

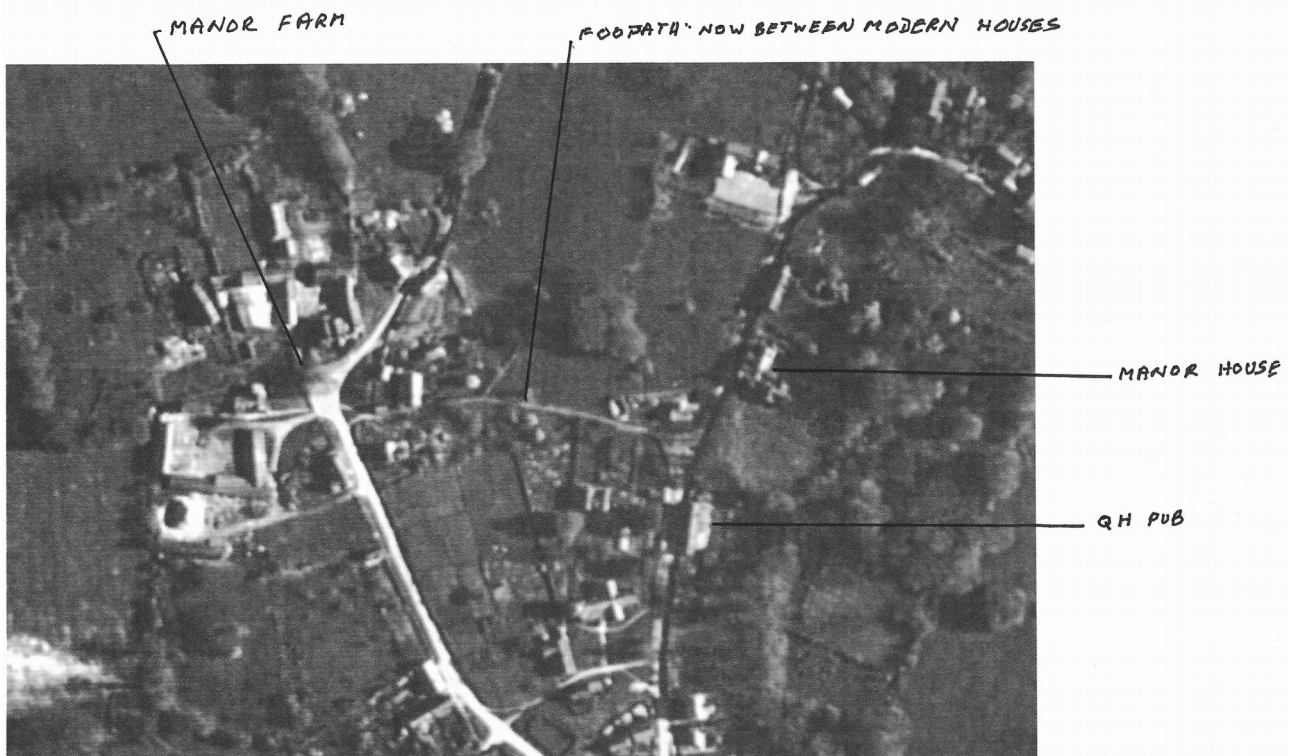
NEWSLETTER 23/4/19

Old Horsepath Updates

Dear All,

Chris and I felt that an update newsletter to the Old Horspath paper was due at last, given some interesting recent research that has shed new light on the old village. As a reminder, the date of our next meeting is Friday May 10th, 7:30 at the Hub. We are hoping you will come and it will help greatly if you could email me back if you are planning on coming. Your comments, challenges and suggestions on any aspect of these investigations are very welcome, as always. Sally.

- 1) Proof of pre-war antiquity (at least) of the footpath extension from our proposed early road/track from Headington Quarry and *possibly* as a branch road from the main Roman Road down to the Ridings & across the fields through to Manor Farm and between the Manor House & the QH pub. It's part of a USAF practice reconnaissance photo taken in 1943 and clearly shows that the footpath is a continuation of our proposed old footpath/track and predates the current meandering footpath through the modern houses. Note that it would appear to be heading across the old Manor House lawn & gardens; thence perhaps across the the old railway line (the making of which would have destroyed that section) and then (we suppose) towards Old Horspath.

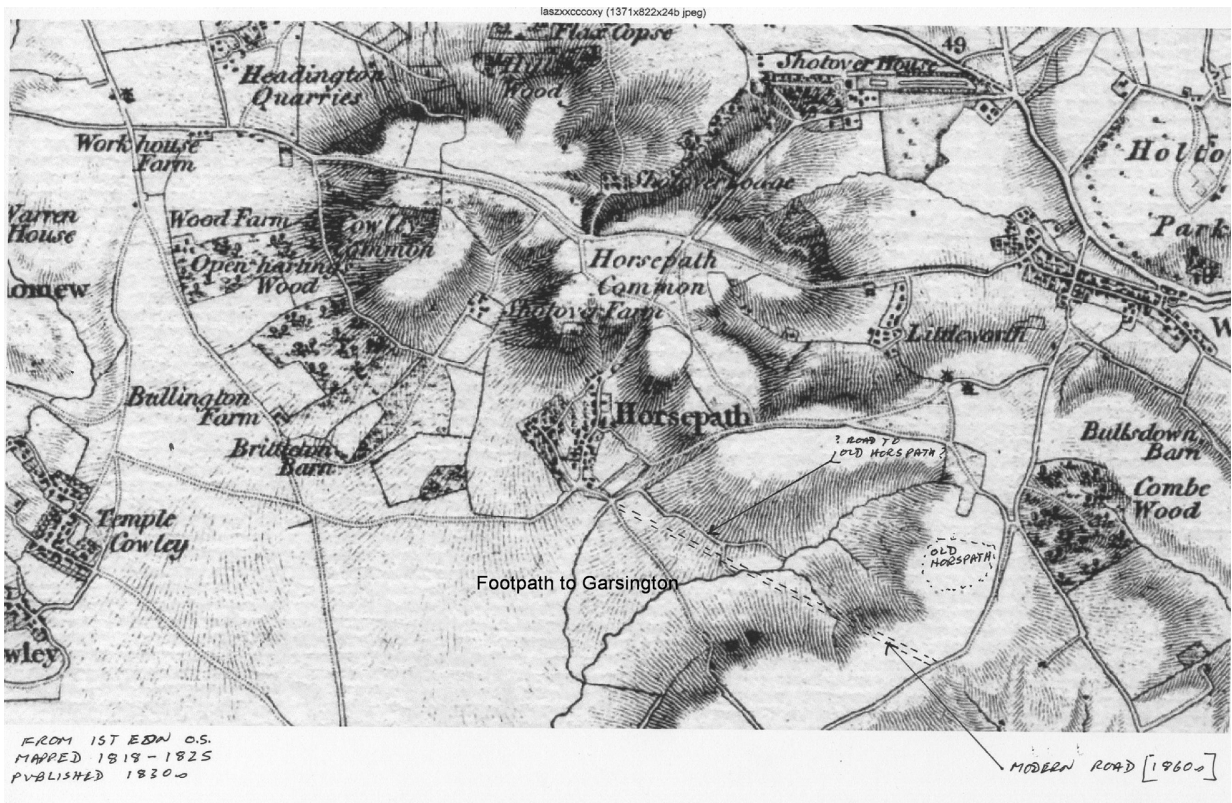


Ridings footpath extension via Farm to QH pub 1943

- 2) (Below). Newly discovered Ordnance Survey mapping of an early track leading out of Lower Horsepath, apparently heading towards Old Horsepath. Taken from the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of this area which was mapped between 1818 –

1825. (If anyone is interested in further research on other areas, microfiche copies of these early OS maps – known as “Surveyors Notes” - are held in the City Archives in St Lukes old church in Cowley.)

It certainly comes off of what is now Gidley Way and would appear to connect laterally to the footpath extension mentioned in item 1 above, before heading out above the Horspath Allotments and across what is now the top of the rear gardens of the houses along the Cuddesdon Road in the direction of Old Horspath. Interestingly, the majority of this track seems to follow the 300ft contour line, adding weight to Ivan Wright's view that it was the “least wet” route without getting caught up on the slopes of Shotover Hill itself. The lower branch of this track seems to be heading for a possible cattle “drink” on the Hollowbrook. I can think of no other explanation for this branch unless anyone has a better idea?



- 3) Field names have long been recognised by archaeologists as indicators of past activity and the local field-name of “Blacklands” on the 1847 Tithe Award has long made us suspicious that something interesting was going on there. The field is directly above the new Savvy building site along the Cuddesdon Road. (See map further below.)

An extract below is from <https://www.bacas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Blacklands1999-2005.pdf> shows one example, which produced a small Roman Villa:-

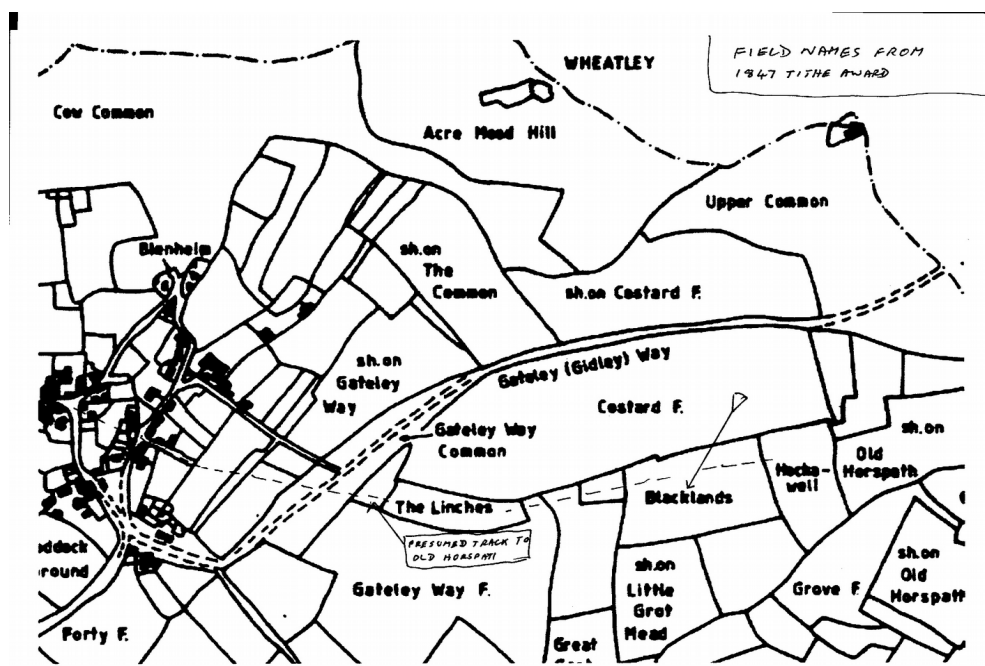
“Blacklands’ Field Names. The name of the field was also of interest. Field names can sometimes give clues to some kind of previous activity. The name “Blacklands” or “Blackfield” has been associated with previous occupation. The origin of the name is obscure, but may have been applied to fields that show signs of archaeological significance because

the occupation has darkened the soil or artefacts have been found. Many Roman settlements have been found in fields with this appellation e.g. Cunetio, a Roman town west of Marlborough; and Blacklands, a villa site near Faversham, Kent. There are many more examples, too numerous to be simply accidental; therefore I was interested to investigate the potential of this field at the invitation of the owner, Mr Gordon Hendy.” (end of extract)

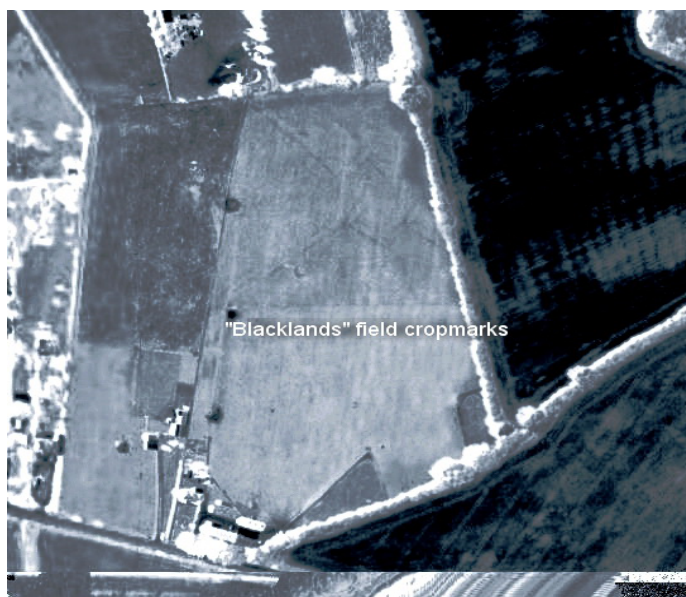
Hence when we saw that the probable course of the road/track (above) to Old Horsepath leads right through a field known as “Blacklands” bells started ringing. But *caveat!* Before we assume **anything**; there can be many other explanations than a villa, such as pottery kilns of almost any period, or industrial activity requiring furnaces such as iron-making: hence the residual black ash contaminating the local landscape. Any other ideas?

The cropmarks in the field alongside are enigmatic & may have been caused by creating modern horse paddock fencing, but the curious angles of the marks would not really support this idea, in my view. To solve this conundrum, we need to get access to this field with the permission of the owner, to either test-pit or metal detect it, and I understand from Sally that there are new owners who may be open to our investigations. Sally will bring us up to date on this at the meeting.

See map and photo below:-



Aerial photo of Blacklands field and showing adjacent crop-marks:-



- 4) Wendy Austen's translation of the entry for the Horsepaths in the 1279 *Rotuli Hundredorum* has shed fresh light on Old Horsepath Manor's land area at that time. Although Wendy has inevitable reservations about a few of the difficult Medieval Latin words therein, the key point is that looking at the maths of converting the text's yardlands *etc* into modern acres, it becomes obvious I've committed a classic schoolboy error re the total acreage of the OH manor. Wendy points out to me that "A yardland is roughly 30 acres but may vary locally. I wouldn't like to comment on the size of Horspath nor its exact boundaries, but 8×30 is 240 acres roughly." This variation is due to the fact that many early land area measurements are based on crop yields; (i.e., soil fertility), which is very sensible in assessing market and therefore taxable values.

From this, I now think that the total acreage of Old Horspath Manor's land is almost twice the size I'd previously thought, but it now seems probable that OH manor extended south-west along the Hollowbrook – a natural boundary - beyond the Cuddesdon Rd towards Garsington, and then uphill towards Surman's Farm (City Farm) on the Garsington-Wheatley road: i.e., on the present Horspath parish boundary with Garsington. I would guess at perhaps 550 acres for OH, which accords reasonably well with the VCH estimates of the acreage of the two Horspath manors in 1279 (see:

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp177-189>),

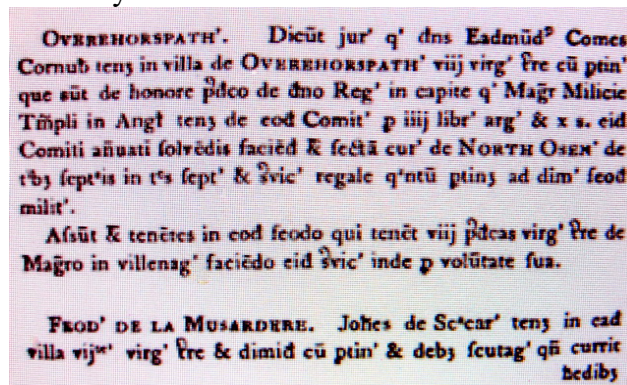
However access to the 25 inches to the mile OS maps in the City Archives will give a better estimate as they have the acreages of each individual field listed. None-the-less, in the absence of clear mediaeval records, the true extent of both manors is open to some debate, but in the general scheme of things I feel it is of no great importance at this point in time.

See below for the Old Horsepath Manor's probable boundary; outlined with hash marks:-



Land ownership and their boundaries have rarely changed, probably since the Iron Age or even earlier, and I cannot trace any record of the overall parish boundary being altered since mediaeval times, and a change of this magnitude would certainly be noted in the VCH (Victoria County History).

Original 1279 RH entry:-



Wendy's transcription and translation of the above entry:-

OVEREHORSPATHE. Dicunt juratores quod dominus Eadmundus Comes Cornubij 1 tenet in villa of OVEREHORSPATHE viij virgatas terre cum pertinentijs que sunt de honore predicto de domino Rege in capite quod Magister Militie Templi in Anglia tenet de eodem Comitatu pro iiiij libris argentij et x solidijs. eidem Comiti annuatim solvendis faciendis et sectam curie de NORTH OSNEY de tribus septimanis in tres septimanis (?) et servicio regale quantum pertinet ad dimittendum feodum militibus. Afsunt (?) et tenentes in eodem feodo qui tenent viij predictas virgatas terre de Magistro in villenagium faciundo eodem servicia inde pro voluntate sua.

FEODUM DE LA MUSARDERE. Johannes de Scaccario tenet in eadem villa vij virgatas terre et dimidimis cum pertintijs et debet scutagium que currit heredibus.

Trans.

Over Horspath The Jurors say that Lord Edmund, the Earl of Cornwall, holds in the vill[age] of Over Horspath eight yardlands of land with appurtenances which are of the aforesaid estate held of the Lord King, in chief, which the Master of the Knights Templars of England holds in the same County for four pounds of silver and ten shillings to the same Earldom making this payment annually namely [for] suit of Court regarding North Osney of three weeks in three weeks (???) and royal services as much as pertain to half the fee of the Knights. Afsunt(?) and the tenants at the same fief, who hold the aforesaid

eight yardlands of land concerning the Master in villenage is doing the same services the Master in villenage Is thereby by his will.

THE FEE REGARDING THE THE MUSARDERE.— John of Scaccario holds in the same vill[age] seven and a half yardlands of land with appurtenances and owes scutage [for carriage by boat/barge] which he runs(?)

I'm sure Wendy will have further comments on this subject!