

An Illustrated Guide



to
Shrivenham

Illustrated Guide to Shrivenham

A brief history and a suggested walking tour of
historic landmarks in the village

By

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Fourth Edition October 2023

Produced by Shrivenham Heritage Society

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AD: MMXXIII

Acknowledgements

This is not a definitive history of Shrivenham. It is, rather, an attempt to show how our village has developed through the centuries. I am indebted to a great number of people. Some have lent old documents, maps articles and photographs; others have recalled memories and events. In particular I would like to thank the late Anne Stevenson and the family of the late Les Judd for permission to use their illustrations and textual material; I would also like to thank Professor A Belk, Mr H Biggs, Mrs S Colyer, Mrs A Day, Mr V Day, Ms P Ilott, the late Mr W Knapp, Mr M Penny, Mr K Pearce, Mr H Taylor, Mr J Wade, and Cranfield University Library Staff. The poems *Of Days Long Ago* and *Ballad for the White Horse* are printed with the permission of Watchfield Village Hall Committee. And lastly, but not least, my thanks go to my late husband Gerry for his help and support.

My gratitude also goes to Neil Maw for his help and suggestions in publishing this 4th edition.

The Heritage Centre in the Memorial Hall holds a wealth of documents relating to the history of the village. The Centre is open to visitors from 10-12 noon on Tuesdays and other times by request.

INTRODUCTION TO SHRIVENHAM

Shrivenham today is a large village that has doubled its size in the last 50 years. Situated in the Vale of the White Horse, it is 7 miles from Swindon, 5 miles from Faringdon and 72 miles from London. It was originally in Berkshire and has been in Oxfordshire since 1972 when the county boundaries changed. Since the by-pass was opened in 1984 there is now only local traffic in the village and shopping has become much easier and more relaxed at the various shops that include a pharmacy, a supermarket, a newsagent and a florist. The village is twinned with Mortree, a comparable village in Normandy

Until the outbreak of World War II, the village was clustered around the High Street and was dominated by the Beckett estate owned by Lord Barrington. The village started to expand in the early 1950s and the Memorial Hall is now centrally placed instead of being on the outskirts as it was then. It is a friendly bustling village with an active caring community. Attractively situated, there is a wealth of history to be gleaned from looking at the many interesting buildings, cottages and houses.

Two factors have contributed to the dramatic growth of our village: the establishment of the Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) here in 1946, now part of the Defence Academy, and the development of Swindon from being essentially a railway town to one that has welcomed several multi-national firms and high technology industries. For many of their personnel our village is a pleasant place to live.

The history of any place is inextricably linked with its physical and social environment, its economic life, its political climate and the way its inhabitants have thought over the years. The ancient village of Shrivenham has seen life in the Stone Age and Roman times, been mentioned in the Domesday Book, known the feudal system, experienced life in Tudor England and during the Civil War, witnessed the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the coming of the canals and the railways in the 19th century and has seen the subsequent drift of workers from the land to the town. Its inhabitants have appreciated the benefits to their children of regular schooling and about 80 years ago marvelled at the introduction of electricity. The Barrington family enriched the quality of life in the village for over 200 years and its influence still shows today.

EARLY HISTORY

We know that men lived on the Berkshire Downs around 2500 BC in the New Stone Age since we have evidence of their sharpened flint stones and also their scrapers for preparing animal skins for clothing. We know too that the Ridgeway, the grassy track running along the northern edge of the Downs, was well walked by Stone Age men who wished to avoid the low-lying swampy country with its wild animals which is today the Vale of the White Horse where Shrivenham nestles. The White Horse carved into the hillside at Uffington from which the Vale takes its name is prehistoric both in age and appearance. It is 374 feet long and is similar to the elongated horse represented on gold and silver coins minted in England towards the end of the Early Iron Age, about 200 BC.

We do not know for certain when the swamps disappeared and crops were grown on the fertile land that lies around Shrivenham and Watchfield. Incidentally, Shrivenham lies on a geological fault which explains the variation in the types of soil in different parts of the village. There is both sand and clay. The soil in the fields around Shrivenham is mainly well-drained greensand and is excellent for growing wheat. The wheat straw has been used for centuries for thatching. Stone was quarried in Watchfield until early last century and nearby Bourton stands on an outcrop of Portland Stone.

Further evidence of early civilisation in this area was discovered when the Shrivenham by-pass was under construction in 1983. During a week-long archaeological excavation of the site when the bulldozers were halted, the remains of 36 bodies were found. Their heads pointed to the South and they were identified as part of a Saxon burial ground dating from about the 6th century AD. Interestingly, the average height for a fully grown man was 5ft 10in and for a mature woman, 5ft 3in, not too dissimilar from today. One grave contained the remains of a man who had been buried with his spears. During the summer of 1989 a further archaeological exploration of the site uncovered Iron Age relics similar to those found at Uffington Castle and dating back to about 400 BC. Post holes and ditches suggesting that animals had been penned in, together with the base of a round house about 15-20 feet in diameter, were also found. Clearly man had settled and lived in this area from very early days. Several Neolithic remains were also identified in the same place. It is thought that hunter-gatherers around 6000 BC regularly, perhaps seasonally, gathered

on this site since Mesolithic flints were found, and that they had settled here about 4000 BC.

On the last day of the excavation an exciting find was made of a young adult male who at his waist had a white metal belt buckle inlaid with decorated brass and three rivets of the same design. It was clear that he had been a man of high status. Even more exciting was the discovery of part of a copper alloy and leather case that contained a balance and a set of weights. Runes were inscribed on one of the case fittings - the first to be found in Wessex. These goods dated the burial between 500 and 550 AD. About this time people fastened their clothing with brooches. Eleven pieces of such Saxon jewellery found at Watchfield is held at the Oxford Resource Centre at Standlake, Oxfordshire.

Water is the first requirement of any settlement. The river Cole runs close to the site and would have supplied the water for man's own needs as well as those of his animals. In addition there would have been several springs just below ground level. Geologically speaking, Shrivenham and Watchfield had recently emerged from a swampy and marshy area. In both villages there were several springs and ponds until the water table dropped notably when drains were put in during the 1940s and again in the 1970s. Indeed, houses built as recently as 1937 still had their own wells.

There are a few traces of Roman occupation in the area. Ermin Street at nearby Stratton and the long straight road between Chiseldon and Ogbourne St George are both Roman. About one hundred years ago a tiled floor in Woolstone, 2.5 miles away, was unearthed and identified as part of a Roman farmhouse. A small

treasure trove of Roman coins together with the remains of some Roman pottery were found in 1903 in an old well in Bower Copse, now part of the Defence Academy grounds. During the excavations for the by-pass in 1983 the remains of a Roman villa were found close to the Highworth Road.

Variations in the spelling of Shrivenham have occurred through the centuries and they include Sciuneham, Sryvenham, Scrivenham, and Shrinham. Explanations differ as to the meaning of the name.

One interpretation is that an Anglo-Saxon by the name of Scrifena held a piece of land here. 'Ham' was Old English and meant a home. Another explanation is that it referred to the mediaeval habit of being 'shriven' or pardoned for one's sins. Certainly, there was a church here in 1086, probably made of wood, and the history of Beckett House goes back well before the Conquest. The Domesday Book (1086) records: 'The King holds Scrivenham in desmesne, King Edward held it. There are 46 hides. There is land for 33 ploughs. On the desmesne there are 4 ploughs and 80 villeins and 17 borderers with 30 ploughs. In the Manor are two mills worth twenty shillings, and 240 acres of meadow and woodland to render (sic) 20 swine. In the time of King Edward, it was worth 35 pounds, and afterwards 20, now 45 pounds.

The Domesday Book also goes on to mention a church in Scriveham (sic) with five hides of land, and belonging thereto are one plough, and four villeins, and five borderers with two ploughs. What the priest has is worth 4 pounds. A hide of land was roughly 100 acres in size and was thought to provide

sufficient pastureland for one family to feed themselves and their animals. One estimate of the population at this time suggests that it was about 360 but we have no documentary evidence.

After the Norman Conquest each village was under the protection of a Lord who owned an area of land known as a manor and who rented small holdings to tenants in return for military service. Life in mediaeval Shrivenham would therefore have followed the feudal pattern of service but instead of one manor it is thought that there were four manors: Salop manor held at one time by the Earl of Pembroke, Stallpits manor by the Earl of Salisbury, Rectory manor with the church granted to the Abbey at Cirencester and Becote manor which was later known as Beckett.

In addition to these lands there was a Mill called Fowersmill. What is recorded is the unusual rent for holding this land in the 14th century: that whenever the King passed through Shrivenham he was to be presented with two white capons together with the remark “Behold Sire, these 2 white capons which you shall have another time but not now.”

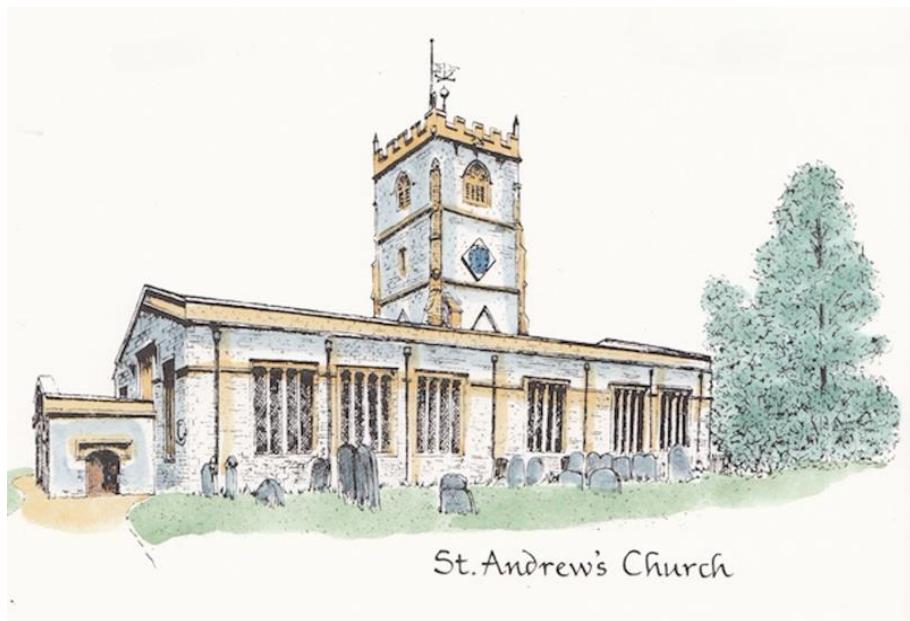
A tucking mill in Watchfield was recorded in the Domesday Book as being worth “14 villeins, 6 serfs with land for 4 ploughs, 8 oxen, 150 acres of woodland and £2.10 shillings a year”. Tucking or fulling refers to the process used to treat woollen cloth before it is woven. This tucking or fulling mill was re-discovered close to Tuckmill brook in 1958 near Northford. Unfortunately for historians it can no longer be seen since it now lies under an extension to the Shrivenham Park Golf Course. Eventually by the early 17th century the manors all became part of the Beckett estate.

In the Middle Ages, Oxfordshire consisted of small villages and hamlets. Cottages with gardens and yards, the church and the manor houses were all surrounded by large open fields, meadows and pasturelands. Beyond this was wasteland and woodland where the pigs were fed. Sheep were kept for their wool and poultry for eggs and meat. The village mill ground the grain, and cider and ale were brewed in the village. It seems that peasant life was probably more restricted and monotonous than squalid. The diet would be limited to cheeses with occasional meals of meat and fish to add variety and each year would be divided by the seasons and the religious festivals. The majority of peasants lived in insubstantial simple houses which were probably re-built every generation. None has survived in Shrivenham and any that might have endured would have been of timber construction with an infilling of woven wattle covered with daub. Cooking would have been done on a central hearth with the smoke escaping through a vent in the roof. The floor would have been of beaten earth. In late mediaeval times the Church was the focus of community life. Few people could read or write and the Vicar kept those records of the Parish which today are kept by local government. The earliest Shrivenham parish vestry record that remains is dated 1575.

THE CHURCH

The establishment of ecclesiastical parishes first came about in AD 685 under Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury. In the Domesday Survey in 1086 the five hides of land belonging to the Church together with the Vicar's living were granted by Henry I to the Abbey of Cirencester. The church remained in the diocese of

Cirencester for about 400 years before it was transferred to Salisbury in which diocese it stayed until 1836, the year before Victoria became Queen. It is now in the diocese of Oxford. In *A Record of the Parish of Shrivenham*, Canon E. Hill says that the Abbot of Cirencester reputedly had a house in the village in 1346. It stood to the north of the present church along the road leading to Pennyhooks Lane today which was known earlier as Abbot's Lane or Abbot's Walk. A map dated 1726 shows the position of Abbots Hill to the north of today's Manor Close development.



There was then a church on the site of the present building, possibly the successor of a previous church, but little remains today. The present St Andrew's church was constructed around a 15th century central tower in the reign of Charles II between 1660

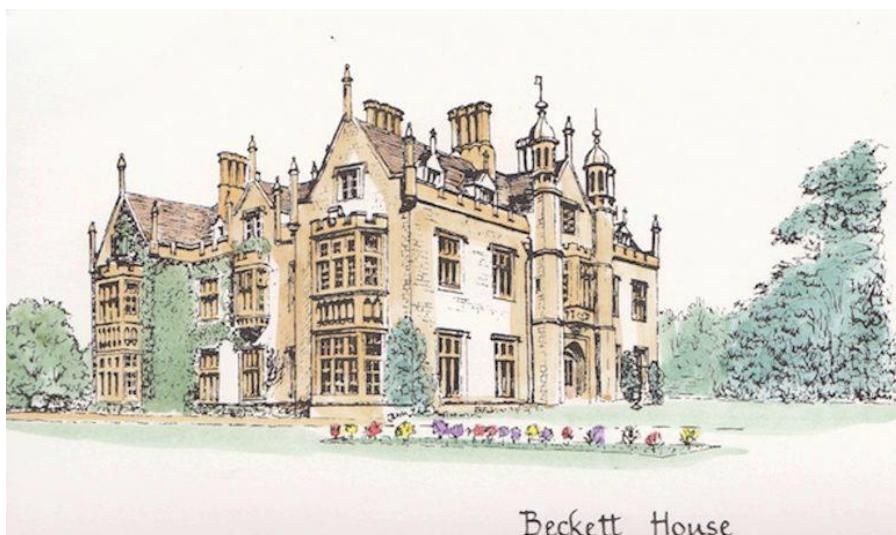
and 1685 by Sir Henry Marten at a cost of £4000. The oldest item in the church is the late 12th century font made from black Purbeck marble and which has an octagonal bowl. It is still used for christenings. Above the font the central window contains two 13th century stone projections that support a small arch. Built into the west wall outside the porch is probably the only remaining fragment of the 12th century church. A record made in 1376 associates the church at Shrivenham with St Mary. It is not known when the name of St Andrew was adopted. During the Civil War, Beckett House was badly damaged by fire and it is not unlikely that the then existing church was also burned. The small stained-glass panel at the top of the central East window, said to be the Abbot of Cirencester in his cope and mitre kneeling with his crozier and bearing the date 1505, was introduced by the Earl of Radnor in 1801.

THE BECKETT ESTATE

To a great extent the history of Shrivenham village is linked to the history of the manor. The four manors that were thought to have originally constituted Shrivenham eventually all became part of the Beckett estate during the mid-17th century. The history of a dwelling on the site of Beckett House pre-dates the Conquest. Although we have no evidence of how many people lived in Shrivenham at that time we are grateful to the Domesday Book for its valuable recorded information. It has been likened to a gigantic tax return whose purpose was to inform William the Conqueror where his possessions stood, how much they were worth, and who held them on his behalf. In 1086, William, Count of Evreux lived in what is now Beckett House. It is believed that King John

was in residence at Beckett in 1204 since a mandate of that date to the Sheriff of Oxford, originated from Becote which was the old spelling of Beckett.

Later in the 14th century it is probable that the de Becket family who gave their name to the estate lived in a stone-built hall-and-solar type of manor house, but the evidence is scanty. In the RMCS Journal for 1951, Major Sewell writes of finds of mediaeval pottery in the south-east corner of Beckett Lawns. He says that this may have been a mediaeval rubbish heap. Handles of large pitchers whose design suggested a date towards the end of the 13th century were found. Other discoveries of flint flakes, probably Neolithic remains, support the view that this area was occupied at least five thousand years ago.



The Barrington family lived at Beckett House from the early 18th century until the mid 1930s. Created a Baron in 1720, the first Lord Barrington had several sons who also had distinguished careers. The eldest son William became the Secretary of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Exchequer and later Treasurer of the Navy. The fifth son Samuel became Admiral of the White. At that time the main road to Longcot and Wantage ran past Beckett House and over what is now the Defence Academy golf course. In dry weather the progress of this former road can still be clearly seen.

In the mid-18th century, therefore, the stagecoach would have driven along the High Street, past Park Cottages in the Longcot Road, into the grounds of the estate and across the ford by the China House. In the style of Inigo Jones, the date of this building is listed as built between 1635-1655 and it is rumoured to have housed a collection of China. It was also a vantage point for the ladies and visitors to Beckett House to watch the stagecoach go by. It may also have been a fishing lodge for Sir Henry Marten who then owned Beckett.



China House & Cradle Bridge

The following Walk Numbers will lead you through the centre of the village and back to the Memorial Hall. Please see the map at the back of the book. For more information on each number the unique 'N' number has been appended for use with the online catalogue

www.shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk



We begin our tour of Shrivenham standing outside the Memorial Hall.

1.

This with its lovely hammerbeam roof inside, was spoken of as one of the finest buildings on the whole of the south of England when it was opened in 1925 by Princess Beatrice. It was built as a result of Lady Barrington's tireless efforts to raise funds to provide a lasting memorial to those Shrivenham men who perished in the First World War. A model of the architect's design can be seen in the Parish Clerk's office. (N255)

2.

The Village Pump. The original pump was constructed over a Well in order to draw up water. What you see here is a replica based on old photographs, erected in 1993. (N132)



Village Pump - Thriplow

3.

Opposite the Memorial Hall are the four Pump Cottages, reputedly built in the reign of Queen Anne and formerly called Well Cottages on account of their proximity to the main village Well. The Well positioned on the triangle of grass between the cottages and the Memorial Hall provided water not only for the cottagers but also for any passing drover and his animals. The village pump was restored in 1993 and is positioned close to its original site.



4.

The eagle-eyed of you may be able to catch sight of Shrivenham's early Police Station if you look just beyond the Pump Cottages. This was erected in 1905 and in use until 1979 when it was sold. It is now in private ownership and has a Policeman with a black bicycle suspended from a tree in the front garden. (N190).



5.

We are now moving into the High Street. A village pound is a rare sight these days. The pound was used for holding stray animals which were only released on payment of a fine. It is in the garden now of the house on the right and is a Grade II listed monument. (N874).

6.

As we continue along the High Street notice the Trust houses on your left belonging to the Viscountess Barrington Trust. This is part of Lady Charlotte Barrington's legacy to the village to provide severely injured soldiers, returning from the First world War, with accommodation to enable them to remain in the village with their families. (N381).

7.

The Methodist Church on the left was built by Mr Wiltshire of Swindon and opened in 1860. Until then services were held in three local farmhouses. It was originally intended to erect the Church adjacent to one of the entrances to Beckett House. Lord Barrington intervened and donated the present site and all the building stone; he was also involved in the provision of the Anglican Churches in Bourton, opened 1859, and in Watchfield, opened 1856. It is a noteworthy achievement by two local organists, Mr Joseph Knapp and Mrs Nellie Penny, that they played the organ here for a combined period of over 110 years. (N358).

8.

Where the row of shops now stand was the yard of the Stone Masons, the Honeybone Brothers. They first started their business in Watchfield and then moved to this spot in the 1840s. Many of the buildings in Shrivenham and district contain dressed stones made by them, and their gravestone markers can be found in many burial grounds.

9.

The next block of buildings made up what once was a large Slaughterhouse and Butchers shop. For most of the 19th century it was in the hands of the Rich family. The animals were brought in from the rear lane to the large buildings behind. It remained a Butchery business until it was partly destroyed by fire in 1976. It is now four separate premises. (N317).

10.

On the other side of the road on the corner of the High Street and Stainswick Lane stands Ivy House, part of which is late 18th century in origin. It was a farmhouse and the land attached to it extended a considerable distance down the lane. Notice the large ammonite in the east wall in Stainswick Lane. A little further down the Lane is the row of dwellings called Coronation Cottages built in 1911. (N1290).

11.

Now, back to the left-hand side of the High Street there are two imposing cottages opposite the entrance to Stainswick Lane. They are listed as 18th century with Historic England but this is incorrect as we have evidence that the original cottages were demolished and they were rebuilt in 1912 to look old. (N925).

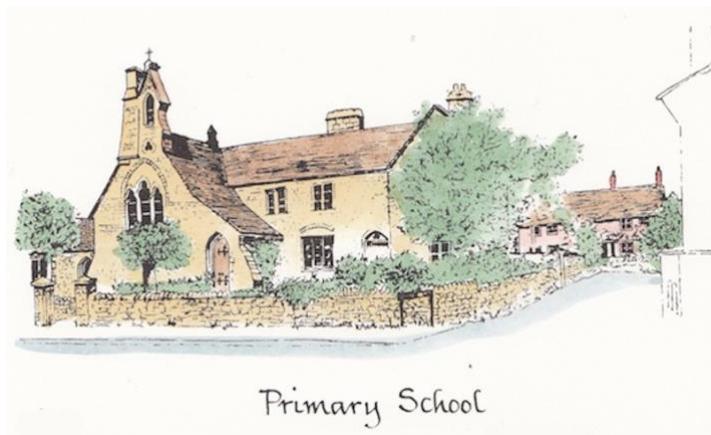
12.

Now look across the road to the White House next to the “One Stop Shop”. It is described as having 17th century origins and was originally two dwellings. A Deed dated 1658, the year Oliver Cromwell died, shows the transfer of ownership from Sir John Wildman of Beckett House. A century later, documents show that the then Vicar of Shrivenham, Barfoot Colton, bought the house. However, it is not certain that he actually lived there. What is certain is that the name “The White House” was in use in 1658 since it is recorded. The bricks in the centre chimney are of a size consistent with those made prior to 1700 and which were not made after that date. The White House used to be detached; at the end of the 19th century a shop and a cottage were adjoined.

13.

Continue walking past the Post Office to the School and the School House. Mr William Knapp said that he understood before the school was built on the land donated by Lord Barrington a six-gabled house stood there. It was taken down to make way for the

new school which was built by his great-great Uncle, also called William Knapp, who had helped to build both Bourton and Watchfield churches in the middle 1800s. It was built in 1863, several years before Forster's famous Education Acts made education available and free for all children up to the age of thirteen in the 1870s. Until 1944 the school provided education for all children from five to thirteen. Extensions were made in 1899, in the 1960s and also in the last twenty years. At the present time with the rapid expansion of the village the school is moving to new premises in the north of Shrivenham. **(N1144).**



14.

Crossing Manor Lane, we are now outside the beautiful Georgian Elm Tree House. Built in 1704 as a Gentleman's residence for Richard Eyloe, it had an interesting history before passing into the Barrington estate in 1805. The portico is Palladian in style. It was used as a private school for the children of wealthy families from the surrounding area. The village green used to be immediately in front of the house and the terrace was well situated for watching the local activities. On the opposite side of the green between what is now Bloomfields and the new Vicarage was the old village pond - a suitable repository for rubbish and dead cats, according to Canon Hill in 1929. Elm Tree House has been the home of the village Doctors since the late 1800s. (N920).



15.

Looking now straight across the High Street can be seen the Old Vicarage built by the Vicar Edward Berens at his own expense in 1805. It was huge with about five acres of land. In recent times it has been sub-divided and is now in private ownership whilst a small estate of houses has been built on some of the land. (N361).

16.

The Cross Trees to the right of Elm Tree House were three stately elms that once towered above the remains of an ancient stone cross. Here too were the village stocks and a whipping post for those found guilty of breaking the law. These were reconstructed in 1977. (N259).

17.

If you look at the dwelling in Church Walk next door to the shop on the corner, it has been determined by research that it was the “Kings Arms” the oldest pub in Shrivenham opened in 1738. (N1025).

18.

In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the Barrington Arms across the road was known as The White Hart. It was sold in 1727 to the first Lord Viscount Barrington and was known as “The Lord’s Arms.” In its heyday coaches and horses would have driven round to the back of the hotel where there was stabling. Visitors’ horses were still being stabled there in the 1940s. (N805).

19.

Lying next to the Barrington Arms is reputedly the oldest house in Shrivenham, Tudor House, which is thought to date from the 14th century. Records show a dwelling here “20 years into the reign of Elizabeth I”. It was certainly two buildings in its life and possible three, and has been used as a Bakery, Shoe Shop, Butchers Shop and Estate Agents. (N2552).

20.

The Firs, next door, is regarded as being much older than it looks and was probably one of the farms that bordered the High Street in the 16th century. We know from documentary evidence that it was a timber-framed building and underneath the plaster covering, which is what we see today, could still be so. (N203).

21.

Still on the other side of the street, next to the Old Post Office is The Men's Institute. It was built in 1904 on land donated by Lord Barrington, as a Reading Room and Library for the men of the village. (N927).



22.

The “Treatment Rooms” standing on the corner of the High Street and Hazell’s Lane is another 17th century building. It was the Parish House in the 18th and 19th centuries and was usually occupied by the Parish Clerk. In the 20th century it became known as “The Thatched Shop,” shop run by the Dike family and was famously known as the shop where one could buy almost anything. It has also been a restaurant. (N168).



23.

Returning to this side of the street is the public house called the Prince of Wales. Part of the building is believed to be 17th century with an 18th century addition. It was licenced as an alehouse circa 1796 and belonged to the brewery known as Garnes of Burford. (N261).

24.

Passing the Crown Public house, which was once three cottages, we see the sharp bend known locally as Horne's Corner. It was reputedly named after a Blacksmith called Horne. Look along the Longcott

Road at the delightful row of cottages known in the 19th century as Park Cottages because they stand on the side of the road that led to Beckett Park, the gate to which was formerly located directly ahead in the distance, but now closed off.



25.

Continue along the Faringdon Road where on your right you will see Medlar Cottage, once part of the Barrington estate but now privately owned. Next door to it is Barnacle Lodge, built as a gate house for the Beckett Estate circa 1830. (N945).



26.

On the opposite corner is Wisteria Cottage which was once two small 17th century dwellings. (N949).



27.

Next on the right is Normanby Cottage, a name given to it by the Barringtons. This is late Georgian and was the home for several Shrivenham medical doctors. The longest in tenure was Charles Parker followed by George Nixon. Dr Albert Macnamara then followed but moved to Elm Tree House in the High Street in 1925, which became Elm Tree Surgery and still a busy practice today. (N118).



28.

The Almshouses, also on the right, were endowed in 1641, about the time of the Civil War, by Sir Henry Marten who lived at Beckett House. They were extensively remodelled in the 19th century and the two at the east end were added by Archdeacon Berens at his own expense. During the last century one of these cottages was made available rent-free for the parish nurse on condition she looked after the other residents in times of ill-health. By the mid 1930s, however, these dwellings were condemned by the local Doctor as being unfit for habitation. The Trustees decided to sell them and to invest the proceeds in four new Almshouses in Marten's Road. (N1389).



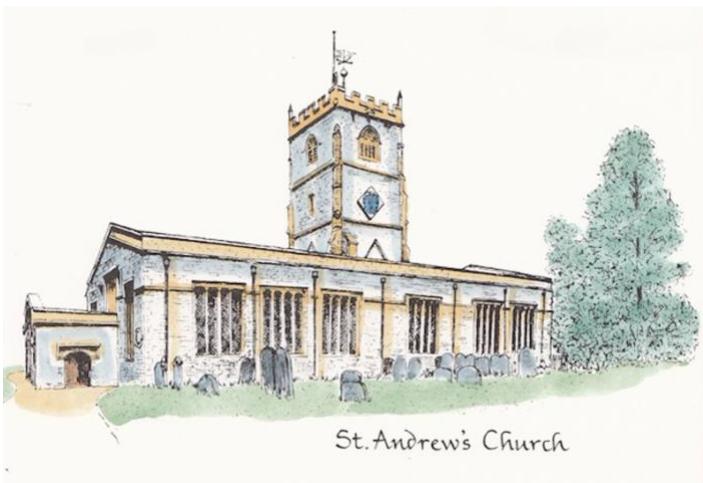
29.

Enter the churchyard. Over the wall on the left is Shrivenham House. This was the Dower House to Beckett House and is similar in style. It was extensively altered in 1834. The original 17th century building was a two-storey house fronting west. A wing projecting east was built in the 18th century from the north wall and the house was made rectangular by the renovations in 1834. (N360).



30.

The construction of St Andrew's Church is something of an enigma. It is also described by some historians as an "architectural curiosity" since it combines two styles. The Tower is 13th or 14th century and the main body of the church was taken down circa 1630's and rebuilt as we see it today but documentary information is scarce. Recently, during building work being carried out, the Barrington Family Vault was uncovered under the porch. (N539).



31.

As you walk through the churchyard you will see a little gem of a cottage on the west side, next to the old School House. These were both built by Rev. Edward Berens in the early 19th century. This is Jasmine Cottage, which was once the home of the schoolmistress who taught in the school for the village girls from 1803 to 1863. The old school is now the Church Room. (N627).



32.

Leave St Andrews by the path close to the Church Room. This path, locally known as Bugs Alley, runs between the gardens of Elm Tree House and Manor Cottages. Look carefully at the wall on the right-hand side and you will see the outlines of doors- the entrances to the six hovels that once stood there. Each two roomed hovel was home for poor families often with six or seven persons in residence. (N685).

33.

As you leave Bugs Alley into Manor Lane Fern Cottage with its 12-foot-high wall greets you. It dates from the 18th century. Turn right and on your right is Manor Close. These houses were built in 1966 on the land where the former Manor House, owned by Mr Amariah Fairthorne, stood. Make your way to the entrance to the Recreation Ground where you will see the remainder of the Viscountess Barrington Trust houses as you approach the Memorial Hall. (N890).



This is the end of the organised part of your exploration of Shrivenham. We hope that you have enjoyed it and are stimulated to find out more about this delightful and friendly English village.



Of Days Long Ago

Of cottage snug, and gardens neat,
Of sunsets red on Winters nights,
Of mist round ponds in Autumn,
Of Christmas in the village shop,
or grand bazaar as it was known;
Of bargains bought with pennies saved,
Of snuff for Gran, a comb for Mum;
Of Spring with hedges green,
Of giant elms, budding faintly red;
Of cowslips, sweet beneath your feet,
Of bread and cheese, picked from the thorn;
Of horsey smells in hayfields sweet,
Of cider as a special treat,
Of autumn reds, its musty smell
Of conkers, bonfires and apples scrumped,
Of accents familiar and faces we knew,

Of a greeting that said "How bist you"
Of hand bells played in village pubs,
Of Christmas parties in village halls,
Of rainwater butts, (rainwater's good for your hair)
Of paraffin lamps, and candles to bed;
Of frost patterns inside windows on morning cold,
Of trips to Southsea by "Knapps" coach;
Of dreams of travel across the sea,
Of morning in school thick with smoke,
from a tortoise stove filled up with coke.
Of holidays long, that never ended;
Of punts on lakes and muddy knees;
Of all these things I often dream.

Vic Day

Ballad for the White Horse by Eileen Jessey

What have you seen, you old White Horse?

Watching over your valley.

Battle and anger, sorrow and pain,

Angle and Saxon, Viking and Dane,

Then after the clamour - silence again.

Peace, in your lovely valley.

What do you see, you old White Horse?

Watching over your valley.

Sheep on the hillside, sunshine and rain,

Grasses and flowers, blossoms and grain,

Oh, may man's hand not scar it again,

Spoiling your lovely valley.

What will you see, you old White Horse?

Watching over your valley.

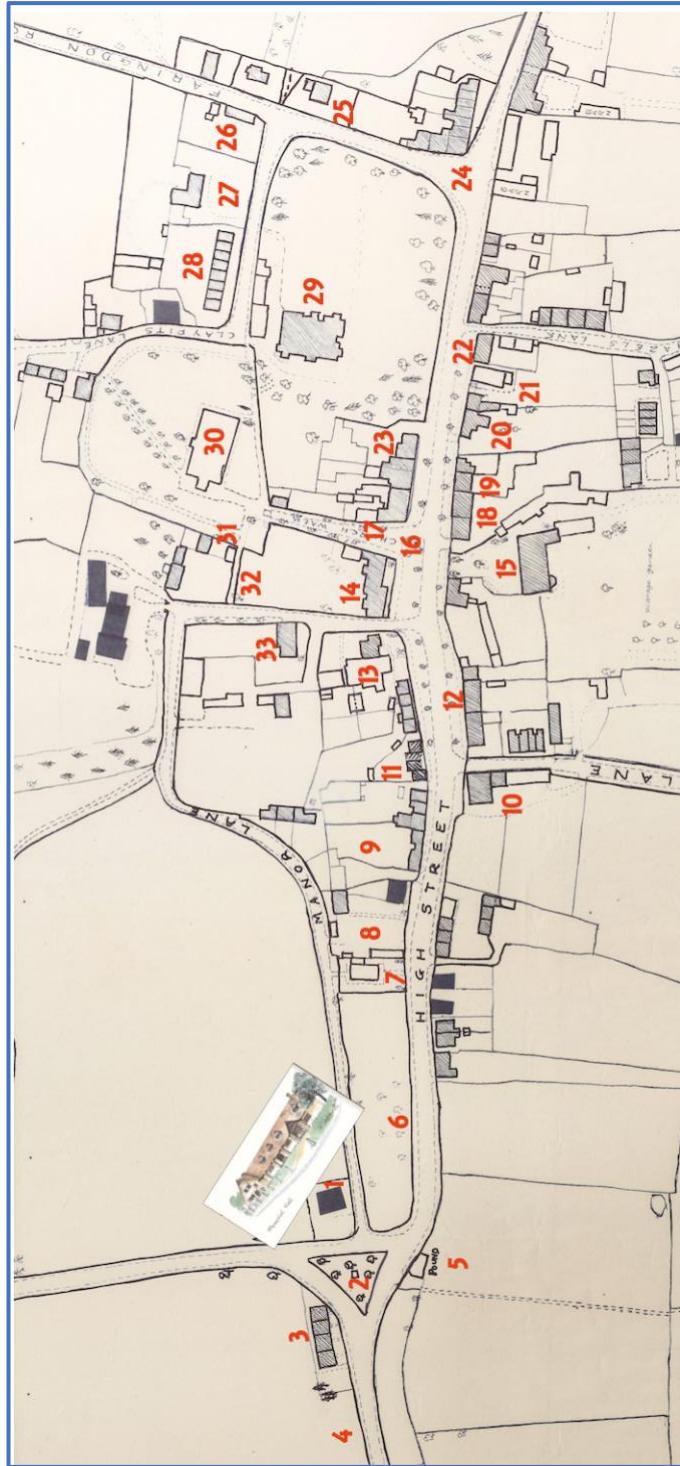
When we are gone, will you still remain?

Proud and aloof, alone to reign,

Unchanged and unchanging, watching again,

Over an empty valley?

Watching over your valley?





Swiss Cottage