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JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF SCIENCE

The Development of Shrivenham

By R. T. PRESCOTT, *Chairman Shrivenham Parish Council*
in response to an invitation from the Editor

The Parish Council are very gratified by your interest in the village, and are glad of this opportunity to outline, however briefly, Shrivenham's probable development. The views expressed here are of course those of the present writer, though they may be taken as representing in general the views of most of his colleagues.

Three aspects of the future are of particular interest to us—the development area, the development within that area, and the development of Shrivenham as a community. The development area is, as you may know, bounded to the south by the properties on the south side of what is, at present, known as Ashbury Road, and extends along a line which runs eastwards until it meets College property at Longcot Road, and westwards across Station Road to the Swan Hill Garage. From there the perimeter of the village will turn north and east in a wide arc—along which will run the proposed Shrivenham by-pass scheduled for some time in the early 1970's!—until it meets the junction of Pennyhooks Lane and Faringdon Road just north of your Day's Ground estate. From that point down again to the Longcot Road our eastern perimeter abuts on College property.

Within that area, particularly to the north and east, lies much land still to be developed. As a mere Parish Council we are very much at the mercy of the real powers in the land—the State, the County and Rural Councils, and not least the big estate developers. We do now, however, have an opportunity to see and comment on any proposed building before it is dealt with at R.D.C. level; we do lift up our voices frequently and loudly, and we are even, very occasionally, taken notice of.

We are delighted to welcome appropriate development so long as it enables us to preserve, and we hope even enhance, our heritage of a village delightfully situated in the Vale, with its pretty High Street, its unmatched Village Hall and grounds, its fine Church, and its wide variety of quiet country homes—well, quiet if they're not too near High Street!

Foremost among the amenities we enjoy is, of course, the privilege, kindly afforded us by the Commandant, of walking in the beautiful grounds of your Beckett Park. Common Close and Day's Ground do not afford us quite the same pleasure, and we earnestly hope that any future development on your land or on ours, will pay some regard to aesthetic considerations. For ourselves, we do not despair. The wall at present being constructed along the road leading westwards out of the village is a craftsman's job, by local craftsmen. With its proposed green verge at the western end, near the Hall, it will enhance the appearance of the village. The other major building project in hand at the moment, the Downs View Estate, unwieldy though it may seem and however dull the shape of its houses, is at least architect-designed and its layout, and the large green verges and shrubberies planned for it, should preserve for it something of a rural look. But what we like to see in the village is as much variety as possible. Some are happy to seek a home planned as part of a larger building pattern; others wish to have a home built to their own plan. There should be room for all.

Which brings me to my third topic—the community. We are no longer the

rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate: Most of us can now read and write! We are, in fact, a democratic community—of widely different interests and background, perhaps of worth, but classified rather than stratified. We are still tinker, tailor . . . but whether rich man or poor man troubles us less—perhaps because our status (whatever that may mean) can no longer be measured by the size of our house or our motor car—and we may hope to have eliminated the two more disreputable occupations of bygone days. We do not work together as a community. Many of us are of necessity com-
The annual village fete, in its comparatively feeble way, is our communal effort. But the village primary school is a unifying force, and more, our younger children are being educated together. And then, of course, there are our excellent village inns! Above all, I think, we share a common, and deep, pleasure in living here; and I am sure that it is the desire to do what we can to foster this way of life which brings my colleagues and myself to serve on what must seem to many, in this age of global planning, a vestigial anachronism—the Parish Council.

Shrivenham at the Turn of the Century

By Miss Lock, *Postmistress at Shrivenham for over half a century.*
The following is a résumé of a talk given to the Women's Institute, Shrivenham

THE population in the village in 1904 was 600 and now it is 2,000. This excludes any of the College population.

Several of the roads in the village were cobble stones and there is still one part remaining round by Shrivenham House. Where the Memorial Hall now stands was just one small thatched cottage, and there were no other buildings between this cottage and Stallpits Farm. There was no Police Station and the one policeman lived in a cottage in the village.

Lighting in the village was restricted to oil lamps until in 1934 electric lighting was installed, and until this date there was no piped water in the village and people had to rely upon wells; and there was ~~no~~ ^{one} old village pump on the green outside the Memorial Hall.

There was a daily horse-drawn coach from Swindon to Oxford, which returned the next day. It pulled up at the Barrington Arms and watered and changed the horses.

The mail would arrive by coach from Swindon at 3 a.m. and at the sound of the driver's horn the Misses Lock, who ran the Post Office, would throw out the door key tied to a duster to enable the mail to be delivered. The Post Office opened at 7 a.m. and closed at 9 p.m. and the last despatch of mail was 10 p.m.

Shrivenham had an Annual Fair, held in the spring, and this was carried on in the High Street but was discontinued during the first World War and never resumed again. The highlight of the year, however, was when The Ancient Order of Foresters held their Fête every summer in Beckett Park, which attracted a lot of people from Swindon and districts around.

Lady Barrington of Beckett Park raised the money in London for the building of the Memorial Hall and the cottages in the Recreation Ground. The Memorial Hall was opened in 1925 by Princess Beatrice. The Women's Institute was started by Lady Barrington in 1920 and she gave permission for a room in Beckett Cottage to be used for the meetings.

In March 1910, a fire broke out in the roof of the Church above the organ but was discovered before much damage was done.

The first footbridge over Shrivenham Station was erected about 40 years ago and that was in consequence of a fatal accident which took place there, when a man was knocked down by a train and killed. There were only two sets of lines then but 20 years later a further two sets were introduced and the present footbridge was erected.

Shrivenham

By F. COCHRANE, *being an expansion of a talk given to the Women's Institute, Shrivenham*

THERE is a great deal of evidence of the activities of our ancestors in this district. Burial mounds such as Seven Barrows, prehistoric camps and forts of which Uffington, Hardwell and Liddington castles are good examples. The Blowing Stone at Kingston Lisle is famous and was used, so legend says, in primitive times as a warning of an enemy's approach producing a dull moaning sound audible at a distance of 5 or 6 miles, a sort of ancient siren. Wayland Smith's Cave, a 4,000-year-old burial mound on the downs near Ashbury, is said to mark the spot where Wayland the Smith shod horses, made flying horse-shoes and invincible swords at his legendary forge. This monument is currently being reconstructed for the Ministry of Works by a team led by Professor Stuart Piggott (see "Wayland's Smithy," in this issue).

It has been suggested that the White Horse is a memorial of the Battle of Ashdown A.D. 871, but this is unlikely for two reasons. The Horse was probably constructed between 100 B.C. and A.D. 100 as a tribal emblem, and Ashdown Hill is only one of the many possible sites for Alfred's battle. It is interesting, however, to speculate that men from Shrivenham fought with Alfred against the Danes.

The remains of a Roman villa have been discovered in the last few years at Woolstone and investigated by local people. In 1903 a hoard of Roman coins was discovered in a brook in Little Wellington Woods (now known as Bowers Copse) at the Longcot end of the College. This was at that time part of the Beckett Estate and the coins were presented by Lord Barrington to the British Museum. They are now in the Salisbury Museum.

The first authentic mention of Shrivenham is in various Anglo-Saxon charters. There is a great deal of variation in the form and spelling of the name. It appears in charters, deeds and registers as Scriuenanhom (A.D. 821, the earliest mention), Seriveham (11th century), Schriveham (12th century), Sherevenham, Sryvenham, Sortiveham (13th century), to mention just a few of the forms. Various suggestions have been made as to the meaning. Dr. Skeat, in his *Berkshire Place-names* (1911), interprets it as "Scrifena's enclosure"—Scrifena denoting a person; at one time it was popularly held that the explanation was to be found in Shriving—Shriving-ham. A definite interpretation is however not feasible, because of the variation in meaning of Anglo-Saxon words.

Shrivenham was a fairly important place before the compilation of the Domesday Book, but it is with this record that the first real account of the village is given.

The Domesday Book states that:

"The King holds Scrivenham in demesne (that is as a personal estate). King Edward held it. There are 46 hides (a hide was an area of land sufficient for a normal family, approximately 120 acres). There is land for 33 ploughs and there 80 villeins and 17 borderers with 30 ploughs. . . . In the Manor are two mills worth 20 shillings, and 240 acres of meadow and woodland to render (*sic*) 20 swine."

The population would be about 380 and the land valued at about £45.

It is difficult to write a short account of village life in Shrivenham through the centuries, and the following description merely touches on the more interesting items.

Life naturally followed the feudal pattern of service to the Lords of the Manor, the Church being the centre of community life. The Parson granted licenses, performed a variety of local government duties (these were later taken over by the Parish Vestry), assisted by the Church Wardens. The registers maintained by the churches of births, marriages and deaths are a major source of history; the Shrivenham registers date back to 1575.

A monastery may have existed at one time in or near the village, but there is no real evidence to support its existence. The original 5 hides of land mentioned in the Domesday Survey as belonging to the Church in Shrivenham were granted to the Abbey of Cirencester by Henry I, and in 1346 the Abbot had a house in the village. There are certainly two local legends connected with a monastery, one of a nun in love with a monk who drowned herself in a well (Nun's Well or Maiden's Well) at the junction of the Watchfield and Faringdon roads. The other of the monk who haunts the churchyard on All Saints' Eve.

Shrivenham in the Middle Ages was obviously a lively place. In 1469 a commission was sent "to arrest William Brown of Shrevenham and others, to bring them before the King in council to answer for certain riots." Retribution was definitely meted out to rogues and vagabonds here, for in addition to the cross that once stood in the village centre, there was also a Whipping Post. Due warning, however, was given, because for many years the following notice hung on the wall of Tarifa Cottage:

"By order of the Magistrates

All idle or disorderly persons found and apprehended in the Parish of Shrivenham will accordingly be removed as the law directs."

Shrivenham also had its village green, where many local activities took place. A favourite spot from which to watch the amusements was the terrace in front of Elm Tree House (Dr. Sparks' house). It is also interesting to note in connection with this fine house that part of it was once a candle factory (the part that is now the waiting room of the surgery). The village pond was opposite the school and apparently served as a convenient place to dump dead dogs, cats and broken pots. The original village inn, the King's Arms, was also near here on the site of Mr. Benford's shop. The village Pound was appropriately enough near the present police station and was a source of revenue, as fines were extracted from the owners of straying sheep and cattle.

The Berks and Wilts Canal, which passed to the south of Shrivenham, was built in 1793 to deal with the increasing flow of traffic to and from Reading. It seems to have brought prosperity to the local smith, because on some days he apparently shod as many as 70 barge horses in a day and the queue of horses stretched from the smithy to outside the village. It is also recorded that a man

called Horne had a blacksmith's shop at the corner near the present Prince of Wales Inn, thus accounting for the name of Horne's Corner.

Local pleasures were few, and even if not as sophisticated as today's nevertheless greatly enjoyed. Shrivenham seems to have had a reputation for horseplay with its village feasts and local contests. The village favourite was climbing a greasy pole to get the leg of mutton at the top. The pole was inserted in the hub of a wagon wheel to make it more difficult. Bourton people had a very poor opinion of Shrivenham and refused to take part in Shrivenham's fun. Bourton preferred the more genteel occupation of dancing competitions with prizes not for dancing but for the prettiest lace cap. Watchfield appears to have had a reputation for laziness as the following local rhyme seems to suggest:

"Shrivenham Revel and Bourton Rout
The Watchfield pot boils and the fire is out."

One of the last Maypoles in Berkshire was still in being at Longcot in the middle of the last century. The Vicar eventually had it broken up, because the local village boys fought so fiercely to remove or restore it to their own village.

The most famous local festival was without doubt the scouring or clearing of the White Horse; this was paid for by the Barringtons for many years. It was famous throughout the county (as many as 30,000 people attended) for its games of cheese rolling, back swords and wrestling. Naturally there was great local rivalry, but teams came from as far away as Somerset to compete. The last one took place in 1875. The Festival was commemorated by the following old Berkshire ballad:

"The Owld White Horse wants zetten to rights,
And the squire hev promised good cheer,
Zo we'll gie un a scrape to kip un in zhape,
And a'll last for many a year.
A was made a lang lang time ago,
Wi a good dale o' labour and pains,
By King Alferd the Great when he spwiled their consate,
And caddled thay woshirds the Danes.
The Bleawin Stwun in days gone by
Wur King Alferd's bugle harn,
And the tharnin tree you med plainly see,
As is called King Alferd's tharn.
There'll be backsword play, and climmin the powl,
And a race for a pig and a cheese,
And us thinks as hisn's a dummell zowl,
As dwon't care for zich spwoorts as these."

The Domesday Survey mentions a church in Shrivenham with 5 hides of land, and states that what the priest hath is worth £4. A later account of a church in Shrivenham is in a deed of agreement between the Abbot and Convent of Cirencester in the year 1395. The present church with the exception of the tower and a portion of the west wall, which are probably 12th century, was built late in the 17th century during the reign of Charles II (1660-85) by Sir Henry Marten and cost £4,000. The present vicarage was built by Archdeacon Berens who was the Incumbent 1804-59. It is worthy of note that local

vicars must be attached to the village because at one period Shrivenham had only three (the Reverends Berens, Murray and Hill) in 130 years.

The history of any village is largely bound up with the history of the manor. Shrivenham originally consisted of four manors and the estate known as Fowersmill. The manors were:

1. Shrivenham Salop
2. Shrivenham Stalpits
3. The Manor of Becket
4. The Rectory Manor

The manors eventually all became part of the Beckett Estate. Salop Manor once belonged to the Earl of Pembroke, Stalpits Manor to the Earl of Salisbury, and the Rectory Manor to the Pleydells, a prominent Coleshill and Watchfield family.

The estate known as Fowersmill (now Friar's Mill) originated in a grant made in 1188 by King Henry II to Reynold le Fouwer (Focarius, or Stoker) of land to the value of 25s. 4d. in Shrivenham. This land was held by Reynold and his descendants by service of making the fire in the King's chamber. The estate came into the possession of John de Becket in 1367 and was sold by his heir of the same name in 1376 to John Warneford and was the property of the Warnefords until 1902.

In 1086 the Manor of Decote was held by William, Count of Evreux, a Norman. Later it returned to the King. King John was actually in residence in 1204; the Manor was probably some sort of hunting lodge. Passing on to more recent times: in 1633 the Manor was bought by Sir Henry Marten, a judge. He was a man of considerable fortune and in 1642 with his son established a charity in the village by building the Almshouses. The charity originally consisted of eight houses and in 1850 Archdeacon Berens completed the Founders scheme by building two additional houses.

Harry Marten, the judge's son, seems to have been a character. He was renowned throughout the Vale for his wild orgies, ably supported by the men of Watchfield. His favourite pastimes were said to be drinking with the servants and wenching. This was rather curious as he was certainly a regicide, one of the men who tried Charles I and signed the death warrant. After the restoration he surrendered to the King and was condemned to death; however, he managed to get himself reprieved and later died in Chepstow prison.

In 1652 the Beckett estates were bought by Sir George Pratt, of Coleshill, and then in 1666 by John Wildman. Wildman had "a life of intrigue during the Commonwealth and three subsequent reigns." He was made Postmaster-General in 1689 and died in 1693.

His son, John Wildman, adopted John Shute as his heir, who on becoming heir to Francis Barrington, took that name in 1716. Shute was a barrister, a distinguished politician and theologian whose tenets were those of the "Presbyterian dissenters." He was expelled from the Commons for promoting a fraudulent lottery. This incident does not seem to have affected his career though, for shortly afterwards he was created a baron in the Irish peerage.

Several of the first Viscount Barrington's sons had distinguished careers. The eldest was successively Secretary of the Admiralty, Secretary of War, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Treasurer of the Navy. His fifth son was an Admiral of the White and a General of Marines, and his sixth son became Bishop of Durham.

A number of court posts were held by the seventh Viscount who was created a baron in the U.K. peerage in the 1860's. He was a friend and patron of Disraeli who was a frequent visitor to Beckett Hall. The first Viscount's successors in the title held the Manor until 1928 when it was sold by the ninth Viscount. The War Department bought Beckett in 1936.

Turning to the house itself, there has been a house on the site from well before the Conquest. It is difficult to say what the earliest buildings were like. The de Becket family probably lived in a hall-and-solar type manor house, secure but not fortified and made of stone. The Tudor house was partly destroyed by fire as was the church. The 18th century house, a mixture of earlier remains, was probably removed to make way for the present building. Until the 1780's the roads ran close to the house but were realigned to ensure the privacy of the park. In fact, before the realignment, the Inigo Jones summerhouse on the terrace was a favourite place for Lord Barrington's guests to view the stage coach as it went through the ford at that spot.

The present house was built for the sixth Viscount between 1831-34. The architect was William Atkinson, who strangely enough was also architect to the Board of Ordnance and designer of several buildings at Woolwich and the Tower of London. The restoration of this building begun by the War Department in 1960 has been completed successfully and the house restored to its original appearance.

Rerum Cognoscere Causas

(To understand the nature of things)

By D. RENNIE

It's all in the nature of things
The workings of Newton's damned
rings;
The fact that they take
Every hour I'm awake—
It's all in the nature of things.

Now all guided missiles have wings
And sometimes a circuit that rings;
I took the Queen's shilling;
Does that make me willing
To fathom the nature of things?

I twitch when my foul alarm rings
For Maths, Phys. or what the day
brings.
E.E. I abhor,
I can't take much more—
It's all in the nature of things.

I'd rather walk heathers and lings
Taking pot-shots at birds on their
wings
Instead I sit here
(I'd give quids for a beer)
It's all in the nature of things!

The Chinese had torture and Mings.
The towel round my head drips and clings.
In this modern army
It all drives you barmy
But then—that's the nature of things.