



VCH Oxfordshire Texts in Progress

Whitchurch

Introduction: Landscape, Settlement, and Buildings

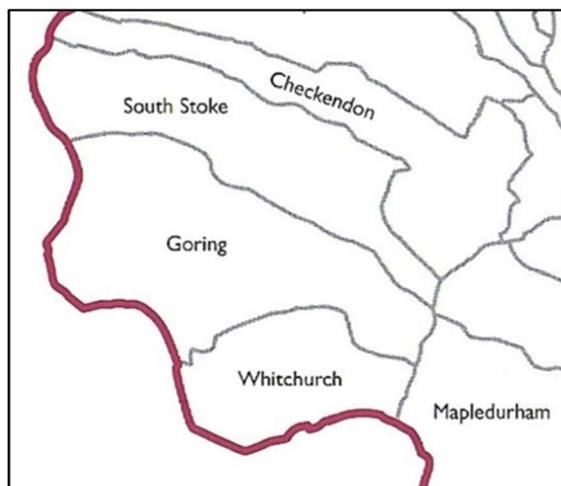


Whitchurch village (Mill House, left, and Church Cottages, right, with the parish church behind) viewed from the toll bridge across the River Thames to Pangbourne (Berks.).

Situated in the Thames valley at the southern end of the Chiltern hills, Whitchurch is a riverside rural parish which until 19th-century boundary changes included a few hundred acres south of the river in Berkshire.¹ The bulk of the population, however, lived in the parish's main Oxfordshire part in Whitchurch village, which since 1792 has been linked to Pangbourne on the river's Berkshire side by a toll bridge replacing an earlier ford and ferry. Good communications, pleasant scenery, and the presence of the river have long attracted well-to-do families, several of whom maintained grand houses with large households. Amongst them were the outlying mansion houses at Hardwick and Coombe Park, the latter

¹ This account was written in 2018 and revised in 2019. For the Berks. part of the parish, cf. *VCH Berks.* III, 417–22, 428–30.

set within an area of medieval parkland landscaped c.1800. Scattered uphill hamlets at Whitchurch Hill, Path Hill, and Collins End mostly remained small agricultural communities of cottages and small farmhouses until the 20th century, some of them fringing an area of common heath (Whitchurch common) enclosed in 1813. Whitchurch Hill acquired its own chapel of ease in 1883, however, and from the 1960s sustained housebuilding transformed it into the largest settlement in the new Goring Heath parish, created from neighbouring parts of Goring and Whitchurch in 1952.



Left: The parish of Whitchurch c.1850.
Source: *Oxon. Atlas*.
Below: The Thames valley from Hardwick.



LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT, AND BUILDINGS

Parish Boundaries

What became Whitchurch parish probably originated in the late Anglo-Saxon period as an estate carved out of Goring.² Its main Oxfordshire part was described c.1012, when boundary marks (none of them locatable with certainty) included a Thames ford, a spring, a pond, and a stile.³ By the 19th century (when the Oxfordshire part totalled 2,049 a.) the boundary ran westwards along the Thames's south bank from a point east of Hardwick House, fringing the Berkshire parishes of Purley, Pangbourne, and Basildon except near Whitchurch weir. There a short detour brought a wharf and the Swan public house (both physically in Pangbourne) into Whitchurch parish and Oxfordshire.⁴ From the parish's westernmost point by Hartslock wood the boundary with Goring (perambulated in 1805 and

² Above, vol. overview (landownership; settlement).

³ Sawyer S.927. For differing translations and interpretations, cf. Grundy, *Saxon Oxon.* 73–5; *PN Oxon.* I, 64; S.E. Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, II (2001), pp. 531–5. For the ford, below (communics).

⁴ OS Maps 6", Oxon. LV.NE, LV.SE, LVI.NW (1882 edn); *ibid.* 1:2500, Berks. XXVIII.12 (1879 edn). Cf. Berks. RO, Q/AZ1/1–3; *ibid.* D/EZ183/1; OHC, QSD/V 2; *ibid.* PAR287/4/F/1, f. 58v., the last two showing that both pub and wharf formed part of Whitchurch parish before 1800.

perhaps partly established by c.1012) ran north-eastwards to Whitchurch Hill, its first stretch following an erratic course probably along former furlong- or woodland boundaries, and a longer stretch following a mostly straight course across former heathland, which separated Goring heath to the north from Whitchurch common to the south. Near Ladygrove Farm the boundary veered south and then east through the scattered hamlet of Collins End and between adjacent woods,⁵ while the short eastern boundary with Mapledurham followed the edge of Bottom wood (marked by a possibly ancient earthen bank) back to the river.⁶

Lands in Berkshire south of the Thames were added to the parish by the 13th century, and in 1878 covered 309 acres.⁷ All belonged to the Berkshire manor of Hyde in Pangbourne, Purley, Sulham, and Whitchurch, which appears to represent an amalgamation of small estates held by or under Miles Crispin (who was also lord of Whitchurch) in 1086.⁸ A chantry chapel licence in 1243 mentioned the lord of Hyde's *curia* 'in the parish of Whitchurch at Hyde',⁹ and part of the manor house (Hyde or Purley Hall) lay in Whitchurch parish in 1635, along with various closes in its park or warren, and parcels in Purley's common fields and meadows. Mention of 'the place where the gospel is said' suggests that those bounds were sometimes perambulated,¹⁰ although in the 18th century the Whitchurch lands were so intermixed with those of neighbouring parishes that successive rectors could not identify them,¹¹ and in 1803 an attempt by Whitchurch's overseers to collect poor rates there failed 'for want of proper evidence'.¹² Some of the land was transferred to Purley and Sulham in 1812, and a protracted tithe dispute between the rector and the owner of Purley Hall was settled in 1816, when 302 a. in Berkshire was adjudged to owe tithes to Whitchurch.¹³ At tithe commutation in 1839 the land lay in eleven discrete blocks,¹⁴ and despite changes at Purley's enclosure in 1856¹⁵ those same 1839 boundaries were confirmed by the Berkshire and Oxfordshire quarter sessions in 1875.¹⁶ In addition the 5½-a. Saltney mead in Berkshire was common to Whitchurch, Purley, and Sulham,¹⁷ while the toll

⁵ OHC, encl. map; *ibid.* E1/M2/E/5.

⁶ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LVI.5 (1879 edn); M. Fallowfield and M. Kift, 'Old Boundaries in South Oxfordshire', *SOAG Bulletin* 52 (1997), 21–2.

⁷ OS *Area Bk* (1878); below. The land belonged to Berkshire's Theale hundred.

⁸ Below, landownership; *VCH Berks.* III, 420–1.

⁹ *Rot. Grosseteste*, 472–7.

¹⁰ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 141, pp. 116–19; below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape). For a boundary marker within Purley Hall, below (settlement).

¹¹ *Secker's Visit.* 169; OHC, MSS Oxf. Dioc. d 560, f. 177; d 563, f. 175.

¹² OHC, PAR287/2/A/1, p. 32.

¹³ Berks. RO, D/EWI/E19–25.

¹⁴ OHC, Whitchurch tithe award and map.

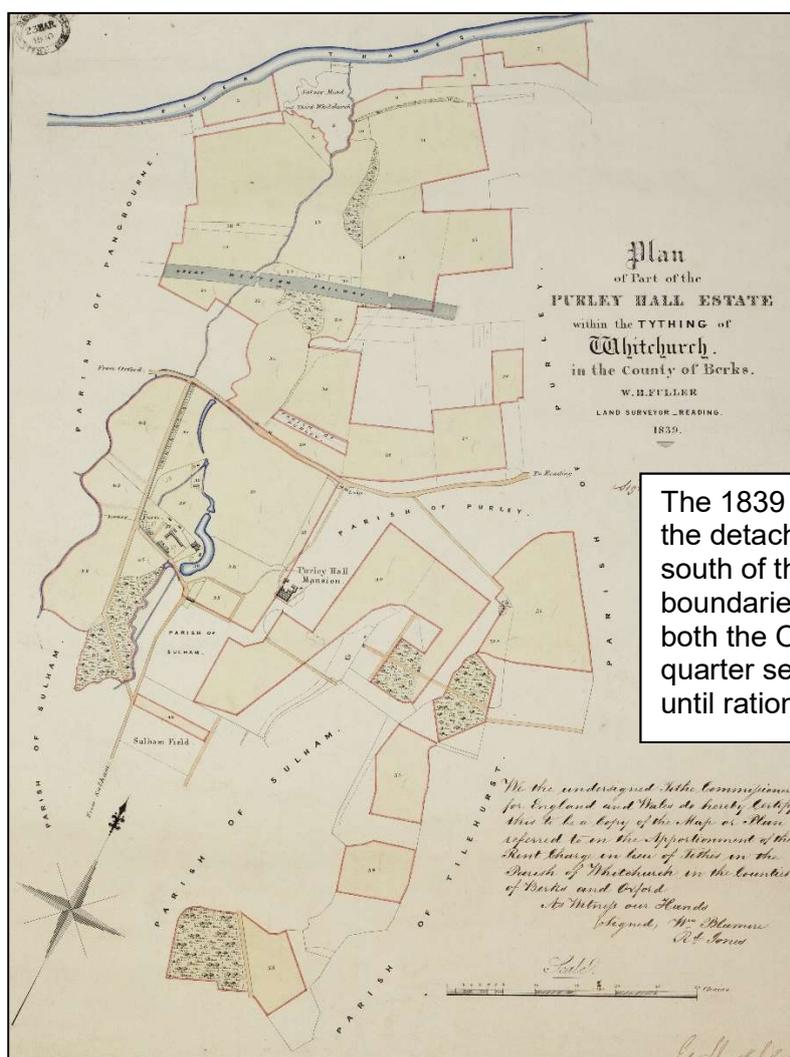
¹⁵ Berks. RO, Q/RDC/44A–B.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* D/EZ183/1; cf. OHC, tithe map. The change to 309 a. by 1878 presumably reflected more accurate measurement.

¹⁷ Below econ. hist. (agric. landscape). Its tithes were also shared (*ibid.*).

bridge between Whitchurch and Pangbourne was deemed extra-parochial under the 1792 Act which established it.¹⁸

Rationalization followed from the late 19th century, some 16 a. of the Berkshire land being transferred to Sulham in 1883,¹⁹ and the remaining 293 a. to Purley in 1894.²⁰ In 1952 a total of 729 a. in the north of Whitchurch was combined with 2,106 a. from Goring to form Goring Heath parish (2,837 a.),²¹ and in 2011, following transfer of the wharf and Swan pub to Pangbourne (and Berkshire) in 1991,²² Whitchurch comprised 1,326 a. (536 ha).²³ The ecclesiastical parish remained unaltered until the 1990s.²⁴



The 1839 tithe map (in OHC) showing the detached Whitchurch parish lands south of the Thames in Berkshire. The boundaries shown were confirmed by both the Oxfordshire and Berkshire quarter sessions in 1875 and remained until rationalization in 1883 and 1894.

¹⁸ Whitchurch Bridge Act, 32 Geo. III, c. 97 (Private Act); cf. *Census*, 1841.

¹⁹ *Census*, 1891; Divided Parishes Act, 45 & 46 Vic. c. 58.

²⁰ *Census*, 1901; Counties of Berks. and Oxford (Whitchurch) Confirmation Order 1894.

²¹ *Census*, 1961.

²² Berks., Bucks., Hants., Oxon., and Surrey (County Boundaries) Order 1991.

²³ *Census*, 2011.

²⁴ Below, relig. hist. (church origins).

Landscape

As with some other south Chiltern parishes, Whitchurch's contrasting landscapes of chalk upland and riverside plain were reflected in separate tithings named 'above' and 'below Down'.²⁵ The village, Coombe Park, and Hardwick House all stand at 40–50 m. above OD in the valley bottom, which occupies sand and gravel terraces and (close to the river) alluvium. The Berkshire part of the parish lay within a widening of the valley bottom formed by the river's confluence with the Pang at Pangbourne and with Sul brook to the east, which enters the Thames by Saltney mead. North of Whitchurch village the land rises steeply to a gently undulating plateau at 120–140 m., forming part of the Chiltern hills and supporting the hamlets of Whitchurch Hill (including Hill Bottom along the Goring boundary), Path Hill, and Collins End. There the chalk bedrock is capped by clay-with-flints, sand, and gravel,²⁶ reflected in scattered chalk, gravel, and marl pits which were exploited on a small scale for local use.²⁷ Woodland is extensive along the escarpment,²⁸ while upland heath known as Whitchurch common formed part of a much larger area of heathland extending into Goring, until its enclosure in the 19th century. A former medieval park north-west of the village was redesigned in the English Landscape style c.1800.²⁹

River flooding killed livestock and impeded milling in the Middle Ages,³⁰ and disruptive floods affecting the village in 1768, 1770, 1774, 1809, and 1894 were noted in the parish register.³¹ Others occurred in 1925 and 1947.³² On the hills, by contrast, water was often scarce, with householders mainly reliant on ponds or cisterns until the 20th century.³³ Some ponds in 1805 were polluted by geese commoned on the heath,³⁴ a problem presumably resolved by enclosure in 1813 when Whitchurch Hill's Tinepit pond was vested in the parish.³⁵ In 1853 the lord Samuel Weare Gardiner sank a deep well for his tenants near the Methodist chapel at Whitchurch Hill,³⁶ and c.1886 his son Charles constructed a reservoir (fed from a rainwater collecting plate) at Hill Bottom, with an adjacent pumping

²⁵ TNA, SC 6/HENVII/1845; below, local govt (manor cts); cf. above, Goring, local govt.

²⁶ Geol. Surv. Map 1:50000 (solid and drift), sheet 254 (1980 edn); OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (2009 edn).

²⁷ OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.4, LV.7, LV.8, LVI.5 (1879 edn); W. Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick* (WGHHS, 2010), 14–15.

²⁸ OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (2009 edn); below, econ. hist. (woods).

²⁹ Below, landownership; econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

³⁰ TNA, SC 6/1118/17; SC 6/1118/22.

³¹ OHC, par. reg. transcript, App. E; Sir R.J. Godlee, *A Village on the Thames: Whitchurch Yesterday and Today* (1926), 248–52.

³² D.W.J. Holmes, 'A Journey through the Village' (unpubl. typescript, 1974), in WGHA.

³³ *Over the Hatchgate* (WGHHS, 2000); W. Barefield-Hutt, *Whitchurch Common: how they said it was* (WGHHS, 2000); Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*; cf. P. Preece, 'Water supply problems in the upland villages of the Oxfordshire Chilterns, 1872–1905', *Oxon. Local Hist.* 6.4 (2000–1), 3–16.

³⁴ OHC, E1/M2/E/5.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Whitchurch common encl. map and award; below, local govt (parish govt).

³⁶ Painted sign on well.

house. No inhabitant was allowed to draw more than 2 gallons a day, exclusively for drinking purposes.³⁷ A second deep well with a pumping house was sunk at Collins End by Charles Day Rose c.1900, from which water was piped to a reservoir in Goring parish near Ladygrove Farm, and from there to most properties on the Hardwick estate.³⁸ Mains water was introduced to the village by the Tilehurst, Pangbourne, & District Water Company between 1900 and 1905, and to Whitchurch Hill by the South Oxfordshire Water & Gas Company, although many outlying cottages remained unconnected for several more years.³⁹



The deep well at Whitchurch Hill sunk by the lord Samuel Weare Gardiner in 1853.

Communications

Roads

Whitchurch stands at an early river crossing, which connects east–west routes following the Thames valley with a north–south route linking the Icknield Way and south Oxfordshire with the Kennet valley in Berkshire. The north–south road (the modern B471) formerly crossed the Thames by a ford close to the later toll bridge,⁴⁰ and may be of Roman (or earlier) origin.⁴¹ The ford itself almost certainly remained in use throughout the Anglo-Saxon period,

³⁷ Painted sign on pumping house door; *Hill Bottom Reservoir & Pumping House* (WGHHS, 2003); *Millennium Exhibition* (WGHHS, 2005), 37. The pumping house has been preserved by WGHHS in a new location behind Goring Heath parish hall.

³⁸ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LVI.5 (1912 edn); Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*, 39–41; Hardwick Estate Office, survey of Hardwick estate, 1913.

³⁹ *London Gaz.* 20 Nov. 1900, p. 7288; 15 Nov. 1904, p. 7385; OHC, PC287/A2/1; *Over the Hatchgate*, 22.

⁴⁰ F.S. Thacker, *The Thames Highway*, II (1920), 221.

⁴¹ J. Sharpe and P. Carter, 'A "New" Roman Road East of the Thames from Benson to Pangbourne', *SOAG Bulletin* 62 (2008), 7–12; below (settlement).

along with others at *blecces forda* (probably further east towards Hardwick)⁴² and *bestlesforda* (further west near Basildon),⁴³ while a nearby ferry established by the 13th century continued until the bridge's construction in 1792.⁴⁴ Immediately north of the river the road forms the main village street, beyond which it climbs steeply to Whitchurch Hill and then northwards to Cray's Pond in Goring and Woodcote in South Stoke. In 1626 it was known as 'heath way',⁴⁵ and in 1800 as Coblers Lane,⁴⁶ its course across Whitchurch common being straightened at enclosure in 1813.⁴⁷



John Rocque's map of Berkshire (1761), showing the principal routes across the parish.

The ancient 'Tuddingway' from Wallingford to Reading – so called by the 13th century, and of likely Anglo-Saxon origin – crossed the parish from west to east, traversing Coombe Park and the village's northern end, then continuing to Mapledurham along modern Hardwick Road and past Hardwick House.⁴⁸ An inquisition held in Whitchurch in 1479 heard that only packhorses and not wheeled vehicles were allowed on the stretch between Hardwick and Sheepcote Lane (in Mapledurham),⁴⁹ although it evidently remained a

⁴² Grundy, *Saxon Oxon.* 74; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, II, 535.

⁴³ Above, Goring, landscape etc.

⁴⁴ Below (ferries and bridge).

⁴⁵ OHC, F XIV/1, ff. 38–39.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* encl. map.

⁴⁷ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); OHC, Whitchurch common encl. award and map.

⁴⁸ P. Preece, 'The Tuddingway, an Ancient Road', *Oxon. Local Hist.* 8.1 (2006), 3–10; above. vol. overview (communes).

⁴⁹ A.H. Cooke (ed.), *The Early History of Mapledurham* (ORS 7, 1925), 55–6, 115.

through-route in the 18th century.⁵⁰ By 1806 the sections past Coombe Park and Hardwick House were bridleway rather than road,⁵¹ and have so remained, perhaps reflecting an increased desire for privacy on the part of the two country-house owners.⁵² As a result it was superseded as a route to Reading by a more northerly road through Cray's Pond (the modern B4526), which bypassed Whitchurch parish.⁵³ A surviving northwards branch from Hardwick Road climbs the escarpment at Path Hill, connecting with the Goring–Henley road (Deadman's Lane) on Goring heath.⁵⁴ That was probably the 'king's highway in Whitchurch from Henley to Pangbourne' which was encroached upon by ploughing in 1687.⁵⁵

Minor roads through Whitchurch Hill and Hill Bottom preserve two pre-enclosure tracks across Whitchurch common,⁵⁶ while surviving paths between Path Hill and Whitchurch Hill include Hods Lane, so called by 1626.⁵⁷ Within Whitchurch village, Eastfield Lane was presumably the 'new lane leading into Eastfield' mentioned in 1755,⁵⁸ and part of Manor Road originated as a southern carriage drive to Coombe Park created between 1800 and 1847.⁵⁹ An alleged public right of way past the mill to the lock and former ferry was blocked by the miller in the 1890s and contested repeatedly over the following century, but remained private in 2018 when there was no public access to the lock island.⁶⁰ The only local route to be turnpiked (in 1764) was the modern A329 from Shillingford to Reading,⁶¹ which follows the Berkshire side of the river, and crossed the parish's detached Berkshire part.⁶² Stagecoaches using that route between Oxford and Reading stopped at Pangbourne by the early 19th century.⁶³

Ferries and Toll Bridge A presumably short-lived ferry across the Thames near Hartslock wood, in the west of the parish, was shown on maps of 1857–8.⁶⁴ A much older ferry superseding the ford between Whitchurch and Pangbourne is documented from the 1270s, when it belonged to Whitchurch manor and raised 13s. 4d. a year in tolls.⁶⁵ By the 1480s it

⁵⁰ Rocque, *Berks. Map* (1761); Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).

⁵¹ OHC, encl. map and award.

⁵² cf. *ibid.* E1/10/21D/25.

⁵³ Above, Goring, landscape etc.

⁵⁴ Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797); above, Goring, landscape etc.

⁵⁵ M.S. Gretton (ed.), *Oxfordshire Justices of the Peace in the 17th Century* (ORS 16, 1974), 17; OHC, Cal. QS, I, 8.

⁵⁶ Rocque, *Berks. Map* (1761); Jefferys, *Oxon. Map* (1767); Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797).

⁵⁷ OHC, F XIV/1, f. 53; OHC, encl. map; OS Map 1:25000, sheet 171 (2009 edn).

⁵⁸ TNA, PROB 11/955/111.

⁵⁹ cf. OHC, encl. map; WGHA, Dodd's map (1847).

⁶⁰ *Berks. Chron.* 19 June 1897; OHC, PC287/A1/1; PC287/A2/1; J.H. Baker, *Whitchurch-on-Thames: The Story of a Thames-side Village* (1956), 9–10; Holmes, 'Journey'.

⁶¹ *VCH Oxon.* XVIII, 395. Disturnpiked in 1874.

⁶² OHC, tithe map; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.12 (1879 edn).

⁶³ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. b 27, f. 183; Godlee, *Village on the Thames*, 89–94.

⁶⁴ OHC, F VIII/68; F XIV/21–3.

⁶⁵ TNA, SC 6/1118/17; SC 6/1118/20; SC 6/1118/22; cf. *Rot. Hund.* II, 776.

was leased with the mill and fishery,⁶⁶ with which it later descended, passing from the miller John Whitborne (d. 1550) to his son Thomas along with the 'ferry house' (probably Church Cottages).⁶⁷ During the 17th and 18th centuries it was owned and run by members of the Elliott family,⁶⁸ but passed in 1764 to non-resident owners who let it to local ferrymen, one of whom also kept the new pound lock.⁶⁹

The Company of Proprietors of Whitchurch Bridge, comprising a group of ten shareholders drawn from local landowners, was established in 1792 to build, maintain, and manage a toll bridge between Whitchurch and Pangbourne in place of the ferry. Together they invested a total of £2,400, and under a contemporary Act of Parliament paid £350 compensation to the then ferry owners for a surrender of their rights.⁷⁰ The first bridge, designed by John Treacher and constructed of oak timbers resting on c.20 wooden piers, was completed the same year,⁷¹ and survived until 1852–3 when it was rebuilt (still in timber) with fewer piers and a shallower profile. That bridge was replaced in 1901–2 with a steel lattice-girder construction designed by the Reading architect Joseph Morris and manufactured by the Cleveland Bridge & Engineering Co. Ltd. Extra bracing was added in 1921 and a major reconstruction was carried out in 2013–14, but otherwise the structure (painted white with brick abutments) largely survived in 2018.⁷²

A brick tollhouse at the bridge's northern end, also designed by Treacher, remained in use until 1992 when a new toll booth and automatic barriers were erected in the roadway.⁷³ The tolls themselves remained unchanged until 1959,⁷⁴ but proved increasingly unpopular,⁷⁵ prompting repeated unsuccessful attempts to abolish them not least by Whitchurch and Pangbourne parish councils.⁷⁶ Tolls on pedestrians and bicycles were removed in 1971, but in 1988 a new Act of Parliament enabled the Company of Proprietors to increase the remaining tolls, which in 2018 were still charged on all motor vehicles except

⁶⁶ TNA, SC 6/HENVII/1845; below, econ. hist. (milling; fishing).

⁶⁷ OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 180.29; Holmes, 'Journey'. Cf. OHC, encl. map, showing the house to have belonged in 1800 to the ferry owner the Revd Jn Lichfield.

⁶⁸ TNA, CP 25/2/707/16ChasII Mich; OHC, MSS Wills Oxon. 126/2/5; 126/2/25; 96.362; below, econ. hist. (trades).

⁶⁹ Berks. RO, D/ER/T528 (conveyances 1764–71); *Reading Mercury*, 3 June 1771; OHC, PAR287/4/F/1; J. Sims (ed.), *The Thames Navigation Commission Minutes 1771–1790*, I (Berks. Rec. Soc. 11, 2008), 236; below (river and railway).

⁷⁰ Whitchurch Bridge Act, 32 Geo. III, c. 97 (Private Act); cf. TNA, PROB 11/1201/214; PROB 11/1402/335. For an 1800 auction of bridge shares, Bodl. G.A. fol. A 266 (40).

⁷¹ Berks. RO, D/EX1457/2/33; OHC, par. reg. transcript, App. E; *Reading Mercury*, 12 Nov. 1792; *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847 edn). For an early engraving, Berks. RO, D/EX27/Z10/11.

⁷² NHLE, nos. 1261775, 1288571; 'Whitchurch Bridge, South Oxfordshire: Historic Building Investigation and Recording' (unpubl. Oxford Archaeology South report, Mar. 2018); www.whitchurchbridge.com (accessed Dec. 2018).

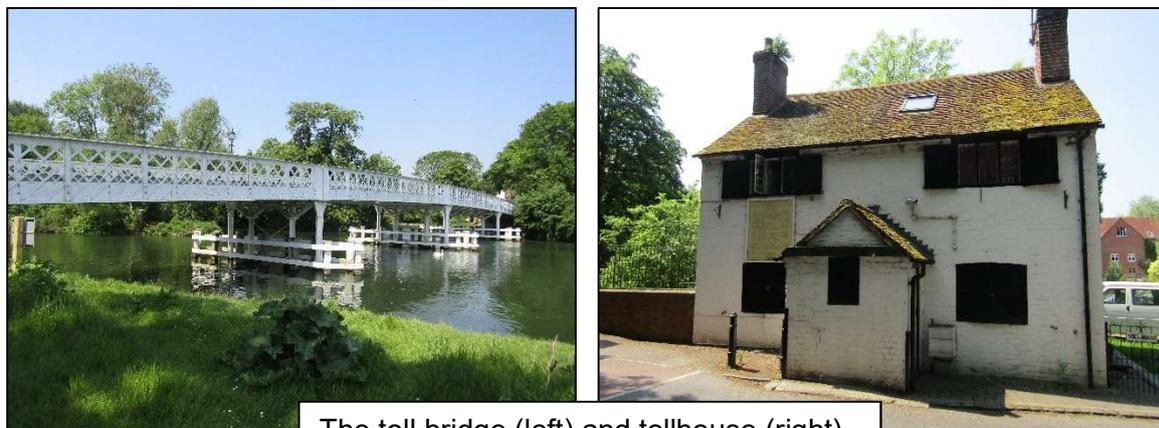
⁷³ NHLE, no. 1261743; SODC, P90/S0732/CA, P90/S0734 (accessed online).

⁷⁴ *Reading Mercury*, 22 Apr 1961.

⁷⁵ Baker, *Whitchurch*, 4; Holmes, 'Journey'.

⁷⁶ OHC, PC287/A2/1–4; Berks. RO, CC3/4/C11/4, 165–6.

for motorcycles. In 2019 the Company of Proprietors was acquired by the General Estates Company Ltd.⁷⁷



The toll bridge (left) and tollhouse (right).

River, Locks, and Railway

Late Anglo-Saxon navigation on the Thames is suggested by a *suðre stæð* mentioned c.1012, which means either ‘southern river bank’ or ‘southern landing-place’.⁷⁸ If the latter then this may have been the later wharf on the river’s south bank, subsequently included in both Whitchurch and Oxfordshire.⁷⁹ Grain and other manorial produce was routinely shipped downriver to London in the 13th century,⁸⁰ although the wharf itself is otherwise unrecorded until the 18th,⁸¹ by which time large-scale river trade upstream of Henley had been revived following a lapse of two or three centuries to c.1630.⁸² In 1843 the vestry resolved to charge a toll of 6*d.* per waggonload and 3*d.* per cartload on all goods passing through the wharf from outside the parish;⁸³ a decade later, however, the river was losing commercial traffic to the railway, and by the 20th century most boats on the river were pleasure craft.⁸⁴

A mill dam or weir between Whitchurch and Pangbourne belonged to the manor by 1270, incorporating a flash lock, and generating 2*s.* 4*d.* in boat tolls in 1275–6. Its reconstruction in 1296–7 required 102 boatloads of ‘white earth’ (presumably chalk),

⁷⁷ Whitchurch Bridge Act, 1988, c. 6 (Local); Holmes, ‘Journey’; www.whitchurchbridge.com (accessed Dec. 2018 and May 2019).

⁷⁸ cf. Grundy, *Saxon Oxon.* 73–4; Kelly (ed.), *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, II, 535; M. Gelling and A. Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (2000), 91–2; A. Cole, *The Place-Name Evidence for a Routeway Network in Early Medieval England* (2013), 58–9.

⁷⁹ Above (boundaries); below, landownership.

⁸⁰ Below, econ. hist. (Middle Ages).

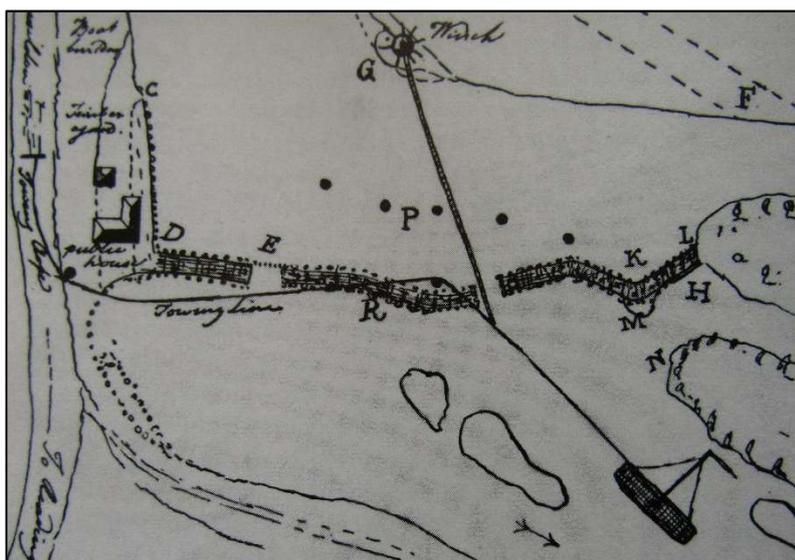
⁸¹ TNA, PROB 11/1075/41; below, econ. hist. (trades).

⁸² R. Peberdy, ‘Navigation on the River Thames between London and Oxford in the Later Middle Ages: A Reconsideration’, *Oxoniensia* 61 (1996), 311–40.

⁸³ OHC, PAR287/2/A/1, p. 248.

⁸⁴ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 219–20.

although river flooding periodically prevented its use,⁸⁵ and c.1390 the weir was one of several between Caversham and Benson allegedly causing floods.⁸⁶ By the 1580s (when the lock was let with the demesne) it had its own keeper (Nicholas Wilford),⁸⁷ presumably a forerunner of the 'lockshutter' mentioned in 1712, for whom the lord Anthony Whistler built a house (perhaps the later Swan pub) soon afterwards.⁸⁸ Sketch maps of 1786 show that the lock had an associated winch on the north bank for hauling boats upriver, and posts on the weir and south bank for winding a towing line. The following year a pound lock built of oak timbers was constructed by the Thames Commissioners in an existing narrow channel between two islands,⁸⁹ although as at Goring the old flash lock remained in use alongside the pound lock until c.1850, its use still requiring payment of a private toll to successive mill proprietors as owners of the weir.⁹⁰ The Thames Commissioners took tolls from the pound lock, whose keeper and toll collector occupied an adjacent house from c.1830.⁹¹ The lock itself was rebuilt in brick in 1876–7,⁹² and in 1966 its gates were converted from manual to automatic operation.⁹³ The weir was reconstructed between 1970 and 1972.⁹⁴



Detail from a Thames Commissioners' plan of Whitchurch weir and flash lock in 1786, showing a barge being pulled upstream with the aid of towing lines, one attached to a winch on the north bank. The Swan pub is also shown (left) with an adjacent timber yard.

⁸⁵ TNA, SC 6/1118/17, 20–2; SC 6/1090/4. For the use of chalk in repairs, cf. *ibid.* SC 6/HENVII/1845.

⁸⁶ C.T. Flower (ed.), *Public Works in Medieval Law*, II (Selden Soc. 40), pp. 125–9.

⁸⁷ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, I, 51, 55; II, 216; below, econ. hist. (1500–1800).

⁸⁸ OHC, F I/16–17, 32–3. For the Swan, below, econ. hist. (trades).

⁸⁹ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, I, frontispiece (map); II, 216–18; Sims (ed.), *Thames Navigation Comm. Mins*, I, xlv, 193; II, 53, 56 (maps); cf. OHC, encl. map, showing 'Winch mead'.

⁹⁰ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, I, 156, 173, 187, 264; II, 218–19; cf. OHC, encl. map; *ibid.* E243/D/1; below, econ. hist. (milling).

⁹¹ Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 219; cf. TNA, HO 107/882/9, 'pound house'.

⁹² Godlee, *Village on the Thames*, 56; Thacker, *Thames Highway*, II, 221.

⁹³ www.whitchurchonthames.co.uk (accessed Dec. 2018).

⁹⁴ *Berks. Mercury*, 29 Aug. 1970; Holmes, 'Journey'.

The Great Western Railway extension from Reading to Steventon (Berks.) opened in 1840, passing through the Berkshire part of the parish. Whitchurch was served by Pangbourne railway station (opened that year), which although outside the parish was only 400 m. from the toll bridge.⁹⁵ It continued to serve both communities in 2018, when there were frequent passenger services to Oxford, Didcot Parkway, Reading, and London.⁹⁶

Carriers, Buses, and Post

Parish-based carriers existed by the 1820s.⁹⁷ One (William Vize) served Reading every day by 1852,⁹⁸ and was succeeded by the village-based carrier James Taylor,⁹⁹ while in the 1880s the baker Amos Goodall ran a similar service from Whitchurch Hill. Outside carriers maintained daily services to Reading from Whitchurch village in 1911, while others passed through Whitchurch Hill three days a week. A bus service to Pangbourne and Reading began in the 1920s,¹⁰⁰ run first by the Thames Valley Traction Co. Ltd and later by Harry Kemp, who expanded it to Woodcote via Whitchurch Hill, and after the Second World War introduced a service connecting Whitchurch Hill with Checkendon and Henley. From 1955 those services were operated by Chiltern Queens Ltd, which extended the Reading route to Wallingford and RAF Benson.¹⁰¹ In 2018 a Goring-based company ran buses from Goring to Reading on Wednesdays and Saturdays (both Reading market days), stopping in Whitchurch village and at Whitchurch Hill.¹⁰²

Letters were received through Reading by 1847, when the tailor and bridge toll collector John Hicks ran a post office from the toll house.¹⁰³ By 1854 he had been succeeded as sub-postmaster by the tailor John Allum Cross, whose post office was situated in the village opposite Hardwick Road. It continued in his family until 1943,¹⁰⁴ becoming a money-order office and savings bank by 1883,¹⁰⁵ and moving before 1899 to a cottage just south of Whitchurch House.¹⁰⁶ Following a further move to Sellwood's grocery store in the

⁹⁵ *Hist. GWR*, I, 53, 102; OHC, tithe map; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.12 (1879 edn).

⁹⁶ www.nationalrail.co.uk (accessed Dec. 2018).

⁹⁷ OHC, par. reg. transcript, baptisms 1822, 1823, 1827; TNA, PROB 11/2093/276.

⁹⁸ *Lascelles' Dir. Oxon.* (1852–3).

⁹⁹ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847–77 edns); TNA, RG 10/1277.

¹⁰⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–1939 edns).

¹⁰¹ L. James and J. Whitehead, *Kemp's and Chiltern Queens 1929–2002* (2017); *Over the Hatchgate* (WGHHS, 2000), 8.

¹⁰² www.goingforwardbuses.com (accessed Dec. 2018).

¹⁰³ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1847); *Lascelles' Dir. Oxon.* (1852–3); WGHA, Dodd's survey and map (1847); TNA, HO 107/1691.

¹⁰⁴ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1854); Holmes, 'Journey'; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1879 edn).

¹⁰⁵ *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883).

¹⁰⁶ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1899 edn); Holmes, 'Journey'; W. Barefield-Hutt, *Memories of Whitchurch* (WGHHS, 1999), 8–11.

1940s it closed in 1988.¹⁰⁷ A post office at Whitchurch Hill was opened c.1899 by the farmer John Kimber,¹⁰⁸ moving soon after to a nearby grocer's shop.¹⁰⁹ After the Second World War both moved to the former Methodist chapel, but closed also in 1988.¹¹⁰

Population

In 1086 Whitchurch manor had 32 documented tenants probably each representing a household, while the future Hyde manor in Berkshire had three.¹¹¹ Population had evidently grown by 1279 when Whitchurch manor had up to 56 tenant households,¹¹² although only 13–18 were taxed in 1306 and 1327, presumably because most others were too poor.¹¹³ The Black Death left some holdings vacant,¹¹⁴ but even so 101 adults paid poll tax in 1377, making Whitchurch one of the more populous places in the hundred, and suggesting a total population approaching 400.¹¹⁵ Fifteenth-century evidence is lacking, but the 1525 subsidy was paid by 35 heads of household,¹¹⁶ 50 households were assessed for hearth tax in 1662,¹¹⁷ and 200 adults were noted in 1676,¹¹⁸ implying some stability with a population still of around 400. The Berkshire part of the parish, possibly not included in those figures, had perhaps two or three households during the 16th and 17th centuries.¹¹⁹

Eighteenth-century clergy reported 80–90 households in the Oxfordshire part of the parish, around half of them in Whitchurch village,¹²⁰ and in 1811 there were 94 houses in all. The recorded population of 540 had ostensibly fallen from 577 in 1801, although the rector claimed that 53 inhabitants were absent on census day in 1811, comprising two gentlemen with their households, and 'many others' serving in the local militia.¹²¹ Over-all population grew from 647 in 1821 to 934 in 1891, of whom 32 lived in the Berkshire part of the parish transferred to Purley in 1894. The change left 919 people in Whitchurch's main Oxfordshire part in 1901, falling steadily to 756 thirty years later. An increase to 895 by 1951 included

¹⁰⁷ Holmes, 'Journey'; OS Map 1:2500, SU6377 (1964 edn); *Whitchurch Bulletin* (Dec. 1988), copy in OHC, PC287/N1/23.

¹⁰⁸ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.4 (1899 edn); TNA, RG 13/1143.

¹⁰⁹ Run by Thos Wheeler and later Hen. Staines: *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1903–39 edns); OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.4 (1910 edn); *Over the Hatchgate*, 18–20.

¹¹⁰ Barefield-Hutt, *Whitchurch Common*, 21; WGHA, Goring Heath Parish Rural Plan (1988); OS Map 1:2500, SU6478 (1967 edn).

¹¹¹ DB, ff. 61v., 159; below, landownership.

¹¹² *Rot. Hund.* II, 775–6.

¹¹³ TNA, E 179/161/10; E 179/161/9.

¹¹⁴ Below (settlement).

¹¹⁵ *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 295.

¹¹⁶ TNA, E 179/161/201, excluding one entry for the church box.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* E 179/164/504 (damaged).

¹¹⁸ *Compton Census*, ed. Whiteman, 425.

¹¹⁹ Below (settlement); econ. hist. (1500–1800).

¹²⁰ *Secker's Visit.* 169; OHC, MS Oxf. Dioc. d 560, f. 177.

¹²¹ *Census, 1801–11*; OHC, par. reg. transcript, App. K.

around 48 families of mainly Polish refugees settled in and around Coombe Park. The following year 366 inhabitants at Whitchurch Hill (41 per cent of the total population) were transferred to the new Goring Heath parish, and in 1961 the reduced Whitchurch parish contained 734 people. That rose to 828 in 1981 but fell to 758 in 2001, despite a sustained increase in the number of households (from 227 to 324) over the same 40-year period. In 2011 some 824 people lived in 327 households.¹²²

Settlement

Prehistoric to Anglo-Saxon

At least five Lower Palaeolithic flint hand-axes have been found in the parish,¹²³ while Mesolithic activity is indicated by a large flint flake or blade recovered from the bank of the Thames near Whitchurch weir.¹²⁴ Finds of worked flints in fields and gardens across the parish indicate widespread Neolithic activity continuing into the Bronze Age,¹²⁵ when a substantial ditch was cut near present-day Bozedown House.¹²⁶ That may have prefigured the 58-a. univallate hillfort known either as Bozedown Camp or Binditch (the latter name from the Old English *binnan dic* or 'within the ditch'), which in 1953 produced pottery and other items dating from the early Iron Age.¹²⁷ Evidence for Roman activity is principally restricted to stray finds,¹²⁸ although a small 2nd-century coin hoard and an almost complete pottery flask of similar date, both dredged from the river near the toll bridge, may have been votive offerings left by people using the ford.¹²⁹ Two skeletons found close to the river near Hartslock wood in the 19th century, one with a knife and the other with a Roman coin placed in its mouth, are perhaps also more likely to be Roman rather than Anglo-Saxon, since other

¹²² *Census*, 1821–2011; above (boundaries). For the refugees, below (settlement); social hist. (since 1800).

¹²³ HER, PRN 12920, 12921, 13967; www.whitchurchonthames.com (accessed Dec. 2018), news 30 June 2013; J. Sharpe, 'Acheulean Handaxes from Whitchurch-on-Thames', *SMA* 9 (1987), 78.

¹²⁴ West Berks. HER, MWB10255.

¹²⁵ HER, PRN 15444, 15549, 15550, 15551; C. Graham Kerr, 'New Flint Working Sites in South Oxfordshire', *SMA* 18 (1988), 100–3.

¹²⁶ HER, PRN 1940; L. Howell, 'The Excavation of a Bronze Age Ditch at the Field Test Centre at Castrol Technology Centre, Pangbourne, Berkshire', *Oxoniensia* 61 (1996), 35–40.

¹²⁷ HER, PRN 1940; P. Wood, 'The Early Iron Age Camp on Bozedown, Whitchurch, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia* 19 (1954), 8–14. For Binditch ('Byndyche' in 1562): OHC, E1/M3/E/1; *PN Oxon.* I, 63.

¹²⁸ PAS database: www.finds.org.uk/database (accessed Dec. 2018).

¹²⁹ HER, PRN 1939, 2970; *VCH Oxon.* I, 327; G.C. Boon, 'Hoards of Roman Coins in the Reading Museum and Art Gallery', *Oxoniensia* 19 (1954), 38.

Roman coins have been found close by.¹³⁰ A suggestion that there was a Roman villa near Bozedown House so far lacks convincing evidence.¹³¹

In the early and middle Anglo-Saxon periods Whitchurch may have belonged to a tribal territory and large estate focused on Goring,¹³² while Hardwick, whose place-name means ‘herding (livestock) farm’, was perhaps a satellite of that estate.¹³³ Whitchurch itself is recorded from c.990, its name recalling a ‘white church’ (i.e. one with chalk or whitewashed walls) which presumably preceded the present-day parish church.¹³⁴ The latter stands within a sub-oval enclosure bounded by the river on its south side,¹³⁵ similar in size and shape to examples which have been shown to date from the late Anglo-Saxon period, when they surrounded churches established by noblemen or thegns.¹³⁶ However, little archaeological evidence of certain Anglo-Saxon date is so far known from the parish.¹³⁷

Whitchurch Village

What is now Whitchurch village took shape probably between the 10th and 13th centuries. A watermill (presumably that by the later bridge) existed by 1086, and the nearby parish church was apparently rebuilt some decades later.¹³⁸ By the 13th century some inhabitants were named from the locations of their houses (at the mill, on the corner),¹³⁹ and peasant housing (of which none survives) probably lined High Street as far north as Hardwick Road, regular property boundaries (particularly towards the top end) suggesting former tofts and crofts.¹⁴⁰ The manor house occupied the site of the later Walliscote House near the church, overlooking the medieval park to its west,¹⁴¹ and there was probably a rectory house within the church enclosure, although none is specifically documented before the 17th century.¹⁴²

¹³⁰ HER, PRN 2476; *VCH Oxon.* I, 372; J. Slatter, *Some Notes on the History of the Parish of Whitchurch* (1895), 8; Godlee, *Village on the Thames*, 26, 142.

¹³¹ HER, PRN 3230; *pace* M. Henig and P. Booth, *Roman Oxon.* (2000), 92.

¹³² Above, vol. intro.; Goring, landscape etc.; below, landownership.

¹³³ *PN Oxon.* I, 63; A.H. Mills, *A Dictionary of British Place-Names* (2011), 225. ‘Hardwick’ (from Old English *heord(e)wic*) was a common ‘functional’ place-name within large middle Anglo-Saxon estates: C. Lewis, P. Mitchell-Fox, and C. Dyer, *Village, Hamlet and Field: Changing Medieval Settlements in Central England* (2001), 94.

¹³⁴ Sawyer S.1454; *PN Oxon.* I, 62–3; Blair, *A-S Oxon*, 137, 199.

¹³⁵ OHC, encl. map; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.12 (1879 and later edns); cf. P. Hawley, ‘Relics & Monuments’: *Essays and Talks on Whitchurch Village History* (WGHHS, 2nd edn, 2017), 28.

¹³⁶ J. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (2018), 387–97. The putative minster enclosure at Goring is similar but somewhat larger, still bounded on one side by the river: above, vol. overview.; Goring, landscape etc.

¹³⁷ A fragment of an 11th-cent. horse harness was found in 2015: PAS website (accessed Dec. 2018), SUR-D42AA6.

¹³⁸ Below, econ. hist. (milling); relig. hist. (church archit.).

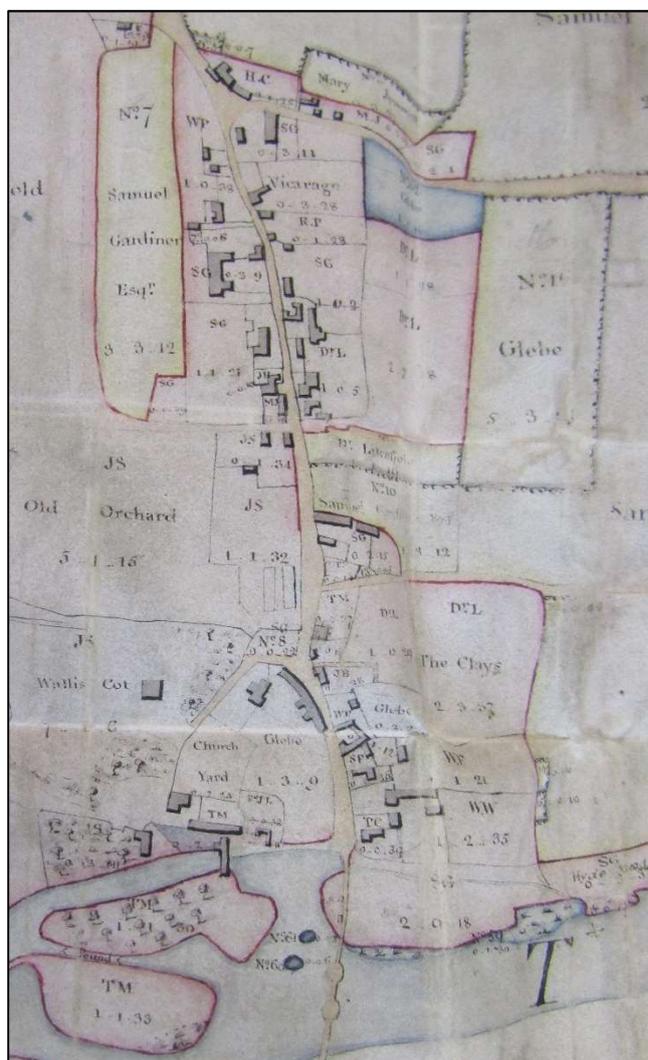
¹³⁹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 776 (*ad molendinum, in angulo*).

¹⁴⁰ cf. OHC, encl. map; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1879 edn).

¹⁴¹ Below, landownership (Whitchurch; Walliscote); econ. hist. (agric. landscape).

¹⁴² Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

By the 1270s there was also a ferry and possibly a ferryman's house and wharf, the latter on the river's southern bank.¹⁴³ Some possibly short-lived contraction of the settled area in the wake of the Black Death is indicated by reports of unoccupied and ruined houses in the 1350s.¹⁴⁴



Detail from the enclosure map of c.1800 (in OHC), showing the linear village of Whitchurch strung out along High Street. Note the regularity of property boundaries towards the top (north) end and the presence of a sub-oval enclosure (perhaps late Anglo-Saxon in origin) adjoining the river and containing both the parish church and rectory house. The site of the medieval manor house (later Walliscote) lies just outside the enclosure overlooking medieval parkland to the west.

Little further evidence for the village's layout survives before the 16th century. A church house recorded from 1538 (and used for social gatherings) stood presumably near the church,¹⁴⁵ and a ferry house mentioned from 1550 may be preserved in Church Cottages, one of several encroachments into the putative early church enclosure.¹⁴⁶ Like Swanston Cottages part way up High Street the building may incorporate 16th-century

¹⁴³ Above (communics).

¹⁴⁴ *Black Prince's Reg.* IV, 52, 138; below, econ. hist. (Middle Ages).

¹⁴⁵ Below, social hist. (1500–1800).

¹⁴⁶ Above (communics); for location, OHC, encl. map; OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1879 edn).

fabric,¹⁴⁷ while a cottage added to the rector's glebe before 1591 was probably that known later as the Vicarage, immediately north of a cottage on High Street's east side given to Reading Corporation in 1602.¹⁴⁸ Other village properties can be identified in a 1626 manorial survey. Edward Frewin's copyhold was the later freehold farm and house at Duchess Close north of Eastfield Lane, while 'Swanton's living lying on the east side of the town' was the later Swanton's freehold, based either on Swanston Cottages or a predecessor of Swanston House. Avery's, 'on the west side of the town', was long held with Swanton's,¹⁴⁹ and in 1705 (after its conversion to freehold) had a new-built house.¹⁵⁰ On the street's west side the 17th-century Manor House or Manor Farm may have been built as a new demesne farmstead c.1627, and in the 18th century was briefly occupied by the lord of the manor Anthony Whistler (d. 1754).¹⁵¹ Its farmyard formerly contained a large tiled and timber-framed barn measuring 100 × 25 feet, demolished following a fire in the 1960s.¹⁵² Whitchurch House to its south was built as the Whistlers' new manor house in the early 18th century.¹⁵³

Eighteenth-century infilling and rebuilding changed the village's appearance but not its over-all plan, which c.1800 (when first mapped in detail) remained confined to High Street and the church enclosure.¹⁵⁴ Some small-scale expansion had taken place at the top of the village, where a terrace of four cottages (Hill Cottages) was built before 1734 on arable taken from Park field shortly before 1714.¹⁵⁵ Cottages to the east followed by 1800, and a nearby lodge (Upper or Coombe Lodge) was built at the entrance to the bridleway leading to the recently landscaped Coombe park with its new house.¹⁵⁶ Further south, Walliscote (then separated from the manor) was rebuilt c.1712–18 as a grand classical mansion whose grounds extended up the west side of High Street,¹⁵⁷ while new houses for the miller and lockshutter were built near the river c.1712–16.¹⁵⁸ The present-day Ferryboat pub occupies the site of a dwelling called Iremonger's or 'Smith's in the Lane' by 1730 (when its outbuildings included a malt house), and which was 'lately rebuilt' in 1806.¹⁵⁹ The large

¹⁴⁷ Below (built character).

¹⁴⁸ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.); below, landownership (other estates). The 'vicarage' was never a true vicarage ho.

¹⁴⁹ OHC, F XIV/1, ff. 15, 16, 19; below, landownership (other estates).

¹⁵⁰ OHC, F III/30.

¹⁵¹ Below, landownership (Whitchurch); econ. hist. (1500–1800).

¹⁵² *Sale Cat., Manor Farm* (1955), copy in WGHA, describing it as 'a fine old barn, reputed to be one of the oldest in Oxfordshire'; Hawley, *Relics & Monuments*, 120–5.

¹⁵³ Below, landownership (Whitchurch).

¹⁵⁴ OHC, encl. map.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* B5/42/D/1–24; below (built character).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* encl. map; below (outlying settlement).

¹⁵⁷ Below, landownership (Whitchurch; Walliscote); OHC, encl. map.

¹⁵⁸ Above (communics); below, econ. hist. (milling).

¹⁵⁹ OHC, F VI/1–49; *ibid.* SL2/2/D/1–3; SL2/3/D/1–4.

detached house to its south (Thames Bank), extant by 1793,¹⁶⁰ was remodelled c.1806 as a gentleman's villa for Robert Richard Pigou (d. 1852),¹⁶¹ and in the 1880s was enlarged eastwards for Tankerville Chamberlain.¹⁶²



Detail from Joseph Farington's 1793 aquatint of Whitchurch from the west, showing Walliscote (left) and Thames Bank (right of the church).

Village gentrification continued through the 19th and early 20th century. The rectory house was rebuilt in Georgian style in 1803 and 1835,¹⁶³ and before 1838 Swanston House (so called by 1845) was rebuilt or remodelled as a 'mansion' for George Jackson (d. 1842).¹⁶⁴ It was further enlarged for the Forbeses before 1879, and almost completely rebuilt on a different (east–west) axis c.1908 for Frank Loughborough Pearson.¹⁶⁵ Expansion along Hardwick Road began with the village school (now Flint House and Old School House),¹⁶⁶ built in a former chalk pit c.1817 and followed by large Victorian houses known as Uplands (1858, for William Binns Wood),¹⁶⁷ The Mount (1880 for John Bagot Scriven),¹⁶⁸ and Hillside (c.1880 for the curate Reginald Molyneux).¹⁶⁹ Bozedown Farm was added in the 1870s.¹⁷⁰ Development was encouraged by sales of land from the Coombe Park estate, including (in 1879) the site of Eastfield House in Eastfield Lane, which was erected for William Blyth the

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Farington's 1793 aquatint in J. and J. Boydell, *An History of the River Thames*, I (1794), plate 23; cf. OHC, encl. map.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. PAR287/2/A/1, p. 68; W. Fletcher, *A Tour Round Reading* (1840), 28. For Pigou's parish charity, below, social hist. (welfare).

¹⁶² OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.12 (1879 and 1899 edns); TNA, RG 11/1300; *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883–7 edns); below (built character).

¹⁶³ Below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

¹⁶⁴ OHC, PAR287/5/F3/2–3; below, landownership (other estates). For his parish charity, below, social hist. (welfare).

¹⁶⁵ R. Noble (ed. P. Hawley), *'Footprints & Cyphers': A Collected Edition of Robert Noble's Articles on Whitchurch Village History* (WGHHS, 2001), 78–82; cf. WGHHS, Dodd's map (1847); OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1879 and 1910 edns).

¹⁶⁶ Below, social hist. (educ.).

¹⁶⁷ Noble, *Footprints & Cyphers*, 96, 105; TNA, RG 9/744; *Dutton, Allen & Co. Dir. Oxon.* (1863).

¹⁶⁸ Noble, *Footprints & Cyphers*, 97; *Sale Cat., The Mount* (1883), copy in OHC, F I/23.

¹⁶⁹ Noble, *Footprints & Cyphers*, 105; TNA, RG 11/1300; OHC, DV/XII/63; *ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. d 761, p. 128.

¹⁷⁰ Below, landownership (other estates); econ. hist. (since 1800).

following year.¹⁷¹ Other new houses included Lower Lodge (by 1847) at the entrance to what became Manor Road;¹⁷² Little House (1898, for John Foster of Coombe Park),¹⁷³ replacing a timber-framed butcher's shop demolished in 1897;¹⁷⁴ and The White House (1903, also for John Foster).¹⁷⁵ Several later houses and bungalows in Eastfield Lane were built on plots of glebe sold off in 1926–7.¹⁷⁶ Gas (provided by the Pangbourne Gas Company) was available from c.1870,¹⁷⁷ with gas street lamps erected c.1901,¹⁷⁸ and both mains water and electricity (generated at the mill) were introduced soon after 1900.¹⁷⁹



The Coombe Park refugee camp in the late 1940s (left) and construction of the Manor Road council houses in the 1950s (right). Both photos courtesy of WGHHS.

Larger-scale expansion took place after the Second World War. In 1952–3 Henley Rural District Council replaced a temporary camp of Nissen huts housing mainly Polish refugees in the grounds of Coombe Park with 22 semi-detached houses along the newly created Manor Road, which along with the rest of the village acquired mains sewerage c.1955–60.¹⁸⁰ The Manor Road council estate was doubled in size in 1958–9,¹⁸¹ and a similar-sized private housing development (Swanston Field) was built south of Hardwick Road c.1961,¹⁸² followed by Hillside (c.1965–7) on its north side, replacing the detached

¹⁷¹ Noble, *Footprints & Cyphers*, 122–6; WGHA, abstract of title to Eastfield Ho. (1946); *Kelly's Dir. Oxon.* (1883); cf. OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV. 8 (1879 and 1899 edns).

¹⁷² WGHA, Dodd's map (1847); cf. OHC, encl. map.

¹⁷³ Holmes, 'Journey'; OHC, RDC6/3/Y3/18; carved date 1898 above front door.

¹⁷⁴ OHC, P221/3/PH/3–4; Holmes, 'Journey'.

¹⁷⁵ OHC, RDC6/3/Y3/31.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* MS Oxf. Dioc. c. 2070/1, contracts for sale of glebe 1926–7; Holmes, 'Journey'; Barefield-Hutt, *Memories of Whitchurch*, 41–7.

¹⁷⁷ Berks. RO, D/EX2024/3; *Sale Cat., Bozedom Estate* (1890), in OHC, SC 192.

¹⁷⁸ OHC, PC287/A2/1; below, local govt (par. govt).

¹⁷⁹ Above (landscape); below, econ. hist. (milling).

¹⁸⁰ OHC, PC287/A2/3–4; Holmes, 'Journey'; Baker, *Whitchurch*, 6–7; below, social hist. (since 1800).

¹⁸¹ SODC, P58/H0495 (accessed online).

¹⁸² *Sale Cat., Swanston House Estate* (1959), in WGHA; SODC, P60/H0741–3; *Whitchurch Bulletin* (Aug. 1970), copy in OHC, PC287/N1.

Victorian house of the same name.¹⁸³ Walliscote was also demolished in the 1960s, leaving only a service wing later remodelled as Walliscote Lodge,¹⁸⁴ while a new primary school was built at the far end of Eastfield Lane in 1966.¹⁸⁵ A conservation area was created in 1978,¹⁸⁶ and thereafter development was restricted to small-scale infilling and subdivision, several of the larger houses (including Swanston House, Thames Bank, and Whitchurch House) having already been internally divided.¹⁸⁷ Only c.30 dwellings were added between 1981 and 2011, when half of all housing was detached,¹⁸⁸ and in 2018 villagers fought to save Eastfield House from demolition.¹⁸⁹

Outlying Settlement

Some of the tenants recorded on Whitchurch manor in 1086 presumably lived outside the later village, a supposition supported by the discovery at Bozedown Camp in 1953 of several pottery sherds dating from c.1050–1150.¹⁹⁰ Men named ‘of the heath’ and ‘of the hill’ in 1279 lived probably at Whitchurch Hill,¹⁹¹ documented as Whitchurch ‘super le Downe’ in 1438,¹⁹² while Henry ‘at the hatch’ (mentioned in 1377) was named probably from Whitchurch Hill’s ‘hatch gate’, which prevented animals from Whitchurch common straying onto the open fields, and which was commemorated in the name of a much later pub.¹⁹³ Gilbert ‘of the south hill’ (a villein mentioned in 1279) came probably from Path Hill, the two names remaining interchangeable in the 1740s.¹⁹⁴ The 13th-century freeholders Thomas Beech and William of Hardwick occupied Beech Farm and Hardwick respectively: the former was called ‘Bechesplace’ in 1423, while the latter was a reputed manor by 1526, and may have already had a high-status house.¹⁹⁵ The scattered hamlet of Collins End (straddling the Goring boundary) also has medieval origins.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸³ SODC, P65/H0609; *Whitchurch Bulletin* (Oct. 1967); Holmes, ‘Journey’.

¹⁸⁴ Below, landownership (other estates).

¹⁸⁵ Below, social hist. (educ.).

¹⁸⁶ SODC, online list of conservation areas.

¹⁸⁷ Holmes, ‘Journey’; local info.

¹⁸⁸ *Census*, 1981–2011.

¹⁸⁹ *Henley Standard*, 19 Mar. 2018, 17 Sept. 2018; www.whitchurchonthames.com (accessed Dec. 2018).

¹⁹⁰ DB, f. 159; Wood, ‘Early Iron Age Camp on Bozedown’, 12–14.

¹⁹¹ *Rot. Hund.* II, 775–6 (‘de Bruer’, ‘de Hull’); cf. TNA, E 179/161/10, listing 1306 taxpayers named ‘ate Hethe’ and ‘ate Helle’.

¹⁹² TNA, C 88/121, no. 59.

¹⁹³ ‘atte Hacche’: *Poll Taxes 1377–81*, ed. Fenwick, II, 311; Barefield-Hutt, *Whitchurch Common*, 12 and map. For the pub, below, econ. hist. (trades).

¹⁹⁴ *Rot. Hund.* II, 775 (‘de la Suthull’); OHC, E1/10/7D/1–2; *ibid.* SL36/1/3D/9. The name Path Hill was established by 1611: *ibid.* E1/10/16D/1.

¹⁹⁵ *Rot. Hund.* II, 776; OHC, F XII/6; below, landownership (Hardwick; other estates). Nothing is known of Hardwick House’s medieval predecessor.

¹⁹⁶ Above, Goring, landscape etc.

Sale of copyholds during the 17th century led to ‘several cottages’ being built ‘upon the purchased premises’, allegedly causing a ‘great increase of the poor’.¹⁹⁷ Various 17th- and 18th-century cottages and small farmhouses survive at Whitchurch Hill, most of them (including Butler’s and Copyhold) fringing the former common.¹⁹⁸ Cottages of similar date remain at Path Hill and Collins End,¹⁹⁹ one of them (Holly Copse at Collins End) used as a pub for at least two centuries until c.1870.²⁰⁰ Hardwick House was rebuilt on a grand scale by members of the Lybbe family in the 16th and 17th centuries, with formal gardens fronting the river, and a home farmhouse (Hardwick Stud Farm) to its west,²⁰¹ while a small freehold farmhouse north of Beech Farm (called Heath House by 1781) occupied the site of the present-day Laundry Cottage.²⁰² West of the village, a predecessor of the isolated Hartslock Farm (by the river bank) existed by 1761,²⁰³ while the large Palladian mansion known initially as Coombe Lodge and later as Coombe Park was erected in 1794–5, its surrounding parkland landscaped shortly afterwards.²⁰⁴



Whitchurch Hill, as depicted on the Whitchurch Common enclosure map of 1813 (in OHC). Note that settlement was largely restricted to the fringes of the former common (outlined in yellow) before encroachment began in 1814 with construction of The Barracks. The ‘public pond’ shown is Tinepit.

¹⁹⁷ OHC, E1/X/39; below, landownership (Whitchurch); econ. hist. (1500–1800).

¹⁹⁸ Below (built character); C.A. Graham Kerr, ‘Whitchurch Hill Village Survey’ (unpubl. MS, n.d. (c.1980) in SOAG archive). For one called Beard’s in 1679, OHC, E1/10/1D/1–3. Copyhold Fm was so called by 1713: *ibid.* PAR287/5/F1/3, f. 19v.

¹⁹⁹ Below (built character); Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*, *passim*.

²⁰⁰ Below, econ. hist. (trades); social hist. (1500–1800).

²⁰¹ Below, landownership (Hardwick); econ. hist. (1500–1800).

²⁰² OHC, F II/1–33; F XIV/28.

²⁰³ Rocque, *Map of Berks.* (1761); OHC, encl. map. So called by 1775: OHC, PAR287/4/F/1.

²⁰⁴ Below, landownership (Whitchurch).

The main focus for development after 1800 was Whitchurch Hill where, following the enclosure of Whitchurch common in 1813, a terrace of six cottages for the poor (Linden Cottages or The Barracks) was constructed in 1814 on part of the parish's 'poor's allotment'.²⁰⁵ An adjacent Wesleyan Methodist chapel opened in 1849. Expansion onto the former common continued in 1883, with an Anglican chapel of ease dedicated to St John the Baptist, its surrounding graveyard, and an adjacent recreation ground,²⁰⁶ while five pairs of semi-detached cottages were erected on the newly laid-out Bridle Road (formerly a footpath) also in the 1880s.²⁰⁷ Further south, Bozedown House was built on former glebe for William Fanning c.1870 and was rebuilt for Charles Palmer in 1907, becoming a chemical research laboratory in the 1950s.²⁰⁸ Associated workers' housing for the Bozedown estate was erected at Whitchurch Hill by successive owners, including New Buildings (by 1899), Palmer's Cottages (1910), and North Lodge (1911),²⁰⁹ some of which replaced existing thatched and timber-framed cottages.²¹⁰ Other new Whitchurch Hill premises included the church hall of 1889 (St John's Room, later Goring Heath parish hall), the relocated Hatch Gate pub and smithy (1901), and the curate's house (Old Parsonage, 1906),²¹¹ while the Sun pub at Hill Bottom was rebuilt after a fire in 1910.²¹² Mains water was introduced c.1904 and electricity in 1932, and numerous bungalows erected between the First and Second World Wars²¹³ were followed by four council houses on Bridle Road c.1948.²¹⁴ Private housing estates laid out between the 1960s and 1980s filled much of the former common between the church and Hill Bottom, adding several new cul-de-sacs and making Whitchurch Hill the largest single settlement in Goring Heath civil parish, with a population in 1997 of c.600. Thereafter development slowed, save for alterations to existing properties and some infilling.²¹⁵ Other parts of the ancient parish saw much more limited 19th- and 20th-century growth, although Hardwick House acquired new east and west lodges

²⁰⁵ Below, econ. hist. (agric. landscape); social hist. (welfare).

²⁰⁶ Below, social hist. (since 1800); relig. hist.

²⁰⁷ cf. OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.4 (1879 and 1899 edns); TNA, RG 12/989.

²⁰⁸ Below, landownership (Bozedown).

²⁰⁹ OS Map 1:2500, Oxon. LV.4 (1899 edn); datestones on bldgs; OHC, RDC6/3/Y1/176; cf. *Sale Cat., Bozedown Estate* (1951), copy in OHC, E233/D/1.

²¹⁰ Graham Kerr, 'Whitchurch Hill Village Survey'; Baker, *Whitchurch*, 42–3.

²¹¹ OHC, RDC6/3/Y3/25, 35. For hall, below, social hist. (since 1800); for pub and smithy, below, econ. hist. (trades); for Old Parsonage, below (built character); relig. hist. (since 1840).

²¹² *Over the Hatchgate*, 13.

²¹³ *Ibid.* 8, 17, 22; OHC, RDC6/3/Y1/188, 224, 241, 268–9.

²¹⁴ Airey Houses: OHC, PC287/A1/1; *ibid.* RDC8/3/F9/36.

²¹⁵ SODC planning docs (available online); OHC, PC116/1/N1/4; cf. OS Maps 1:10560, SU67NW (1960 edn); 1:10000, SU67NW (1989 edn).

c.1890,²¹⁶ and a few isolated farmhouses were established along the Coombe Park
bridleway in the 1950s–60s.²¹⁷

Settlement in the Berkshire part of the parish never comprised more than a few dwellings, the most significant being the Hyde manor house established by the 1240s.²¹⁸ Its successor Purley (formerly Hyde) Hall was begun c.1609 and altered in 1719–26 and later, while a formal canal garden to its west was laid out by Charles Bridgeman c.1720–1, and a surrounding park in the late 18th or early 19th century.²¹⁹ The rebuilt house straddled the parish boundary,²²⁰ the point at which Purley, Sulham, and Whitchurch met being marked in 1803 by a stone set in the dining room floor ‘near the southernmost window looking towards the canal’.²²¹ Other buildings included a warren house mentioned in 1635,²²² the 16th-century Lower (later Home) Farm,²²³ and a nearby cottage mapped in 1839.²²⁴ Three houses were noted in 1861, five in 1871, and seven (housing 27 inhabitants) in 1894, when they were transferred from Whitchurch to Purley.²²⁵

The Built Character

Typically for the area, several of Whitchurch’s older buildings are timber-framed, reflecting a plentiful supply of timber and a paucity of good local building stone. Chalk or clunch footings and wattle-and-daub wall panels have generally been replaced with brick and flint, and thatch with tiled roofs, although a few thatched cottages remain. Chimneystacks were nearly always of brick, and by the 18th century bricks, sometimes rendered or painted, were the preferred medium for virtually all buildings. Many were locally made, though apparently not within the parish itself.²²⁶ Flints continued to be used in some walling, usually in combination with bricks.

No firmly dated medieval buildings are known other than parts of the parish church, although a cottage at Path Hill retains a cruck frame perhaps suggesting construction before

²¹⁶ Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*, 56–9; cf. TNA, RG 11/1300; RG 12/989; OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8, LVI.5 (1879 and 1899 edns).

²¹⁷ Holmes, ‘Journey’; OS Maps 1:2500, SU6277 (1964 edn), SU6278 (1965 edn).

²¹⁸ *Rot. Grosseteste*, 472–7; below, landownership (other estates).

²¹⁹ *Country Life*, 5 Feb. 1970, 310–13; 12 Feb. 1970, 366–9; NHLE, nos. 1000590 (Purley Hall park & garden), 1214696 (Purley Hall); N. Pevsner (rev. S. Bradley and G. Tyack), *The Buildings of England: Berkshire* (2010), 430–1; *VCH Berks.* III, 417–18.

²²⁰ OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 141, p. 118; Wilts. & Swindon Arch., D/1/9/1/2, Purley return; cf. OHC, tithe map.

²²¹ Berks. RO, D/EWI/E21/8 and 15.

²²² OHC, MS Oxf. Archd. Oxon. c 141, p. 117.

²²³ NHLE, no. 1214439 (Home Fm); Wilts. & Swindon Arch., D/1/9/1/2, Purley return; cf. Berks. RO, D/EWI/E25; OHC, tithe map.

²²⁴ OHC, tithe map.

²²⁵ *Census*, 1861–1901; above (boundaries).

²²⁶ Above, vol. overview (economy); Caversham, Goring (econ. hist.).

1550.²²⁷ A few other timber-framed cottages and farmhouses have suspected 16th-century origins,²²⁸ and the two-bayed Thatched Cottage at Whitchurch Hill has been dendro-dated to 1560. The structure is box-framed with curved braces and (in the roof) clasped purlins and windbraces, and was built with an internal end chimneystack which may have begun as a timber-framed smoke hood.²²⁹ Swanston Cottages in Whitchurch village have a jettied cross-wing, and Home Farm near Purley Hall (in the parish's Berkshire part) retains queen-post trusses and arch-bracing.²³⁰



Milo Crispin at Whitchurch Hill (left) and Holly Copse Cottage at Collins End (right).

Seventeenth-century farmhouses and cottages (still mostly timber-framed) include several with lobby-entry plans,²³¹ and a husbandman in 1639 left instructions for his house to be partitioned at the chimneystack between his two sons, ordering one to make a new staircase so that he could access the upper chamber in his half of the house.²³² Some cottages fringing the former heath at Whitchurch Hill and Collins End originally comprised only a single storey and one or two rooms,²³³ and presumably represent some of the numerous dwellings taxed on only one or two hearths in the 1660s. Most farmhouses had four to six hearths, although by far the grandest building (with 16) was Hardwick House,²³⁴

²²⁷ NHLE, no. 1368948 (Pilgrim Cottage). For early examples nearby, above, Mapledurham, landscape etc.; cf. N. Alcock and D. Miles, *The Medieval Peasant House in Midland England* (2013).

²²⁸ NHLE, nos. 1368969 (Swanston Cottages), 1059496 (Church Cottages); 1059527 (Thatched Cottage, Path Hill), 1194296 (Holly Copse, Collins End), 1214439 (Home Farmho., Purley).

²²⁹ Thatched Cottage, Whitchurch Hill: www.oxford-dendrolab.com/oxfordshire.asp (accessed Dec. 2018); cf. NHLE, no. 1368926.

²³⁰ NHLE, nos. 1368969 (Swanston Cottages), 1214439 (Home Farmho.).

²³¹ Ibid. nos. 1059484 (Hardwick Stud Farmho.), 1059493 (Manor Ho.), 1180608 (Herringbones), 1180629 (Yew Tree Cottage), 1285399 (Duchess Close), 1059526 (Rose Cottage), 1059530 (Middle Thatch), 1059529 (Cottage c.10 m. south of Middle Thatch), 1194240 (Copyhold Farmho.), 1194298 (Holmes Oak), 1368923 (Ladygrove Farmho.), 1368927 (Holly Copse Cottage).

²³² OHC, MS Wills Oxon. 41/3/44.

²³³ e.g. NHLE, nos. 1059526 (Rose Cottage), 1059530 (Middle Thatch), 1253473 (The Cottage); cf. Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*, passim.

²³⁴ TNA, E 179/164/504; *Hearth Tax Oxon.* 4–5.

begun before 1599, and remodelled and extended in the 17th century. Constructed almost entirely from red bricks with stone dressings, its interior features elaborate plasterwork ceilings.²³⁵ Purley Hall was broadly similar in style and grandeur when first erected c.1609.²³⁶

Timber framing gave way to brick during the 18th century, and though lobby-entrances occasionally persisted,²³⁷ end chimneystacks and classical symmetry became more typical. Examples include Hill Cottages, Hill House, and Rosemary, the last two featuring dentil cornices,²³⁸ while farmhouses such as Duchess Close and Copyhold Farm were extended or refronted.²³⁹ Grander gentry houses in similar style included Whitchurch House (built c.1712 and extended c.1750–60) and Walliscote (built c.1718 and mostly demolished in the 1960s), both with neat rows of sash windows, central six-panelled front doors, ornate roof parapets, and flanking service wings,²⁴⁰ which at Walliscote were said to give the house ‘a splendid appearance’.²⁴¹ Gothick influence is evident in the arched windows of Hill Cottages and Coombeside Cottage (the latter apparently erected after 1800),²⁴² and also at Straw Hall (by 1756) and The Baulk, both of which were built as eyecatchers to be viewed from Hardwick House. By contrast, at Coombe Park (1794–5) the architect J.W. Sanderson employed a Palladian style in brick and stone,²⁴³ producing ‘a fine majestic building in the Ionic style ... with corresponding wings’.²⁴⁴ The entrance drives to Coombe Park and Walliscote were marked by curved brick walls erected soon after 1800, creating elegant bell-mouthed entrances from the village street,²⁴⁵ while late examples of Georgian architecture include Thames Bank (c.1806) and Old Rectory (1835, by Richard Billing), both of which have symmetrically-arranged sash windows and hipped Welsh slate roofs.²⁴⁶

Victorian and Edwardian additions for wealthy incomers were similarly eclectic, but also typical of the area, with bricks of contrasting colours sometimes laid in a decorative fashion, and often coupled with decorative half-timbering and hanging tiles.²⁴⁷ The first Bozedown House (1871) was ‘Elizabethan’,²⁴⁸ while The Mount (1880) was considered

²³⁵ Below, landownership (Hardwick).

²³⁶ See above (settlement) for footnoted architectural descriptions.

²³⁷ e.g. NHLE, nos. 1059487 (Wellesley Ho.), 1368971 (Tudor Cottage).

²³⁸ NHLE, nos. 1059488–90; cf. *ibid.* 1180641 (Ford Cottage); 1253473 (The Cottage).

²³⁹ *Ibid.* nos. 1059491; 1194240.

²⁴⁰ Below, landownership (Whitchurch; other estates).

²⁴¹ *Reading Mercury*, 30 Sept. 1771; illustrated in Bodl. MS Top. Oxon. a 69, no. 590.

²⁴² *Ibid.* nos. 1059488; 1368970; OHC, encl. map.

²⁴³ Below, landownership (Whitchurch; Hardwick).

²⁴⁴ *Gardner's Dir. Oxon.* (1852).

²⁴⁵ Hawley, *Relics & Monuments*, 65; P. Hawley, ‘The Brick Bell Mouth Entrances of Whitchurch’ (unpubl. TS, 2018), online at www.whitchurchonthames.com (accessed Dec. 2018).

²⁴⁶ NHLE, nos. 1180624; 1368972; Pevsner, *Oxon.* 840; below, relig. hist. (rectory ho.).

²⁴⁷ e.g. Dingle Dell (red and grey bricks), Bozedown Farm (diaper brickwork), Mill House (herringbone brickwork), North Lodge (half-timbering), Goring Heath parish hall (hanging tiles).

²⁴⁸ *PO Dir. Oxon.* (1877 edn); below, landownership (other estates).

'Early English', its heated conservatory paved with Minton tiles.²⁴⁹ Coombe Park was remodelled in the 1880s in 'modern Italian' style, while 'Jacobethan' was used for a now-demolished south-wing extension to Hardwick House (1900), and for the second Bozedown House of 1907 (by Paul Waterhouse), which was significantly larger than its predecessor.²⁵⁰ Several Reading-based architects were active in Whitchurch in the late 19th and early 20th century,²⁵¹ and the London architect and Whitchurch resident Frank Loughborough Pearson both redesigned Swanston House for himself and, in 1909, remodelled The Baulk for Charles Day Rose, preserving much of the earlier Gothick flint eyecatcher.²⁵² He also designed the parish war memorial.²⁵³ Most later 20th- and early 21st-century housing was unremarkable, the ubiquitous brick and tile being often combined with timber cladding and chalet-style roofs.²⁵⁴



Coombeside Cottages (left) and Thames Bank (right).

²⁴⁹ *Sale Cat., The Mount* (1883), in OHC, F I/23.

²⁵⁰ Below, landownership (Whitchurch; Hardwick; other estates).

²⁵¹ S. Gold, *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects at Reading* (1999, privately published); cf. OHC, RDC6/3/Y1, Y3.

²⁵² OHC, RDC6/3/Y3/36–7, 50; cf. OS Maps 1:2500, Oxon. LV.8 (1899 and 1910 edns); Barefield-Hutt, *Hardwick*, 122–4.

²⁵³ *Whitchurch Parish Mag.* (Dec. 1921); below, social hist. (since 1800).

²⁵⁴ VCH fieldwork (2018); SODC planning docs (available online).