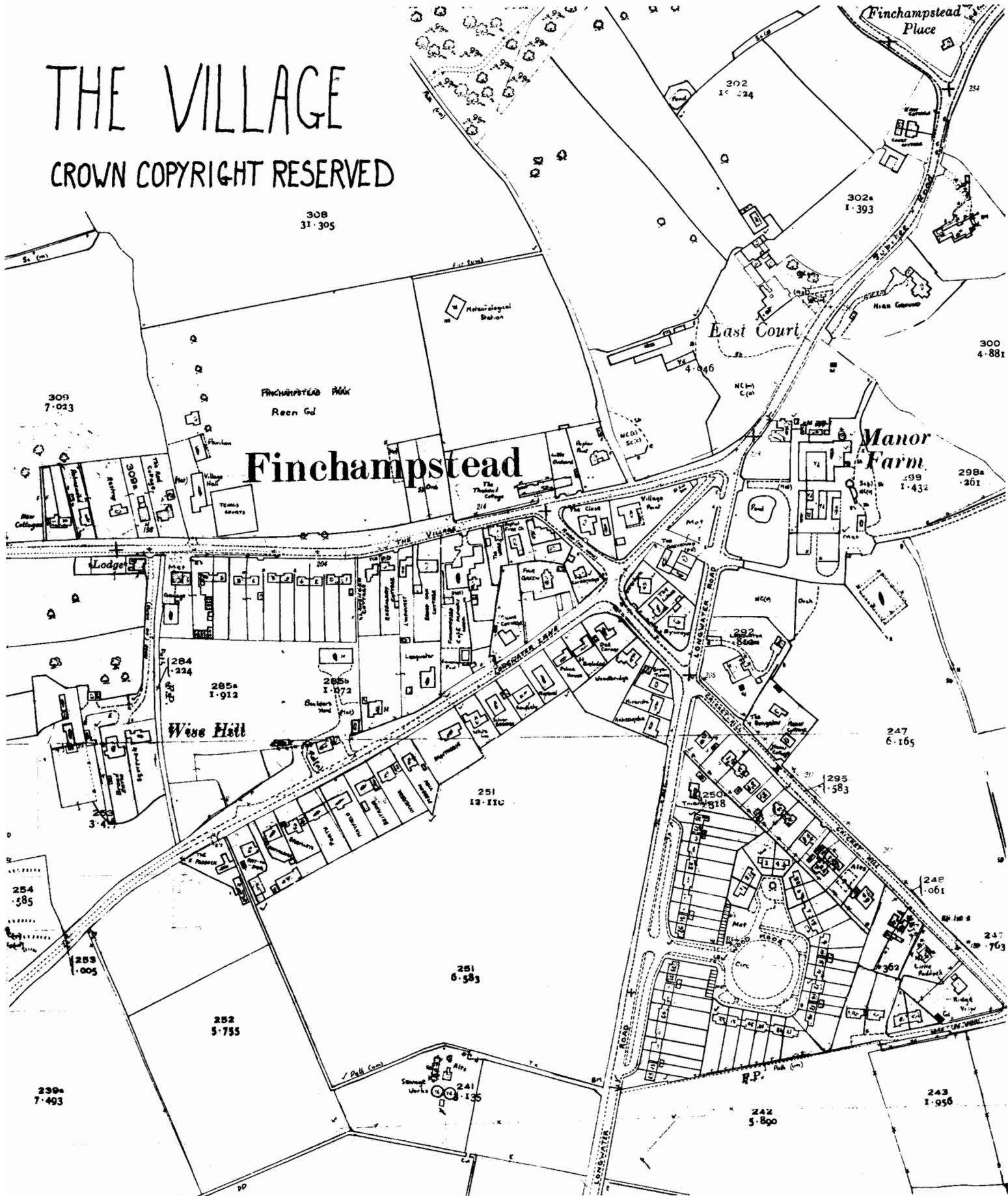
Until the late sixties and early seventies, the same planning policy was applied to The Rides area but the ribbon development which was evident in the 1950s has now been "rounded off" and "expanded", against the wishes of the local council. Major residential development was allowed on appeal to the Minister of Housing and Local Government (now the Department of the Environment) and, as a consequence, by far the greater proportion of the increase in the number of households since the 1971 census has been located in The Rides area. The Rides Issues Report was an attempt to rationalize this development and a draft plan is due shortly. There is, by contrast, no suggestion that there should be any change in the application of Green Belt Policy (for a definition see page 50) to the Village. Furthermore, the District Council publication of January 1976, recommends that a buffer zone be maintained between the two areas to check the spread of residential development towards the Village. It is essential for the whole of this "buffer zone" to be designated Green Belt in the Berkshire Structure Plan now in preparation.

There is a marked difference in the levels of density of dwellings per acre between the Rides area and the Village. Recent housing developments carried out in the private and public sectors have shown a level of density in the Rides area of 60 persons per acre, as on the Gorse Ride South Council housing estate, and a relatively high density on the residential housing developments on the land at the rear of Finchampstead Road. Such densities are not to be found in The Village, where terraced housing is very rare. In both areas the majority of the houses constructed prior to 1950 had large to average garden sizes, thus maintaining a rural atmosphere and character throughout the parish. In recent years, the size of garden allotted to the new houses in The Rides has sadly diminished and much of the area can only be described, and indeed is officially regarded, as semi-rural. (See the article in Construction Research and Development Journal Vol. 2, No. 3, pages 123-135 - "Finchampstead: A survey of Planning Needs in A Semi-Rural Area".)

A Government survey of California Cross-Roads
A survey begun on the 4th September, 1976, by a research team from the then Ministry of Housing and

THE VILLAGE

CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED



Local Government, shows that 84 per cent of the dwellings lying within a half-mile radius of the California Cross-roads were bungalows, a tenth were houses and 5 per cent were caravans. The balance was made up of miscellaneous housing. The buildings constructed in The Rides since then have changed these figures towards a more even spread between bungalows and houses. However, the figures unquestionably reveal a contrast to The Village where the dwellings are more evenly mixed and are predominantly two-storey houses. A number of houses of historic interest are found in The Village, but there are none in The Rides. Furthermore, the quality of housing, both in design and material content, appears to be of a higher standard in The Village.

The matter of design and materials used is of considerable importance, ranking next to layout and numbers, in the consideration of what is good housing. The changes in the ribbon development along Nine Miles Ride and Barkham Ride illustrate this point most clearly. The demolition of the former unsightly single storey dwellings constructed with poor materials has improved both these roads and the subsequent construction of mainly chalet bungalows has added to the scene and not detracted from it. Planners are too frequently concerned with the sole question of whether a property should be constructed and not what the property should look like. The standards applicable today in Finchampstead are capable of improvement by sensible creative planning.

Growth of housing and population

The columns set out below are based on census figures where available.

	Population	Households
1975	4,685	
1971	3,956	1,286
1961	2,731	
1951	2,827	912
1931	1,308	
1921	934	
1911	866	
1901	660	143
1891	680	138

The houses in Finchampstead originate from two sources: from the private sector and from the public sector. The latter means either district council or central government schemes.

The public housing sector

At the present time there are 256 council houses in the Parish. The first demand for council housing came in 1920, following the end of the first World War. It was for families employed in agriculture and forestry. Twenty houses were constructed in the Village in 1922. They were provided with large gardens, suitable for the needs and occupations of the people living in them. In 1929, four council houses were constructed opposite the church and a further nine in the Village. In 1931, twelve houses were constructed along Reading Road, and, in 1951/52, forty houses were built along Longwater Road and Woodmoor. The District Council constructed the houses in Gorse Ride North Estate, all but twenty of which have now been sold to the council tenants. They were sold on a low

deposit scheme and it very likely that the majority of the purchasers took council mortgage facilities. This council estate has much to commend it, for the houses are well designed and the layout is obviously working well.

On average, casual vacancies occur at the rate of 10/12 per annum. As at the 20th October, 1975, the demand for council houses from the Wokingham District Council was 236 applicants, with 41 of that number specifically seeking council housing within the Parish of Finchampstead. Of this number, 31 required ordinary family accommodation, 8 wanted old person's placement, and 2 were seeking single person's accommodation.

The council intends (funds permitting) to construct further houses, that should meet the demand. It does appear, however, that within the various categories of accommodation, Finchampstead is particularly deficient in accommodating the elderly who are, perhaps, unable to care for themselves. Alongside Gorse Ride North Estate, there is another council housing estate, Gorse Ride South. Prior to 1967, the Wokingham Rural District Council acquired 27 acres of land adjacent to Gorse Ride for housing. It was recognised at that time that much of the surrounding land was low density ribbon development of moderate to low standard housing. It was hoped that the development of the site would give the area an identity by providing "a sub-centre of population". A considerable amount of research was done and a Research and Development Group of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government was asked to prepare a development project report for the Wokingham Rural District Council. This survey was presented to the Council's Housing Department in November, 1967. Some findings of the survey contained in the report are:

"The broad problem is to design housing at a suitable density while retaining the rural character of the neighbourhood."

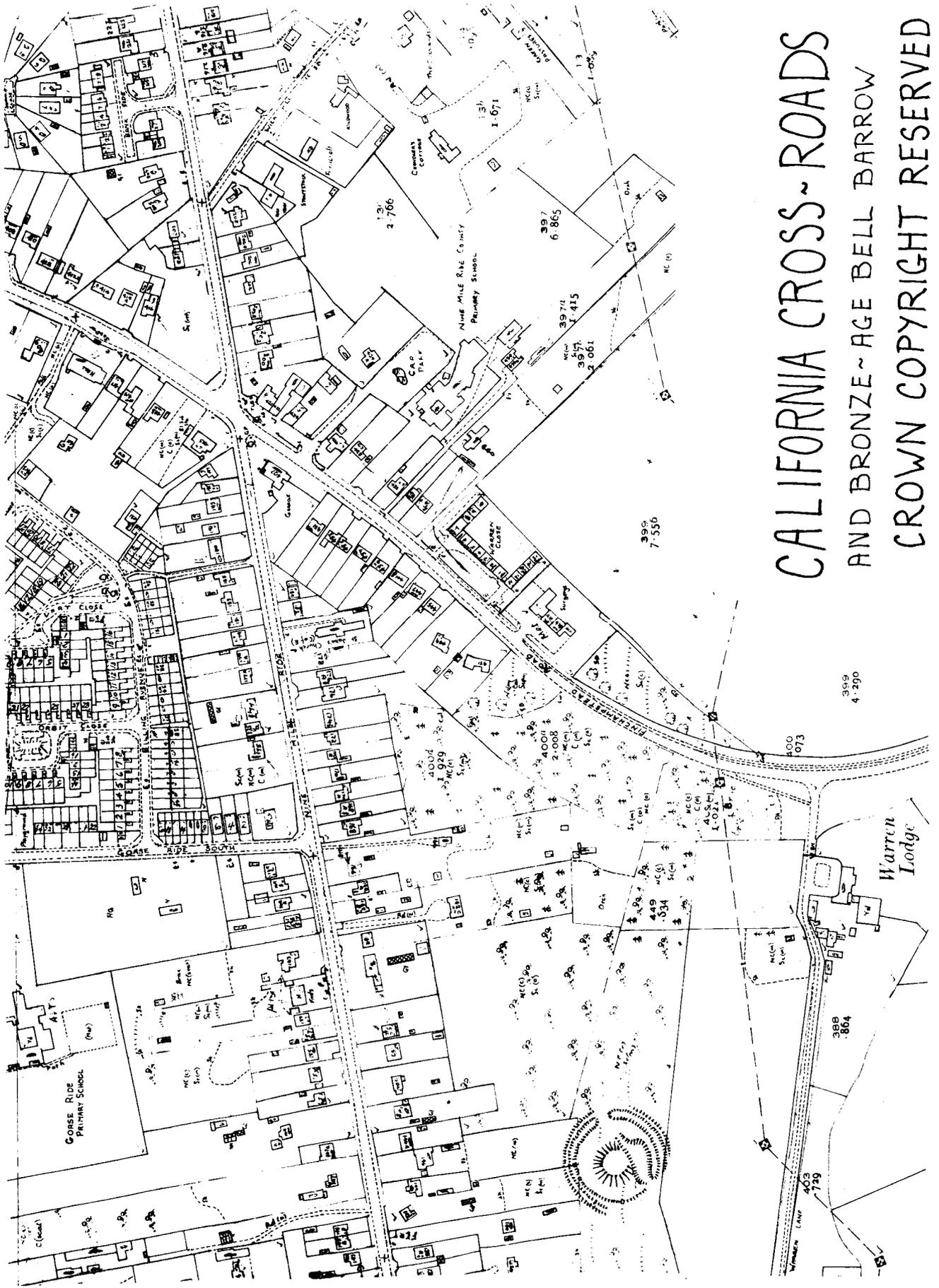
"Nor surprisingly the most popular outdoor activity was gardening, which 85 per cent of households engaged in. This should be taken into account in deciding the size of gardens."

"Some people thought gardens of over half an acre too big. Gardens in the scheme will be nowhere near this size. But as they will be used for many activities *they should be uniformly as big as possible except for the elderly households.*"

The conclusions reached by the research team are important and are set out at length here because it is very illuminating to read the recommendations and then compare them with the homes that were finally provided:

Conclusions of Research & Development Group of Ministry of Housing & Local Government, 1967

- (i) Finchampstead lacks cohesion and a definite core, and improved public facilities would benefit both the present and the new population. The density of 60 persons per acre would save land and would be a better capital investment than a lower one. Moreover a scheme at this density would provide the basic core which is lacking at present.
- (ii) At 60 persons per acre it would be impossible



CALIFORNIA CROSS~ROADS
AND BRONZE~AGE BELL BARROW
CROWN COPYRIGHT RESERVED

to provide semi-detached houses, and the alternative of semi-detached houses with low flats is not desirable. Almost all tenants will want a garden, so for this reason terraced housing appears to be the best solution. The objections to terraced housing appear to be relatively minor. It is felt that in such an area gardens are of paramount importance and that 700 sq ft should be the minimum garden size for each family dwelling.

- (iii) Car ownership is high and growing in importance. The decision to attach garages to most of the houses for convenience and so that they can be used for additional storage and workshop space would seem an advantage over other layouts.
- (iv) Pedestrian and vehicular separation would be worth while providing, if it did not entail leaving the vehicle some way from the house. But for this reason, and the likely confusion and misuse of entrances, the true Radburn layout with services and gardens on one side and pedestrian walkway to entrances on the other was rejected in favour of a controlled "mixed" side for vehicles and pedestrians, where vehicles are few and slow, while the rear sides of the houses are kept pedestrian and intended for children. These conclusions are borne out in recent studies by the Building Research Station on Radburn estates.
- (v) Not enough provision for children's play had been made in the past, and care is needed to provide enough for all age groups.

The estate is now in existence, of course, and so we can examine the extent to which the Gorse Ride South scheme can be regarded as a success in housing terms. The greatest source of satisfaction revealed by the survey carried out by the research team appears to be gardening, and then enjoyment of the rural scene. Can it be said that the Gorse Ride South Estate, judged by these criteria, is a success? The gardens allocated to each house are tiny. The rural scene has not been preserved, but it has been adversely affected by the poor standard of design. Many occupants are happy with the accommodation, especially old people who do not wish to have too many or large rooms, but few can be happy with the small gardens and the general look of the estate.

The private sector

The houses in the private sector in Finchampstead originate from three sources. Some derive from employment (such as the farm house or agricultural cottages constructed on the farm land); some were the result of speculation by builders tending to be, for the most part, either detached properties in The Village or semi-detached and detached in The Rides. In recent years, however, there has been estate development to the West of Finchampstead Road and throughout The Rides. Finally, there are those houses built by individuals. These houses have tended to be larger than in the first two categories and frequently have involved the enlargement of existing smaller properties. It is most regrettable that there are now very few large houses being built (with a gross floor area in excess of 3,500 sq ft). It is unlikely that such houses will be constructed in the foreseeable future,

for builders report that the cost of construction exceeds any possible selling price.

It must not be forgotten that much of the character of The Village has been established by the presence of large properties in attractive garden settings. The houses along The Ridges act as a housing buffer zone between farm land the National Trust area and are an asset in planning and social terms. As there will always be a need for a limited supply of larger properties, the role of this type of development should be taken into account.

Much of the housing in The Rides consists of ribbon development of frontage and double depth development beginning in the 1920s when the then existing forest was cleared for timber and the area divided and sold to individual purchasers as narrow 20 ft, 40 ft and 60 ft wide plots, giving rise to low standard housing. The 1947 Planning Act put a stop to this type of development. The County development plan subsequently included part of the Parish in the Green Belt east of Finchampstead. On the remaining White Land, rounding off and in-filling has taken place and, during the last 5 years, there has been much improvement in the quality of the visual scene along the roads of The Rides due to the demolition of temporary buildings and the erection of new housing.

Small builders and big developers

A number of small local builders, both in The Village area and The Rides, and indeed elsewhere in the private housing sector, contributed noticeably to the improvement of house design and housing standards. Their efforts have frequently added to the environment by improving areas that would otherwise have remained shabby. During the last five years, there has been a most noticeable increase in the number of large developers building in The Rides. It is questionable whether they have maintained the high standards set by the smaller builder and they have certainly developed the sites to the highest density possible. This has had the effect of destroying the rural scene. It is open to question whether it is always advisable to release 10 acres for high density development or 20 acres for low density development, but in the latter case preserving the rural atmosphere. It is not necessarily recommended that one is to be preferred to the other but it should be a matter of careful debate.

A clear pattern toward large scale development would appear to be emerging both in local authority and private housing building. During the last 10 years, the demand for housing has increased at such a rate that only large scale production could meet the demand adequately. The creation of large estates quite obviously changes the nature of the community and environment to a degree not previously witnessed by Finchampstead. Reference is made below to the Community Land Act, 1975, and although this Act is unlikely to have an immediate impact on the housing in the Parish of Finchampstead, it is of essential importance to appreciate that it does pass to the Local Authority the right to control the development of land. It is, therefore, very pertinent to examine closely the track record of local authority development, for, in the absence of better evidence, it is reasonable to suppose that they will do no better or worse than they have done in the past in the public sector. In this context, the results at Gorse Ride

South may be particularly significant and, further, the observations made with regard to quality building from the smaller development in the private sector are particularly relevant.

Planning: Development Plans, Green Belt Policy, Community Land Act

The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 and subsequent amending Acts require, among other things, that planning permission be obtained before a dwelling is constructed. The acts require the Department of the Environment to ensure that the County and District Councils produce a planning policy. The current planning policy for the County of Berkshire, including the Parish of Finchampstead, is under review because the Berkshire Structure Plan is in the course of preparation. However, at this point in time, the planning principles which govern development and the construction of housing are contained in the Development Plan submitted to the Minister of Housing and Local Government on 21st September 1960 as amended by the Secretary of State for the Environment. The statement and accompanying plan referred to have never been fully adopted by Central Government but, nevertheless, these documents form the basis upon which the District Council in Wokingham made their planning decisions with regard to Finchampstead. As a supplement to the written statement and County Review Map, and indeed as a supplement to its successor, the Berkshire Structure Plan, the Wokingham District Council are engaged in the preparation of The Rides Plan which will contain the planning policy for much of the Parish, i.e. The Rides area.

The written statement of the 21st September, 1960 as amended, contains a number of useful definitions, not the least of these being paragraphs 92 and 93, which are set out below. These state what is permitted in a Green Belt area and answer the basic question frequently raised, what is Green Belt? The answer is expressed in terms of what can be done in Green Belt, and it may, therefore, be assumed that all else may not be done.

Green Belt

“Paragraph 92. The following types of development are considered to be appropriate in the Green Belt and in principle will be permitted:—

- (a) development requisite for the use of land for agriculture, forestry or sport
- (b) cemeteries or institutions standing in large grounds
- (c) infilling (as defined in para 26) within existing settlements
- (d) other uses appropriate to a rural area.”

“Paragraph 93. Care will be taken to ensure that the visual amenities of the Green Belt will not be injured by developments within, or conspicuous from the Green Belt, which although they would not prejudice its main purpose, might be inappropriate by reason of their siting, materials or design.”

Any person seeking to build in the Parish of Finchampstead must, therefore, first obtain planning permission from the Wokingham District Council. If an application is refused, then the individual has

the right to appeal to the Minister in charge of the Department of the Environment, who reserves the right to adjudicate the decision of the District Council. The Courts reserve the right to check the Minister's conduct if he makes an error on a point of law. The expression “allow an appeal”, therefore, means that the District Council have, in the first instance, refused an application which the Minister or the Courts have subsequently allowed.

Though much of the village of Finchampstead lies outside the Metropolitan Green Belt zone, the limit of it is set by the Finchampstead Road as it runs through Finchampstead, towards Yateley, the Green Belt area laying to the east. The land lying to the West, though notionally White Land and not subject to such severe restrictions as to development, has always been in practice treated as part of the Green Belt by the Wokingham District Council and its predecessors. The District Council has plainly stated that it does not envisage any significant changes in planning policy for The Village of Finchampstead. At the most some “in-filling” may be permitted. This expression is also defined in the written statement referred to above — para 26 as follows:

“*In-filling* denotes building on vacant plots within the existing building area of a settlement. Such development will usually be of single plots with existing frontages to suitable roads; *in-filling* will not normally involve a material change of the existing use of land and will not alter the physical, social or visual character of the settlement”

The decisions made by the District Council in Wokingham relating to the Parish of Finchampstead appear as precedents in Planning law, as do the decisions of the Minister. Accordingly, anyone seeking to know the policy of the District Council with regard to any particular plot should visit the Council Offices, examine the map which is available and consider any planning decisions made with regard to adjacent land.

As stated above, it will be obvious that The Rides Plan, when it is finally defined, will be a most important document with far reaching effects. The policy decisions which will be contained in the Plan are likely to be of a regional nature. The Plan will not deal with the whole of the Parish but only such parts as the District Council consider require planning and rationalisation. However, it would be unwise to treat the area of the Plan as a separate entity. The content of The Rides Plan is as much a matter of importance for the people living in the Village as it is for the people living in The Rides. It is a matter of concern that the proper balance of housing is maintained in The Rides, for if The Rides becomes unbalanced in housing terms, through over-development or failure to provide a full range of houses, then pressure will mount for development outside The Rides to redress the balance. This could conceivably involve developing part of The Village area, thus spoiling the rural amenity for the whole Parish, The Rides residents included.

Community Land Act

The following is a brief summary of some of the policy decisions contained in the Community Land Act, 1975, which, although of no immediate application to Finchampstead, must be included in a survey

of Finchampstead housing as it has a most direct bearing on the future of the housing market. An explanatory leaflet states:

"The Act received Royal Assent on the 12th November 1975 and its main provisions were brought into effect on the first appointed day which was 6th April 1976. The Act is based on proposals announced in the Government's White Paper 'Land' which was published on 12th September, 1974. How will it operate? In the first phase, as from the first appointed day, local authorities will have a general duty to have regard to the desirability of bringing development land, particularly in relation to housing and industrial development, into public ownership. In order to assist them in this objective, they will have wide powers to buy the land in order to make it available for development.

Local authorities in each county are already obliged to make jointly land acquisition and management schemes or LAMS which have to be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment. Basically the schemes settle who does what with regard to the sharing of duties and responsibilities under the Act. Further documents in the form of the Five Year Rolling Programme of Acquisitions and Disposals and the local authority's Land Policy Statement will also be prepared. They will describe the types of development that the authorities want to encourage and the ways in which they will ensure that land is made available for development.

In the second phase, as authorities build up resources and expertise, the Secretary of State will make duty orders providing that land for the kind of development and in the areas specified in the order must have passed through public ownership before development takes place.

In the final and third phase, possibly ten years hence when duty orders have been made for all relevant development and cover the whole country, the second appointed day can be brought in. This will bring a change in the basis of compensation for land to be acquired for new development to current use value which represents its existing use and in most cases taking no account of any increase in value attributable to the grant or hope of a fresh planning permission.

What is development land? Land which in the opinion of the local authority concerned is needed for relevant development within ten years, having regard to the development plan, any relevant planning decision and any factors material to a planning decision." (N.B. Parcels of land of less than 1 acre or for less than 10 houses are exempt under the Act.)

What is the degree of satisfaction?

In 1968, before work began on the Council Housing Schemes at Gorse Ride, the Research and Development Group of the Ministry of Housing carried out an extensive research project in a survey area covering a half mile radius of the proposed site. Within this area there were found to be 552 dwellings and a sample survey of one in three houses was carried out during

1967. The Research Team interviewed 184 housewives, and 160 questionnaires were completed for use in their analysis. There was a response rate of 87 per cent. The team's findings are a most useful guide on the matter of the degree of housing satisfaction within The Rides area. Many of their findings must surely apply with equal validity to the remainder of the Parish. Some of the findings relevant to housing satisfaction within the area of study were as follows:

- (a) Just under 80 per cent of the households were entirely satisfied with their homes and the remainder are divided between those who were not satisfied and those who found it all right. This figure compares most favourably with the degree of satisfaction found at most recent council house purpose-made schemes. The national average for satisfaction at this level is 64 per cent.
- (b) The satisfaction dropped with income within the area of the survey. Those without cars with children under five, households renting accommodation and living in caravans were the least satisfied groups.
- (c) 84 per cent of the sample said they were not trying to move. A further 12 per cent were trying and 4 per cent were actually on the move. These figures correspond with the national average. *The main reason for trying to move was given as a desire for better or different accommodation. It was noticed that one third of those with children under five were trying to move.*

Much of the satisfaction declared to the Research Team was based upon the Parish's ability through its housing and amenities to meet the needs of those occupying the homes. It appeared that the needs least catered for were those of the young mother with young children who encountered transport difficulties, shopping difficulties, limited play space and security for children. On the other hand there was support for the proposition that children over five played in each other's gardens. This was recorded by 59 of the housewives interviewed with children over five.

The Research Team found that much satisfaction was derived from gardening; it reports:

"The popularity of gardening as an outside leisure pursuit reinforces the demand for gardens."

Elsewhere it stated:

"Almost all the adults included gardening in their spare time activity out of doors"

and

"Observations prior to the survey had shown that many of the gardens included fairly large vegetable gardens. Over two thirds were content with the gardens and the figures were the highest where gardens were over an eighth of an acre but below half an acre in size."

The team concluded that in Finchampstead the garden size should be as large as possible as residents' expectations would be based upon not only what they wanted to do in their gardens but what they could expect elsewhere. *There was only slight evidence that elderly people wanted smaller gardens.*

It appears that the main cause of the satisfaction

shown by the housewives lay in their enjoyment of the rural atmosphere of The Rides. The Research Team concluded that every effort should be made to preserve a rural rather than an urban landscape and to seek "the preservation of peace and quiet for all, but particularly for the residents here already and for the elderly who will come and live on the new estate."

The reasons disclosed to the Research Team for the satisfaction found with the housing in The Rides must also apply to the remainder of the Parish which is more rural in character. The Village and the adjacent farming and National Trust Lands are sufficiently pleasant areas in which to live. The preservation so far as possible of a rural atmosphere throughout the Parish is a matter of real benefit to all concerned.

Conclusion

Housing is a major factor in determining the environment. The increase in the number of houses construc-

ted in the Parish of Finchampstead during the past fifteen years has made much of the Parish, principally The Rides, a semi-rural area, and all the signs are that the scale of housing is likely to increase. Major housing schemes obviously affect the environment to a greater extent than smaller schemes. The tendency in very recent years has been towards large-scale development. It is likely that certain areas, principally in The Rides, will be allocated for further residential development and this is likely to establish the area as a residential zone. The preservation of rural areas within the Parish is necessary as an amenity for both The Rides and The Village. Within these areas, it is necessary to maintain a proper balance of housing.

There is a demand for more low cost housing in The Village area, and it can be argued that there is a need in The Rides for more expensive housing. Any future development in The Village area is likely to take place as infilling within the existing limits, though even that is likely to be on a very restricted basis.

One of the larger Village properties, built in 1871.



Agriculture and Industry

The major part of the Parish of Finchampstead has retained its rural nature to such an extent that it is an attractive area in which to live for people who work outside the Parish. This fact accounts for the pressure for housing development, yet, of course, without strict control, the influx of population would destroy the rural amenities they come to Finchampstead to find.

The natural landscape in Finchampstead owes its existence to farming. However, it is noteworthy how few of the residents of the Parish earn their living from the land. It is reliably estimated that a total of no more than 12 men are employed on the nine or ten farms that are operated commercially in the Parish. This figure is only about one third of the number of agricultural workers that can be remembered as recently as 20 years ago. The reduction is due in part to the closure of some farms for housing development, especially in the Nine Mile Ride Area, to the change in the type of farming in the past 10 or 15 years, and to the increase in efficiency in farming that has been achieved in some cases.

The soil in Finchampstead is Grade 3 (on a scale of Grade 1-5) and grows excellent grass for beef raising and produces good quality cereals. Up to 10 years ago, the main activity of Finchampstead farmers was dairy cattle, with sizeable stocks, too, of sheep, pigs and hens. This more mixed form of farming has given way to specialisation in order to operate more productively and more competitively. Now there are no sheep, only one small-scale pig breeder and no dairy cattle. Poultry was badly affected a few years ago by disease and within the past couple of years the last significant poultry farm has been sold (down Nash Grove Lane) for housing development.

Many of the farms have been bought and amalgamated into larger, more economic units. This has reduced employment needs but increased productivity. Miss Isabel Vaughan Morgan of Warren Lodge, for example, operates five farms — Rectory Farm, Church Farm, Banisters Farm, Ridge Farm and Hill Crest Farm. Frank Napper is the Farm Manager and he has two farm workers. Their main speciality is beef raising and Finchampstead can be proud of the superb herd of Red Poll cattle that attracts expert visitors to view it from many parts of the world. Wheat, barley, and oats are grown in rotation on some of the pastures. The Manor Farm and Hall's Farm are both owned by Mr B.E. Rickett. His Farm Manager, John Sephton, has one employee, and grows wheat, barley and oats on over 340 acres. (Mr Sephton is currently in the *Guinness Book of Records* for a 50-hour non-stop ploughing world record achieved in November, 1974.) These seven farms, therefore, are the source of five jobs, excluding the farm proprietors.

Smaller units

There are several market gardens in the parish. Mr V. Breakspear does general vegetable and potato growing and Mr and Mrs Guy Hannen have two large greenhouses currently producing lettuce, tomatoes, green peppers and runner beans for the market with

at least two people employed.

On a number of smallholdings cattle are fattened and horses are taken for grazing. Two stud farms operate in Finchampstead. Mr and Mrs N.R.H. Graham breed and train thoroughbred hurdlers and steeplechasers as well as a limited number of childrens' ponies. There are at present approximately thirty horses and ponies on this farm and four people are employed to look after them. Mr and Mrs George Gaines breed and train Irish Connemara ponies — a large native pony renowned for its hardiness, good temperament and excellent natural jumping ability. One person is employed there. Mr B.N. Grey has a large agricultural haulage firm. He employs fourteen people and has a fleet of thirteen vehicles. He transports from 50,000 to 60,000 animals (many are pedigree stock) to the Continent each year. This represents about one half of his business.

Non-agricultural jobs

It is clear, therefore, that there are well over 4,000 people living in Finchampstead who are not dependent on the land for their living. These other occupations are widely spread and remarkably varied. Within the Parish itself, employment opportunities are minimal. They are mostly confined to jobs in family retail and garage businesses and the schools. There are a few small building contractors, a coal and haulage business in The Village and some work in the maintenance of the larger gardens. There are four pubs. Beyond the Parish, the source of work is so varied that the Parish is very unlikely ever to feel the effects of serious unemployment except in periods when the whole country's economy is extremely depressed. Even in the recent difficult times for the nation, the Parish has apparently not been affected to such a great extent. The employment opportunities immediately on the fringe of the Parish include the Arborfield Military Camp (partly within the Parish boundaries), the Department of the Environment's Transport and Road Research Laboratory in Crowthorne, the mixed light engineering estates in Wokingham (notably on Molly Millar's Lane) and more especially in Bracknell New Town. There are jobs at Broadmoor Hospital and Wellington College, two employers that were responsible for the original expansion of Crowthorne.

Slightly further afield is Reading, where employment prospects are healthy in department stores, chain stores, County Council departments and the increasing number of national HQ's of major companies that have been attracted to move there, including The Metal Box Company, Foster Wheelers and the Norcros Group. Reading has a substantial engineering industry, originally based on agricultural implements (Gascoigne's, for example) but now greatly diversified.

Commuting

The opening in the past few years of the M4 and M3 motorways has increased the convenience of living in Finchampstead and commuting to employment at



Cricket on the Memorial Park fields, part of Finchampstead not in Green Belt

Heathrow Airport and in Central London. It is interesting to note that the Blackwater River, for centuries the natural boundary of Finchampstead to the South, and for so long crossed from the Parish only by a ford on Longwater Lane, still seems to be a natural barrier in terms of employment. There are remarkably few people who live in Finchampstead and who commute to places such as Camberley, Farnborough, Aldershot and Guildford, even though these busy, growing centres are at the most 40 minutes and, for some, only 10 minutes away from the Parish. Camberley and Guildford are much more used by Finchampstead residents as shopping centres than as sources of employment.

Work for wives

One of the main disadvantages of the lack of work opportunities inside the Parish is the scarcity of jobs that would suit a married woman who has the responsibility of bringing up young children. The poor public transport facilities oblige a wife to work very near to home if she has to be there in time to receive children coming from school. The only alternative is for the wife to have a car at her disposal. But this would generally mean two cars in the family, as the husband very frequently is obliged to travel to his more distant place of work by private car.

In the past, wives in the Parish frequently took work as domestic helps in the larger houses, which were often bought by retired, well-to-do couples or widows or widowers. Many were ex-officers from Sandhurst or Aldershot. These people needed domestic help and could afford to pay for it, and, of course, wage levels for domestics were comparatively low. Nowadays, the number of domestic jobs has decreased and the number of women willing to do domestic jobs has decreased, so this is no longer a major form of employment. If any form of light industry were permitted to establish itself in the Parish, consideration ought to be given to providing opportunities for the untapped resources of female labour, for more wives would wish to bring additional revenue into the family without neglecting the needs of their young children.

School leavers

Finchampstead has suffered less than the national average from the problem of unemployed school leavers during the economic depression of the past

two or three years. The County Employment Officer reports that the majority of male school leavers from the Parish are intent on jobs in engineering and electronics, and it has been possible to place most of them in jobs or apprenticeships around Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell. The girls still make secretarial, clerical and shop assistant work their main choices, and there has not been too much difficulty in finding work for them in these same towns. The region is also fortunate in the opportunities in nursing, with the enlarged Battle Hospital and the continuous expansion of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and also Heatherwood Hospital in Ascot.

The main problem is not so much the availability of jobs as transport to the place of work. For daily commuting to these towns, the public transport from Finchampstead is crowded at peak hours, unreliable in its timing and, worst of all, extremely expensive. This is a particular disincentive to the young people, for transport costs then represent a big proportion of their earnings. Travel to Reading can take £5 a week from the residue of wages after NHI stamps and income tax have been paid and lunches bought daily. This factor makes Wokingham jobs all the more in demand for Finchampstead youngsters.

The main result of the economic downturn for young people has been the scarcity of holiday jobs for schoolchildren and college students. Employers have attempted to maintain normal levels of employment where possible, but have cut out temporary jobs drastically. This should, of course, be a short-term measure only.

Conclusion

Though farming and related activities employ a relatively small number of people, agriculture is vitally important to the Parish -- for without the maintenance of actively farmed land the character of Finchampstead would be radically changed. The amalgamation of the farms has had very little effect to date on the historic character of the landscape. The fields are still small and spread around the Parish. Hedges have remained in place with few exceptions and the woodlands have not been cleared for greater acreages. The land supports a smaller number of people but provides a rural amenity for thousands more than ever before. It is all the more necessary, therefore, for the non-agricultural residents to feel a great sense of responsibility for the landscape.

Traffic and Transport

Finchampstead is now what can be described as a semi-rural area. It is rural in so far as a large proportion of its acreage is farmed, but it is urban in that dense pockets of population now exist within the Parish, the residents being employed outside agriculture.

This situation produces particular problems in traffic and transport. People have to travel long distances to reach their work, the shopping centres or vital amenities, such as hospitals, secondary schools, stations and airports. It produces congestion at peak periods on roads that in some cases have not kept pace with the population growth. People are more dependent on private cars than in truly urban districts and there are more people per square mile than in truly rural areas.

There is also some fear that the Parish location may lead to an increase in traffic passing through, already noticed in the movement of gravel from the extensive workings on the other side of the Blackwater. Finchampstead lies between the M3 and M4 Motorways, but to date there is no evidence to suggest that the Parish roads are being over-used by traffic crossing from one of these to the other, a fear that was expressed immediately prior to the opening of the M3 in 1971.

Accident rates

A measure of inadequate roads for existing traffic is the accident rate. No community wishes to tolerate unreasonable hazards on the roads and the number of accidents that occur that injure people can serve as a strong motivation for a council to improve conditions. Finchampstead is fortunate, in fact, in having a good record, for the level of accidents is low. This would appear to indicate that at present our road system and parking facilities are coping with demands to the extent of not creating intolerable hazards to safety.

The accompanying map of the Parish carries a record of all accidents within Finchampstead during the past three years. Each red dot represents an accident causing a serious injury. Each black dot represents an accident resulting in a less serious injury. Collisions that do not result in personal injury are not recorded. (There is no obligation to report such accidents to the police.) (Map on pages 36 and 37).

It is interesting to note that some of the junctions that attract most criticism from the public have a clean accident record. One of the most notorious is at the War Memorial, where drivers tend to utter a short prayer before attempting to cross, say, from the uphill stretch to turn into The Ridges. No accident has occurred there to cause injury during the past three years. Although there are many scrapes at the Tally Ho junction of Fleet Hill and Reading Road, one serious and one lesser injury have been recorded, which means that the rate is less than one per annum.

The black spot as far as Finchampstead is concerned is the California Crossroads. (The 'dog's leg' junction where Nine Mile Ride crosses Lower Wokingham

Road is just outside the Parish boundary. The latter junction is the scene of more than two injuries a year on average.) The California Crossroads situation is more complex, as not all accidents which occur in that vicinity are related exclusively to the actual junction, as some may arise from access to and exit from the individual shops, the school and the nearby housing estates. Many people are uneasy about the traffic situation in that whole area and some detailed study is necessary to see how the area can be made more safe.

One consideration might be a mini-roundabout system instead of the straight crossroad junction that would control the traffic flow and help to reduce the speed of approaching traffic.

The total injuries from traffic accidents in the Parish as shown on the map is 45 in three years, 28 serious and 17 less serious, averaging overall at 15 per annum. Many, of course, are totally unconnected with parish residents or local activities. One serious accident (including a death) on Fleet Hill occurred when a young driver from outside the Parish drove his car into a tree in the middle of the night.

Traffic flows

The highest rate of traffic on any road in Finchampstead is 13,000 vehicles per day along the half mile length of the A321, where it crosses Nine Mile Ride. This flow can reach 1,400 vehicles per hour. The second highest rate in the Parish is the two mile stretch of the A327, which carries 8,000 vehicles per day from the Tally Ho up through the Reading Road to Arborfield.

The B3016, Finchampstead Road along two miles where it traverses California, has a traffic flow of 4,100 vehicles per day, with 500 as its highest rate in an hour. Nine Mile Ride itself has been measured at 3,760 vpd, with a peak of 590 in an hour. Wellington Avenue and The Ridges, a three-mile stretch of the B3348, carries 2,500 per day and up to 300 in an hour.

Junctions create the worst hazards, as seen on the map, but roundabouts evidently reduce the risk of injury very significantly. The table overleaf shows the traffic flow across a junction with the number of injury accidents during the past three years.

From this it can be seen that one of the busiest junctions in the Parish, at Crowthorne roundabout, taking large numbers of local vehicles to the station every morning and to the Crowthorne shops and Waverley School, for example, plus some heavy through traffic between Camberley and Wokingham, has a much better safety record than the other two junctions, which leads one to believe that a modified treatment of the actual junctions could result in less accidents.

Car ownership

The nature of the Parish layout in relation to the

<i>Busiest junctions</i>	<i>No. of vehicles per day</i>	<i>Injury accidents for 1973/74/75</i>
Nine Mile Ride/ Lower Wokingham Road at Kingsmere (Kings Bridge) (Priority to A321) *	17,000	7
Crowthorne Station Roundabout (Wellingtonia Avenue/Lower Wok. Rd) (Priority on roundabout)	15,000	2
California Cross-roads (Priority to Finchampstead Road crossing Nine Mile Ride)	8,000	5

* Just outside the Parish bounds

facilities that the residents must reach presupposes a high rate of car ownership. This is borne out by the known statistics.

The latest figures available are those published from the 1971 national census and it is possible to compare Finchampstead in the Wokingham Rural District as it was at that time, with the Berkshire figures and with the national figures.

The tables show ownership of one car and ownership of two cars or more, but the most significant summary is that of the percentage of persons who have no access to a private car for personal transport.

Car ownership -- from 1971 Census statistics

Percentage of persons without access to a private car:		
<i>Finchampstead</i>	<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>
16.1%	27.2%	42.4%

A resident of Finchampstead, therefore, is nearly twice as likely to use a private car than the average Berkshire resident and more than two and a half times as likely to use a car than the average Briton.

The number of people in households owning one car is very close to the national average. In Finchampstead the figure is 47.2 per cent, whilst nationally it is 46.5 per cent and in the Royal County of Berkshire it is higher at 55.1 per cent. However, the striking fact about Finchampstead is the percentage of people living in households that own more than one car. In our Parish it is as high as 36.7 per cent, whilst in Berkshire it is 17.7 per cent and only 11.0 per cent in the country as a whole. A Finchampstead resident is, therefore, more than three times as likely to live in a household with more than one car than the average Briton.

These figures become very relevant when new housing developments are scheduled for the Parish, for each new dwelling in Finchampstead can be expected to put a proportionately greater pressure on road and parking facilities than the national average. This is especially true as the general amenities of the Parish have not been improved in the past in relation to the growth of the population. Not a single additional

shop, not a single additional local job was created at the time the Longwater Road council estate was built, so that every one of those additional households had to make a journey of some distance to do most of their shopping and to reach their place of work. This same trend continued with the much bigger Gorse Ride development, as explained in the section of this document dealing with housing. New residents, therefore, are obliged to rely very heavily on transport to reach essential services and, in the main, on their own private transport.

Public transport in the Parish

Public transport facilities in the Parish are notoriously poor. The basic reason of course, is that the disparate, and small, population hardly makes it profitable for any public transport enterprise to operate better services in the area. This means that, on the one hand, residents are forced to rely on private cars and, on the other hand, those without cars (for medical, age or financial reasons) are seriously at a disadvantage. The most seriously hit are not only the obvious infirm and elderly, but also the wives whose husbands take the sole family car to work and the children and teenagers who find it difficult to reach their places of education, libraries and entertainments and sports facilities. A lot of pressure is put on parents who have to serve as chauffeurs for their families, fetching and carrying within the Parish and outside the Parish to places such as Wokingham, Bracknell, Reading, Crowthorne and Camberley.

Travel to work

The 1971 census statistics vividly illustrate the problem in relation to travel to work. Based on a 10 per cent sample of households in the Parish, of 188 people actively employed, 134 used a private car to reach their place of work — which is 71.3 per cent of the sample. Only 14 used the bus service and three the train. This means that public transport was used by no more than by 9 per cent of the sample. The rest (37 people, 20 per cent) mentioned motor cycle, pedal cycle, on foot.

Buses

Bus routes run along the Lower Wokingham Road, Nine Mile Ride between Kingsmere and California and the Finchampstead Road from the Tally-Ho through California, and Barkham Ride. (These are not terminus points, but simply indicate the stretches of road used by buses within the Parish.) Most services are infrequent — only two a day go from The Village to Wokingham and do not necessarily coincide with peak shopping times or school times. It is not too wild a generalisation to say that only those living close to California Cross-roads can reasonably expect to use a bus for regular and dependable transport to and from Wokingham.

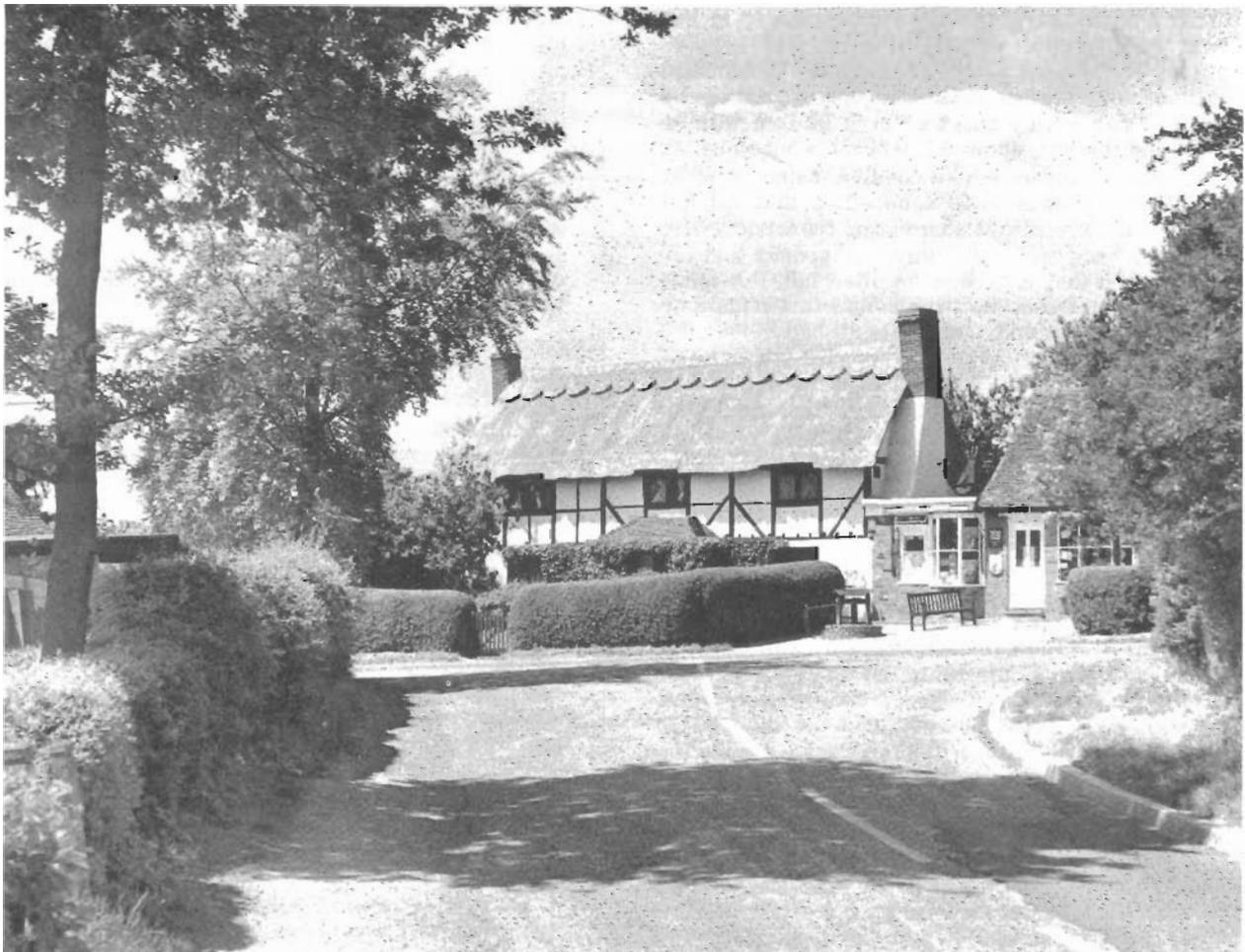
Train services

Trains run approximately each hour from Crowthorne Station, close to the bottom of Wellingtonia Avenue, to Wokingham and Reading in a northerly direction and Guildford in a southerly direction. The greatest use of the train service is by school-children taking the 8.31 a.m. which specially stops at Winnersh Halt in addition to Wokingham and



These two master thatchers at work on the roof of The Thatched Cottage both live in the Parish.

The 16th or 17th C Thatched Cottage, when the Forge was still serving as the Village shop.



Reading. Many change at Wokingham to journey to Bracknell, Ascot and Sunningdale. This service is therefore suitable for reaching The Holt School for Girls, The Forest School for Boys, Bracknell College, The Abbey School and so on. However, as the station is located just outside the furthest eastern point of the Parish, only a small proportion of Finchampstead households think in terms of rail as a means of transport, unless they first travel to Wokingham for the London-Reading service.

Survey results

We are fortunate in having access to the Survey of Planning Needs carried out over a circle of a radius of half a mile from California Cross-roads in 1968, prior to the construction of the housing at Gorse Ride South. This bears out much of what is evident from the 1971 Census. In the sample of the survey, about 85 per cent of men went to work by car or van, whilst 10 per cent went by bicycle and 5 per cent by public transport, which, in that area, virtually meant by bus. Housewives mainly did their shopping locally on foot, but many waited until Saturday so that they could have the use of the family car to go further afield. This, of course, is another factor that adds to the congestion of peak hour shopping on Saturday.

Great difficulties are reported in getting to the doctors' surgery by a small minority, about five per cent stating that an urgent visit meant asking a neighbour for a lift or hiring a taxi. Half the housewives said they went to the surgery by car, but some husbands were obliged to miss their work in order to act as chauffeur. Of the 59 housewives with children under the age of 11 who were interviewed in this small sample area, 33 said their children went to distant recreational areas, such as the Wokingham outdoor swimming pool. Of these, half were taken by car, a third went by bus, bicycle or on foot with an adult and the rest, about 17 per cent, went alone. At that time, secondary school children mainly went by bus. Half the housewives commented that the bus service was expensive, a quarter said the services were infrequent and late and a tenth complained that the buses, when they arrived, were often full. For some, it was inconvenient that the conductors refused to accept pushchairs on board.

These criticisms of the bus services came from an area that would be considered the area best served by buses in the whole of the Parish.

Taxis

There appear to be no taxi services operating from within Finchampstead itself. Residents are obliged to use the Station Car Hire taxi service based at Wokingham Station, or Mr McHugh, who operates from his home in the centre of Crowthorne. This makes it expensive to use taxis for very local journeys, where the journey may be doubled in length due to the distance the taxi has to come to the pick-up point; this is an extra burden for an elderly or invalid person who has to travel from home to the surgery, or to a meeting in the Memorial Hall.

Early in 1976, the journey from Finchampstead to Wokingham would cost 30p by bus and from 70p to £1.50 by taxi, depending on the location of one's

home. The cost of a train journey from Wokingham to Reading is 33p extra to the cost of reaching the station, whilst the onward journey by bus from Wokingham to Reading is 35p. The train journey from Wokingham to London is £1.52, but there are variations in the fare structure depending upon the time of day and the day of the week, with special reductions for day shopping excursions. A taxi ride from Finchampstead to Reading costs in the region of £3 one way. There is a combined train/bus service to Heathrow Airport via Feltham that costs £1.82 one way. The taxi fare for this journey varies between £5 and £7.

It can be economical, therefore, to use a taxi for such longer journeys if more than one person is to travel. Where train or bus changes are necessary, the taxi service scores for convenience and even in the time required for the journey. A visit to a patient in Royal Berks or Battle Hospital from Finchampstead can take a whole evening, from 5 p.m. to 10.30 p.m., if public transport is used, allowing no more than one hour by the bedside. The new hospital at Frimley, beyond Camberley, is even more difficult of access.

Conclusions

The conclusion must be that more and more emphasis will be placed on transport by private car as public transport services appear to be getting more expensive and less frequent. The construction of more housing will create greater demands for roads and parking improvements, but, at this point, the extra traffic has been accommodated with no serious risk to safety according to accident statistics. Attention should be given to modification of the accident black spots to improve their safety margins and to prevent deterioration in the future. As elderly and infirm people find it especially hard to attend functions and visit amenities, more attention should be given to the provision of voluntary transport services for them. Any encouragement possible should be given to traders willing to set up new shopping facilities in the Parish, as this is one of the greatest of the transport problems – reaching shops daily when the sole family car may be used for travelling to work.

Education Facilities

Educational facilities are a focal point of a community. They are a major factor in the formation of relationships not only between children but also between parents. A sense of where one belongs is often associated with the place where one was educated, and a sense of to whom one belongs is associated with the people with whom one was educated.

In addition to academic instruction, schools can provide centres for social and leisure activities. The Finchampstead schools, for example, are the settings for not only the children's plays and concerts and pageants, but also for public meetings on matters that closely affect the community. They serve as electoral polling booths, exhibition sites and could possibly be cultivated on an even bigger scale as facilities for cultural and general interest clubs.

Development of educational facilities

Up to 1854, educational instruction was given to the parish children in one of the Almshouses close to the churchyard, which have now been demolished. Then the Finchampstead School was built with funds provided by John Walter of Bearwood, with entry open to any parish children between the ages of 5 and 13. In 1903, a part lease was made over to the rector of Finchampstead, a Mr A.F. Walter of Bearwood, at a rent of £25 per annum for the school itself and £10 for the school house. In 1925, the complete lease went to the Priors, so the school became a Church of England school, as it is still today.

Finchampstead C of E School remained the sole school serving the Parish until September 1931, when the Nine Mile Ride County Primary was opened, probably to act as an overflow facility, for it consisted of two classrooms of asbestos construction, capable of accommodating no more than 26 pupils. The third primary school, Gorse Ride County Primary, was opened in January 1971.

Schools are founded to cater for the needs of a growing population, and it is interesting to see how the two sides of the Parish have expanded at such a different rate. The original school in The Village remained exactly the same size until 1961, when extensions were added to form the rear classroom and new entrance, whilst in 1972 a further classroom, to the left as one views from the road, was constructed. Even now, the total number of pupils at the C of E school is only 96, with a staff of four teachers, including the headmaster, Mr. David Poynter (who is currently also editor of the Finchampstead Parish Magazine and Clerk to the Parish Council).

At the California end of the Parish, however, the Nine Mile Ride and Gorse Ride schools have respectively 268 and 349 pupils. Schoolchildren around Nine Mile Ride, therefore, appear to outnumber those in The Village area by 6.4 to 1.

Managing Bodies

The Finchampstead C of E School has a Board of Managers, of which four, including the Chairman, are

appointees of the Church of St James, whilst the remaining two are appointed by the Parish Council and the County Council respectively. The head teacher attends management meetings but has no vote. The Rector of the church is always one of the Managers. Currently, 85 per cent of the cost of new school buildings is funded by the state and 15 per cent by the church authorities. The property is however owned by the Diocese of Oxford. Running costs and teachers' salaries are met by the County Council in the same way as other state schools. The C of E school is termed "state-aided", not to be confused with the "direct grant" schools in the private sector that are now having their grants discontinued and must become either fully integrated into the state system or totally independent and funded exclusively from private fees.

The Nine Mile Ride and Gorse Ride schools have Managing Bodies in line with the Berkshire Education Committee terms. These suggest that 8 Managers should be appointed by the Local Education Authority, of whom one should be the Headteacher, one a parent, one a staff representative and one a secondary school representative, with 4 additional managers (making 12 in all) appointed by the Minor Authority.

Secondary education

The Parish has no secondary education facility within its boundaries, but such is the growth of the population, that plans have already been formulated for the construction of a Comprehensive secondary school at Nash Grove Lane, with a capacity of 1,000 children aged 11 to 18.

Until 1974, Finchampstead children were tested at the end of their primary school course, those achieving a high standard being provided with places at The Forest Grammar School for Boys, in Winnersh and the Holt School for Girls in Wokingham, whilst the remainder attended the co-educational schools Emmbrook and St Crispins, west and east of Wokingham respectively.

The advent of Comprehensive education, starting September 1974, meant the elimination of the 11-plus examination and selection system and the introduction of secondary schooling based almost entirely on the Catchment Area system. Finchampstead children were designated pupils of Emmbrook School. For special reasons, however, a choice can be made of Forest or Holt or St Crispin, or even Edgebarrow in Crowthorne.

All these schools now operate the Comprehensive system for the new intakes, but contrary to original plans, Forest and Holt have remained separate single sex schools instead of being merged into one co-educational school. The schools are at least two miles apart and so there were physical as traditional objections to the merger.

As Emmbrook is the officially designated secondary school for the Parish, a coach service is provided to transport children to and from the school, whereas

transport to the other secondary schools is left to the individual families to arrange. A secondary school located within the Parish would greatly alleviate the travelling problem for some children, but might aggravate the traffic congestion problem at the approaches to Nash Grove Lane, about which many of the residents there are already complaining.

Transport and education

Being a semi-rural area, the Parish is poorly served by public transport and yet schoolchildren have to come long distances to school from disparate points around the Parish. The C of E primary school in The Village suffers from this problem out of proportion to the number of its pupils. The start of school in the morning is only served by a Thames Valley school bus from Farley Hill via Reading Road, arriving about 8.55 a.m. There is no bus in the other direction and no bus serves the school from any direction in the afternoon when school finishes.

There is no provision for car parking convenient to the school so there is intense congestion twice a day on the narrow main road at the school gates.

Nine Mile Ride and Gorse Ride have better provisions for dropping and collecting pupils by car, but the approach roads are congested at peak times.

Private education

All the facilities discussed in previous sections of this chapter are within the state system of education. Private education plays an extremely important part in the current education of Finchampstead children, however. Children aged between about 5 and 10 are served by such private, fee-paying schools as White House (girls only) in Wokingham, Waverley (co-educational) in Crowthorne, Hawley Place (girls only) at Blackwater and Yateley Manor (boys) in Yateley. The numbers of schools as far afield as Windsor and Reading used by Finchampstead families are too numerous to mention *in toto*.

Private secondary schools that serve Finchampstead residents cover the whole country, for from the age of 11, or even 8, more parents are ready to put their children into boarding schools. Wellington College, of course, in Crowthorne, is a conveniently situated, internationally renowned public school, catering for boarders and some day boys, with recent admission of a few day girls into the upper forms.

Private education influences the Parish scene, from the point of view of this document, because of the fairly distinct way in which private and state education splits the community in two parts horizontally, according to type of residence and level of income. Until recently, within memory of the existing headmasters of the C of E School and Nine Mile Ride school, only one child had ever attended a Parish primary school from The Ridges, yet, conversely, it is not known that a child from the council estate at Longwater Road has ever attended a private fee-paying school.

Whereas wives meetings and sports clubs and jumble sales and fetes attract a cross-section of the total community, the Parish appears to be divided strictly

in two at the primary education level and almost as much at the secondary education level, with little chance for friendships to be cemented between, on the one hand, the children of working class families and, on the other hand, the children of the management or professional classes. In this, the Parish seems to have changed little, if at all, since the Domesday Period.

The arguments for and against private and state education are so many and so intensely debated, that this document cannot adequately summarise them, but the topic is touched upon in this section to indicate that the existence of two entirely separately educated communities within the Parish has a bearing on the extent to which the Parish can ever become an integrated community.

Further education

The main Further Education Centre serving the Parish is Montagu House alongside the library in Wokingham, where adult classes, both day and evening, cater for trades and special interests and crafts. Within the Parish, Nine Mile Ride and Gorse Ride schools and the California Ratepayers Hall offer some limited facilities. For technical courses, both full-time and part-time, residents have to attend the South East Berkshire College of Further Education at Bracknell and the similar technical colleges at Windsor and Reading and even Farnborough.

Pre-school arrangements

There are play groups as follows: Memorial Hall, Finchampstead Village — a play group for 20 to 30 children, run by Mrs White and Anderson; California Ratepayers Hall Play Group, for 20 to 30 children, run by Mrs Daly; Woodside Play Group run by Mrs James and the St Johns Play Group for 24 children, run by Mrs Marsh.

Most of the groups accept children aged from 3 to 4, but as young as 2½ at the Memorial Hall.

There are no official nursery schools in the Parish and doctors report that mothers in the socio-economic groups II and III are constantly complaining about this, as more and more mothers with children of below school age wish to return to work to complement family incomes. Private nursery classes are available at the White House in Wokingham and the Maria Montessori School in Bracknell, but these demand fees and involve parents in the cost of transport daily.

A shortage of child minders is reported in the Parish. About 8 child minders are known, with facilities for looking after no more than one or two children each.

In spite of the rural nature of the Parish, it would appear a serious shortage of open play spaces for the younger children. The only suitable area of this kind is the Finchampstead Village Memorial Park, which is distant from the populous area of Nine Mile Ride. The Ridges is also remote and not suitable for small children without very careful supervision because of the fast traffic on the adjacent, unfenced road and the unauthorised galloping of horses on the heath.



The St John's Scottish Country Dance Club holds an annual event at the White Horse Garden. Lady Liddell is seen here congratulating the group on its performance.



California Cross-Roads, dominated by the North American red oak in front of Red Oak Stores before the tree was severely pruned.



The corn house at North Court Farm is one of the old grain store buildings raised on rick stones to keep the produce dry and safe from rodents.



The Village post office can be seen in the distant centre background, and the sports club in the far right corner of this view across the fields from the path that leads up to the church. This stretch of landscape is in the White Belt of the Parish.

The Finchampstead post office is a valuable amenity, especially for old people and mothers with young children, living in the Village end of the Parish.



Community Amenities

For over 100 years Finchampstead lacked a recognisable centre that would normally, in the typical English village in the South, consist of a cricket field surrounded by a pub, school and shop — all overlooked by the church. Finchampstead had many of the ingredients, but the road from The Village up to the church followed a circuitous route and once the footpaths were no longer the main link, then The Village and the church seemed more separate from each other. The village green proper was lost as a focal point when the common land was absorbed into larger estates at the time of the enclosures and what remains of a commonly held green in Longwater Lane is currently the subject of dispute over ownership and maintenance. To further fragment the community, the major population growth and housing development have taken place in The Rides, cut off from The Village by Church Hill, Wick Hill and the belt of farmland.

The residents of Finchampstead have long been conscious of the division within the Parish and the need for a focal point and for stronger community links. In 1910, for example, there was a proposal that the road through The Village from Eversley should run close to Finchampstead House, alongside Rectory Farm, round the foot of the mound on which the church of St James stands and then on past the Queens Oak to Nine Mile Ride and Wokingham. This suggestion was rejected by the County Council.

Memorial Park

It was in 1946 that a major step towards the creation of a focal point for the whole community was taken. The field opposite the school was bought in honour of the Finchampsteaders who fell in the World Wars and was named the Memorial Park. It became sports-field and recreation ground and virtually the new village green where cricket matches could be held, soccer played and fetes organised.

This move was the inspiration of Dr Billing who, at that time, was the community's sole General Practitioner, and a man who won respect for his attention to all the community's needs, not only medical. Billing Avenue on Gorse Ride South is named after him

Most of the funds for the purchase of the field were raised through a special levy on the Parish rate. The Memorial Hall was constructed in 1960 and, like the Park, placed in the hands of a charitable trust, the trustees being the Parish Council, with management of the facilities in the control of a Parks Committee.

In 1964, the new brick pavilion was built with finance from interest-free loans provided by local residents, most of whom remained anonymous. The Finchampstead Sports and Social Club was founded and prospered so well that it was able to repay the loans in advance of the agreed time. Later additions to the leisure complex include the Lounge Bar, opened in 1975, and the Sportsman's Bar, opened in January, 1977.

The Memorial Hall is booked most days of the year

for such activities as a pre-school nursery group, Catholic services, Girl Guides, the Women's Institute, the Young Wives Club, public meetings (such as those sponsored by the Finchampstead Society), jumble sales and fund-raising and entertainment events including weekly bingo, concerts, discos and barn dances.

The playing fields serve as the valuable open space for the C of E school sports and also boast a children's playground, with swings and roundabout. An additional piece of land, once sold by the trustees to raise cash to help to build the pavilion, part of which served for a time as a Meteorological Office experimental reading station, was bought back by the trustees in 1976. It lies behind The Thatched Cottage and The Forge, linking the Memorial fields with the broad path that runs up to the church. There is currently some debate about its future usage — for additional soccer pitches or for walks and gardens.

The Parks Committee is the umbrella organisation under which a variety of different clubs operate. The largest is the Finchampstead Sports and Social Club.

This has about 500 members and the membership reflects the relative proportions of the population in different parts of the Parish, the majority of the membership coming from the California, Nine Mile Ride area. The Sports Club raised the cash to build the new bars, the Parks Committee became the owner and the Sports Club then rented the buildings back. In this way, the village residents pay for their leisure facilities and the assets are placed in the hands of the trustees.

The Sports Club runs two soccer sides in a Saturday league, two in a Sunday league and three junior sides, which compete in the Bracknell and District League. There is a Finchampstead darts team and the attitude, generally, is that any member of the Sports Club that wishes to initiate an activity is free to go ahead and will receive the support of the committee. There is table tennis available, and two good hard tennis courts. Access to these is not limited to club members, nor even to residents of Finchampstead, and people come from neighbouring parishes to play there because of the delightful setting.

The bars have become a very well patronised social focal point, where large numbers of people meet each other every evening from 7.30 to 10.30.

Ratepayers Hall, California

The California end of the Parish has provided itself with a local community hall which serves as a valuable centre for local activities. There are a number of clubs and special interest societies that operate in California, indicating the extent to which the Parish sees itself divided into two halves. There are, for example, two Women's Institutes — one called the Finchampstead WI (meeting at the Memorial Hall) and the other the California WI (in the Ratepayers Hall). One of the most successful and renowned organisations in the locality is the California Gardeners Club, which has been host to the BBC

Radio programme "Gardeners Question Time". Its membership is drawn from the whole Parish and beyond.

The Nine Mile Ride-California area of Finchampstead became the scene of hectic development soon after the 1914-18 war, when returning soldiers found employment difficult in London and were attracted by the idea of cheap land, a healthy open-air life and a new future for their families in the Berkshire countryside. Mrs J.E. Bowie recalls that time:

At first the land was incredibly cheap — ten shillings (50p) a foot for frontage plots and fifteen shillings on the main road. The back acreage was almost thrown in. I knew a family who bought five acres behind their plots for £5. The ex-servicemen, many with health and lungs damaged by the war, thought they could earn a good living by raising poultry. Wire went up everywhere, much to the annoyance of the Hunt. At first eggs did very well and an egg packing station was built by local people on a co-operative basis. But the economic depression and the tariffs on feeding stuffs in the thirties meant that many dreams faded and poultry farms were sold up.

In the early days, there were some nice bungalows, but many dwellings were just corrugated iron shacks and one area was actually known as 'Tin Town'. There was one man who built his home around and up a tree, with access only possible by climbing up an 8-foot rope ladder. He claimed he was exempt from rates as he had laid no foundations on the ground. As his family grew, the house was extended groundwards and a second house was built for the children. The whole place, located on what is now Gorse Ride estate, was known as 'Up-A-Tree'.

In 1926, the early residents decided that some kind of social centre had to be provided. With the help of a loan from Colonel St John of West Court and Mr Wood, a Scottish schoolmaster, as organiser, land was bought near the cross-roads. A wood and asbestos hut was built and painted and decorated and called 'West Court Club'. There was a tennis court and football field. Eventually, as parents were unhappy about their children having to travel to the Village and to Arborfield to school, in Mr Mason's lorry, and as a policy disagreement over the future of the football field (some wanted to level it into a bowling green) had signalled the end of the club, the County Council was asked to purchase it for a local school. It was the origin of Nine Mile Ride School.

In 1936, the growing population of the California area felt the need for a community hall that would be easier of access than the one in Finchampstead at that time. Through local house to house collections and various social events, cash was raised to permit voluntary labour to build and gradually improve the Ratepayers Hall, which is now the setting for so many local clubs and activities.

Neighbouring facilities

Finchampstead is well situated for the residents to take advantage of sports and leisure facilities not far

beyond its boundaries. Wellington College has recently decided to open its sports facilities to public use on payment of annual membership fees and an hourly rate for certain sports. It offers four squash courts, several tennis courts and a huge open-air swimming pool. Bracknell Sports Centre is nationally famous for its comprehensive facilities for most indoor and outdoor sports. Individual or family membership is also open to residents outside East-hampstead. Wokingham has a squash club, and there is another at Shinfield.

A rare facility is South Hill Park Arts Centre in Bracknell, which boasts a cinema, theatre, concert room, practice rooms for pop groups, an art exhibition hall and classes in almost every kind of cultural activity, including electronic music composition, children's art classes, and semi-precious stone cutting.

Shopping facilities

One of the most important amenities within a parish is shopping. The two different sides of the Parish have very different facilities for shopping. The Village has one general grocery shop at the petrol station, Park View Motors, opposite the Memorial Hall, plus the tiny Post Office and sweets shop closer to the school. Nine Mile Ride area is served by a cluster of shops at the cross roads and with two or three individual shops, including one at Long Moor, one down Barkham Ride and one near Kiln Ride.

The recent history of the Park View Motor shop owned and run by Mr and Mrs Peter Adnams is a salutary tale of how a community may have to fight for its essential amenities and how determination can overcome the most imposing official obstacles.

Village store battle

Nellie Bird and her husband, Graystone Bird (whose photographic skill has preserved many old memories of The Village) kept up the Thatched Cottage Store that had previously been run by Nellie's family, the Goswells, until 1973. For forty years it was a main source of supply of groceries, haberdashery and almost anything imaginably to be found in a village store and well patronised by many of the local families. For most local residents it was the only source of many items that they could reach on foot, the alternative being a car or lengthy bicycle ride to Eversley or Nine Mile Ride cross-roads.

The Birds retired in 1973 and the shop, that had been the village smithy and forge in days gone by, was sold and converted into a private dwelling called The Forge. Peter and Betty Adnams had not long before taken over the village petrol station and car workshop, which they had re-named Park View Motors in place of the former Finchampstead Motors. They planned to take over the function of the village stores by using their existing motorist requisites shop to stock groceries and to build an extra facility next to the workshop to house the motor spares and also toilets for car patrons.

Planning permission was refused by Wokingham Council on the grounds that:

"1 The proposed development will constitute over-

development of the site by reason that:—

- a the proposed Toilet/Store and Motorists Shop building will deprive the existing garage of parking space, and
- b the proposed use of the existing Motorists Shop as a General Store is without adequate loading/unloading facilities.”

Included in the Park View Motors' reply was:

- “a The proposed site is only waste ground. Should a car attempt to park on it, it will suffer very heavy casualties.
- b There is a large forecourt on which to park, and if a petrol tanker can unload on it then so can a delivery van.”

A lengthy, involved correspondence followed. The Village mounted a massive campaign of support for the proposed shop. The Misses Travers, Billings and Taylor organised a petition and the copies available for signing in the Thatched Cottage Stores (prior to closure), the Surgery, and Park View Motors collected as many as 465 local signatures, plus additional signatures from further afield. There was a further barrage of 25 personal letters supporting the proposed shop from residents of The Village. In the meantime, the Thatched Cottage Store closed, and the Adnams began to stock groceries alongside the motorists' items, defying Council instructions to discontinue, waiting the outcome of the campaign for planning permission.

The correspondence continued until 23rd April 1975, when the Council was over-ruled by the Department of the Environment, and building finally went ahead in June 1975.

Shopping survey

The determination of The Village to maintain a general stores close to hand bears out the findings of a survey that was carried out in the Gorse Ride area, at the other end of the Parish, in 1968, which showed that, not surprisingly,

“The amount of shopping done locally was high. The local shops were used to a greater or lesser extent by all except a small minority of housewives. Some housewives relied exclusively on the local shops for all except special items of shopping. It can be assumed that most of the others used them for a considerable amount of shopping even though they did not do the bulk of their shopping there. It seems likely that given a wider choice and competitive prices a greater number of housewives would do more of their shopping locally, although journeys into Wokingham, Bracknell and Reading would probably always be necessary to meet needs such as clothing and banking which could not be provided locally”.

These were the findings of the Research and Development Group of the Ministry of Housing prior to the development of the Gorse Ride South site of 27 acres. The survey covered a circle centred on Nine Mile Ride Crossroads, with a radius of half a mile. The findings would, therefore, be even more true of The Village, where transport to the bigger shopping centres is much worse than from Nine Mile Ride, where distances are greater and where local shopping facilities are even more restricted.

Bookshops and libraries

The Bullock Report of 1975 pointed out that children from homes without books are seriously educationally deprived. A mobile library is provided by the County Council and this visits schools and specified points around the Parish once a fortnight. Libraries, however, are no substitute for book ownership, especially for children. As there is no bookshop in the Parish and the nearest, in Wokingham, Crowthorne and Sandhurst, are not easily accessible to the younger children, it is encouraging to hear that the Finchampstead C of E School in the Village has installed a School Bookshop, where children and parents can together browse amongst and buy a large number of children's paperback books. The other Parish schools are watching the experiment with interest.

Churches and chapels

Catholic services

There is no Catholic church in the Parish but a growing Catholic population is able to attend services held every Sunday morning in the Memorial Hall. Finchampstead Catholics form part of the parish of the Church of the Holy Ghost in Crowthorne. Mrs Salt, who used to live at Banisters, wanted some years ago to present a plot of her land to the Church on which to build a chapel, but planning permission was refused by the council.

Baptist chapel

There has been a Finchampstead Baptist Chapel since 1840, when the trustees bought a plot of land, then part of Windsor Forest, for the sum of £14. The same building, though greatly altered, still stands today, 137 years later. The old shed behind the chapel (in The Village) was originally a stable for the horses of visiting preachers. Since the Pastor left in 1975, different lay preachers have visited each Sunday to preach from the pulpit. Membership is currently 18 Believers and about ten other people who worship at the chapel from time to time. There is a Sunday School every Sunday morning and an extension hall is being built at the rear of the chapel for this school and for additional youth work, at a cost of £10,000.

St James's and St John's

A complete section is devoted earlier to the Parish Church of St James, as it has been so closely identified with the village since at least the 11th C and its ecclesiastical boundaries are still the same as those used by the civil authorities.

St John the Evangelist (who was the brother of St James) is the name of the Mission Chapel on Nine Mile Ride. In the 1930s, in view of the rapid rise of population of The Rides, the Parochial Church Council and the Rector of that time, Revd R.D.Weller, reinforced the ministry of the Parish Church with the construction of a dual purpose hall about half a mile north of St James's. It was licensed for worship and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and was, after the War, given its present name. Finchampstead PCC paid towards the stipend of a Church Army captain, called Wills, and took the initiative in building a church house.

The neighbouring parishes had not made provision



The Queen's Oak pub is a Grade III listed building of late 18th C.

for the growing populations on their borders and so the work load of St John's was greatly increased, especially in the 1960s with the arrival of so much housing development in Nash Grove Lane (in St Paul's Wokingham parish) and Foxcote (in St Sebastian's parish), no more than a mile from the Finchampstead Parish church. In 1971, the Rector of Finchampstead and the incumbents of the neighbouring parishes agreed a convention with the Bishop of Oxford for the appointment of an assisting priest to serve a district that spanned benefice boundaries based on St John's. In this way, Finchampstead's Mission Chapel of St John is able to assist the other parish churches in ministering to the new population in our Parish and in the surrounding areas.

Some people in The Rides have suggested that St John's should be raised in status to a fully fledged parish church with its own Rector in place of the existing title of Priest Missioner. If this suggestion were to be carried through, then the newly created parish would have a population of about 6,000, bigger by far than the consequently reduced St James's Parish. Such a move would destroy the centuries-long close relationship between the whole Finchampstead community and the church at its centre, making it even more difficult to regard the civil parish as a single unit.

Community news

A vital role is played in maintaining a community spirit by the "Finchampstead Parish Magazine". This is published monthly by Mr J.F. Colbeck and is now edited by Mr David Poynter from the School House. As Headmaster of the Village school and Clerk to the Parish Council, he is central to many Parish activities and therefore well able to collate news and background information. The magazine provides space for reviews and letters from each of the churches and chapels in the Parish, including St James, St John's, the Baptist Church and from the Roman Catholic Community. The magazine keeps the community up to date on fund raising events, planning permission applications, sports results, and the activities of all the local clubs and societies. It provides a showcase for publication of stories, poems and reminiscences written by residents. There is even a crossword. It is currently priced at 5p and offers about 32 pages an issue.

The local commercial papers that have special coverage of Finchampstead are "Wokingham Times" and "Wokingham News" appearing each Thursday.

Comprehensive medical services

Whereas Dr Billing used to be the sole provider of medical services in the parish, Finchampstead now boasts a medical centre staffed by four GPs and auxiliary specialist workers. This group practice is the source of a wide range of medical services. They include the following:

Child Health Care — Up to age of 5
Health Visitor's Advisory Clinic once per week;
Child Health Clinic and immunisations twice a month; developmental assessment by GP twice a month for babies up to 6 months; vision and squint screening by Royal Berks Hospital Senior Orthoptist once a month; routine hearing tests at age of 9

months.

Adult health care

Ante-Natal Parentcraft and Relaxation classes;
obesity clinic for patients on group practice list.

Over 65 years of age

Health screening and recreation clinic, two groups per month; mobile chiropody service; health visiting service.

Home help and transport

Elderly and physically infirm people find it difficult to get about within the Parish and so a small body of volunteer drivers has been set up to transport them for the purposes of shopping or to attend dentist and doctors surgeries or OAP clubs. Demand, however, always exceeds supply.

The Home Help service operates effectively, as the rates of pay are good. There is no shortage of Home Helps and the elderly and infirm should take advantage of the scheme.

Medical services outside the Parish

The Royal Berkshire Hospital and Battle Hospital in Reading are the hospitals to which Finchampstead residents are normally directed for treatment beyond the scope of the group practice. A large new hospital has been opened at Frimley, beyond Camberley; however, patients prefer not to be admitted there as the transport connections between Finchampstead and Frimley are very poor, so that visiting is a serious problem.

Wokingham Hospital specialises in Maternity and Geriatrics. The intake of patients here depends more on the consultant than on the residential location of the patient.

Physically handicapped — children

West Mead School in Wokingham educates the physically handicapped, whilst the Hephaistos School in Farley Hill will accept boys of high academic ability. Blind children have no special facilities, but deaf children can attend a special unit in Bracknell, or a special unit at Embrook Comprehensive after the age of 11.

Physically handicapped — adults

There are very few facilities or services for the adult physically handicapped person in the Parish, other than those normally provided on a national scale by the Social Services Department and the Red Cross, which include 'Aids to Living' and invalid equipment and handicrafts to do at home. Little Court Day Centre is able to cater for the physically handicapped person, but there are no physiotherapy facilities on the premises.

Mentally handicapped — children

If the disability is not too severe, pre-school age mentally handicapped children can attend the local play groups. Otherwise, there are special nursery units at Berek and Bray Brook Schools in Bracknell. Some Finchampstead children attend special units in Reading. Special education for ESN and SSN children after the age of 5 can be provided in Reading or

Bracknell. There are also residential schools for them at Ravenswood (Jewish Community) in Crowthorne and Church Hill House Hospital in Bracknell (which also acts as a day nursery unit). Children are admitted to these schools on the recommendation of the Community Physician.

Mentally handicapped — adults

There are Sheltered Workshops in Reading and Bracknell that provide simple repetitive work for SSN adults according to each individual's ability. Because SSN adults present severe problems to their families, they are mostly cared for in residential accommodation. Psychogeriatric patients are accommodated in Wokingham Hospital and in Fairmile Hospital if the problem is predominantly psychiatric. Mentally ill patients at home can be visited by the Psychiatric Community Nurse.

Conclusions

Considering the Parish consists of only about 1,500 households, it enjoys a remarkable range of amenities. It is well served for sport and is in fact attracting many outsiders to its recreational facilities. There are excellent medical services and a wide choice of shopping centres within a few miles in every direction. Attention should, however, be paid to improving the lot of the aged, infirm and those without private transport. There could be more shops and it is hoped that provision for better, close-at-hand shopping will be made as the existing development sites are built into dwellings to accommodate a bigger population.

It is strange that no brewery has taken the opportunity to meet the need of the California/Nine Mile Ride are for a 'local'. The Village is served well by *The Queen's Oak*, *The Greyhound* and also *The Tally-Ho*.

Acknowledgements:

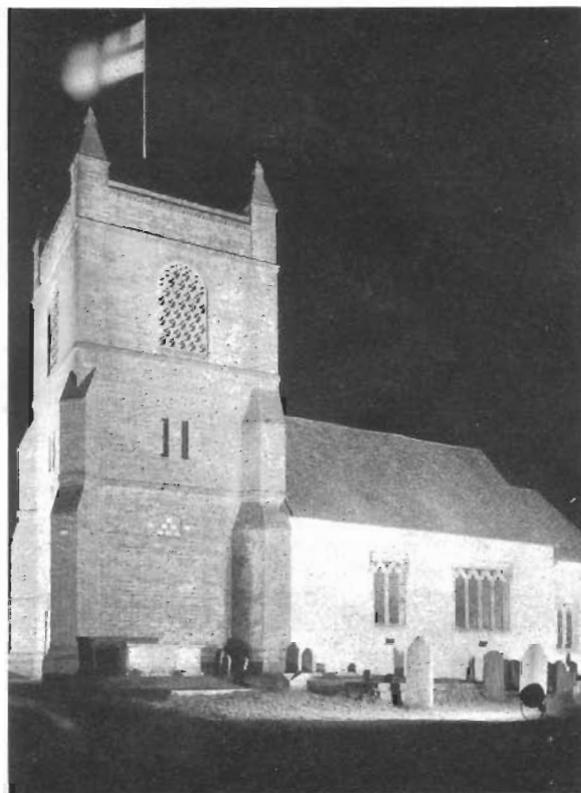
Contributors to this publication include:

Jackie Adnams
David Archer
Frank Blackmore
*Wally Chapman
Dennis Crossley (Rev.)
Freda Dalby
*Patrick Garnett
Biddy Hannen
Dr Ian Hossack
Robert Jacob
Bernard Levy
Peter Mason
Arthur Murrell
*Mary Moore Gaines
*Barrie Munn
Walter Noorlander
*Sydney Paulden (Editor)
Dr Perry
David Poynter
*Robert Seed
*Eric Shimmin
*Brian Shone
David Stafford
*Keith Stephenson
Helen Taylor
G. Willoughby-Cashell

The photographs were taken by:
Graystone Bird, Freda Dalby, David Moore and Nick Tucker

Artwork has been contributed by:
Ann Wales Smith and Mrs Mitchell

*denotes past or present committee members of
Finchampstead Society



St James's Church, floodlit during the Coronation Celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II, in June 1953.

The Finchampstead Society is grateful to all these willing helpers for the immense efforts made to produce this publication in their free time.

Finchampstead Society Chairman: Patrick Garnett,
Finchampstead Place, Finchampstead, Wokingham,
Berkshire.

THE FINCHAMPSTEAD SOCIETY

Finchampstead Place
Finchampstead
Berkshire

7th January 1977

Ref: SL2/5043/166/1

The Regional Controller - Planning
Department of the Environment
Charles House (Room 525)
375 Kensington High Street
London W 14

Dear Sir,

ROYAL COUNTY OF BERKSHIRE
NATIONAL PARKS & ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE
ACT 1949 COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1968

I am writing to you on behalf of the Finchampstead Society regarding the First Review of the Definitive Map of Rights of Way for this area and the Special Review provided by Part III of the Third Schedule to the Countryside Act 1968.

We have carefully studied copies of the draft revised maps and statements at the Wokingham District Council offices and we have inspected on foot, and in great detail the roads and footpaths in question.

In order to obtain comment from a wide cross-section of opinion, the Finchampstead Society organised a Public Meeting at the Memorial Hall, Finchampstead on December 9th which was attended by representatives of the following bodies:-

1. The National Trust
2. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England
3. The Finchampstead Parish Council
4. The Ramblers Association

The official speaker at this meeting was Mr. Keith-Lucas, a solicitor representing the County Secretary of the Royal County of Berkshire. As a result of our detailed investigations into this subject and lengthy discussions with our individual members, the Committee of the Finchampstead Society wishes to object to certain aspects of the re-classification as follows:-

.../2

2

1. Whilst accepting that CRB No. 27 (Hollybush Ride) becomes a BW - "Byway open to all traffic" from Nine Mile Ride to Heath Ride (No. 24), we object to this re-classification from Heath Ride to Wellingtonia Avenue where it crosses over the Devil's Highway and passes through National Trust Property (No. 37).
2. Whilst accepting the revision proposed for CRB No. 39 to become Byway No. 21 open to all traffic from Rhododendron Corner to the last house when it will become Bridleway No. 21a to Hollybush Ride (No. 27), we object to the last section - 21b becoming a Byway open to all traffic to Wellingtonia Avenue where it passes through National Trust Property.
3. Whilst accepting that CRB No. 31, which is the Devil's Highway, should be re-designated as a Byway open to all traffic from Wokingham Road to Heath Ride (No. 24), we object to the re-classification from Hollybush Ride (No. 27) to Heath Ride (No. 24) which borders the National Trust Property of Simon's Wood.

Our recommendation is that the above three sections of byways which do not directly service residential development but which have for some time been enjoyed by walkers and riders on horse-back as recreational amenities should be re-designated as BR's - Bridleways only for the following reasons:-

1. These paths are physically unsuitable for vehicles.
2. If they are down-graded to Bridleways there would be no undue hardship to former users of the road.
3. There are no plans for the maintenance of these paths to a standard suitable for vehicles - either by the Council of the National Trust.
4. Vehicles on these paths could be extremely dangerous to walkers and riders presently using them as a recreational facility adjacent to National Trust land.
5. The use of these paths for vehicles would encourage cross-country rally activities, and motor bike scrambling and would cause a visual and audible intrusion into an area of outstanding natural beauty.

We trust that it is appreciated that the above objections and recommendations have been sensibly proposed as a result of intensive research by a broad cross-section of locally interested parties and that they should be given full and serious consideration in determining the most logical and workable re-classification of Byways presently used as footpaths and bridleways in the National Trust area of Finchampstead.

Yours faithfully,

P. B. Garnett

PATRICK B. GARNETT
Chairman of the Finchampstead Society

Recommendations for Action

The exercise of compiling the material for this publication has revealed that Finchampstead is a comparatively well balanced community. It has a wide variety of housing and stretches of delightful countryside easily accessible by footpath. The neighbouring towns offer a good mix of job opportunities and there are considerable leisure facilities in and around the Parish.

There are, however, threats for the future and the Finchampstead Society has to be vigilant and take

action on a number of issues. The Green Belt anomaly is the most obvious, for the highly developed areas of Crowthorne are included in provisional Green Belt, whilst the most rural and historic parts of Finchampstead are not.

Action is recommended on the following points that have arisen from the different sections of this document. These are not listed in order of priority or importance, but in relation to the sequence of sections in the book for easy reference.

History and heritage

- 1 Investigate the options for the preservation of Bell Barrow
- 2 Elucidate the facts concerning the legal status of the Rights of Way along the Devil's Highway
- 3 Support a move to preserve St Oswalds Well (Dozwells)

Paths

- 1 Follow up the Society's approach to the D of E to avoid upgrading of certain bridleways to Byways open to all traffic
- 2 Take steps to improve condition of paths as required
- 3 Encourage enjoyment of footpath network through sponsored walks
- 4 Devise means of more effective separation of pedestrians and riders to prevent destruction of footpath surfaces

Landscape

- 1 Urge inclusion of The Village in Green Belt
- 2 Appoint Landscape Officer of Society to examine, among other items, the impact on environment of the proposed gravel workings; arrange for this officer to attend the annual reviews held by County Landscape architects and the gravel developers

Wildlife

- 1 Invite specialist voluntary organisations to cooperate in a survey and count of bird, animal, insect populations
- 2 Recommend that the Society and the Parish Magazine be informed of all new Tree Preservation Orders
- 3 Discuss appointment of Society Tree Officer to comment on care and maintenance of woods and individual specimens
- 4 Investigate impact and control of Beech Bark Disease
- 5 Explore means of removal of dead elms from the Parish scene
- 6 Recommend creation of firebreaks to assist forest firefighting

Housing

- 1 Make recommendations for maintaining the proper mix of houses in The Rides to ensure a well-balanced community
- 2 Contest any future plans for high-density, poor-quality, small-garden housing developments that detract from rural atmosphere

Employment

- 1 Support reasonable proposals for the provision of more employment near to home for wives and school-leavers

Traffic and Transport

- 1 Support moves to improve bus services for schools and shopping centres
- 2 Study effect on traffic congestion and accident rates of new developments, such as Nash Grove Lane extension plans
- 3 Improve voluntary transport services for old and infirm
- 4 Urge re-thinking of California Cross-roads to reduce traffic hazards and improve visual scene

Education

- 1 Support the proposal for a new secondary school closer to the Parish
- 2 Consider more social events where all the Parish children can get together more often
- 3 Investigate The Rides need for more open space playing facilities for younger children

Community amenities

- 1 Encourage expansion of local shopping facilities
- 2 Investigate plans for use of new land acquired by the Memorial Park to balance needs of sportsmen, children, senior citizens

General

- 1 Drive for increased membership of the Finchampstead Society to make it more representative of the whole community.

