

The Lost Village of Old Horsepath.

Its Historical Landscape, Church and Cuddesdon's Lost
Watermill
(Revised to January 2019)



HORSPATH

2019

*“ Go light the lantern at your door
and honour those who've gone before ”*

(“All Hallows Eve”: Show of Hands Folk Group 2015)

This paper is an updated version of the summary of investigations into the “lost” medieval village of Old Horsepath that Sally and I distributed last year. With additional notes on a “lost” watermill at Cuddesdon and important input from Ivan Wright on an ancient track from Headington to Horspath, which may just turn out to be a branch of the main Roman Rd through East Oxfordshire. Also, further research on Old Horsepath's curious church legend is noted and a possible explanation mooted. It focuses mainly on the probable last phase of the old village: from around AD 1250 – 1350, but the area's human settlement from the Mesolithic to the Iron Age & Roman period is also very briefly explored.

This is not an academic paper in any sense of the word: just a private story & record for the Walker Family who own the site and for a few interested villagers. Nothing written here is set in concrete and challenges or alternative views are welcome.

It is dedicated to Bob and Muriel Walker, who gave me every encouragement to explore the archaeology of their Horspath farmland for over half a century and, more latterly, to Denis, Sarah and George, who have been equally supportive.

Also, many thanks are due to Sally Humphrey who has kept me firmly up to the mark & frankly nothing at all would have been publicly released without her dogged insistence. She has also created an informal local archaeology group to investigate further and, hopefully, to add new information to Horspath's long history and its place in the landscape.

Last but not least, thanks to my eldest daughter Caroline, whose keen eyesight when she was but three years old, spotted medieval potsherds in the frozen ploughland in the field above the Hollowbrook & thus truly discovered Old Horsepath. She could tell the difference between potsherds & ironstone: I could not..

Although I am not now a Horspath resident, I did live in the village for a spell in the late 1940s & early 1950s and later joined the 60's “rebellion” in the juke-box back room of the Chequers (happy days!) And thus maintained an affection for the village and some of its inhabitants which lasts to this day.

Any inadvertent copyright transgressions will be happily acknowledged or redacted.

Chris Pym. Horspath Allotments Association. 2019

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THE “LOST” VILLAGE OF OLD HORSPATH

AND CUDDESDON'S LOST WATERMILL

Background: An Investigation: 1962-2018

Contemporary writers seem unsure as to which of the two Horsepaths was the earlier, and which begat what. Even the Victoria County History for Oxfordshire (VCH Vol 5 p.177 ff) covers its bets by suggesting in one place that modern Horspath had Roman origins; then in another it suggests that Old Horsepath may have been the earliest with Anglo-Saxon origins.

However, Frank Emory in his “Oxfordshire Landscapes” (1974: p64) has no such doubts “...the original Horspath settlement was sited like Old Wheatley, Cuddesdon and Garsington villages by a spring at about 400 feet on the limestone hill: the present village is the result of migration to, or better survival at, Lower (Church) Horspath“. But the truth is that we still don't know for sure; and new research projects (suggested herein) might well show even earlier evidence from the Roman and Iron Age for both villages. Flint material from campsites of the Mesolithic Era, circa 6000 BC, has also recently come to light indicating that the area and its natural resources have long been attractive to our remote ancestors.

My own curiosity in the lost village was first piqued in the early 1960s when Jack Surman - then living in the old cottage behind Manor Farm - casually mentioned to me as I was searching a new water-mains trench in his garden for medieval pottery – as one does - that “*the Devil moved the church from Old Horsepath down to where it is now*“. But he knew nothing more of this old village and nor did any of the older village residents I asked. (see appendix 4 on page 72 for more on Old Horsepath church.

(Incidentally, the pottery I found that day was exactly the same type of 14th century Brill ware as I later discovered in the test pits at Old Horsepath. These former sherds are now with George Walker for safe keeping.)

This old tale regarding deserted villages is usually a reference to a greedy medieval landowner (The Devil) wanting more pasture for his ever-expanding flocks of profitable sheep. Good media headlines perhaps, and sadly true in many later cases – but mostly those of the 15th & 16th centuries when wool was king, but rarely for the earlier periods. However, the 1847 Tithe Map for Horsepath clearly shows the

ancient strips of open fields surrounding a blank space, high up above the Hollowbrook spring (see p.11 below) and close to a field aptly named in the Tithe “Award” (not the Map) as “Shootings on Old Horspath”. The inference being that it never had been enclosed and the stone debris remaining after the village had been abandoned, probably preventing much of that land being used for agriculture. I suspect that the overall site of the village with its gardens (crofts) & green spaces originally covered a lot more ground than the 1847 blank space: the village margins would have been easier to reclaim. Even today (2018), most of the stones seen in the 1976 photographs have been moved to the hedge overlooking the Hollowbrook. Thus it turns out that Old Horsepath was never *really* lost: merely mislaid.

At first sight it may seem difficult to “lose” a village, yet Maurice Beresford in his 1954 ground-breaking book on the “*Deserted Villages of England*”, recorded no less than 500 so-called “lost or missing English villages”, abandoned in England between 1340 and 1750. Their one-time existence could be proven from medieval tax documents and other historical records (some even with the taxpayers names), yet were not on modern maps.

Today, the recorded number of Deserted Villages in Britain has grown to nearly 3000. Our generic name for them is now “Deserted Medieval Villages” (DMVs). Beresford listed 15 known DMVs in Oxfordshire in 1954: today we know of 146. The location of most of these is now known, although some only approximately, as with Old Horsepath until fairly recently.

But some really *are* lost, and remain so to this day. For example *Bispedone*, *Hunesworde*, *Tilgardesle* are missing without trace, along with the mysterious lost manor of *Derehyde* on Shotover, which had twenty cottages and a 100 acres in 1358 according to the VCH, and the Boarstall Cartulary (written in 1452, but recording land grants back the late 1100s) shows many land-grants in *Derehyde* to various people from villages in this area in the preceding centuries. (An interesting research project for aspiring young Horspath archaeologists: *a whole lost village up there somewhere.....*)

The causes of a DMV's demise are sometimes known: the Black Death in surprisingly few cases. Many from Tudor period due to the forced removals of the villagers to increase sheep farming area, and climate change (of which more later), soil depletion *etc etc*.

At present we have only the barest bones of the story, requiring a huge leap of imagination to bring that long-forgotten settlement back to life. But they were *real*

people, they and their children toiled in those fields, walked on our hills and evidence of their activities abound in the shaping of our present landscape over the last six hundred years.

Documentary Evidence for Old Horsepath since 1086

The very name of the village can cause problems for the researcher in old documents: *Overhorsepath (sic): Horsepath Superior and Upper Horsepath*. The present modern village was variously known as: *Horsepath Inferior, Lower Horsepath, Nether Horsepath, Church Horsepath and Horsepath Major*. And in 1912, after some no doubt delicate reasoning by the Parish Council, the village name lost its “e” and became simply Horspath. (*Oh to see the minutes of that meeting!*) NB: I have kept to the original spelling for the old village.

Interestingly, since very early times Old Horsepath was a separate manor from that of Lower Horsepath, with a separate Manor Court and its own field system beyond the Hollowbrook of around 140 acres. Also Garsington and Cuddesdon originally had two manors. Old Wheatley also appears in the early records. see:-

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp96-116#h2-0017>

The upper manor at Garsington is not well documented and its pre-Norman history virtually unknown, but recent field walking there by Patti Blaza has produced a mass of Romano-British pottery, so a Roman era settlement or farm is a very likely.

There is growing speculation (and increasing proof) that in a growing number of cases these early manors were originally derived from Romano-British estates (which in themselves were most likely to have been Iron-Age or older land-holdings) and taken over again, initially more or less intact, by the Anglo-Saxons in the 6th century AD and, after much fragmentation and distortion, became the basis of the ecclesiastical parishes of the nascent Anglo-Saxon Church. And then, after many further changes, became the basis for the modern parishes we have today. Food for thought. Especially in the case of the two Horsepath manors. (*See appendix 1 on p 55 for an amplification of this intriguing idea*)

The Written Evidence

1086. The first written evidence for Horsepath as a settlement is in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was in essence an inventory for William the Conqueror of his newly captured province. Full of errors, lies and omissions (similar to any modern corporate tax-returns to the Inland Revenue) and thus full of pitfalls for the unwary scholar. But it's all we have from that remote period. The entry for "Horsepath", while stating that there are 15 tenants *etc*, makes no mention of another Horsepath.

(NB: Recent research has proved beyond doubt that the majority of villages mentioned in the Domesday Book, or even those NOT mentioned, but in existence today, have archaeologically proven origins well before that date. Indeed, many have clear evidence of occupation right back to the Bronze Age – circa 2500 BC to 800 BC. And recently discovered crop-marks of what could be an Iron Age settlement near the Cuddesdon turn might well put Old Horsepath into that category. We shall see. More research on this site is needed.)

1122 St. Frideswide's Cartulary (I.28) lists St. Frideswide's receiving tithes from two Horsepath villages. Both were in *demesne*, i.e., belonging to, and probably farmed by, the Lord of the manor using his villeins as tied labour.

1225. **Sandford Cartulary** (i 74-75.) Bernard de Mulet grants all his lands in Upper and Lower Horsepath to the Knights Templar.

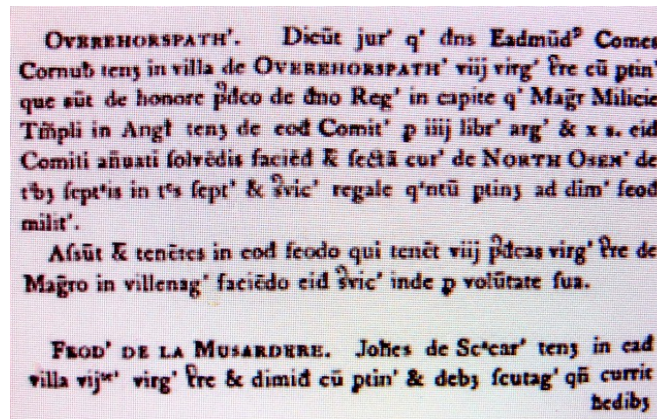
1279. Rotuli Hundredorum "OverHorsepath had 6 tenants with 6 virgates of land." The Hundred Rolls were commissioned by Edward I. In essence a second Domesday Book, and a far more reliable record of land ownership by Hundred (county division) of occupation and tax-return.

(NB: A virgate was primarily a measure of tax assessment rather than area, usually reckoned as notionally equal to 23 acres. So the manor of Upper Horsepath had about 140 acres.)

1316. Nomina Villarum. Upper Horsepath is mentioned, but no details are given. It was a survey carried out for Edward II and contains a list of all cities, boroughs and townships in England and their lords for taxation purposes.

1377. Poll Tax Returns. In this nationwide survey undertaken to raise monies for Edward III's French wars, Upper Horsepath was taxed at 61s 11d with 19 named

inhabitants over 14, both male and female, as being liable for the nationwide 4d tax due to Edward.



The digitalisation of Poll Tax returns for a few Oxfordshire villages are available online from the Public Record Office, but not for Old Horsepath as yet, only a file record number of the original 1377 parchment roll. Further research in the Oxfordshire County Record Office shows no local copies of the original 1377 document are available, so access to the Public Record Office at Kew is needed to determine if those original Medieval Latin records can be retrieved. One fly in this particular ointment is that Medieval Latin is *very* difficult to transcribe and to translate (for a novice) – see for example part of the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum entry for OVEREHORSPATH (*sic*) (above).

1452 Boarstall Cartulary. A private Cartulary, drawn up over 20 years from 1444 for Edmund Rede the younger, the presumed owner & occupant of Boarstall House, a beautiful hunting lodge near Brill (now with a restored duck decoy), and listing their local land holdings & forest privileges.

The Rede family was neither ancient nor wealthy, but they held two forest serjeanties – that of Boarstall and Shotover – seemingly from the late 12th century. Although written between 1452 & 1444, the entries begin in 1170 and the last – a later insertion on a separate MSS page – in March 1467. The entry for October 2nd 1452 mentions their agistement rights on Shotover: “*et de villata de Overhorspath in eodem comitatu pro concesso agistamento 11s vid; et de villata de Netherhorspath 111s vid*”

No acreage is mentioned but the value of the Old Horsepath agistement is only a tenth of that of Lower Horspath. (*Agistment refers specifically to the proceeds of pasturage in the king's forests. To agist is, in English law, to take cattle to graze, in exchange for payment*) Even if the old

village had died out, presumably the forest rights were still maintained, so this data is not helpful in determining the fate of the village, except that the area was still regarded as being within Shotover Forest, although the 1298 boundaries seem not to include them. Curious.

No further documentary details are available purely for Old (Upper) Horsepath in any of the later administrative returns. Hence my conclusion that the village was either deserted, or so depopulated, as to be beneath the tax-collection threshold within a century after 1377, and any tax returns would have been incorporated into those of Lower Horsepath. However, limited test-pitting higher up in the valley to the east of the source of the Hollowbrook (*see later paras below*) has yielded pottery sequences right through to the mid 18th century, so someone was living in that area close to the spring.

Archaeological and fieldwork evidence

The Victoria County History of England (VCH), Oxon, vol 5, p177 lists three pointers as to the location of Old Horsepath at or around OS SP5884 0473:-

- 1) A field name “Old Horsepath” occurs in the 1847 Tithe Award map near to the source of the Hollowbrook.
- 2) There is now a farm named “Old Horspath Farm” at SP 58640433 about eight hundred yards SW of the Hollowbrook source. This farm is not shown on the Tithe Award map and was built around 1900, but perhaps reflects local memory of the old village.
- 3) The VCH quotes “a local antiquary” (*possibly the parson*) as saying he saw “indications of foundations” near the source of the Hollowbrook in 1882.

In 1975, I dug a number of 1 sq. yard test pits in a line about 50 yards eastward uphill from the Hollowbrook spring. These produced a layer of uneven cobblestones, one small fragment of roof-tile and a piece of a large-bore clay pipe (thus probably Victorian: earlier ones had a small bore as tobacco was expensive in earlier times) plus a few animal bones, but no diagnostic (datable) pottery.

However, the following year (1976) systematic field-walking with my young daughter Caroline (then just three..), to the south-east on the field above the spring after ploughing & harrowing had finished, produced a quantity of 12th to 14th century potsherds (now in the the County Museum), plus several discrete

areas of stones (see photos below). These occurred across an area of approximately 300 X 300 yards. Caroline had eyes like a hawk and, unlike me, could spot the difference between muddy pottery and equally muddy chunks of the local ironstone. Without her discoveries further research would have probably died a death right there and then.

(Unfortunately the temperature was close to zero and she had turned blue – but still keen none-the-less. Her mother was less than complimentary when I got Caroline home. Her interest in archaeology waned somewhat after that..)

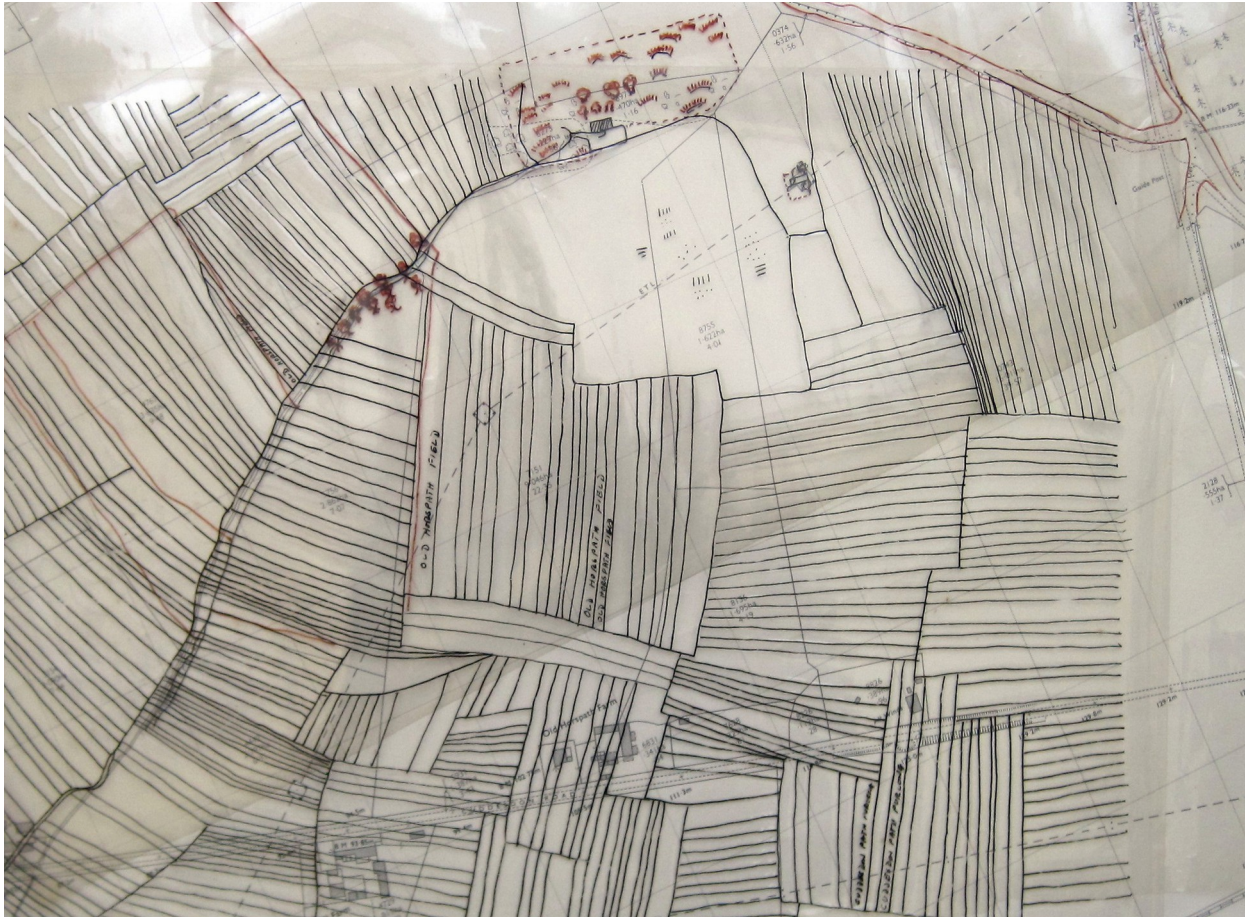


Old Horsepath foundation stones (?). Looking towards Coombe Wood in 1976



Old Horspath site looking towards Littleworth

To try to zero in accurately on the village site's original position, I got a photocopy of the relevant portion of the 1848 Horsepath Tithe Map from the Bodleian Library and traced the field strip outlines on to a sheet of clear plastic. My assumption was that the ancient field strips would retain a negative impression of the space occupied by the old village. This was then overlaid - with some projector jiggling to match the scale - onto the 1906 OS map with the following result:-



1848 Tithe Map overlay onto modern OS map

The blank area immediately below the Hollowbrook Spring coincided precisely with the pottery scatters and stone rubble photographed above.

It seems likely that the stone rubble made the redundant site unattractive to other farming tenants after the village had finally been abandoned, whenever that was.

Small trial trenches to the north-west of this site in the grass pasture (just behind the white horse in the second photo and beyond the modern hedge) produced a section of an enigmatic low limestone wall; a lot of charcoal, and an all-important

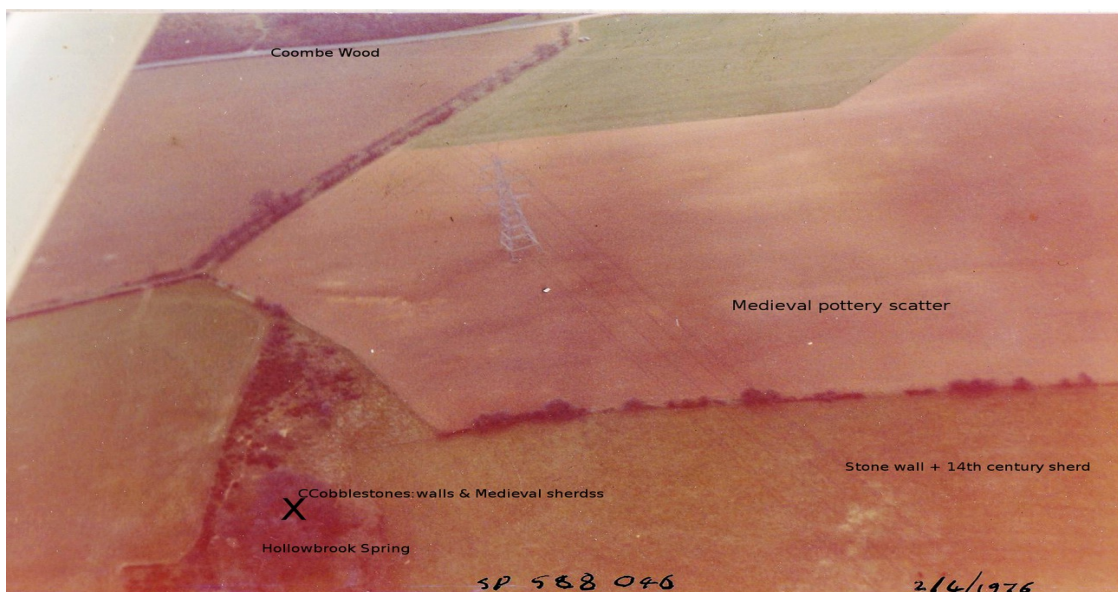
sherd of 13th /14th century Brill Ware *within the wall* about 18” down; thus giving them a reasonably secure date.

It is dreadfully tempting to interpret these as perhaps the (burnt ?) remains of the ancient village church. It would almost certainly have been constructed of wood, wattle & daub & thatch, possibly on a minimal stone foundation, but then, so would many of the village houses. So an expensive geophysical survey would be needed to recover the ground plan to be able to say one way or the other.

If Old Horsepath church could be found, it might be possible to locate proximate graves, but unlike the graveyard at modern Horspath where later burials would have destroyed earlier evidence, at this site they would have been among the last interments and the skeletal material – if any – and depending on soil acidity, might reveal much crucial DNA data on the lives, origins, occupations and causes of deaths of the inhabitants. Thus any excavation of graves would need to be done with great care to avoid contamination with modern DNA.

For a deeper and more speculative investigation of the church, see Appendix 4 page 70.

Later that year I was able to get aerial coverage of the site (*see below*) with a friendly Cessna 172 pilot and added my field notes to the print.



Aerial view 1976

(At which point my job changed and I spent the next twenty years frequently working abroad and thus had no opportunities or time for British archaeology.)

After a heaven-sent early retirement and pension) I was at last able to focus on various archaeological projects I'd had in mind, both here and abroad. Thus in 2001 a local microlight pilot took me up on several occasions to check for cropmarks on various archaeological sites around the county in which I was interested: Old Horsepath being one of them.



Aerial view of Old Horspath site from 1800ft.

The air photo is digitally enhanced in false colour to bring out some crude detail. Although very faint, it shows the vague outlines of the village precisely where Caroline had picked up the medieval sherds in 1976, and where the blank area was on the 1848 Tithe overlay map.

Over the intervening twenty years virtually all the stones had vanished and no trace of them at all exists today on the field, although the hedgerow is littered with them.

Finds from the Hollowbrook Spring

Later in 2001, Bob Walker asked myself and my wife Mary to restore the badly overgrown Victorian pond below the Hollowbrook Spring to create a fishing reserve for his grandson George. Over six months we felled & cleared away a tangle of trees and bushes before an excavator was brought in to deepen and widen the old pond. A careful watch was kept on the spoil heap but nothing medieval was found.

The spring outlet was also hidden by brambles & fallen trees and took much effort to clear. We raked out the stream bed close to the spring source to clear a mass of water weeds and discovered, to our great surprise, many medieval potsherds buried in the gravel. I suspect that there are many more still buried at lower levels.



The spring outlet after cleaning. (The beer bottles are a much needed later deposit...)

The Ashmolean identified the sherds as mostly local Oxford & Brill ware dating from the 13th century on, presumably from broken water-carrier vessels. However, a curious anomaly among the finds was several sherds of German Rhineland “Bellarmine” or “Bartmann” wine flagons. These are quite distinctive with medallions on the sides.

The medallion is popularly supposedly to be that of: a) the face of a popular mythical “wild man of the woods” (a Bartmann); or b) that of one Robert Bellarmine, a German cardinal who had opposed both Protestantism and alcohol with equal vehemence and was thus ridiculed by the potters:-



Bellarmino sherds from the Hollowbrook spring

These flagons had a long production history, circa 1500-1750, and were used for transporting liquids, mostly wine. The vast majority were produced in and around Cologne, mostly for Rhineland wine, although some copies were produced later in London.

Quite what they were doing in the Hollowbrook spring is an interesting question. Maybe they were “empties” from the Bishop's Palace at Cuddesdon or from the wine consumed on-site by parties from the palace? I guess we shall never know.



Rhineland Bellarmine flagon with broken neck. (Ashmolean)

In Summer 2006, about 100 yards from the spring to the east in roughly the same area I had seen the cobblestones some years before, I opened a series of one yard square trial test pits down to the sterile natural (clay). (*Sadly, the photographs I took of the excavations were lost when the hard-drive on my PC failed in a power surge*). (see below for location.)



Site of the 2006 dig looking West. The dark area to the right of the left-hand tree marks the excavation area. Pond in background.

No cobblestones were seen, but the disturbed topsoil contained a few sherds of 19th century pottery, mainly willow-pattern. Then some 12" down were a good number of medieval and post-medieval earthenware potsherds, plus a few dark glass fragments which appeared to be from 17th & 18th century wine bottles (wine again!)

Some of the good (diagnostic) medieval sherds were products of the Brill/Boarstall pottery industry which had a long history of operation from around AD 1100 up to AD 1600 making coarse-ware (kitchen pots) and fine-ware (table usage). Their superb table products are common from excavations within Oxford City. (see complete examples below)



Examples of the Brill potteries fineware jugs (Ashmolean)

These sherds from Old Horsepath with their knife-slash handle decorations, are from similar jugs of the AD 1350-AD 1450 period, the high point of their output. (*see below*)



Excavated Old Horsepath Brill jug handles with knife-slash decoration.

Lower down still and close to the clay subsoil were a number of sherds of Romano-British pottery: mostly gray-ware pots from the 3rd / 4th century East Oxfordshire Romano-British Pottery Industry, and a few fragments of mortaria (gitted fabric food-mixing bowls) from the same kilns. These had narrow inverted rims, thus dating them to the mid to late 4th century AD.

These were not the usual heavily abraded single sherds frequently found in many fields across southern England, deposited by dung carts from the kitchen middens from the nearest villa.

These sherd's edges were reasonably sharp & not showing signs of any great wear, and the quantity at a single location arguing against dung-cart deposition. (*see below*)



Sample of 4th century AD Roman pottery from the excavations

The inference being that they had been deposited not too far from where they'd been used some 1600+ years ago. However, so far I have not seen any other evidence of Roman occupation in the surrounding area, especially not that from villa-type buildings, such as hypocaust tiles or painted wall plaster. (But as Mick Aston used to teach, "*Absence of evidence is **not** evidence of absence*")

The more likely scenario in my view is that they perhaps came from outlying round-houses of a local native British settlement: one of which certainly existed a few hundred yards away towards the Cuddesdon turn from the Wheatley-Garsington road, as a large circular crop-mark was seen from the air by a survey aircraft some years ago and was interpreted in the Sites and Monuments Record as an Iron Age round-house.

More recently however, an old photograph has come to light, taken by a local pilot around 1990. He saw what appeared to be a collection of hut circles in the same

place and photographed it (on film). After some digital manipulation to enhance the poor image, I got the following faint crop-marks:-



Crop-marks of probable Roman/Iron age farmstead and possible square (“Celtic”) field closes to the east of them, with further hut circles. Cuddesdon Turn at top of picture and the old track across to Littleworth is to the left.

If this is a Roman/Iron age farm-stead it is interesting that it does not “respect” the Littleworth track, as the track cuts across the top left-hand corner of the fields, thus the track (now the parish boundary) must be of a later period than the crop-marks. Field-walking after heavy rain might well provide good dating evidence for this site by means of diagnostic potsherds – the pre-Roman Iron Age pottery being very different from that of the Roman period or that of the far earlier Bronze Age. Well-documented Iron Age roundhouses persist throughout and beyond the Roman period well into the Anglo-Saxon era. These are settlements of the original British farming population and, after the Roman conquest, probably enforced (?) workers on Romano-British estates. The large Roman villa at Wheatley was less than a mile away above the Cuddesdon Brook on Castle Hill and would have been a

likely employer. Its large bath-house was excavated in 1845 but the main villa was never found. (Roman bath houses were nearly always situated some distance away from the main house due to fire risk from the hot-water furnaces.)

For interest, see link below for the 1845 villa excavation report :-

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-1132-1/dissemination/pdf/002/002_350_356.pdf

To briefly complete the settlement picture in the Hollowbrook Valley since the end of the last Ice Age around 10,000 BC:- Lower down in the test pits close to the natural (clay), were many examples of Mesolithic flints. Here are a few:-



Most were skin-scraping tools from around 6000 BC, (some 3000 years before Stonehenge was even begun.) But one was an excellent flint knife – second in from the right at top - and still amazingly sharp. I used it experimentally to skin a Roe deer and it was actually more effective than a modern skinning knife. Not bad for an 8000 year old tool... These people survived because they were clever and very well adapted to their unforgiving environment; not ignorant savages as they sometimes have been portrayed by ignorant historians!

And as proof of their success, most of us still carry some of their genes according to recent DNA research.

It's worth bearing in mind that because of lower sea levels, at this time Britain was still joined to mainland Europe. (but sea levels were rising fast – see link below).

This vast now submerged area, rich in Mesolithic tools and artifacts dragged up by fishing nets, is now known as “Doggerland” is the subject of much fascinating

research. See :- <www.nationalgeographic.org/maps/doggerland/>

Similar scatters of Mesolithic flints, mussel shells and curious small pieces of white crystal with flakes of mica (?) inclusions (see example below on a 1-p piece for scale) are found on the Horspath Allotments some 150 yards below the allotment spring; also in the field below the railway embankment when the site was undergoing the archaeological survey prior to the planning of the new BMW sports field.



Mesolithic crystal from Horspath Allotments

Whether these crystals are simply attractive ornaments or have a deeper ritual significance we don't know, but it may be significant that the Newgrange Neolithic passage tomb (circa 3200 BC) in Ireland is faced with the same sparkling material.

See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newgrange>

I suspect many more of these intriguing sites will show up in future – once we know what to look for.

Clearly, the hill-slopes around Horspath have been a favoured spot for our earliest Holocene forebears over the last 8000 years.

Tracks from Old Horspath to the Hollowbrook Spring

In 2006, test pits dug within fifteen yards of the spring on the eastern side revealed traces of two semi-metaled tracks, one above the other and clearly leading uphill in the direction of Old Horspath. The upper layer (18 inches below modern ground level) yielded a few sherds of mid-Victorian willow-pattern pottery and a brass umbrella tip. The lower-level track, a further 12" down, had fragments of a simple Staffordshire cream-ware plate from the early 1800s.

The waterlogged ground prevented deeper excavation, but it seems that flooding near the source of the spring had made improved access necessary over the last 300 years. Deeper excavation in dry weather might reveal more even earlier tracks and artifacts. It might also give us some elusive wooden utensils and leather goods from the medieval period – far and away the most common household artifacts at that time, but of course the majority do not survive except in waterlogged ground, which biases our view of contemporary household goods greatly. Some interesting digging to be done here in Summer 2019.



Site of tracks test pits near the spring, bottom right behind the bonfire.

LIVING IN OLD HORSEPATH IN THE 14th CENTURY

Not for nothing has the 14th century been called “calamitous”. From the English kings' foreign wars in Europe and excessive taxation impoverishing this country; to continental-wide famines that were both weather and war-related; to the first catastrophic outbreak of the Black Death in 1348. All conspired to cast an ominous shadow across the century: one that reached into every village and hamlet in the country. Both Horsepath villages would not have escaped these calamities and their miseries, although we have no surviving records at village level for this.

The Great Famine: In early 1315 unusually heavy rain affected England and much of northern Europe. Throughout the spring and the summer the rain continued and temperatures remained cold. Grain could not ripen; crops failed. Straw and hay for animals could not be stored either, so there was no winter fodder for them.

Food prices in England *doubled* between spring and midsummer of 1315 and famine became inevitable. Salt, a necessity for preserving meat, also became increasingly expensive as brine would not evaporate in wet weather. As always, stores of surplus grain were limited to royalty, the Church, the barons and wealthy merchants. But even these stocks were raided by the King to feed his European army. Hence the poorer classes simply went hungry (as usual) as they had no reserves. Many cases are recorded where tree-bark was actually harvested in an attempt to stave off starvation.

By the early 1300s the population (and both Horsepaths would have been no exception) was increasingly weakened by the diseases that ravaged England throughout the medieval period; dysentery, malaria, diphtheria, influenza, typhoid, smallpox and leprosy. The Church helpfully added insult to injury by explaining away all illness as “*divine retribution for leading a sinful life*”. Of course.

Because so much of the seed stock had been eaten, it was not until 1325 that the food supply slowly returned to a semblance of normality. During which time many of our poor Horsepath villagers – the very young and very old – would have starved to death or died of disease brought on by malnutrition.

Historians estimate that 10–25% of the English population died during the famine alone and while the later Black Death (1348 onwards) would kill even more people, the impact of the Great Famine lingered on for many years afterwards, weakening

the general health of the population and making them far more prone to diseases like the recurring plague. The famine also led to a sharp increase in crime as, inevitably, the hungry poor would resort to any means to feed themselves. The famine also greatly undermined the lower class's respect for the Church and confidence in the King's government evaporated for their blatant and incompetent failure to deal with these crises. Truly a terrible century in which to live...

The "Peasant's Revolt" of 1381 was a direct result which frightened the ruling classes to the core & eventually broke forever the slavery of the Norman feudal system.

See below for Tony Robinson's excellent two-part history of that amazing upsurge of working-class anger. Well worth watching:

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kq9sbtFCR8>>

Class and Status in Old Horsepath in the 14th century

Ever since middle Saxon times, English society had been split along very rigid class lines, where each inhabitant knew exactly his or her place in the strict social hierarchy. By the 14th century the Norman barons (half-civilised Vikings) and their noble descendants had ruthlessly refined their feudal exploitation of the Saxon lower classes. The Church had also made very sure of its income by ensuring that its own tax-gathering rules were strictly followed; regardless of the impact on its flock.

Thus every village had its lord; for example a knight, abbot, bishop, or some feudal Norman entrepreneur who owned multiple estates or even whole clusters of parishes. These lords were separated by a vast gulf from the rest of the inhabitants whom they regarded merely as their chattels and treated them no differently from their animals. Even their language was often a corrupt form of medieval French, unlike the lower classes who spoke a Germanic dialect (Anglo-Saxon), thus exacerbating the gulf.

One telling example of this exploitation is given by Richard Muir in his "*Lost Villages of Britain*". I quote :-

"On taking over a tenancy, the peasant paid an entry fee: when his daughter married he paid a 'merchet' (marriage) tax', and when he died a 'heriot' tax was applied, usually consisting of the family's best beast. Throughout his life he was plagued by petty fines exacted by the six-weekly manor court: his master's bailiff

issued a perpetual sequence of demands for labour service and other 'voluntary' boon work on the demesne (the Lord's land). The Church in turn took a tithe of one-tenth of his produce and shared in the death duties, often removing yet another beast. Not surprisingly, peasant life oscillated between poverty and starvation."

The Norman lord of both Horsepaths was originally Roger d'Ivry, a companion of William the Conqueror. By 1122 both manors' tithes went to St. Frideswide's and had become part of the Honour of St. Valery, a Berkshire knight's family. In the early 13th century Richard, son of John Musard, held the title. Sometime before 1242-3 he had granted all his Horspath land to the Templars, whose order he later entered himself.

By the 14th century the Templars were holding a court in Lower Horspath, as well as one in Upper Horsepath. The Hospitallers (now the St. John's Ambulance brigade) became the owners after the Templars were disbanded in 1312 by Philip IV of France who, by coincidence no doubt, was deeply in debt to them.. The Wikipedia entry for the Knights Templar is an excellent overview of this powerful organisation and its downfall: See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Knights_Templar

Subsequently the manors were acquired by Cardinal College (Christ Church today) presumably as part of Thomas Cromwell's endowment of the grand college he had promised to Henry VIII. As much of the land in Horspath today is owned by Brasenose and Magdalen colleges, I assume it came via Christ Church?

(Light relief: Horsepath's first recorded murder.....*Half of the Musard manor in the early 13th century was held by one John de Scaccario of the heirs of Ralph Musard. Interestingly, Andrew de Scaccario of Horspath was alleged in 1234 to have been murdered by Peter Mimekan of Headington. He must have had the Horspath property, for John de Scaccario, almost certainly his son, was holding it in 1254.*

Although riven at the lower levels by class barriers, the village was in harsh reality a community forced to unite in the need to survive by utilising their lands to meet the heavy burden of obligations to their lord & the Church which the manorial system imposed. We have no information at all on the way the social structure of our village played out historically, but there are many extant records across England from manor courts of this period from which historians have extrapolated to get a good idea of what that social structure implied.

To escape the mind-numbing details of the class structure, the following website is perhaps easier to digest :-

<<https://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/123/123%2013%20Society.htm>>

One dire consequence of the feudal class system, plus an increasing population, was that poverty was an endemic and acute problem in pre-plague villages, as many peasants had little or no land at all. Poor peasants (*villeins*) could find some employment during the peak periods and at harvest time they were allowed to glean, but as many manor court records show, for much of the year many had no choice and lived by begging, pilfering food, firewood and anything else to help them survive. As a result, both the landlord and the peasant community attempted, via the manor court, to reduce the number of the poor in the village and to suppress their activities.

Unlike other higher-ranking villagers, poor peasants who committed offences were often expelled from the manor,. Those who were permitted to stay were required not only to pay a fine, but also to give pledges for good behaviour. The manor court also fined those who harboured "undesirable" poor peasants. (*Welcome to "Merrie England.."*)

(*Casual readers may like to skip the next five paragraphs to avoid a neurological seizure*) For example, between 1270 and 1348, 151 native-born Halesowen villagers were noted in the court rolls as taking refuge with local tenants. At least 128 (85 per cent) of them did so with their relatives. This suggests that during the period under study, caring kin-folk were the main agent for poor relief in the parish. There was no other form of basic security until Elizabethan times.

It is impossible to measure the number of unfree peasants in England in the late fourteenth century. However, we can gain some idea of their proportion in the rural population from earlier records. For example, it was estimated that in the four midland counties covered by the Hundred Rolls of 1279, (Huntingdon, Bedford, Bucks and Oxford) 63 per cent of the peasant landholders were unfree. But there were marked local and regional variations in the ratio of unfree to free tenants in England at that period. None-the-less, it is quite possible that the proportion of villein tenants (feudal tied serfs) also amounted to almost two-thirds of all the peasant landholders in England. The two Horsepaths would have been no exception.

The subsistence crises between the 1290s and the 1320s must have caused some

increase in the overall proportion of unfree tenants, as in many villages the cottagers and smallholders, who were mostly free peasants, suffered a far higher mortality rate, judging by surviving records. On the other hand, in the immediate post-plague period, the overall proportion of unfree tenants must have declined through migration, even though this was not yet on a massive scale because the demand for land in most areas was still quite strong. From the 1279 returns for the four midland counties already mentioned, a sample of 6,757 peasant households of which 4249 (62.9 %) were noted as villeins.

The Black Death caused a sharp rise in real wages (for those who survived) due to the increased demand for labour; and a steep fall in rents and land prices as much land became unoccupied by the late 1300s with much of it turning into waste.

The subsequent erosion of landlords' powers in the fifteenth century allowed an exodus of serfs. As a result, some unfree peasants left their home manors without permission and settled in distant places, but the majority settled in other nearby villages and towns. This exodus uprooted many families from villages in which they had lived for many generations, thus drastically reducing the kinship network support in these villages, therefore removing the only form of social security available in those very bleak times.

The Black Death: From the various census & poll tax returns Old Horsepath village after the effects of the great famine and Black Death would not have been more than perhaps a dozen or so (?) houses.

From the 1377 Poll Tax Returns, Old (Upper) Horsepath was taxed at 61s 11d with 19 named inhabitants over 14, both male and female, as being liable for the nationwide 4d tax for Edward III. A rule of thumb used by the Medieval Village Research Group (MVRG) is to add 50% in these cases to get an approximation of the total population (so say 30 for Old Horsepath), and then a further 50% to get the post famine- pre-plague (1348) population numbers – so perhaps about 45 souls. Thus the village population had dropped by over 50% 27 years after the first onslaught of the Black Death alone. The inference is that in the previous century, Old Horsepath may well have had a population of 60 to 70, hence perhaps upwards of 25 dwellings?

By comparison, Lower (modern) Horspath had 60 named inhabitants listed in 1377, hence a comparison total of around 135 (up to 50 dwellings?) prior to 1348 and again, a drop in population of over 50% due to the Black Death alone.

(In terms of real living people, around 79 villagers had died in the two villages in, or subsequent to, the Black Death (let alone those deaths caused by the Great Famine). For a comparable impact, if those percentages were applied to modern Horspath today, it would mean that about 650 village residents would have died. A truly terrible catastrophe by any measure.)

What did Old Horsepath look like?

Despite the UK's nearly 3000 recorded DMV's, **no** original peasant huts, hovels or houses have survived, only those better-built oak frame houses of the more wealthy classes. Nonetheless it's worth trying to imagine what the old village houses might have looked like at the time of the probable last phase of the village – the 1377 tax investigation.

Exteriors: Over the last thirty years much excavation and crop-mark survey work has been done by the Medieval Villages Research Group (MVRG) hence we have a pretty good idea in general of what DMV *plans* looked like (and none conform to any particular pattern as none were planned villages in the first place) A few very brave artists have attempted reconstructions from those, but I can find none that would simulate what little we know of Old Horsepath's presumed layout.

A web search of “*deserted medieval village reconstruction*” will give you some idea of modern artists' *impressions*: but that's all they are – impressions. And we don't really have sufficient facts to justify most of them. Stone-robbing, modern mechanised deep ploughing and soil erosion over the years has inevitably destroyed almost all the surface evidence and left us just with grassy earthworks.

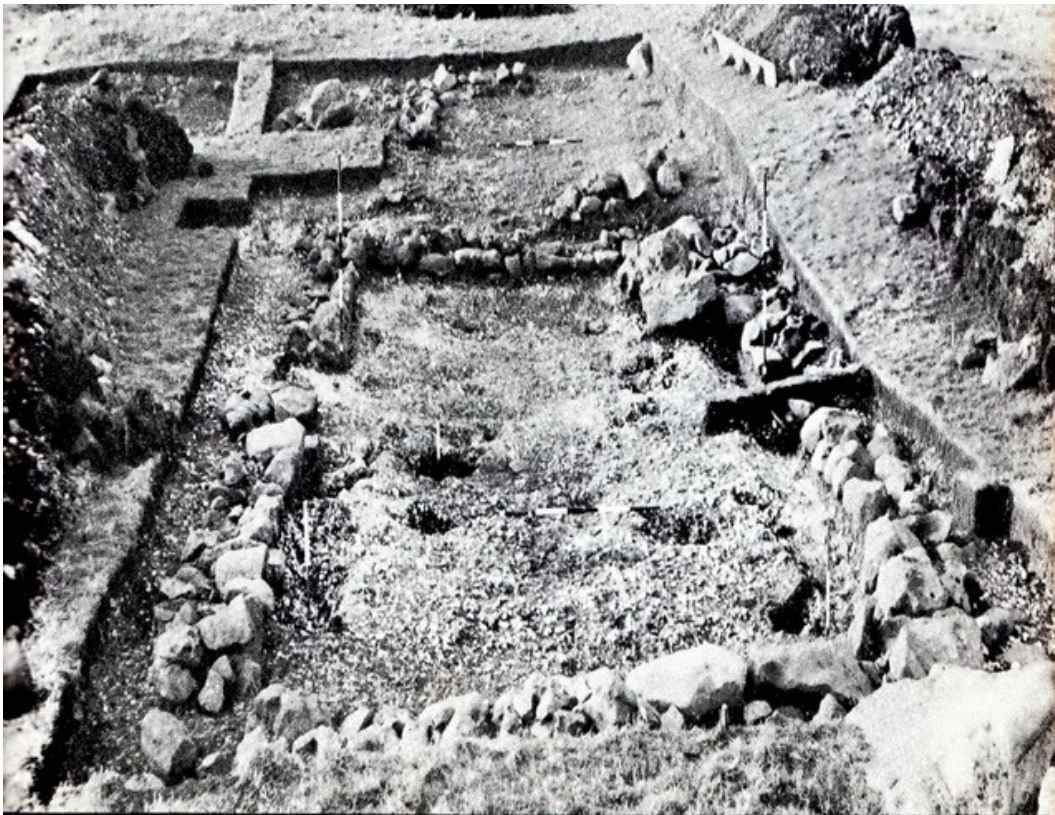
House ground plans:

The oddest thing to modern eyes is the way in which plans of excavated DMV houses appear to “dance” around their original site over the life of the village. This is due to the flimsy and thus ephemeral nature of their construction: thatched roofs over wattle & daub walls on perhaps a low stone foundation (in this part of the country). It appears that re-building frequently took place almost every generation on a slightly different axis as the organic structures decayed. Fire, too, may have played a part given the use of open fire hearths and naked flame illumination from rush-lights.

Foundations:

Where foundations *were* used they tend to be a only a few courses high merely to keep the superstructure out of the damp. The apparent minimal foundation courses in Old Horsepath's case – if that's what they were - were of limestone rubble presumably bound together with clay, as no mortar was found attaching to any stones in 1976.

An excavated example from elsewhere in Southern England below:-



Typical 13th/14th century house foundations in Southern England. Site unknown.

Walls:

On top of these stone foundations would be a rough timber sill, drilled to take the vertical uprights of (probably) hazel to allow weaving of more hazel cross-bands to make a strong lattice. This would then be coated with daub from both sides – a sort of plaster infill mixture of clay, animal manure & straw. Modern experimental reconstructions have shown them to provide surprisingly warm and wind-proof

insulation for the houses. The thatched roofs would have needed a considerable overhang to keep the walls dry for obvious reasons. Examples below of making wattle and daub from the recent Plymouth (*sic*) settlement reconstruction in Massachusetts USA:-

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plimoth_Plantation



Windows and doors: The position of doorways is sometimes obvious as gaps in the foundation courses. Excavations in Southern England have shown many examples of socket-stones or iron hanging pivots, together with security latches, so even these apparently flimsy structures often had fairly solid wooden doors. The archaeological record has little evidence regarding windows. Sometimes small

hinges and latches are found, probably from wooden shutters. Glass is never found in rural cottages until Tudor times.

Roofs: Capping timber poles around the top of the walls into which the the hazel uprights were fixed kept the whole lattice structure in place, with rafters from them up to a ridge-beam to take the straw thatch (or more likely bracken from Shotover in Old Horsepath's case). Many of these rafters would have been simple wooden poles with little real carpentry involved: another reason for the short working life of these peasant houses. Internally there would have been additional roof-post supports, as many post-holes show in excavations elsewhere. Especially the brilliantly excavated and restored West Stow DMV in Suffolk, where a collapsed roof due to a house fire showed a structure of oak rafters with hazel rods woven between them.

Interiors: We have little evidence of internal partitions and furniture as yet. Sometimes changes in floor levels indicate where a partition would have been and small, non-structural, internal post-holes too, may be clues. Many excavations show a separate byre at one end of the house for animals: useful additional heat in cold weather. These so-called “long-house” plans survive even today in the later cob-walled and thatched Devon long-houses.

Floors: In this part of the country DMV excavations have shown little evidence of hard floors, i.e., cobble or flag-stones. Most had simple earthen floors, often showing a distinct concave depression due to continued sweeping, to the extent that the walls themselves were undermined: thus a complete lack of interior finds upon excavation. (*the academic idea that these were stinking hovels is well past its sell-by date*).

Another clue to this scrupulous hygiene is that phosphate analysis – the result of animal or human waste residues – draws a blank *within* the floor areas, while giving high readings *outside* the house. In fact an area of *negative* phosphate results surrounded by high phosphate levels is a good indicator to the excavator of the presence of a house. Nowhere near as exciting as Roman villa archaeology which is perhaps why so few have been scientifically excavated...

Heating and cooking: The central hearth was the norm in the DMV. It consisted of a fire lit directly on the earthen floor, or perhaps on a bed of small stones, or an area of rammed clay with stone kerbs. In a few cases there are examples of side fire-pits in addition to the main hearth, which may have been used for additional

baking over hot ashes. In many cases there were small post-holes on either side of the hearth which we think supported a roasting spit. In one example a large pottery vessel had been sunk into the floor near the hearth, presumably for water storage. Frequently, as well as a central hearth, we find small clay ovens in the corners of rooms, presumably for baking bread.



One rather simplistic reconstruction of the interior of a medieval hovel. Hearth in foreground. The comfy-looking (?) bed is under the window. Hmm..

Fuel: There is almost no evidence as to which particular types of wood were used for the hearth fires as very little charcoal from hearths has ever been analysed, or indeed recognised, in excavation. What is known is that the typical medieval woodland management from at least Domesday onward up until recent times consisted of “coppice with standards”.

This ancient forestry system is where the underwood of (mostly) hazel in this area was cut in regular cycles of between four and 15 years for walling, hurdles, sheep pens *etc*; while the standard, or full-sized timber trees (usually of oak and ash), were allowed to mature over far longer periods to provide structural timber for larger houses, wagons, or ships.

The frequent cropping of the under-wood thus provided for a wide variety of woodland crafts and for the all-important making of faggots for fuel.



Re-enactment: Fuel faggot being fed into a Tudor bread oven. 200 years later than our village, but the faggot hasn't changed.

The immaculate, chainsaw-cut (sic!), fireplace-sized log piles shown in many period TV documentaries are utter nonsense: most villagers' wood-yards consisted of literally hundreds of hazel faggots. Plus an assortment of waste dead wood – mostly windfall branches got by peasants from the Lord's forests by the ancient and lawful practice of gathering “by hook or by crook”. (billhook or shepherd's crook.

It's worth bearing in mind that many rural forestry workers - my grandfather among them - made a living from this trade right up to the first world war and beyond. An uncle of mine who owned Tingewick watermill spent many weeks every Winter – I helped him in the 1950s - gathering dead hedgerow material & stored them as faggots in his barn. And as recently as 1962 I noticed (while waiting for a Landrover to take me to work in Bernwood Forest), coppiced hazels from Bernwood were regularly on sale in Stanton-St-John. One cottage backyard opposite the church was stacked high with hundreds of them. Not for fuel at this late date, but for runner bean and pea sticks! Happily a practice now enjoying a revival in these more environmentally friendly days, in preference to bamboo canes imported from the Far East.

Lighting: Rush lighting was the most economic way of lighting the interior of medieval houses to add illumination when craft work (e.g., sewing) was going on.

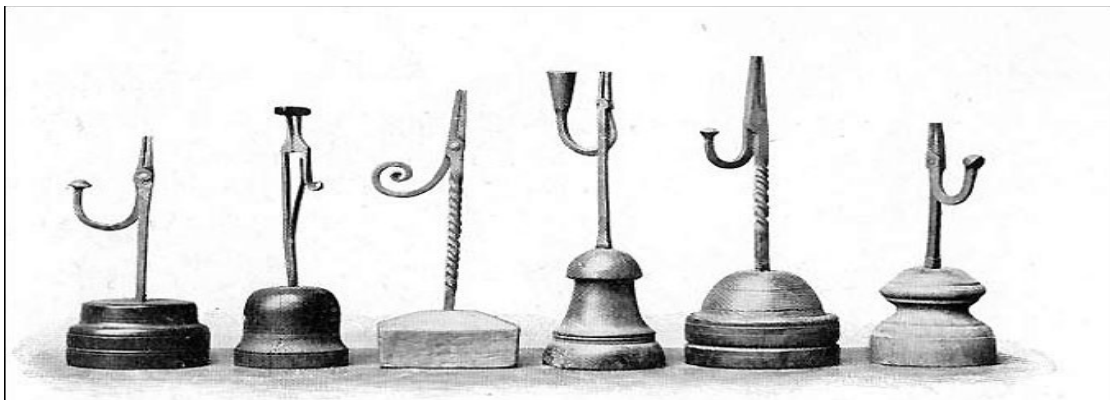
Hearth fires were rarely doused and most cooking was done over hot embers, as in modern barbecues, hence not especially useful for illumination. Rush lighting has been around for millennia and was still being used in rural Ireland and Wales in the early 20th century. They even made a brief reappearance during WW2.

The “rush light” was made by first harvesting the abundant soft rush (*Juncus Effusus*), then drying and stripping off most of the skin apart from a small longitudinal strip which preserved their stiffness. This process would expose the firm absorbent pith beneath that which then served as a rudimentary wick. The pith was soaked in rendered animal fat. Animal husbandry was commonplace among the lower classes, and the fat easily obtainable. After the fat had congealed and dried, the pith was an ignitable source of light.



*Typical crude blacksmith-made
rushlight holder.*

Rush-holders came in a variety of shapes & functions:-



The more expensive models came with a candle-holder too (centre, above). Even tallow (animal-fat) candles had to be bought: rushes were free. Expensive beeswax candles were strictly for the upper classes, or churches on feast days.



The rush would be placed in the jaws of the rush-holder, usually at about 45 degrees (the weight of the movable handle keeping it in place) and the upper end lit. If placed nearly vertically it would give less light but last longer. In our period (13th/14th centuries) the rushes were usually about a foot long and experiments show they lasted for up to 15 minutes. In the nineteenth century, Gilbert White (of “*Natural History of Selbourne*” fame) observed that his rushes were nearly 30

inches long and lasted for up to an hour.

If more light was needed for close work, the rush could be placed horizontally in the jaws and lit at both ends and although giving better light, also burned more quickly. This practice is the origin of our modern phrase: “*burning the candle at both ends*”. Many later commentators remarked that rush-light was far superior to that from tallow candles, which gave off a putrid smoke.

Diet : Those at the bottom of the social scale – certainly as in Old Horsepath - ate very simply. Cereal crops were mainly barley (for beer), oats (for pottage) and rye for coarse bread (wheat needs rich soil which our village did not have). Most people ate preserved foods that had been salted or pickled soon after slaughter or harvest. Bacon seems to have been available at times as the poor often kept pigs, which, unlike cows and sheep, were able to live in wooded areas fending for themselves. *Pannage* for Autumnal acorns for keeping forest undergrowth in check using pigs are common in forest contracts of the period.

Peasants also tended to keep cows if they could afford them (six shillings for a middling beast in 1350 – a huge investment - although a young calf would have been far cheaper) so a part of their diets would have included dairy produce such as buttermilk and cheese. The Common above Old Horsepath was called “Cow Common” in the Tithe Map of 1847, as was the one above Lower Horspath near Shotover and almost certainly both had a very long history before that.

Rich and poor alike ate a dish called *pottage*, a thick soup containing vegetables, or oat bran (*frumenty*) and, very occasionally for the poor, meat. An obvious additional source of food was from the hedgerow or woods in season; hazelnuts, blackberries *etc, etc.* and the many edible wild plants still found on Shotover and around the present village today.

Clothing

I have no books or knowledge on this and the online literature on peasant clothing for this period is large and overwhelming. To save the reader from interminable repetition, the most readable and interesting I've found is:-

<<https://www.thoughtco.com/european-peasant-dress-1788614>> and:-

<<https://www.thoughtco.com/medieval-clothing-and-fabrics-1788613>

Water Resources: The Hollowbrook spring was obviously the main water source for the village as evidenced by the quantity of pottery sherds found in the gravel of the spring bed. Nevertheless, it was a walk of some two or three hundred yards from the village down to the spring. It underlines the fact that very close proximity of water supply was not a key factor in siting any settlement, then or now. Other factors like soil, aspect and drainage were clearly more important.

Mick Aston once observed the willingness of villagers in Africa today to walk considerable distances to get water: he claimed the reason being that the water carriers were mainly women... Enough said..

(It must also be said that many ancient civilisations – the Minoans especially, but the Indus Valley culture and the later Sassanians too - had mastered hydraulic technology millennia before, to the extent that they were able to bring fresh water from many miles way; the Minoans by use of siphons and cone-shaped Venturi sub-surface clay pipes, even across valleys when necessary for drinking, bathing and sanitation. The Minoans even developed sand and charcoal filters for their drinking water at Knossos on Crete– technically excellent even by today's standards.

Visitors to the unique Minoan Bronze Age city of Akrotiri on Santorini (it was buried in volcanic ash, in places up to 90ft deep, from the cataclysmic eruptions of around 1620 BC) are frequently amazed when one points out to visiting American tourists a flush toilet on the first floor of one building: and all this 3,500 years ago. But doubtless the countryside was left to basics.)

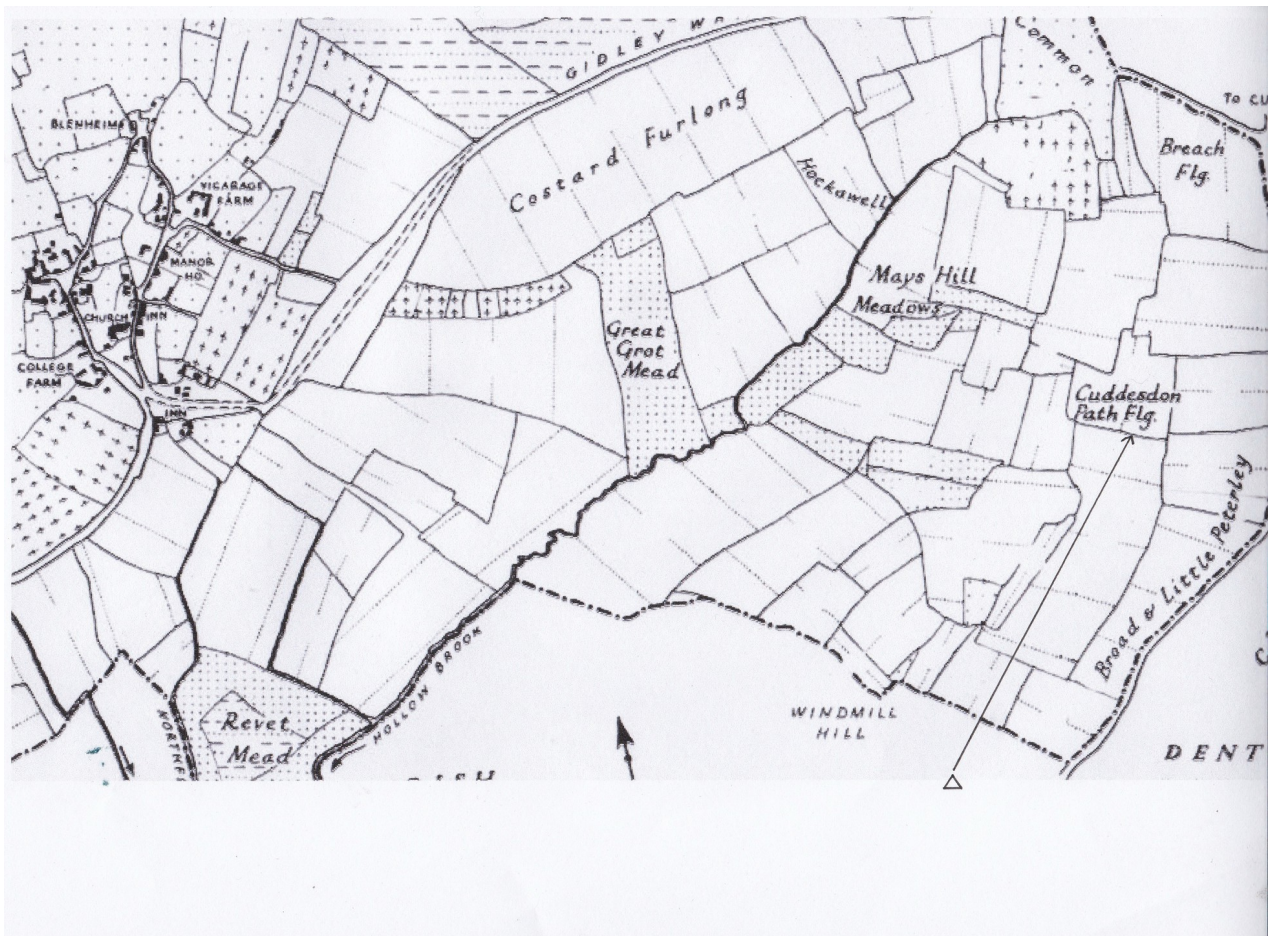
However, on the track leading up to Old Horsepath there appears to be another spring outlet much closer to the village which was piped in many years ago and the outlet seems to be close to the main spring itself, causing a deep bog for any idiot driving a Landrover tempted to drive too close to the main spring when loaded with a ton of logs. Twenty years ago Mary and I did just that.. And then had to call out John Heritage with the farm's biggest tractor to haul us out. The ash logs are still there..

A small test pit next to this higher spring should provide some dating evidence of its use.

VILLAGE ROADS

All human settlements inevitably have footpaths, tracks or roads to enable social and commercial links with other nearby settlements. No village exists in isolation. Hence for a better understanding of the overall working environment of both Horsepaths, we need to try to understand the villages' network of communications (roads and tracks *etc*) to and from them, as these would obviously reflect the economic and social needs of the villagers.

In this context, one of the (Old Horsepath) fields named in the 1847 Tithe Map is called "Cuddesdon Path Furlong" (see sketch below). Its position relative to the present Cuddesdon turn seems odd, as the *modern* turn is several hundred yards east of that field.



However, I noticed on Richard Davis' 1797 map of this area an *earlier* road leading across the Garsington-Wheatley road from the Cuddesdon Path Furlong to join the present Cuddesdon road some way south of Coomb Wood. So at a time when Old Horsepath was active, that road would have provided more direct access from Old Horsepath (and Lower Horsepath) to Cuddesdon. (see below)



Davis Map of 1797. Lost road is in the centre, at bottom, below Coomb Wood

Why this particular road ? (or muddy track as it would have been in winter.)
One good reason might well have been the need to process cereal crops grown in both Old and Lower Horsepath. Cereal seeds could have been ground by using a hand quern, however, given the acreage of Old Horsepath (140 or thereabouts) the volume would have been too much (in my view) for hand-grinding given the small village's female population normally available for such labour, hence it's likely that the cereals from both villages would have been carted to the nearest watermill – that at Cuddesdon.

(NB: *The windmill at Wheatley was probably not built until the early 17th century. The earliest record of that mill – there were two originally - is a sale poster dated 1671, but it was advertised as being “ruinous” at that time. Certainly no windmill or miller is cited in the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum for Wheatley.*)

See: <https://wheatleyarchive.org.uk/2013/01/23/wheatley-windmill/> for more details.

The watermill at Cuddesdon - not the stone built watermill on the River Thames that still exists today - albeit now as domestic flats. That building originated in the 18th century, but the entries in the VCH for Cuddesdon show there was an earlier wooden building on roughly the same site. And *another* one higher up on the Cumb Broc (Cuddesdon Brook). As this “lost” road and the mill would have been of considerable importance to both Horsepaths as it was closer, I researched it in some detail.

(NB: *there was a watermill (The Kingsmill) on the Cherwell at this time at Marston but much further away*)

(See appendix 2 for more details of the mill on the Cuddesdon Brook)

Other access roads.

There must have obviously been a road to Old Horsepath from the current village. After a lot of detective work I'm pretty certain it ran from Gidley Way, opposite & lower down from Butts Road, across the top of the Horspath Allotments, (*that area is named as “lynchets” in the OS map of 1830, often a sign of a man-or animal made path cut into the side of a hill*), then behind the extended gardens of the houses on the Cuddesdon Road, down into the Hollowbrook valley, then up towards Old Horspath.

See photo below of the final stage of that road.



2017 photo of the end section of track from Old Horsepath to Lower (modern) Horspath. Old Horspath Farm over the hill to the right.

Old Horsepath is up on the ridge to the left: the other direction of the trackway leads straight down to the Hollowbrook and has no possible modern function but I cannot as yet find any traces of a bridge over the Hollowbrook where the track intersects it.

Obvious local destinations from Old Horsepath would have been: Cuddesdon: Garsington: Wheatley and Oxford. However, roads or tracks are very difficult to date for the simple reason that they have often been in use since the first agriculturalists (the so-called Beaker People) settled the land in Neolithic times.

As far as the Horspath area is concerned, in the late 1300s the Garsington-Wheatley road was definitely in use at that time and we have a charter of AD 956 (*a sort of verbal map describing the boundaries*) for the twenty hides of land belonging to Cuddesdon, in which that road is named as a “Street” (*straete*), an Anglo-Saxon word possibly, but not always, meaning a paved Roman road.

Also, the back road to Shotover from Blenheim is certainly medieval: in the lower parts it is paved in the medieval manner. It also linked Lower Horspath to the main Oxford - London road at that time which ran across the top of Shotover, and is presumably (?) part of the *Horsepadan* origin of the village's early name.

The present Oxford Road is also at least medieval in origin as its course runs directly from Sandy Lane next to the Southfield Golf Course (a less wet route out of Oxford before the Cowley Road was made), to modern Horspath, skirting the southern edge of the then 13th century Templar's wood (Salesian & then Bowley Field).

The planned Saxon city of Oxford that we know today only dates from around the late 9th century, although there is increasing evidence that there was some settlement here in Roman times, See :-

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/445/oxford_archaeological_resource_assessment>

However, a rather interesting new piece of evidence has recently emerged on a possible unknown (to me at any rate) Roman Road within our area.

From the Berks. Bucks and Oxon Journal, Vol 28, published in 1898, I found therein "Notes Archaeology of Oxford and Its Neighbourhood" by Percy Manning, (note XXXIV. pp27ff :-

"Roman pottery is often found in the brickfield on the north side of the old road over Shotover Hill, just at the western end of the hill.... (9 lines on pottery types redacted..)

In the bank on the north side of the brickyard, is a section cut through a bed of stones some twenty feet in width, diminishing from a thickness of about one foot in the middle to almost nothing at the edges. It is evidently a road. It lies over 100 yards east of the line shown on the ordnance survey map as that of the Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester. The course of this road is by no means clear at this point, and it is possible that the surveyors have made a mistake in their line, and laid down the road too far to the west. If, however, the ordnance map is correct (it is, as the Eastern By-pass building work proved. CJP), we must assume that the road shown in the section is a branch road leading up Shotover Hill, possibly to a villa, which remains yet to be discovered. A similar branch road at Beckley, Oxon, about four miles north on the Alchester road, was noticed and described some years before it received an explanation, in the discovery of a villa to which it led some half-mile from the main (Roman; cjp.) road.

About 600 yards east of the brickfield, on the northern slope of the hill, more Roman pottery was found about two years ago by some men digging sand."

This branch road is about 200 yards beyond the present Old Rd bridge over the

eastern by-pass on the uphill, i.e. eastern side, and would appear to be heading toward The Ridings and thence possibly to a villa somewhere near Westhill Farm, or continuing to Lower Horsepath and then possibly to Old Horsepath.; or both. I also discovered evidence on an early map of a track leading from OH towards Cuddesdon; the Cuddesdon Path Furlong (See above, page 43)

(NB: There was also another Roman branch road on the *opposite* side of the main Roman road leading off westward to the extensive Roman kiln-field on the present Churchill Hospital site.)

Ivan Wright, the Chairman of Shotover Wildlife < <http://www.shotover-wildlife.org.uk/index.htm> > has researched the boundaries of Shotover for his (and his wife Jacqueline's) new book (*Shotover: The Life of an Oxfordshire Hill*) and it seems that the boundary “perambulation” of 1298 incorporates The Ridings (*The Boundary and Woodlands of Shotover Forest circa 1298*. Oxoniensia. XXVIII: 68–73.)

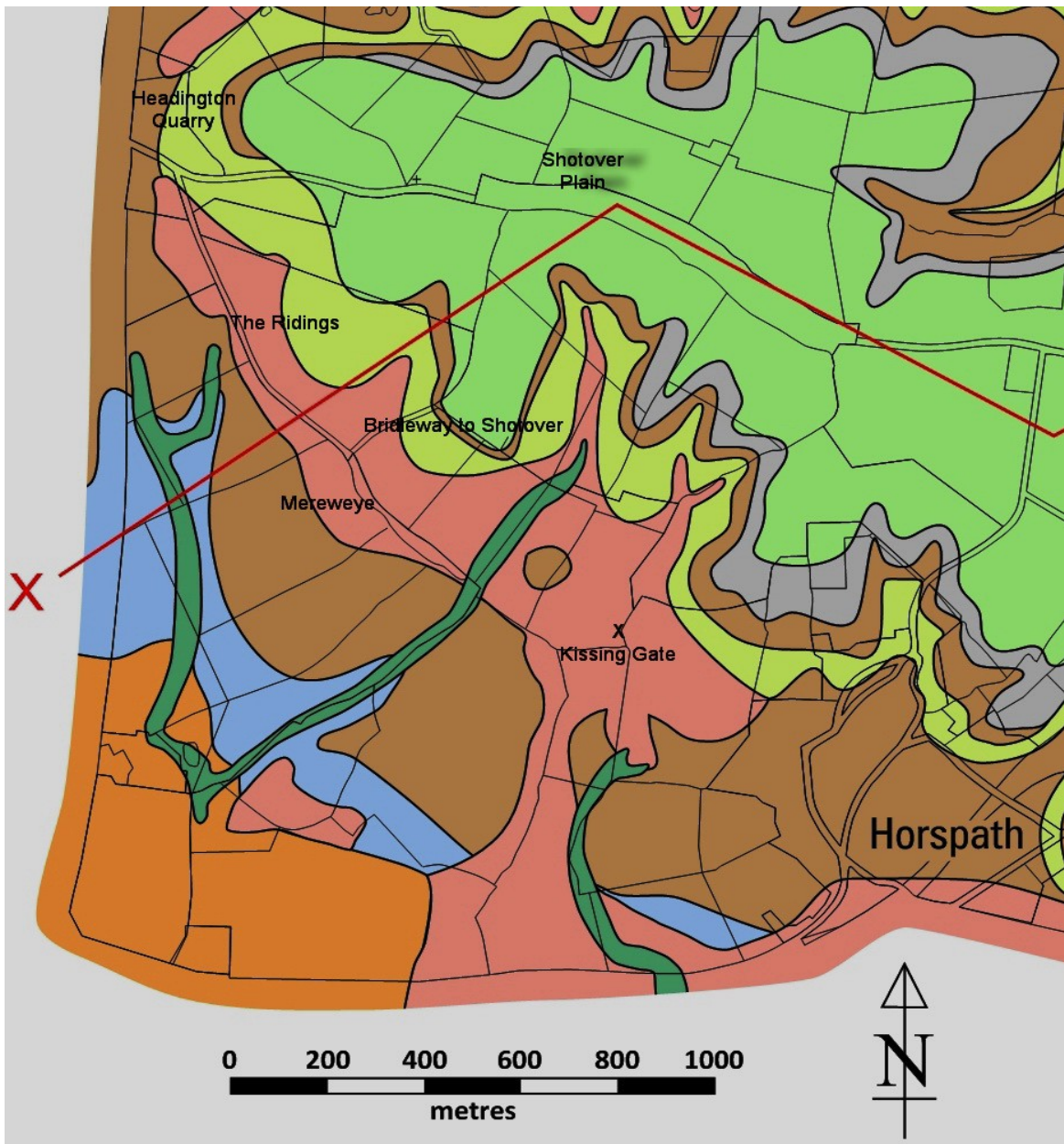
Ivan says in an email to me that:

*“Fortunately, there is agreement over Mereweys – including the 1604 Corpus Christi map. I think it is safe to assume that the boundary **joins** Mereweys at a point where it crosses Akermerebroke (where there is now a ‘kissing’ gate) and follows it westward to the east corner of Open Brasenose. Unfortunately, we don’t know for sure where Mereweys begins or ends – that would have been very useful for establishing the antiquity of the route from the (old) London Road (from the foot of Fiddlestone Hill) along the Ridings to Horspath*

Nevertheless, the permanence of the geology is most useful. In my view a strong contribution to the argument that this route is a very old part of the direct route from Headington to Horspath is that it follows the spring-line Head clay deposit (in red in the map detail from our book

Although crossing a few small streams, the track is the driest possible route without having to go up onto the Hill to the east, and to the west it is likely to have been impossibly marshy. This would seem the only flattish route for a track (going back millennia) on which you might want to haul or carry anything heavy between these two settlements or around the south side of the Hill.

I guess in translation ‘Lake Way’ is a further hint of likely feature(s) along the route”



See his geological map above (with my annotations).

So we have firm confirmation that the Mereweys track, of which The Ridings is a part, dates back at least to AD 1298 and almost certainly well before that, possibly even Roman or earlier.

For a full description of this and other Roman period sites in Headington see;-
<http://www.headington.org.uk/history/misc/roman.htm>

A surprisingly well settled area in Roman times!

Jacqueline Wright has also proposed a botanical walk along The Ridings to assess the variety of plants still present that might also give confirmation of its greater antiquity. Fascinating!

Coming at this from the Old Horsepath end, the *possible* village footpath extensions of the trackway from Old Horsepath down to modern Horspath run behind the houses on Cuddesdon road, then above the HAA allotments and the new vineyard; through a now blocked footpath between two modern bungalows, across a missing stretch over the old railway track and through the gardens of the Manor House (built well after Old Horspath was abandoned).

Thence along the course of what is now Wrightson Close; through to Ford's Close and then below Manor Farm at the back of Bond's Farmhouse. Then across the fields below Westhill Farm to the corner of Open Brasenose wood; along The Ridings and perhaps beyond to the main Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester (near Wendlebury). I don't believe these old connecting footpaths are a simple coincidence. Much more likely that they are the shrunken remains of an original road or track. See maps below:-



Above: possible route from the Quarry brickyard – above the Old Roman Rd – through to Horspath. I used the 1945 RAF cover as the route was less overgrown then. (Thanks to Don Satsiky USMC for the loan of his original photo.)



Possible continuation of the track to Old Horsepath from modern Horspath. A diversion via Butts Rd is just possible after building of Manor House (?), but as the earliest parts of that date to the late 1500s, it's long after OH fades from the records.

This route, apart from being much shorter than any other and, as Ivan says, may have been a preferred and much drier route from Headington & Headington Quarry to the two Horsepath villages in medieval and even earlier times.

(Note: In the original version of this paper, there followed a discussion about the need to verify the origin and dating of the stone used in Horspath church. This was aimed at the possibility of this track being used to bring stone from Quarry to Horspath, thus indicating the antiquity of the track. Since Ivan's research shows clearly that it dates back to AD 1298 and beyond, this stone-dating issue is no longer relevant.)

One other local track probably of medieval origin is the old and still active footpath from the bottom of Gidley Way to Garsington. (the present Cuddesdon Road was made after Enclosure in the 1860s). It passes close to a field on the 1847 Tithe Map named "Revel Mead" right on the parish border with Garsington. (Perhaps a place of revelry for both Horspath and Garsington at harvest home or other celebrations?) Not that this would have affected Old Horsepath as they had their own connection via the old Wheatley-Garsington road.

Two other tracks or roads, probably of considerable antiquity, are now known to have existed in this area. One, with a very stony foundation, leads from the Roman kilns on Little Peril field by Brasenose woods, straight across toward what is now modern Horspath and independent of the present footpath. One can only guess at its purpose, but the potters and ancillary workers must have lived somewhere close by. "a Roman" Horsepath farm perhaps?

Another track leads from the same kilns on Little Peril up to Westhill Farm towards the Roman kilns on The Row where the reservoir now is. A Google Earth view of this latter track shows a dense mass of what are almost certainly hut circles (Iron Age? Roman?) running parallel to the present tarmac road to Westhill Farm. Denis Walker has given me permission to do some trial excavations here. (Any helpers about?) If a few test-pits on these hut circles produced diagnostic Roman era pottery we might well have the potters' village. (A truly "Old" Horsepath) More research is needed.

(NB: Both tracks/roads were pointed out to me by the late John Heritage as they caused him considerable annoyance when his plough hit them and the shear-link broke.) Any support for investigating this site?

(If so, see below for basic test-pitting instructions:-)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppM-yiGfFOI>>

The end of the village

The causes of depopulation and abandonment of villages in Britain as a whole were many and varied. In the past, the Black Death (Plague) was usually considered the prime suspect in books dealing with the subject. The Black Death first entered Britain in 1348 subsiding in 1350 with recurring outbreaks in 1361, 1374, and regularly over the next 300 years until it finally disappeared in 1665. But the 1348 epidemic was by far the worst. As previously mentioned, estimates are that almost 50% of the British population died.

But in Oxfordshire we only know of two such villages (*Tusmore* and *Tilgarseley*) that were totally depopulated by the Plague, as by chance the surviving records explicitly state as much. But more may well have suffered a similar fate and inevitably most of those that did survive were shrunken to one degree or another. What is not in dispute is the fact that the Black Death indiscriminately reduced village populations greatly across the country and led to a serious shortage of labour in all rural occupations; especially so in agriculture. There are many contemporary reports of vast numbers of fields - and thus farms - going out of use and reverting to wasteland.

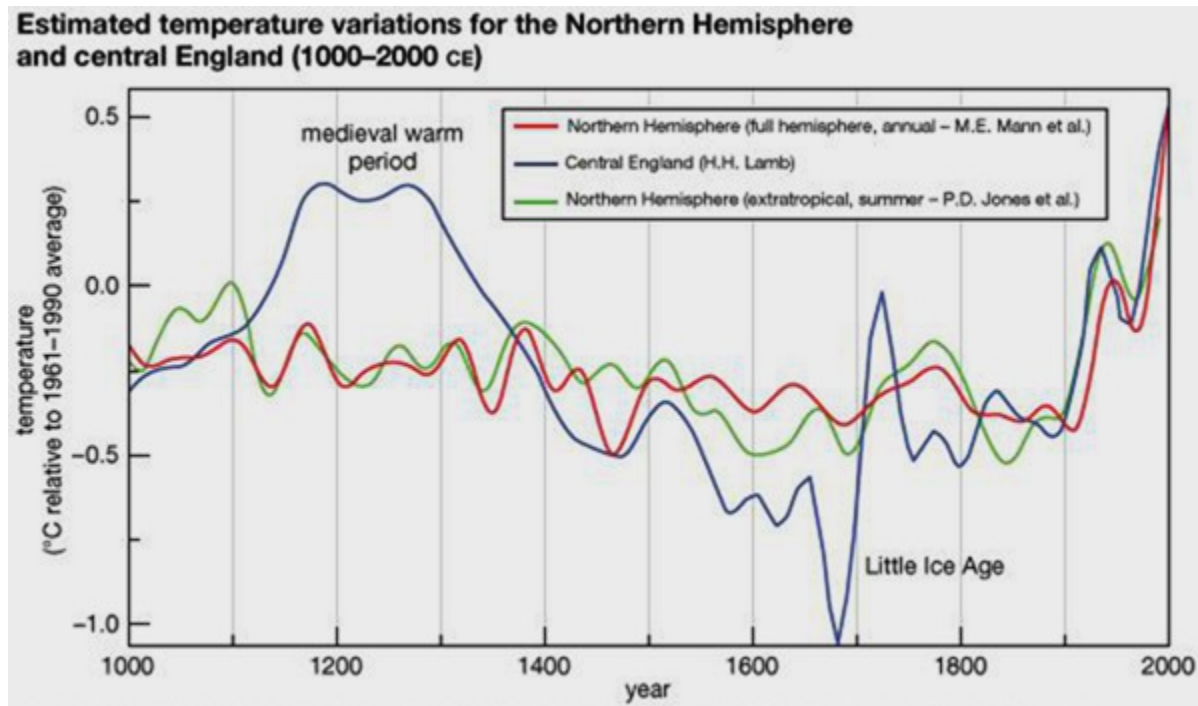
For those feudal serfs (essentially semi-slaves) who *did* survive, it also meant the eventual end of the hated feudal system. As competition for scarce labour inevitably pushed wages up, the feudal tied-labour system (virtual slavery by any other name) could no longer be enforced and thus fell into disuse.

Many villages shrank to a shadow of their former selves at this point: *one* of the possible reasons that Old Horsepath disappears from the records after the Poll Tax returns for 1377 (*although see note below re climate change*). Since the tax returns for 1428, 1524 and 1665 do not mention Old Horsepath at all, the conclusion must be that the village was largely deserted within fifty years after 1377 and the unoccupied houses slowly crumbled back into the soil.

However, the previously mentioned pottery yields from test pits higher up to the east from the source of the Hollowbrook, and from the spring itself, are good evidence that a few hardy souls were still living near the Hollowbrook spring area well after that time - perhaps up to the late 18th century, to go by the pottery finds.

(Again, in Poll Tax, or census terms, these people would have been included in returns for Lower or modern Horspath and are thus invisible to us now.)

Climate Change: More recently, the new bogeyman of climate change as a reason for hill-top or exposed village desertion has entered the picture as better historical meteorological data has become available: the graph below tells its own story:-



Note the blue line: the increasingly cold climate in Central England from AD 1300 to AD 1670 (The Little Ice Age) and the previous Medieval Warm period from around AD 1150 to 1350.

(It is perhaps worth recalling that during this same Warm period, the Vikings were able to found two viable colonies on Greenland from about the year AD 1000 onward, until they too were abandoned around AD 1350.)

Although still slightly controversial due to the apparently negative impact it has on the current thinking re recent man-made climate change, this new view of climate change in the Middle Ages has become widely accepted by most serious historians.

It certainly lends weight to the notion of population decrease caused by poor crops on top of that caused by the Black Death.

The hilltop situation of Old Horsepath village, exposed as it was to the worsening weather at the beginning of what is known today as “The Little Ice Age”, would have made it increasingly untenable for crops, let alone human beings in their wattle & daub hovels. Even today with our waterproof boots & windproof clothing, it is a bleak and inhospitable site in Winter:-



Old Horsepath field in February 2017.

The soil up there is very poor – a mix of Portland Sands, Shotover Ironsands & Kimmeridge Clay that requires much expensive fertilizer to produce any sort of a viable crop.

So perhaps a surviving family, or families, moved down into that snug little valley of the Hollowbrook Spring in the late 16th century and built a new home there where their ancient ancestors had once lived? The cobblestone layer close to the spring, later post-medieval pottery and improved track surfaces would tend to support that notion.

Further research work is necessary in the valley – more test pits and a deeper examination of the track-ways leading to the spring itself.

It is still a beautifully peaceful little valley, where we have hard evidence that people have lived over the last 8,000 years since the last Ice Age ended. Today, it is a

dedicated, organic nature reserve, begun some forty-five years ago by Bob and Muriel Walker initially with a duck-pond and now as a sanctuary for many wild animals and flowers. It is now maintained & managed by his son Denis & grandson George. Long may it remain so! *CJP*

Caveat: The site of Old Horsepath itself is on private property and is active farmland. In any case there is absolutely *nothing* to see apart from a few enigmatic stones in the hedgerow. Also, to deter metal detectorists the area has been seeded with metallic swarf.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The Origin of the Two Horspaths: -Romano-British Estates into Modern Parishes?

There is an increasing trend among modern British archaeologists to see the origins of many of our parishes as perhaps being formed as far back as the Bronze Age, based on well-defined tribal territories; their boundaries marked by the barrows of the tribal chieftains, which carried over into the Iron age and subsumed again into Roman administrative districts after the Roman Conquest. Fascinating stuff, but general coverage is outside the remit of this short paper sadly.

And much academic ink has been spilt in the last century over the vexed question of "continuity" between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon eras. What exactly did the Anglo-Saxons inherit? Did they invade *en masse* and ethnically cleanse the land of its ancient British population? Or did they find a countryside nearly devoid of inhabitants because of catastrophic plague, induced by cometary (Halle's?) decade-long atmospheric crop-killing dust & resulting famine that killed a third of the European population as some historians believe? See:-

<https://www.ancient.eu/article/782/justinians-plague-541-542-ce/>

Or did they filter in piece-meal and become absorbed into the existing population until they somehow became the (post-plague?) dominant force. The latest DNA evidence leans in favour of the latter and in our area the predominant grave-goods indicate migrants coming from the Frisian areas of what is now the northern Netherlands. Interestingly, the modern Fries dialect itself is a linguistic half-way house between Dutch and English. For example, the Dutch *kaas* becomes the Fries *chreese* and the English *cheese*.

The academic arguments continue, but a more commonsense farming approach is to ask why on earth incoming Anglo-Saxons would have ignored an existing man-made landscape of trackways, hedgerows, ditches, fields and farms and started over with a clean slate of their own making?? A monumental task, and my own view is that being sensible people they used what was already in existence, thus preserving many of the old territorial boundaries.

So it is that much new research since the 1950s into ancient and modern landscape boundaries has begun to reveal “ghost” outlines of large estates dated to the 7th & 8th centuries, clearly derived from Roman estates and even those of much earlier periods, including the Bronze Age. The pioneering work was done by Prof. Finberg on the large parish of Withington in the Gloucester Cotswolds. A 2006 Time Team programme re-evaluated the site.

See :-

http://www.bgas.org.uk/tbgas_bg/v127/bg127195.pdf

Finberg was able to show conclusively that Withington parish is based on an ancient Roman estate centered on an imposing Roman villa and *several other contemporary ancillary Roman settlements*. The land attached to the villa emerged as a 7th century estate given over intact by an Anglo-Saxon king to the local monastery belonging to the See of Worcester. Its later history, with a few minor boundary changes, can be documented right through the Middle Ages to the present modern parish. Since then other investigations into parishes where surviving Anglo-Saxon charters exist now suggest that the same pattern appear to hold good for other modern parishes too. In fact, recent research specifically on Wessex shows that; *“Gone are the simplistic models of a Germanic takeover of a Roman province. Instead, we have a nuanced picture of transition in which society, economy and institutions evolved over time.”*

(From a review of: 'From Roman Civitas to Anglo-Saxon Shire' by Bruce Eagles; Oxbow. 2018)

If, (and it's a big if), this should hold true for Horspath and other nearby local parishes as well, perhaps we should be looking for a central Roman Villa and its ancillary settlements? Could the Wheatley villa – which has never been found, only its bath-house – fit that bill?

The arguments for these survivals are complex, but very it would seem that often a large landholding “owned” by an Iron Age tribal chieftain (Catavellauni and Dobunni in our area) and perhaps even originating in the Bronze Age, was taken over by a prominent Roman after the Conquest in AD 43 with many of the villages remaining intact and their British inhabitants used as a source of labour. After the Romans abandoned Britain some 400 years later, it appears that the land unit (the estate) eventually passed into the hands of an eminent Anglo-Saxon chief although the process is by no means clear.

As stated previously, field-walking at Garsington has recently revealed substantial amounts of late 3rd & 4th centuries Roman-British pottery centered on the higher of the two manors, (although some sherds of high-status Gaulish Samian ware from the 1st & 2nd centuries were found as well, but these may be heirloom pieces). The later sherds are from the large Romano-British East Oxfordshire potteries (see below). The sheer quantity of R-B sherds from Garsington indicate that a Roman era farmstead (at least) once existed here. A close watch is being kept by Patti to see if any further evidence of a building emerges.

We also have an enigmatic scattering of RB sherds in the Hollowbrook valley above the spring and close to the Old Horsepath site and, to my surprise, in 1974 I found considerable amounts of 4th century pottery on the Howe Trust allotments on Mill Lane at Wheatley while looking at a friend's allotment there. This site is a long way from the villa site on Castle Hill, so perhaps this site also an ancillary Roman settlement?

(NB: The present Horspath Parish has two known 3rd / 4th century pottery-kiln sites from the nationally significant Roman pottery industry which was spread out on either side of the main Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester during the late 3rd & 4th centuries. There is a very extensive one on the Row near the reservoir on Shotover, with more on the other side of the lane below the old pig farm; and another kiln-field which I discovered in 1972 next to Open Brasenose wood and close to the old Roman road. It contained about 15 kilns and many more could be hidden beneath the trees of Open Brasenose wood.

Also there is a large circular low-walled area directly in front of the Moors cottages, presumably the main drying shed for "green" pots, and close to the stream alongside Open Brasenose there is a large sunken area which could have been a puddling area for the raw clay.

This site clearly continued its pottery-making well into the Anglo-Saxon period as I found examples of classic Saxon potsherds with stick-end stamp decoration in the debris of a well-used kiln. (now in the Oxfordshire Museum) Example below:



After Augustine's gradual conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, the social structure of the early regional societies initially appears to have been fairly flat and perhaps even democratic (by their standards), but it was not to last. The twin pillars of the Church and increasing tribal power by local chieftains began to shape a more pyramidal & hierarchical society with the emergence of kingship as the top rung. With advisory-only assistance from the Witenagemot, an early form of Privy Council, its composition and calendar were determined by the king alone.

These meetings of aldermen, thanes and bishops discussed royal grants of land, church matters, charters, taxation and so on. Thus from about AD 800 our Anglo-Saxon kings began granting significant portions of their estates to local monasteries (*to ease their way into Heaven no doubt – a process later dignified by the Catholic Church in their sale of indulgences; until Martin Luther stepped in...*) In the year AD 956 alone King Eadwig made over **seventy** sizeable gifts of lands.

See below for the complete list of his land gifts during his reign (files S582 – S672) :-

www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/ch_date/0900.html

One of those charters, S587 in Peter Sawyer's list above, is one in which King Eadwig gives 20 hides of land from Cuddesdon (later to become the parish of Wheatley), to Aelfhere, an Ealdorman in the then adversarial state of Mercia. A curious move indeed in my view as it gave Mercia *both* banks of the River Thame, then a lawless frontier between Mercia and Wessex.

Eadwig was called “A Wanton Youth” at the time, even though he only reigned for four years. His unwholesome reputation stems from the story that he was found “*in a compromising situation*” at the time when he was supposed to be presiding over his coronation feast. With whom, sadly, we are not told. But it shows clearly the way in which original tribal (and perhaps Roman) estates were broken up during the reign of the Anglo-Saxon kings.

The original S587 charter is as follows:- (*Cu̅enes dune & healhtunes* translate as *Cuddesdon & Holton*)

“Is syndon ̅a land gemæru to Cu̅enes dune .xx. hida. Of hry̅era forda on holanford, of holanford on lahanmere, 7lang ri̅iges on bradan mædwā, ̅æt swa norð 7lang fura on set ̅orn, of set ̅orne on fulan ri̅ig on anne pyt, of ̅am pytte 7lang ri̅iges on ̅æt heafod lond, of ̅am heafodon 7lang fura on pric̅orn, on foreweardne eanfer̅es hlau, of eanfer̅es hlawe 7lang fure, ̅æt on an ri̅ig, 7lang ri̅iges ̅æt on ane dic, 7lang dices on drygean broc, ̅æt swa 7lang dices on mærwelle broc, 7lang broces on mærwelle, of mærwelle on ̅æt heafod lond, on gerihthe to stræt, ̅onne east 7lang stræte o̅ ̅æra stræta gelæto, ̅onan

rihte nor on dlong weges o ̃ a heafdo, ̃æt on mærweg, 7lang mærweges ̃æt on butan ceorla graf on fost broc, of fost broce on ̃one hliðweg, 7long weges on hina gemæro, 7long hina gemæres on ̃a hlydan, of ̃æra hlydan on ̃a stanbricge, 7long **healhtunes** gemæres on risc dene, ̃æt of risc dene on gerihte on ̃æt ̃riex, of ̃am ̃riexe on ̃a stræt, 7long stræte on holan broc, 7long broces on herpa ̃ ford on **Tame**, 7long Tame ̃æt eft on hry ̃era ford.

I later found Tom Hassall's translation of this charter in his "Wheatley Records", page 28 & 29, published by the Oxfordshire Record Society in 1956 and I now have a PDF copy of this extract if anyone is interested. Curiously though, none of these grants concern lands in Horspath parish. Did the Saxon royal estate of Headington extend to include the Horspaths area (as part of Shotover Forest) and was it perhaps regarded as sacrosanct in some way?

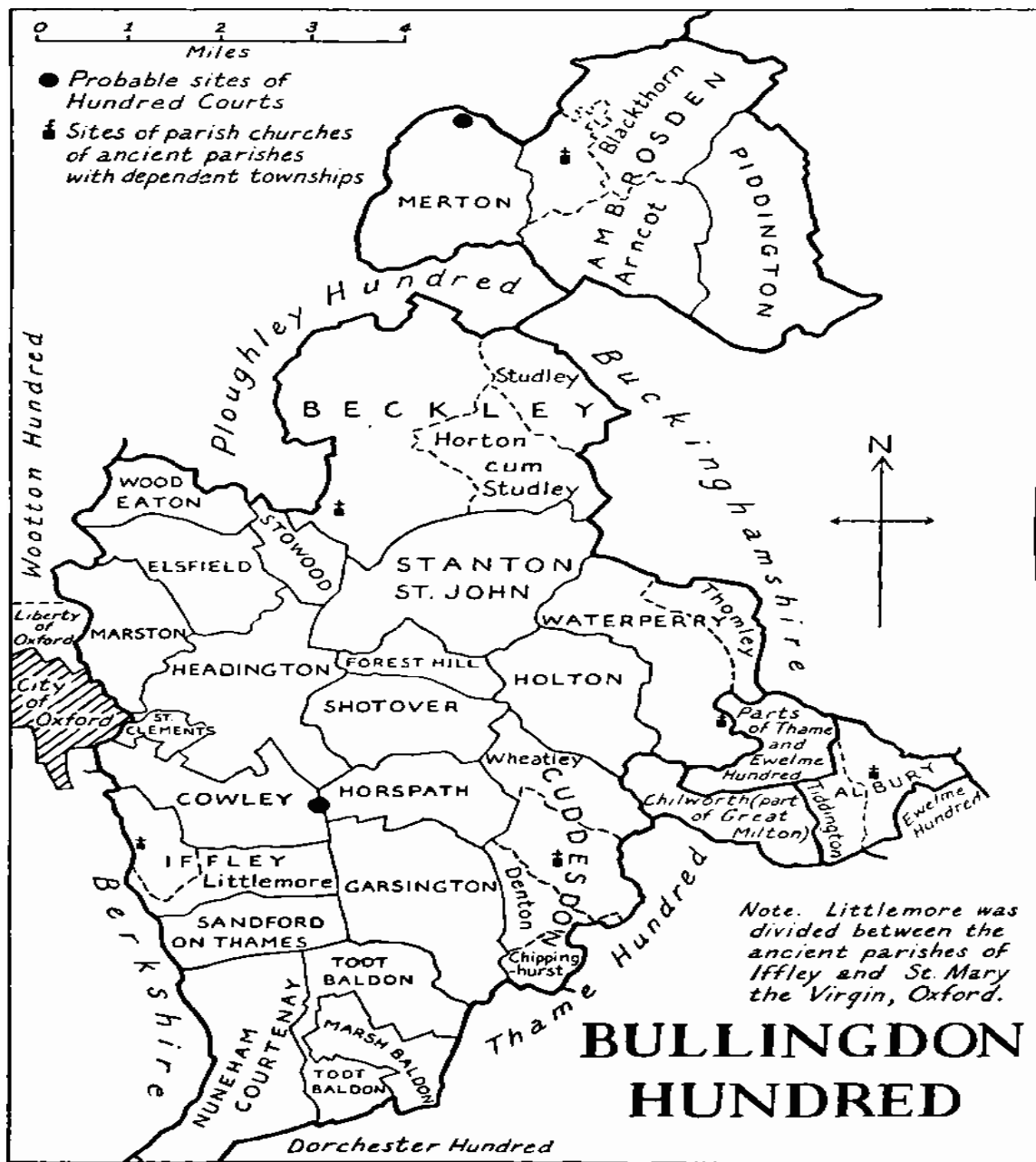
I am still trying to get hold of a copy of J.Bond's "*The Reconstruction of the Medieval Landscape: The Estates of Abingdon Abbey*" published in the Landscape Journal of 1979 to see if it had any holdings in Horspath as the benefactor of all this largess in our region was mostly Abingdon Abbey; itself sitting on top of what is increasingly looking like a significant Roman town by a ford or bridge over the river Thames. From the latest excavations there see:-

<http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/2007/brady.pdf>

Appendix 2

A Missing Villa?

One of the key findings of recent research on parish development is that the control of these early British pre & post-Roman estates was usually centered on some place of particular importance at the time, perhaps an ancient hill-fort or a specific place with special historical significance for them known as a *caput*. In the Roman period we are fairly certain that the local villa would have fulfilled that function, for obvious reasons. Curiously, the *caput* for the very large Bullingdon Hundred by the 14th century, when it is first mentioned in print (but would have had a very long unknown history before that), was a place on the border between Horspath and Cowley, roughly near the Council sports field below Open Brasenose Wood. (see sketch map from VCH below:)



If indeed it existed in Roman times, this location was close to the main Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester (near Bicester) and hence enjoying good internal communications across Roman Britain.

Also, it's close to the entrance to the Roman kiln-field by Open Brasenose Wood and the link road up to the extensive Roman potteries on the Row (the reservoir field) and therefore in a good location to control storage, sales and distribution of the potters' wares from the Horspath kilns. There was also a branch road to the left further up on the old Roman road, leading to the extensive kiln-site around what is

now the Churchill Hospital, so any *caput* might well have had a controlling influence on those kilns too.

Here it gets more interesting. The distribution of Roman villas in east Oxfordshire is pretty well known. They seem to occupy sites roughly every two miles or so on either side of the old A40 road from High Wycombe onward. But there *appears* to be a gap in the very area of the kilns at Horspath & Shotover: between the large Wheatley villa and the one at Headington Wick above Barton, a distance of well over four miles as the crow flies. Not that this proves anything in itself, but why the large gap in such a well-populated landscape?

Given that we know there was standardisation of (especially) mortaria sizes across the East Oxfordshire Roman potteries which seems to point to some sort of controlling organisation; certainly by the 4th century when the industry was at its zenith. The big question is where was it based? Is there an as yet undiscovered villa under the trees up on Shotover itself? Could there be a grand villa like the one at Wheatley lurking close to the Roman road beneath BMW or their sportsfield? It's not impossible. See: -

<<https://theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/apr/17/amazing-find-roman-villa>>

The "smoking gun" evidence for me is the high probability of a branch road off of the main Roman road through the area leading towards Horspath. (*See note on Manning's report on p.45 (above).*)

As an aside, one customer in the Queen's Head pub in Horspath (a friend of Nigel Webb) told us recently that about 20 years ago he'd seen "*masses of Roman material coming up from excavations during the making of the parking lot of the Roman Way Club*". This is near the far corner of the old Pressed Steel sports field and close to the Roman road (Roman Way).

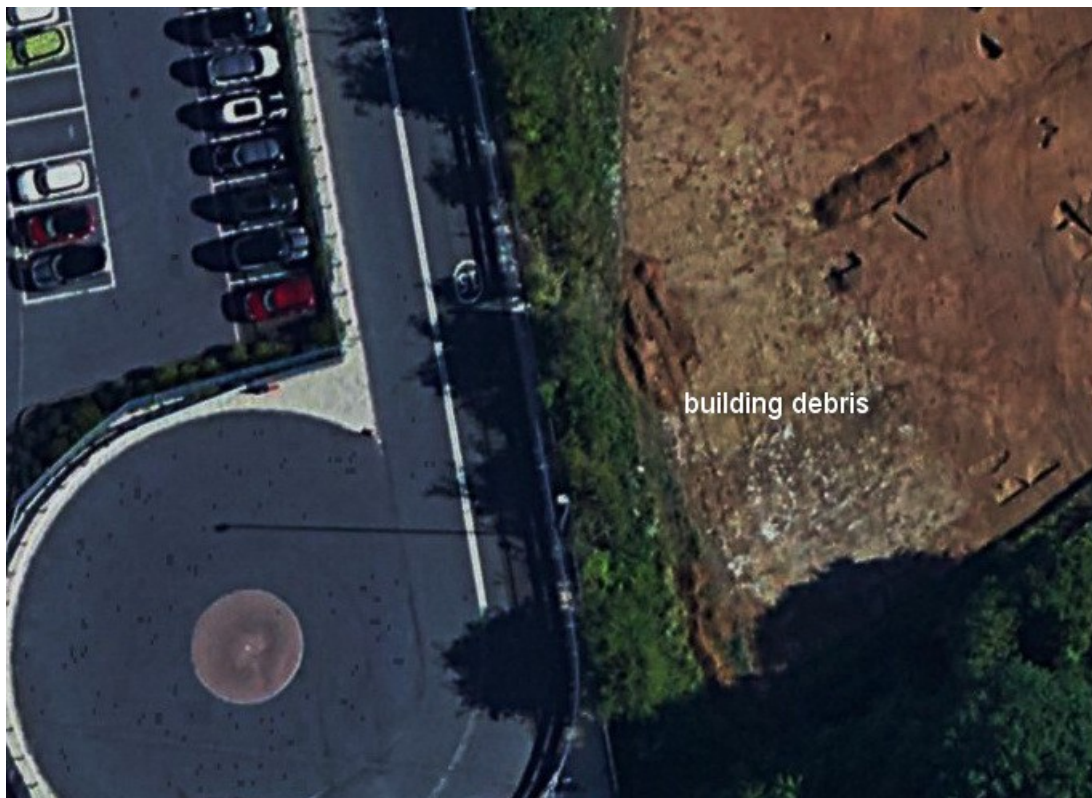
NB : Update. During the mandatory (PPG 16) archaeological survey of the new BMW sports field in 2017, geophysical tests showed buried features were present. According to a site worker, subsequent excavation by Salford University School of Archaeology revealed "*traces of an Iron Age & Roman farm-stead*" close to the Roman Way car-park (and very close to the previously mentioned excavation witnessed 20 years ago.) As yet, (Jan 2019) the excavation report has not yet appeared in any of the Oxford City Archaeology Reports. See:

-<<https://oxfordarchaeology.com/>>

The Google Earth pictures (one of the greatest world-wide blessings of that much maligned company) of the site at the time of the 2017/18 excavation are below:-



Overview of the SW corner of the BMW Sports Field



Enlargement of SW corner of site with Sports Club car-park to the left.

However, a quick on-site examination in early 2018, (coupled with the historical witness to Roman material being seen during the digging of the adjacent car-park some 20 years ago - well before BMW's tenancy!) points to a substantial Roman building with what appears to be agricultural *and* horticultural features (smaller enclosed gardens possibly for vegetables?). Clear signs of building debris spreading out from the adjacent car-park is evident on the above enlargement. However, as car-parks do not have deep foundations, future excavations within the car-park (or under the modern building itself?) might well show the building's undamaged lower foundations, so all is not lost.

In my view this *might* be evidence for a *mansio* – an imperial wayside guest house. (And/Or the lost *caput*?) Its close proximity to the Roman road strengthens that argument as Roman farms were usually some distance from main roads, but as yet no evidence has emerged as yet of a hypocaust debris for the heated baths that were normally a feature of a *mansio*, or any painted plaster associated with a building of high status. See :- <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mansio>>

The majority - say roughly 80% - of known Roman Villas conform to something of

a pattern. They are *usually* situated within a mile or less of a Roman road; are on or above the local spring-line; and face south to south east.

In our case, excepting more data from the recent BMW excavations, I feel that investigations east of The Ridings on Shotover (i.e., along the spring-line) could be worthwhile. The Westhill farm area would also be well worth exploring in detail as it sits on a man-made platform facing south-west with an excellent spring (the Northfield Brook) running alongside it and the field patterns below it look to me to be infill in a larger (older?) field system. And field-walking in 1990 I found 4th century RB pottery scatters alongside the Northfield Brook that leads to the Oxford road on the southern side of these fields.

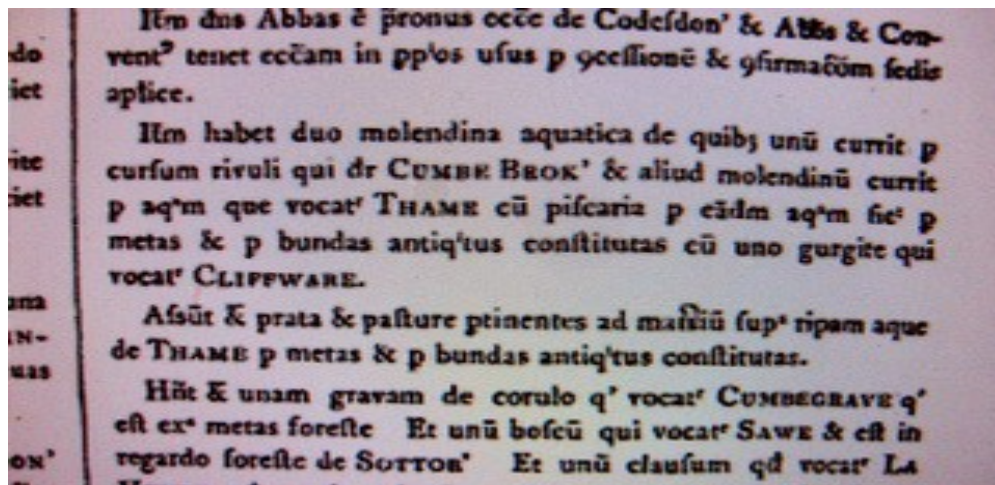
In my view, this could be a very interesting subject for a Summer investigation by local field-walkers. A separate seminar in The Hub with those interested might also be fun.

APPENDIX 3

The Lost Mill on the Cuddesdon Brook.

Despite opinions to the contrary below, the 1279 *Rotuli Hundredorum* for Cuddesdon clearly mentions two mills in Cuddesdon at that time. An otherwise excellent Wheatley local history pamphlet published in the 1980s, categorically disputed that any mill could have been located on the Comb Broc:- “ *the suggestion that a small mill existed on Cuddesdon Brook itself has neither evidence nor water power to support it*”.

But the author perhaps did not understand the development of watermills in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Many of them were sited on *leats* diverted from hill-side streams or brooks, thus requiring less massive structures and well within the technology of that period.

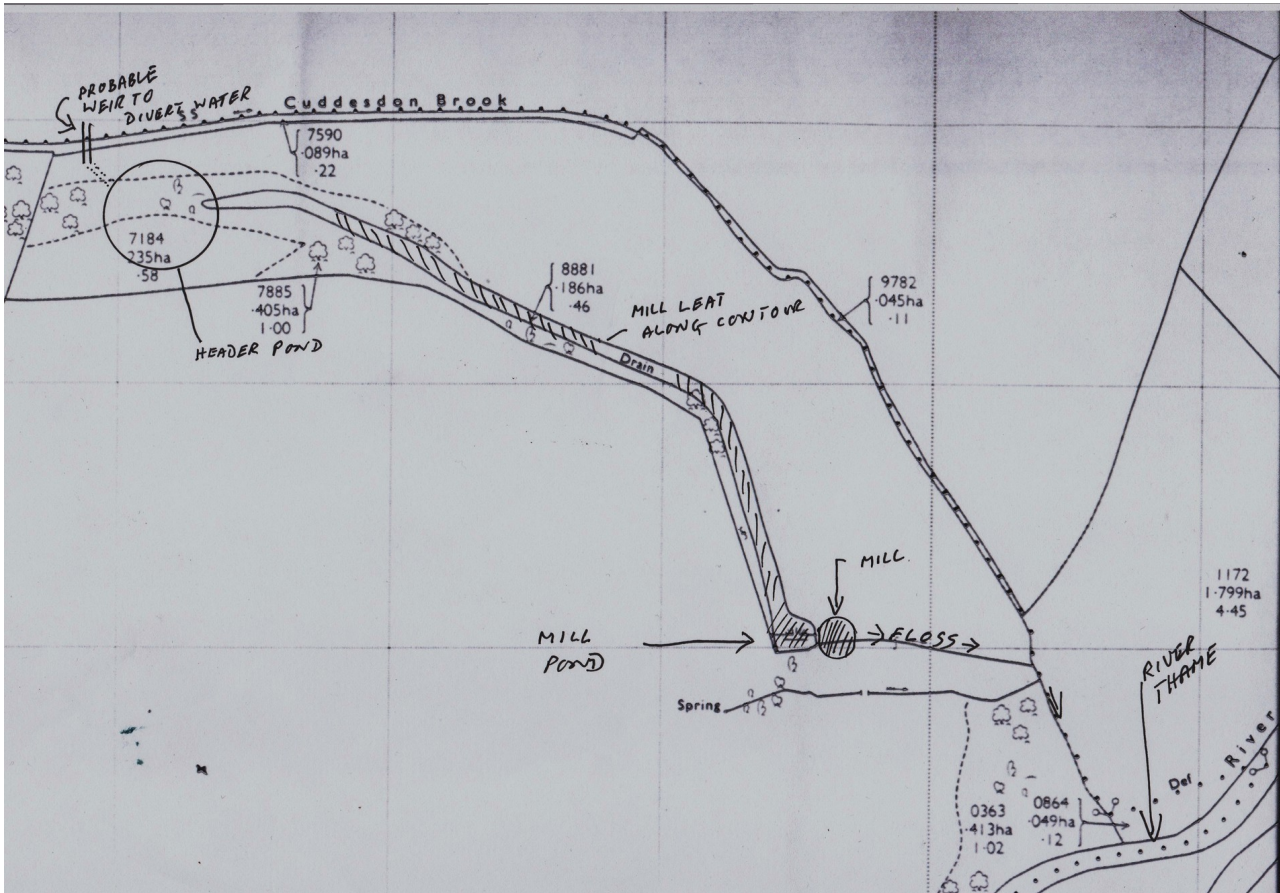


Cuddesdon watermills in the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum: "habet duo molendina aquatica"

One mill was on the River Thame, although the actual building at that time would have been of wooden construction, not stone as now. The other higher up (as stated in the 1279 *Rotuli Hundredorum* above) on the Cumbe Broc (Cuddesdon Brook today) and about a mile closer to Old Horsepath than the mill on the River Thame.

I re-discovered the remains of this mill in Summer 2000 by walking down *in* the Cuddesdon Brook from Coombe Wood toward the River Thame. And sure enough, through the hedges at low sun angle I saw the slumped, eroded banks of what looked like a header pond a few yards away from the brook. Unsurprisingly, there was no trace of any weir structure in the brook that would have been necessary to divert water into the header pond, although careful excavation might show some traces remaining.

Beyond the pond (as described later below) was a deep leat (called a "drain" on the modern OS map) running from the pond along the contour line toward the mill, while the brook itself descends quite steeply in the same direction (see diagram below).



Author sketch



The mill leat, looking upstream towards the header pond and the Cuddesdon brook to the right

I could find no obvious trace of mill structures around the dam wall or pond area but the dense undergrowth made searching very difficult.

However, with the permission of the landowner I made a small excavation behind the dam wall outlet and about two feet down found the elm boards that guided the water over the sluice (*see below*) The boards were of the consistency of cheese. So some, at least, of the original internal workings from the mill's latest iteration (around AD 1700?) are still *in situ*.



Elm sluice board. Mill dam to right.

From there the mill outlet discharged into the floss and thence back into the Cuddesdon Brook some 30 yards below:-



*Confluence of mill floss with Cuddesdon brook.
Mill is uphill behind the photographer.*

From its location the mill is probably an earlier one than the one sited on the River Thames and was in existence by 1279. Much simpler to build than the far larger and complex structures needed on a more substantial river like the Thames that would have needed elaborate protection against winter floods and the powerful currents.

To judge from its overall layout and its position on the side of a steep slope, it was *probably* late Anglo-Saxon in origin. Although, during the 1845 excavation of the Wheatley Roman Villa (*see page 22 above: page 335 of the original report*) a fragment of a **three foot** diameter millstone of Red Sandstone (possibly from Heidelberg or Staffordshire) being used as a whetstone. A millstone of this size can only have come from a water-mill as it is far too large for a domestic hand-grinding quern. So it's possible that the Cumb Broc mill had its origins in the later Roman era. A few deep test pits around the edges of the mill site to access the lowest levels might well provide diagnostic proof in the shape of Romano-British pottery or even coins.

A Roman watermill would actually make good sense given the large acreage devoted to cereal crops in virtually all later 4th century Roman estates in this region. We know the cereal acreage was extensive from the dimensions of the grain storage pits and barns on villa excavations. From these, archaeologists have calculated backwards to give a very rough estimate of cereal acreage. (Grain was a major export in the 4th century replacing sources in Gaul lost to the invading Germanic tribes).

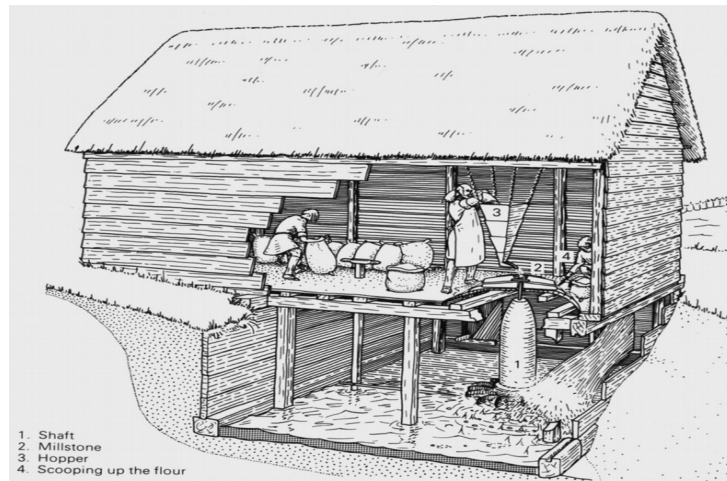
As with other mills of this period, it followed their practice for diverting water for the mills from small, steeply-running streams, along a specially dug ditch (lead) that roughly followed a contour line, albeit with a very slight downhill gradient. Thus our "lost" mill used the small flow from the Cuddesdon brook (as described earlier), diverted into a header pond of about a quarter of an acre - the banks can still be seen at low sun levels - and from there ran into a lead (called a "Drain" on the OS map - some of it still stone -revetted on the uphill side near the mill-pond) And then along the contour line for about a quarter of a mile, turning left into a still existing, but heavily overgrown, millpond:-



Overgrown mill pond in 2000 looking uphill towards Cuddesdon. A spring in the field above apparently still feeds this pond.

The header pond, leat and mill-pond together acted as a sort of storage battery for the mill. Once all were full of water, the miller could open the inlet weir to the mill and begin milling.

The original machinery drive originally was *probably* a more primitive horizontal turbine rather than a vertical water wheel, given the unsuitable terrain. (See sketch below). The “charge” would probably have been sufficient for several hours of milling. For further milling the miller would have to wait for the whole water reservoir to re-fill.



A 1970 theoretical reconstruction of late Anglo-Saxon horizontal turbine watermill

The VCH entry for Cuddesdon records from the “*Chronicles of Abingdon Abbey*” both mills and their later tenants:-

“There is an 18th-century water-mill standing on the Thame, which once belonged to Cuddesdon manor. It is known that Abingdon Abbey had a mill here, which it lost during the Danish invasions, but afterwards recovered. The mill was the cause of much strife with the Bishop of Lincoln's tenants at Great Milton, who threatened to destroy the weir in 1066, but were foiled by Abbot Ealdred, supposedly with the aid of the miraculous bones of St. Vincent. Later they or their descendants twice destroyed the mill enclosure, and in 1108 the bishop made them repair it. In 1279 the mill weir was called 'Cliffware', and in 1397–8 the sacristan of Abingdon Abbey had 13s. 4d. from the mill. Its farm was worth £5 in 1539.

A second mill, on the stream called 'Cumbe Brok', is mentioned in 1279. It is not clear whether it was this mill or the mill on the Thame which was granted to Robert Browne in 1545. In Elizabeth I's reign his mill had passed from George Bartlett to John Barston, whose family came to own both the mills. From Richard Barston (d.1613) they descended to his son Thomas, who was dead by 1624, and in a document of 1678 are referred to as 'Down' and 'Overshot'. They were owned by William Broadwater in 1705. The Thame mill, rebuilt about 1800, is still workable, but has been inactive since about 1935 and serves as a store.” (NB: This VCH volume was written in 1957)

See:- <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp96-116> for more details.

Appendix 4

The Moving of Old Horsepath Church: The Devil's Work?

The very existence of a church at the old village was (rightly) questioned by Paul Surman at the first airing of this paper at the Hub. And the only evidence we have – if it can be called that – is the persistent local legend that “*the Old Horsepath church was moved by The Devil to where it is now*”. Tempting though it is to dismiss such local folklore, in my view we do so at our peril. My reason being that there is much firm evidence, both archaeological and written, to support the idea of even the smallest of villages or hamlets in England, Cornwall and Wales having its own place of worship well before, and after, the Norman Conquest.

John Blair's “*The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*” the pre-eminent historian of The Queen's College Oxford, shows how many of these evolved from private chapels of the ruling Saxon landowner, seeking to enhance his status by having a private

house of worship close to his manor house.

Or, more intriguingly, small chapels built either by Christianised landowners or the Church itself on places of pagan worship; be they sacred springs, trees or other landscape features. John aptly calls these “*the privatization of 'undeveloped' sacred sites*”.

In this context, there is indisputable archaeological evidence that the Fathers of the early English Church followed in the footsteps of the Eastern Roman Church (where the remains of many an early Christian basilica is found to overlie a Classical, or earlier, Greek temple), and determined to erase the folk memory of English pagan places of worship by substituting a Christian focus of their own.

A wonderful example of this practice (below) is of a now disused Christian church set boldly in the centre of a Neolithic henge at Knowlton in Dorset.



Evidence of deep continuity in our landscape; some four thousand years separates the two monuments.

Many of these pagan sites of worship were also Bronze Age (3000 BC – 1200 BC) barrows or later burial monuments of the Anglo-Saxons themselves. In both cases

the assumption is that an elite tribal family was intent on increasing its status, as well as making a mark of ownership on its surrounding territory. These were thus ideally suited to later, and similar, status displays as the Christian penetration of society after the ninth century spread from the grand minsters down to virtually parish levels. Having a private chapel attached to your manor house seems to have become the modern equivalent of a heated swimming pool for neighbours to envy.

An unimpeachable witness: *“When Bishop Hereman of Ramsbury visited the pope in 1050 he told him about 'England being filled everywhere with churches which were daily being added anew in new places, about the distribution of innumerable ornaments and bells in oratories and the most ample liberality of kings and rich men for the inheritance of Christ' (From John's book: pp 368)*

In 1014 a new legal code had classified churches into descending orders of importance; minsters at the top, with the humblest “field-churches”, where few parochial services were on offer, at the bottom. These “field churches” were of two types: those with graveyards and those without and in John's words *“may have given a new lease of life to old but informal cult sites.”*

Finally, to put our possible OH church in this overall context, we should expect it to have been of the “field church” type: possibly close to a manor house; either with a grave-yard or not; and perhaps on, or close to, an ancient pagan place of worship.

Many springs (perhaps the Hollowbrook Spring is a corruption of *holy-brook?*) are known to have been venerated as ancient cult sites: and we have an enigmatic crop-mark above the Hollowbrook that needs further investigation:-



Area above Hollowbrook Spring with curious crop-mark. In false-colour tones for enhancement.

And a recently published book provides an interesting clue. Again written by John Blair and entitled “Building Anglo-Saxon England” it is based to a large degree on his re-analysis of 30 years of developer-funded archaeology: PPG 16 -for an explanation of PPG 16: see -

<https://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/archaeology-in-the-ppg16-era.html>)

In most cases these PPG 16 reports have mostly been largely unpublished except in “grey literature” reports to the funders, hence only reaching a limited audience.

In his book, Blair makes a very valid point that our current knowledge of later Saxon structures – as, say, with our OH church - is greatly limited by the fact that in many cases they had no foundations at all, thus leaving no trace in the excavation records. The timber framework of the building merely resting on a number of large flat stones, (*such as we have discovered in the hedge at Old Horspath*). The very few buildings of this type that *have* been recorded were only discovered using meticulous and time-intensive procedures of a kind that are rarely possible under expensive developer-funded PPG 16 contracts.

In cases where evidence for foundations *has* been found, the evidence is slim and

often confined to stains in the soil where wooden sill beams have rotted away, or a “robber” trench indicating where stone walls had once been, prior to their recycling by later builders.



Likewise, single post-holes as in the example above give us absolutely no idea as to what the superstructure looked like. (*The case above is an old pagan shrine of the spirit guardian of the forest in Latvia – not a pigeon loft -with a modern drinking party.*)

However, (the plot again thickens..) The reconstruction below, in the Weald and Downland Museum of a 10th century aisled hall (or church), used timbers from an Anglo-Saxon London waterfront structure. Blair says that it shows clearly that houses could be made of prefabricated elements that were specifically designed to be assembled and dismantled using tusk tenons and pegs for the joints. However, oak dowels were a common method of fixing building frames up to the late 19th century in pioneer America, perhaps for ease of re-cycling? But either way, our expectations of test-pitting results for the OH church foundations should not, perhaps, be set too high!



Reconstruction of a 10th century aisled hall in the Downland museum from London's Anglo-Saxon waterfront.



Details of the corner of the building showing dowels.

Focusing only on the foundations and post-holes (below) shows how easy it is to underestimate the architectural merit of Anglo-Saxon buildings. Excavated

features are often bland, while post-holes and wall trenches –if they exist at all – can look rather uninteresting and it requires imagination to visualise the fine craftsmanship of the (possibly movable) superstructure and its interiors. See below:-



Illustration from Blair's book

In published reconstruction drawings, archaeological illustrators have necessarily erred on the side of simplicity and plainness, in the absence of any other detail. Given the technical excellence and complexity of much Anglo-Saxon woodwork and art, Blair suggests this is giving us a false picture.

The surviving fragments of early medieval buildings – as well as parallels in Northern Europe and Scandinavia – demonstrate excellent technical skills in the cutting and fitting of timbers; craftsmanship of a high order that must surely have been extended to the internal features.

Apropos of which, surviving wills from AD 950-1050 reinforce Blair's suggestion that cloth or tapestries constituted the all-pervasive domestic environment for most Anglo-Saxons that turned a house into a home (or a church..).

Blair suggests that the importance of these luxurious hangings can be glimpsed in two late-10th-century wills – those of Wynflæd (d. 950/960), an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman and a major landowner, and of the widow Wulfwaru (c.984–1016). They list a long, and a short hall-hanging, a bed-hanging, and a chamber-hanging, implying specialisation in the ways that they were made and used. How the hangings were used can be seen in manuscripts from around the year AD 1000, which depict rich and heavy drapes running along curtain rails or tied back to flank door posts, demarcating different areas of the building or providing a degree of privacy, perhaps also contributing to warmth and sound-proofing. Perhaps *much* less ornate at OH church, but quite important in a draughty wooden-framed building perched high up on ridge overlooking the Thames Valley in Winter...

Blair concludes : “*Carts bumping along decaying Roman roads laden with poles, rails, panels, and bundles of cloth or leather explain much that was distinctive (and transient) about the Anglo-Saxon built landscape. This was not an earth-and stone-moving culture. Although there are extant enclosures, forts, and linear earthworks, they do not compare with those of the Neolithic, Iron-Age, Roman, or Anglo-Norman eras.* “

But what price then, the *literal* accuracy of the persistent Horspath legend that: “***The Devil moved Old Horspath church down to where it is now..*” ?**

If it *was* physically moved, it may well have seemed sacrilegious to those old Saxon country folk: their outraged reaction to an arrogant Norman bishop (the Devil?) ordering the pulling down of their old church or moving it down to where congregations were, perhaps, larger? Is that why this traumatic event became stuck in the collective consciousness of the village for the last millennia ? Or was it because the old village had died out and common sense and economy made the moving of the church inevitable to give the inhabitants of Lower Horsepath a place of worship ?

(I had a wonderful vision of the dis-assembled old church creaking its way on ox-carts across the top of our Horspath allotments in the early AD 1200s on the road from Old Horsepath, doubtless accompanied by cheering children and dogs. And then being re-erected where its later stone-built descendant now is. Who knows, its wooden remains may still be under the nave of the present church...)

So; we have two main choices here: first, that the the old church actually was physically moved; and secondly, that it was the only the diocesan administration that was transferred to the new, stone-built church.

In archaeological terms, in the first case there will be no clear physical evidence surviving at Old Horspath to indicate an early wooden church had once stood there. Except that our finding a graveyard with an unused space in the middle would prove something had once been there. And that can only have been a church. In the second case we might well, with careful excavation, find traces of structural timbers and fixings below the ploughing level.

(The preference for timber structures based on stone pads proved to be remarkably resilient as it prevented rot to a degree and was the standard method for less permanent structures such as hovels, woodsheds, cowsheds and dunnies up until recent times, especially for barns and farm outbuildings in the U.S.)

Below: Our only surviving Anglo-Saxon timber church – St Andrew, Greensted-juxta-Ongar, Essex – has a nave that was built in the traditional Saxon style out of split oak tree trunks circa AD 1063–1110. I suspect the gable windows are a later feature:-



But the fashion for marking out God's house as eternal had already spread from the Continent and, as the only Anglo-Saxon timber building still standing in Britain, it

represents a type of small church that was once common in Anglo-Saxon England until the great period of rebuilding in stone began under the Normans.

Thus in the 12th century the Normans began a virtual clean sweep of English timber churches in favour of masonry cathedrals, abbeys and churches, something that must have been traumatic for those who lived through it (and whom no doubt paid for it by means of additional taxes...) Meanwhile, the more wealthy domestic builders of the 12th century and after began to use the same stone materials and techniques for their own houses.

Granted, a rather tenuous academic house of cards to build on a hazy thousand year old village legend! And yet, and yet..... that old legend cries out for an answer.

Further reading : Building Anglo-Saxon England (2018), by John Blair, Princeton University Press, £40, ISBN 978-0691162980

APPENDIX 5:

Wages and Prices in the 14th century

It is very difficult to get a specific picture of what our peasants at Old Horsepath would have paid for their goods or, indeed, what they might have been paid for their services, but this data set below gives the best general picture I can find at the moment.

It should be remembered that a very high percentage of peasant transactions at this time would have been by means of barter, or exchange, not outright purchase. Hence this data is heavily skewed by “retail” prices and our villagers would have much lower overall living costs.

Also, there seems to be little specific mention in these files of wooden goods such as plates, bowls and cups. These would have been turned out on local pole-lathes for a fraction of the price of the ceramic versions mentioned in the files. We know of many worn-out examples from waterlogged excavations – often elm or beech. (Hence a dig in the waterlogged soil by the Hollowbrook Spring is needed.) On dry

sites they would not have survived at all. Given the low incomes at the bottom end of the social scale, a purchase of a clay pot (costing a half-penny in the files) would have been worth half a day's pay; not something to be undertaken lightly.

These files were extracted from:

<<http://medieval.ucdavis.edu/120D/Money.htm>>

and

<<http://web.archive.org/web/20110628231215/http://www.fit.qut.edu.au/~mcarthur/medieval.html>>

I've greatly reduced the file to exclude items of little relevance to this paper, except where they show the great disparity between the classes and over time.

TOOLS

Item	Price	Date
2 yokes	4s	c1350
Foot iron of plough	5d	"
3 mason's tools (not named)	9d	"
1 spade and shovel	3d	1457
1 axe	5d	"
1 augur	3d	"
Anvil	20s	"
Bellows	30s	"
Hammers	8d-2s 8d	"
2 chisels	8d	"
Spinning Wheel	10 d	1457

HORSES

Item	Price	Date
War Horse	up to £80	13 cen
Knight's 2 horses	£10	1374
High-grade riding horse	£10	13th cen
Draught horse	10s-20s	13th cen

Note: Horse prices varied dramatically; for instance, they doubled between 1210 and 1310.

FOOD AND LIVESTOCK

Item	Price	Date
Wine:		
Cheapest	3d-4d/gal	Late 13 cen
Best	8d-10d/gal	"
Ale (beer comes later after 1500):		
Good	1.5d/gal	14 cen
Medium	1d/gal	"
Poor	.75d/gal	"
Ale (best):		
Somerset	.75d/ gal	1338
London	1.25d gal	"
Dried Fruit (eg raisins, dates, figs, prunes), almonds, rice to 6d		
	1-4d/lb, up to 6d	14 cen(?)
Spices (cinnamon, cloves, mace, pepper, sugar, etc).		
	1-3s/lb	"
Pepper	4s/lb	mid 13 cen
Pepper	6d/.5lb	1279-1280
Saffron	12s-15s/lb	14 cen(?)
Cow (good)	10s	12 cen(?)
Cow	9s 5d	mid 14th
Cow	6s	1285-1290
Ox	13s 1.25d	mid 14 cen
Sheep	1s 5d	"
Wether:(castrated sheep)		
Somerset	9d-10d	1338
London	1s 5d	"
Pig:		
Somerset	2s	1338
London	3s	"
Fowl	1d	"
2 Chickens	1d	14 cen
2 Dozen Eggs	1d	"
Goose (in London)	6d	
	7d-8d asked	1375
80 lb cheese	3s 4d	late 13 cen
Salted herring (wholesale)	5-10/1d	1382
Salt conger	6d each	1422-1423
Oats:		
Somerset	1s/quarter	1338
London	2s 2d per quarter	"
Cost of feeding a knight's or merchants' household per year	£30-£60,	15 cen

[Related note: around 1380, these are the average costs per day of feeding people on a large estate: lord, 7d; esquire, 4d; yeoman, 3d; and groom, 1d.]

BOOKS AND EDUCATION

Item	Price	Date
Monastery School	£2 (approx) per year	1392-1393
Oxford University:		
Board	104s/year	1374
Clothing	40s/year	"
Instruction	26s 8d/year	"
Other University:		
Minimum	£2-£3/year	Late 14 cen
Student of good birth	£4-£10/year	"
7 Books	£5 (approx)	1479
126 Books	£113	1397
To Rent a book	.5d-1d per pecia**	mid 13 cen

(A **pecia** is 16 columns of 62 lines of 32 letters, i.e., 31 744 letters, or about 7,500 – 8,000 words. Rental period is not specified, but I would guess a year; books were also rented to be copied. (copying the Bible took 15 months))

BUILDINGS

Item	Price	Date
Cottage rent	5s/year	14 cen
Rent craftsman's house	20s/year	"
Cottage (1 bay, 2 storeys)	£2	early 14 cen
Row house in York (well built)	up to £5	"
Craftsman's house (i.e., with shop, work area, and room for workers) with 2-3 bays and tile roof	£10-£15	early 14 cen
Modest hall and chamber, not including materials	£12	1289
Merchant's house	£33-£66	early 14 cen
House with courtyard	£90+	"
Large tiled barn	£83	1309-1310

CLOTH AND CLOTHING

Item	Price	Date
Fashionable gown	£10, up to £50	late 14 cen
Gentry:		
Shoes	4d	1470s
Boots	6d	"
Purse	1.5d	"
Hat	10d, 1s 2d	"

Craftsman's tabard and super-tunic (apron)	3s	1285-1290
Reeve's robe (dark brown)	6s 4d	1349-1352
Reeve's red robe	5s 3d	"
Peasants (wealthy):		
Linen Chemise	8d	1313
Shoes	6d	"
Woolen garment	3s	"
Fur-lined garments	6s 8d	early 14 cen
Tunic	3s	"
Linen	1s	"
Landless serfs' tunics	1d-6d	mid 14 cen
Cloth for peasant tunics	8d-1s 3d per yard	early 14 cen
Best Wool	5s/yard	1380
Silk	10s-12s per yard	15 cen(?)

The worth of cloth provided yearly by a lord to:

esquires	2s 11d/yard	1289-1290
yeomen	2s/yard	"
lesser servants	1s 7d/yard	"

Note: loose tunics take 2.25-2.5 yards. In the late 14th century, shorter doubled (lined) tunics, known as doublets, became fashionable, requiring 4 yards of cloth.

WEAPONS

Item	Price	Date
Cheap sword (peasant's)	6d	1340s
Musket	16s 6d-18s 6d	"

MARRIAGE

Item	Price	Date
Sample peasant dowries:	13s 4d, 35s 11d, 57s, 63s 4d	14 cen(?)
For serfs fees <u>to lord</u> , depending on wealth	1s-13s 4d	14 cen(?)
Wedding feast, wealthy peasant	20s	"
Wealthy peasant wedding total	£3-£4	"
Dowry for esquire's daughter: up to	£66 13s 4d	15 cen
Dowry for baron's daughter	£1000 +	"

Note: these costs will be widely varying depending on circumstance.

TRAVEL

Item	Price	Date
Chariot	£8	1381
Chariot maintence	1-3s/year	14 cen
Barge	£10	"
Iron-bound cart	4s	c1350
Guide for a night	1d	14 cen
Ferry ride per horseman	1d	"
Keeping an earl's warhorse 82 days in summer	36s 9.5d	1287

Note: The following prices at a rural inn in 1331. For one day, 3 men with 4 servants spent: Bread, 4d; beer, 2d; wine 1.25d; meat, 5.5d; potage, .25d; candles, .25d; fuel, 2d; beds, 2d; fodder for horses, 10d. The four servants staying alone sleep 2 nights for 1d. Generally, all 7 spend 2d a night on beds; in London, it is 1d per head.

MISCELLANEOUS

Item	Price	Date
Fee to enroll an apprentice: with mercers (rich merchants)	2s	14 cen
with carpenters	1s	"
Fee to join guild at end of apprenticeship: with mercers	20s	"
with carpenters	3s 4d	"
To empty a cesspit in a city	6s 8d	15 cen(?)
Candles Somerset	1.5d/lb	1338
London	2d-2.5d/lb	"
Candles tallow	1.5d/lb	15 cen(?)
wax	6.5d/lb	1406-1407

From inventories of peasants' belongings. The fine goods would be more expensive.

Vat	4d	1457
Barrel	3d	"
Bottle	4d	"
2 buckets	1s	"
1 sheet	4d	"
1 mattress	2d	"
4 pillows	4d	"

3 boards for a bed	4d	"
2 sheets, 4 blankets	5s 8p	1349-1352
Duke's bed of cloth of gold, with blue satin canopy	£182 3s	1397
Table	6d	1457
Chair	3d	"
Chest with necessaries thereto	2s 2d	"
2 chests	6d each	"
Metal ewer	6d	1349-1352
Brass pot	2s	
Basin and ewer (wood?)	8d	
Basin and ewer (metal?)	2s 8d	
Towel	6d	
Coffer	1s	
2 stools	8d	
Clay cooking pot	.5d	

Note about lighting: a great houses could use 100 lb of wax and tallow in a single winter night. Others, not as rich, would merely go to sleep earlier.

WAGES

Profession	Wage	Date
Mercenaries:		
knight banneret (commoner of rank leading a company)	4s/day	1316
knight	2s/day	"
man-at-arms or squire	1s/day	"
Regular Army		
Esquires, constables, and centenars (<i>company leader of 100 men</i>)	1s/day	1346
Mounted archers, armoured		
infantry, hobilar, (<i>mounted light cavalry</i>)		
vintenars (<i>platoon leader</i>)	6d/day	
Welsh army platoon leader	4d/day	"
Archers	3d/day	"
Welsh infantry	2d/day	"
Labourer	£2/year max	c1300
Barons per year	£200-500+	c1300
Earls per year	400-£11000	c1300
Master mason	4d/day	1351
Master carpenter	3d/day	"
Carpenters' Guild stipend to a sick member	14d/week	1333
Weavers	5d/day, no food	1407
Chantry priest per year	£4 13s 4d	1379
Squires per annum	13s 4d-L1	14 cen

Carters, porters, falconers	5s-8s 8d	14 cen
grooms, messengers	per year	
Kitchen servants	2s-4s/year	14 cen
Boys and pages	1s-6s/year	14 cen

Note: To get a very rough sense of wage increases over 250 years, the following chart gives the averages of daily wages in (old) pence for thatchers

Decade	Thatcher
1261-70	2
1271-80	2.5
1281-90	2.25
1291-1300	2.5
1301-10	2.5
1311-20	3
1321-30	3
1331-40	3
1341-50	3
1351-60	3.5
1361-70	3.5
1371-80	4.25
1381-90	4
1391-1400	4.25
1401-10	4.5
1421-30	4.5
1431-40	4.5
1441-50	5.25
1451-60	5.5
1461-70	4.75
1471-80	5.25
1481-90	6
1491-1500	5.5
1501-10	5.75
1511-20	5.25

FINIS

