

THE HITCHAM HERITAGE 1126-1976

This little booklet was first offered as a contribution to the celebration of 850 years of church life in the area of Hitcham, Bucks, No-one can specify what actually happened in 1126 (the date on the church banner) but it seems that around this time a simple wattle-and-daub church structure was erected, to be replaced some years later in the century by a stone building, of which the present nave walls appear to have formed a part.

This book supersedes to a large degree the out-of-print 'Ye Oulde Storie of Hitcham: the Little Grey Church on the Windy Hill' which was written by the Revd. C.H.D. Grimes for the 1926 celebrations. Many local people have given valuable help in this 1976 edition.

The parish of Hitcham was once identical for civil and for church purposes, but in 1867 the Dropmore ecclesiastical parish was formed out of parts of Hitcham, Burnham, Taplow and Dorney parishes, and Hitcham Civil Parish Council was to end its business in 1923 when the parish was split for administrative purposes between Taplow and Burnham. This study is based on the former boundaries, which are still marked at intervals by stone or metal boundary markers.

No-one can deny that the shape of Hitcham Parish must be regarded as the principle of the strip parish taken 'ad absurdum' - portions of marsh, gravel land, farmland, heath and woodland are all included but are dispersed over a vast distance north to south. But for the development of the Dropmore Estate and within a few years the Great Western Railway the parish might have continued to be a string of tiny hamlets. Now most people live in the south, in 'Newtown' and the 'Station Estate.'

Geologically the parish lies astride a stream valley occupied by an intermittent stream formed during the very cold period just after the Ice Age when the River Thames, diverted from its Marlow - St Albans route to the sea, had slipped south to its present course. The local rocks (glacial period deposits over Tertiary sands and clays over chalk) do not lie evenly over one another, though all generally slope to the south, a fact which influenced the changes in the location of the Thames. At that stage run-off from the frozen ground was greater than nowadays, giving rise to the oversize valleys we can see. The volume of water involved in the erosive action can be judged from the size of the swallow holes (all on private land) in the northern part of the parish. The deepest is over 40 feet deep and 25 feet across; they

were formed where water ran off the surface of the clay Reading Beds and into the permeable chalk below, eroding and dissolving it.

The stream valley forms the long axis of the parish, and the oldest settlements are found near it, especially Hitcham Bottom (the Nashdom area) and around the Church. To each side of the stream one can find the valley gravels laid down by the Thames; geologists know them by their height above sea level and their slightly differing characteristics. The highest is the Harefield Terrace (about 100m.) and the lowest is the present-day flood-plain of the Thames (24m. above sea level.) Flooding is now rare, but in mediaeval times floods over the southern area were more frequent and could be dramatic. The stream and wells provided the normal source of water.

The first settlers in the area seem to have preferred the area near the present Bath Road, for it lay a little above flood level but was not in the midst of the dangerous wooded area to the north. What are called pit dwellings were found on a site south of the west end of Hag Hill Lane: they were simple huts, with excavated floors, built-up mud walls and had roofs of stakes and branches covered with mud or thatch. A typical pit dwelling would have been 5m. in diameter and probably dates back to neolithic times, the site being re-occupied in the Bronze Age. Roman coins and Anglo-Saxon remains have been found nearby; the latter took the form of a sword and a shield boss from a warrior's grave in what was later called Windmill Field. Far less is known about early settlement in the north, though parish and other records show conclusively that the area just south of Dropmore (Cabrook) was settled by about 1500 and had a chapel.

1. THE EARLIEST WRITTEN RECORDS

For the first five hundred years of recorded history in Hitcham the evidence is very scanty and tells us little about how people lived. Just before the Conquest in 1066, it is recorded that Hitcham was the property of Haming, a thegn of King Edward the confessor. The Domesday Book also records that

"Hitcham is the property of Milo Crispin and is held under him by Ralph and Roger. Hitcham contains 6 hides and 6 plough teams. On the demesne are 2 plough teams, 8 villeins have 4 plough teams. There are 3 serfs. There is meadow land sufficient for the plough teams, and woodland to feed 100 swine. From the fishery come 500 eels."

This indicates that at Domesday Hitcham extended right to the Thames; if we add together the number of men mentioned it suggests that Hitcham had about 13 families. Milo Crispin

married Maud, the daughter of Robert D'ouilly, and gained thereby an interest in certain properties known as the honour Of Wallingford. Milo died childless in 1107. He was a great soldier in his time, but there is no proof that the Crispin Inn in Burnham has any link with him despite his importance.

In the next century there is only one reference, which is to the arrival of John le Clerk as Rector. In 1210 a reference in the records of Merton Priory shows them in possession of the curacy of Hitcham, a fact also referred to in the Taxation of 1291, when the value of Hitcham was assessed as being £4.6s.8d.

The Lord of the Manor was obviously a man of significance, but records here are also scattered and incomplete. In the middle to later part of the 13th century it appears to have been Miles Neyrant, then his wife and her heirs from her second marriage to Beauchamp.

At the end of the 14th century control passed by re-marriage of a widow into the Ramsay family, who held it until 1551 when by marriage it passed to Nicholas Clarke. The influence of these families is not known, but it appears that two courts a year were held at Hitcham. The will of Thomas Ramaay (d. 1499) leaves a bequest to Abraham Sybells to arrange the courts, both at Hitcham and at Croughton, Northants. Later, in 1618, Sir William Clarke obtained from King James I a grant of court leet and view of frankpledge to be held twice a year in his parish of Hitcham. Few traces of any transactions survive, but one held in October 1676 indicates that there were a number of transactions at a View Of Frankpledge and Court Baron in the Manor of Hitcham and Dorney, and these included encroachments on the common, and the decision to request the Lord of the Manor to repair the gate between Burnham and Hitcham Commons.

2. HITCHAM TOWARDS THE END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

By this time the keeping of parish registers had become established and where they remain legible they yield valuable information about the local population. The early records of Hitcham suffered badly and various pages were rebound in 1598. This was not a notable time in the history of the parish; the dissolution of the monasteries many years earlier had little effect as a law (other than on Cabrook Chapel) but it is clear that church life was weak. In 1596 the records show neither baptism, marriage or burial. The Inventory of 1552 showed that Hitcham had 2 bells, the legal minimum, one silver chalice with paten, and two surplices. The parsons were in office for many years, though they may have spent only a proportion of their time actually in the parish. In the register of 1591 the priest (Henry Reynolds) is styled as 'Clerke and Farmer of this

parsonage'; the list of Rectors at this time gives Thomas Hall (1569-1592) followed by Robert Floide (1593-1629) so that Reynolds was probably a curate or vicar (i.e. he did the Rector's work for a fee).

In 1627 a terrier, or list of church lands and buildings, states that the parsonage house consisted of "7 bayes built all of timber and covered with tiles and all being chambered over and boarded and the whole building contrived in two storeys and sipoed, into 15 rooms" In 1637 the church building is mentioned in the State Papers Domestic: "Hitcham - Buttresses in decay, ivy to be taken away from church and chancel. Church walls must be plastered. The minister saith there are no books except the bible and the service books... No flagon... A cover for the font and it to be lined with lead." Whether the poverty was of monetary or spiritual resourcefulness is not clear. That money existed in the Manor is clear from the elaborate memorial to Sir William Clarke (d. 1624) in church.

Whilst the date of their placing on the walls is not known, the helmets on the chancel walls of the church date from this period: The one on the north wall, a funerary helmet, is dated by the Victoria and Albert Museum as c. 1570; the one on the south side, which is a piece of German made armour is. about 1640.

3. ON TO THE LATTER PART OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Hitcham does not reflect vividly the stresses of the Civil War any more than it records the earlier religious troubles. The Lords of the Manor were often, highly placed officials in church or state'; thus the Nicholas family, had as an example the principal Secretary of State to Kings Charles I and II; others were royal physicians or leading clerics. But it was Edward Nicholas, son of that Secretary of State, who has left a most significant mark on the parish, for in 1681 the south, east and west walls of the churchyard were built at his expense. The wall on the northern boundary was built in 1686 by the parish; interestingly that wall appears to have been built so as to include the width of the old road from Taplow to Burnham, which was thereby diverted around the west and walls of the churchyard, or perhaps diagonally across the field called Pound Green, west of the church, which might well have been the village green of the time.

The patronage of the Clarkes appears also to have included support for the parsonage, which was enlarged in 1685 and 1702; new barns at the parsonage (Hitchambury) were erected in 1671 and 1679; a set of elm trees were planted there in 1684. Lastly, the chancel of the church was retiled in 1707 There is further evidence of both generosity and pride in the church at

this time, though apart from the wall building no-one is credited with meeting the costs. The pulpit, former oak pews and communion table all appear to date from the 17th century} a chalice and paten are dated 1684; an oak chest is dated 1684 and has the initials C.R. (possible meaning Carolus Rex, King Charles). The alms dish is dated 1694; Edward Nicholas died in 1696, Full details of the succession to the Lordship of the Manor are in the Victoria County History which is available in local libraries.

4. BEFORE THE GREAT DISRUPTION AND CHANGE

We are lucky to have a clear record of the main Inclosure Award of 1779, and this has both map and accompanying parchments. There had been some earlier smaller enclosures, but this period of time marks the ending of Hitcham as it had been. Soon momentous changes were to occur, south and north. A great deal of research has yet to be done on the Inclosure Award, and especially on the patterns of land tenure indicated by it. The Lord of the Manor, then Dr. Robert Freind, was responsible for the largest share of the cost of enclosure (his share being £600) but he also had the lion's share of the land. The next highest share was £184, paid by the Earl of Inchiquin. The Rector was granted 200 acres in lieu of his tithes on the produce of the open lands or common fields. Until this period farming had been based on the three main open fields of the parish, though each man had a number of strips in them, which led to a most inefficient farming pattern. The three fields were: Hitcham Field, later called East Field, which lay east of the road now called Hitcham Road; Hitcham Common Field, later West Field, which lay between Hitcham Road and Boundary Road/Hill Farm Road; and Church Field, which lay north of Hitcham Lane, from the church to a point near Hitcham Lodge.

As a result of earlier and the 1779 enclosures some new farms were established, and these are referred to later. But most of the population were tenants, either tenant farmers or cottagers who made their living in various forms of service on farms or in the woods. The families appear to have been fairly settled, though quite a number of surnames present in 1779 are not also found in 1841 and vice-versa. This settled relationship between man and the land was soon to be disrupted, both in the north and the south of the parish. It is not clear whether the parish was prosperous, for, the church was gaining in possessions: - an inventory of 1783 showed that the church possessed "a silver weighter, a ditto plate and cup, a surplice, one bibell, 2 prayer books, one cushion and hangings to the pulpit, 2 table cloths, one napkin and pewter and flagon, 1 burial cloth and register book." This was a better showing than hitherto, though the population must have been well under 200, and we have no idea to what extent, the Lord of the Manor subsidised, or was gaining

profit from the parish.

It is interesting to note two local events in parentheses: in 1772 the new and present-day stone bridge was opened at Maidenhead. It was a toll bridge, but the toll records show that it soon became very popular and the old road (now Taplow Common Road) to Henley via Cliveden Hill began its decline in importance. By the early 19th century both Hitcham's northern Inn, the Waggon and Horses, and the Inns of Burnham reflected the decline in passing trade. The other event which gave an idea of how society was changing in this rural backwater was the formation of the Burnham independent congregation, based on a Minister of the Congregational Church in Maidenhead, in the later 1770's. They eventually built the chapel in Gore Lane (as it was) but must have drawn in some Hitcham members, just as would have been the case with the Wesleyan cause in Taplow, later transferred to Lent Rise. It is important to remember that at this stage the ordinary people of Hitcham travelled only within the area immediately next to their parish; the wealthy few might go to London; those who lived at Hitcham Bottom might often see traders and the upper classes pass by. For the others there were the local paths and tracks, and the occasional use on them of the pony and trap or some similar conveyance. To get to church from Skipcot (Sheepcote) Farm must have been a long and tiring journey.

5. THE NEW HITCHAM - THE FOUNDATIONS OF NEWTOWN AND DROPMORE

At first it might have seemed that enclosure would have but little effect on the daily life of the men of Hitcham. The cottages remained where they were, entirely within the northern two-thirds of the parish. Under the Inclosure Award the poor were catered for by an award of five acres of land which were to be planted with furze and heath to provide them with fuel, thus replacing the rights of commonage and collection of fuel which they had hitherto. The 'Poor's Land' was situated astride the Taplow Common Road at the point called Hitcham Lower Heath, a few hundred yards north of the Parliament Lane turning. It was central for the population and was unsuited for farming.' Access was easy, for it lay at the junction of roads from all parts of the parish.

The first hints of coming change came in 1780, consequent on the death of the Lord of the Manor who had only recently acquired his newly enclosed lands. The Manor House and lands were advertised and auctioned, and thus purchased by the Right Hon. William Wyndham, Lord Grenville. He was to become Prime Minister for an eventful year in 1806-7, during which time the anti-slavery laws were passed. He became settled in the parish quite quickly, though we have no record of his level of activity until 1792 when he purchased the cottage which lay at Widmer (Widmore) Common

from John Williams of Little Shardeloes. Perhaps he bought some cottages on the Burnham side of the boundary also. At once Lord Grenville set about replacing the woodland cottage with a large country House, to be called Dropmore Lodge. The Lodge was constructed along an east-west axis, and through the middle passed the parish boundary. (The Hitcham section is now administered by Taplow, so that the house is still in two parishes.) The House is substantial and of pleasing aspect, but is in an area to which the public have no access. This seclusion (a major factor in its current use) was part of the policy of Lord Grenville who managed by various means to increase the extent of the estate and to reduce traffic. In 1796 he purchased the Lordship of the Manor for £17,500, and at about the same time he was able to exchange over 200 acres of the Rector's glebe land for other land in the south. The main portion of this was 215 acres of the Hitcham Upper Heath, and the whole transaction was ratified, as law demanded, by a special Act of Parliament. The land thus transferred forms the major part of the present day Dropmore Estate. Other lands were gained on lease or purchase from other owners, and include lands leased by Indenture from the parish of Burnham in 1792 and 1801 for example.

The existence of major routeways across the area had to be dealt with and this was done at a local level by means of gaining the agreement of the justices meeting at the local Inn. Thus we read of a number of road closures and diversions being agreed to in a document:

"We Pascoe Grenfell Esquire and Montague Grover squire two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said County of Bucks at a special session held at the house of William Turner called the Waggon and Horses in the parish of Hitcham.." on Monday 27th April 1812

The closures were of two roads, one from near the Poor's Land and the other being the continuation of the present Rose Hill, leading past Cabrook to Dropmore and thence to Beaconsfield, and of numerous short sections of roads from Hitcham Bottom (where the Waggon and Horses was situated) to East Burnham. Thus Russell Cellar Lane was diverted to the line of the present Nashdom Lane; previously it had gone further north to join the footpath from The Feathers to East Burnham past the northern edge of Dorneywood House gardens. The routes of the old roads can still be traced, though access is not allowed, by the raised hedgerows of what were once small hedging thorns and elms,. Similar changes occurred in the north of the parish, affecting the roads from Wooburn to Burnham, Hedsor to Hedgerley, and similar 'local' and probably historic trading and droving routes. To enable this to be done alternative routes were laid down, and of these the two main ones were the road from the Hedsor

turning north of Cliveden Estate entrance to Dropmore School, and the road from the Burnham end of Nashdom Lane to that school. The area was thus almost completely encircled by roads, and the interior could thus be depopulated and re-planned. The exception was at least one cottage at Cabrook, two if the old chapel / farm was still standing at that stage. New Lodge Houses were erected, four in number, of which one (if it were a Lodge) opposite Nashdom Abbey has been pulled down. The most significant was the Queen's Lodge near the Feathers, erected so that the Queen might enter on her visits - she would in normal circumstances come from Windsor or London along Taplow Common Road, but might have been visiting at Cliveden or Hedsor House, both of which had entrances not far away. By a quirk, none of the Dropmore Lodges lie in Hitcham parish, though Hedsor Upper Lodge does (even to this day, as it was not transferred into Dropmore parish when the rest of north Hitcham was in 186?.)

Thus the Estate was formed, and due to the road and footpath closures isolation increased. At some stage the tenants were dispossessed of the cottages or tenements as they were described, and by 1830 the stage was set for Lord Grenville to gain local agreement for the Poor's Land to be exchanged for a 5-acre plot in the south of the parish. We can thus presume that between 1792 and 1830 there had been almost total eviction of the families from the Estate lands, and their replacement in many cases by family servants, perhaps from London. Little detailed evidence has been brought to my notice, but the depopulation of the north and the new peopling of the south are both evidenced by a comparison of the 1779 Inclosure Award Map, and the 1843 Tithe Map. The people appear to have moved to a new settlement site well south of the church, though we do not know how they came to gain their land or cottages. The small area settled was the southern portion of the 12 Acre Field, itself a portion of the East Field. East Field was in 1843 owned by Lady Grenville, so this conjecture may not be at all fanciful. It seems that the 'New Town' as this settlement was called, numbered at first only about half-a-dozen houses. It was to grow rapidly shortly after because the newly founded Great Western Railway Company were to lay their line only four hundred yards to the south. One of the group of tiny cottages was later to be taken down and replaced by the Reading Room. The inhabitants were all described as Agricultural Labourers, so that they presumably worked for Lady Grenville's Hitcham Court Farm which was adjacent to the church.

The erection of Dropmore Lodge resulted in the old Elizabethan Manor House, purchased by Lord Grenville in 1780, becoming unnecessary, so that it was let to a Dr. Gretton who ran it as a school. There were about 26 boys and it was a profitable exercise. The House had nineteen rooms and was set in a landscaped Park, part of which was devoted to a walled garden.

In the house were some valuable portraits, including those of Kings Charles I and II, and some others, one of which was said to resemble Cromwell - a surprising juxtaposition. The house was pulled down after damage by fire some time before 1840. The last item of interest in this period is to recall that in 1813 a gallery was erected at the west end of the church "at the sole expense of the St. Hon Lord Grenville, Lord of the Manor." The gallery was to be shared with the families of Mr. P.C. Bruce (of Taplow Lodge) and Lady Hammet (of Taplow) in lieu of the right to their pews in the main body of the church. The date at which the gallery was removed is uncertain but it may have been during the restoration of 1866.

6. CENSUS, TITHE AND RAILWAY.

The enumeration of the population was developed on a ten-yearly cycle as from 1801. The figures for that year may occasionally be suspect, but thereafter they seem to be reliable. Written records of people's names, ages and occupations exist from 1841, though with increasing accuracy and detail from 1851 onwards. It is interesting to compare the information given by these Census returns for the adjacent parishes of Taplow and Hitcham. Note that Taplow at that stage included Odd's Farm, and Hitcham included those northern parts which I have referred to above.

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891
Hitcham	200	161	172	232	267	236	205	270	395	512
Taplow	422	592	586	647	744	704	811	1028	1063	1029

Additional information related to 1801 and 1841 enables us to compare the number of houses and their occupancy rates. In 1801 Lyson gave these figures:

Number of inhabited houses:	Hitcham 30	Taplow 80	Burnham 258
Population	200	422	1519
Persons per house	6.3	5.35	5.5

Though the populations of all three parishes increased by 1841 only Hitcham showed a bettering of the 'overcrowding' for there were then 48 houses, with 4 unoccupied and 2 being built, and thus an overall occupancy rate of 5.6 persons per house.

The development of the Railway dominated the 1841 figures, for a whole series of changes were sweeping over the parish, and New Tovm in particular. The railway had cut, regardless over the southern farming fields of the parish, and an engine house, turntable, siding and some railway cottages all erected on the embanked area east of the current Taplow Station. At that stage (from the opening of the route to London in 1838 till the

opening of Maidenhead Town station in 1872) the station was the 'old' station at the Dumbbell, variously called Maidenhead (Riverside) and Maidenhead (Dumbbell) but never Taplow. The present station is in Taplow, though Station Garage and the W.I. Hall are both in Hitcham. The first trains were Broad Gauge (7' 0¹/₄") and the last such trains ran in 1892. Not long before that date the tracks had been doubled up, giving the present layout. It was reported at the time that the effect of the railway was so to reduce the number of stage and other horse-drawn carriages crossing Maidenhead toll bridge that the tolls had to be reduced. Prior to 1838 there had been 70 or 80 carriages a day on the London road.

It appears that part of Hitcham's population figures are thus explained by the influx of railway builders and workmen; in part by the de-population consequent on the establishment of the Dropmore Estate. Research has yet to show the effects of the incidence of epidemics or of poor harvests. As the railway was the main line to the west, and, via the Bourne End line, from London to Oxford also, it would not be surprising if Hitcham did not act as a residential area for railwaymen working trains in and out of Maidenhead station. It would be interesting if someone could specify the relationship of the Fairview Road houses and the siding behind them to these developments. The census figures indicate that 31% of Hitcham's people were born outside Buckinghamshire as compared with 18% in Burnham hundred as a whole. It was (as in many areas) a young population with 55% being aged under 20, though with an equality of males and females, the ratio being 133:134.

The following table gives the occupations of the 267 inhabitants in the Census records of 1841

Trade	Number	Dependents of occupied	
		Wives	Children
Agricultural labourer	45	25	69
Male servant	11	3	11
Female servant	13	0	1
Railway trades (all types)	5	5	14
Farmer	3	3	8
Gardener	2	1	3
Carpenter	2	1	7
Brickmaker	1	1	5
Brickyard labourer	1	0	0
Factory labourer	2	0	0
Clerk in holy orders	1	1	7
Elderly, not employed	2	0	0
Indigent	4	0	1
Others incl indep't means	4	0	5

TOTAL

96

40

131

These figures do not indicate the extent to which those in one of the occupations mentioned were employed - whether spasmodically or all the year through. One Railway Tradesman (an Excavator) was in 1843 listed as tenant of the Beer House (i.e. the Maypole) and it likely that this was a 'second job'; in the same way the keeper of the Waggon and Horses Inn in 1843 is shown in 1841 as a carpenter and joiner. The Waggon and Horses had ceased to trade by 1866; the Maypole which did not exist at all in 1779 still trades but with a full licence and on the adjacent site to its position in 1841 when it was the house now called 'The Retreat'. The establishment of the Haypole next to the footpath from Burnham was likely to have been a response to the development of the railway; it is not known if it was supplied from the Rose Brewery in Burnham at any stage. Other evidence from the Census is that the male and female Servants were employed at Hitcham Court Farm, Hitcham Bottom Farm, Hill House (The Grange), Hill House Farm, Hitchambury (The Rectory), Dropmore Lodge - which had 12 servants resident in Hitcham alone, and Sheepcote.

Interesting place names in that Census include Botney Bay, which is listed just before Hedsor Lodge, and 'Railroad Cottages' - in New Town, a description which sounds rather American. The Census return should be studied in conjunction with the Inclosure Award and Tithe Map, There is a gap of 62 years between the earlier two documents, so that many family names have disappeared, but only minor changes between 1841 and 1843. What links the 1779 and 1843 maps is the field boundaries, which reflect the changes discussed in previous sections. These maps also help to indicate the framework of field boundaries and paths which have shaped the Hitcham we have today, for it is only with the development of Hanbury Close that a road system has completely hidden the old boundaries. But in 1843 there were no housing estates; very few of the 1483 acres were built on, and the analysis shows that 582 acres were arable, 280 were under permanent grass, and 474 were woods and plantations. Of the latter the most significant plantation was the Firs, an area of Old Inclosure in the north-west of the parish; it is reflected in the existence of the old Abbott's Wood Hill, which is now converted into an expensive private house.

At a more detailed level, it is interesting to note that the Pound Green (whose location and size suggests it was an erstwhile Village Green) was fenced off between the two dates, thus introducing a diversion of the road from Taplow across the top

corner of the field known as Sheep House Close. The old road, running along the north side of the churchyard until 1686 we may presume, was now out of use, though to this day its route at the rear of Cloverdown Cottage and across Pound Green field can be seen. The part of Sheep House Close cut off at the top was the area in which the school was to be built. The area south of that diverted road is now the plot on which the modern Rectory was built. The roads were repaired by workmen appointed by the surveyors of Highways, still using the parish gravel pit (now an enclosed grass area) between the north side of Hag Hill Lane and Hitcham Road. The old gravel pit in the north (alongside the road from Hedsor to Dropmore) could no longer be easily used because Lord Grenville had stopped up that road, and therefore easy access to the pit. This was a matter of some complaint to the Lord of the Manor in 1868. By 1913 the southern pit had become an 'environmental issue' due to its being used as a refuse tip by the occupants, of the cottages immediately to the south of it.

Though the southern part of the parish is described as 'Marsh' in many maps, the 1843 map shows that at least the section between Ye Meads and the Bath Road was arable; the meadows in the south were where the sewage works now stand, south of Hill Farm, around Hitcham Court Farm, around Hitchambury and in the whole area known as Hitcham Park. There appears to have been a higher percentage of arable land there at that time than there is now.

A reference to the Rector, of that period should not pass unrecorded. He was the Rev. W.M. Grover, Rector from 1833-1866. He was described as having been 'at first too busy with other things, and then too feeble.' From 1838 to 1846 at the very least curates were effectively in charge of the parish. When he was elderly he was wheeled from Hitchambury to church in a wheelchair by his man-servant - and in bad weather they might find, only the churchwarden there, so they would say a prayer and set off back home. In those days it is interesting to recollect that there was no vestry: the clergyman and choir used the base of the tower. Before the sermon was preached the Rector (or curate) would, as in most other churches, go to the vestry to exchange his surplice for the black gown. So far as one can tell, there were some times during Grover's time when there was neither choir nor music at the services. Was there an organ? We don't know.

7. THE REST OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Perhaps the title of this section is ambiguous: for the death of Lord Grenville in 1834 and of his wife in 1864 led to death duties and thus to the sale of part of the estates which they had built up throughout the parish. As a result of the duties, Mr George Hanbury purchased lands around the church, and later the old Manor House site and gardens from the heir to Lady Grenville

(the Hon. George Matthew Fortescue) for a reasonable sum. This opened up a new and very happy chapter in the history of the parish; people could 'rest' because much was done for them by the new family, even though the Fortescues remained Lords of the Manor. Mr Hanbury employed architect Roger Smith to build him a new house, which was called Blythewood and is now Hitcham House and is used as a Nurses Hostel. A number of road and path diversions were part of the planning of this new house and grounds, and though these are referred to later, we might mention here that the 'New Cut' dates from this time, together with its bridges, one of which carries the road from the Lower Lodge which bears the initials 'G.H.'. The new 'Manor House' like the old one is situated on the edge of the valley of the stream and especially before the trees grew tall enjoyed good views across the Thames Valley. Of course it could not be called the Manor House - that was, technically. Dropmore Lodge.

Two other buildings can be immediately linked with the Hanbury estate: the school (1868) and the Reading Room (1870's - date uncertain). But at the same time the church was restored and it is not clear whether this involved the Hanburys. This restoration appears to have depended for its initiation on the grandiose ideas of the Rev. William Carter, who also enlarged the Rectory to accommodate his many children despite knowing that he would shortly have the opportunity to move to Burnham. The Rectory extension involved a mortgage of £1,000, paid off by 1906; the restoration of the church included new pine pews, the oak pews being removed to the carpenter's house in Taplow, though a few pieces still line the west side of our church porch, complete with hinges. Apart from this the tower arch was raised 3 feet, and a new porch was built; the chancel floor was relaid using some of the old encaustic tiles and some new ones from the Chilterns factories. Two years earlier, in 1864, a major change in the church occurred when the Rector (then Mr. Grover) arranged that carpenter James Rutland should cut a door through the north chancel wall to a new vestry which was constructed there. The Bishop, who had not been asked, was extremely vexed. However, the door still gives good service! In 1876 an extension to the vestry was made, with a corrugated iron roof, on the site of the present large vestry. It was at this time (Rector Frewer held office from 1873 - 1905) that the church was further improved with new lamps, the first of many gifts from the Hanburys.

Other signs of the effects of increasing population can be noted: following the first meeting of shareholders in 1891, the Burnham, Hitcham and Dorney Waterworks Company was operational by 1896. In 1894 an area of glebe land which includes the site of present-day Poplar Farm Cottages was rented by the Parish Council as allotments. This is an interesting link with the past, for many parishioners were men who were used to having their own plot

adjacent to their cottage in the country. Special gates to the allotments were presented by Mr Hanbury in 1895. (The allotments went out of use in the 1920's consequent on the sale of the glebe lands.)

It is perhaps 'history' to speak of the 1870's but we are lucky to have in the parish a centenarian who was born in 1876 in the Lodge to the Dropmore Estate. She lived there till she was nine and then went into service. The Lodge was a cottage with a thatched roof whose thatch was continued beyond the wall on one side to form a verandah, under which her father used to play a variety of musical instruments. As his wage as a Dropmore Estate gardener was 2/6 (12¹/₂p) for a 12-hour non-stop day, he had to find other ways of supplementing the family budget and of supporting the seven out of 15 children who survived infancy. So he had a miniature farm around the cottage, and also played his music to the customers at the Feathers Inn which was just down the road. His lunch, which was taken to him at work, was often a hollowed out cottage loaf filled with boiled bacon or eggs. In the winter they would collect cartloads of ice from the frozen pond and take it to the ice-house (a mainly underground construction) where it would keep fresh until needed at Dropmore or at the other Fortescue houses in London or Cornwall. The gardeners worked in part on vegetable plots from which a proportion was also sent to London. The children attended Dropmore School, and no doubt Dropmore Church, which was not only built by the Grenville family but contains a large Grenville aisle. But, as this church reminds us, the northern half of Hitcham was now in the ecclesiastical parish of Dropmore.

8. HITCHAM SCHOOL

When the Hanbury family came to Hitcham the village was without a school; the population was small and dispersed, and there were other opportunities for those who wanted education. In particular there was a small school on the Gore serving Burnham and Taplow as well as Hitcham. (The Gore is just in Burnham.) The Rector agreed to let the school, which was to be Hitcham Church of England School, be erected on the triangle of land at the top of Sheep House Close which we had seen earlier was cut off from the rest by the diverted road. The cost of the two-room school (Infants and Boys) was £350. It was enlarged by the addition of cloakrooms and a separate Infants' porch in 1892. At about that time a school was established in the nearest part of Taplow to New Town (at Station Road corner); this was to be Taplow Grammar School, and whilst it existed many Hitcham boys, including some still with us, went there, using the short cut south of the allotments which is now a footpath right-of-way.

Hitcham School was improved in 1904 by the provision of earth closets, and in 1905 wash stands were added, and by, order of Her

Majesty's Inspector of Education the Infants' tiered gallery was replaced by desks. But the number of children was never great, and in 1922 the school closed, the last teacher being Mrs. Massey. At a similar date the Reading Room was closed and sold, like the school, so, that it might become a private residence. The school was, however, bought by Sir Henry Dixon Kimber in 1926 for £400. He allowed it to be used as a parish room for some years; the land around the school was sold to him for £200 after protracted and stressful negotiation. The whole site is now a private residence. Taplow Grammar School also closed, and after a variety of uses was left derelict and then demolished in 1975.

The story of Hitchambury as a Rectory also comes to a close soon after 1900. Carter had ambitiously and foolishly enlarged it, and had saddled the benefice with a large mortgage. Soon after that was paid off, and in the time of Rector Edward Carter, it was decided to sell it together with some adjacent land, and to build a new Rectory near the church. The old Rectory was half a mile from the church and was only suitable for a farming parson with a large family. So in 1909 the Rectory was sold to Charles Selwyn Awdry for £4,200, and with it went 4½ acres of land for a further £3,429. The other nearby glebe lands were rented out. The new Rectory, which cost a mere £1,800 was commenced in 1908. Plans to sell further plots of glebe land were made but not effected until after the War. Above all things, it was the sale of the glebe lands which brought the next stage of change to Hitcham, but before we consider its implications I must mention that the building of the old houses fronting onto Hitcham Road was now complete, from The Villa, built by William Horwood in 1908 up to the Reading Room. There was also a side road, Oxford Court which led past Horwood's Cottages to Hanbury's Cottages. These have all gone, which is just as well for those who lived there. An isolated house at Taplow Road corner, Beech Lodge, built by the Head of Taplow Grammar School, Mr Dykes, has also gone - but not before its next occupants could start the Nursery which was to be the basis of the new Woods' Nursery, now sited along the Bath Road. Dykes also owned some other land in New Town, and some of the Hitcham Road houses originally were let out by him. Included in that road was a Post Office run by the Howards, which also served as a Tuck Shop for Taplow Grammar School boys who came to it along the footpath. A house on the corner of Byways was also possibly built as an intended shop but never used as one. At this time the old Maypole was a Dairy.

9. THE SALE OF THE GLEBE LANDS

After the First World War many factors, including the economy, long term plans and the need for new housing land all supported the idea of selling most of the glebe land. In addition, the Rector and his tenants had before the war experienced Land Tax,

which was an added if modest incentive. The Eton Rural District Council had been keen to see new houses erected to house the war veterans, and in the case of Hitcham the steadily increasing population gave its own pressure. Some houses were erected in Byeways (Byways), a cul-de-sac until about 1950. (It also had a nickname, Lantern Avenue because of its lights.) All these houses had made the total population of New Town greater than that of any other part of the parish.

There was another new area, The building of houses along the track we now call Marsh Lane had commenced;. The date of the earliest houses there is unknown; they were wooden structures and it is remembered that at least one man worked in Maidenhead. Between them and the station was erected the Drill Hall in 1911. Does anyone have any early records of it?

The glebe land was sold in ten lots, some near the old Rectory, and the rest with two exceptions were in the south of the parish. The areas varied from 1 to 39½ acres, and the sale prices varied according to the farming and gravel qualities of the land. Gravel was a selling point even then. The tenants of these southern lands at the time of sale were Mrs Dykes, widow of the Headmaster Dykes, R.H. Cleare, and W. Horwood. 1-acre plots in the area went for £300, but larger arable areas fetched about £125-£150 an acre. The small plots were a continuation of the process of 'infilling' - empty plots between houses were sold to be built on. In 1911 Hitcham had lost its small recreation ground, 'The Croft' being built on it in such a way. We can trace some specific developments to the sale of the glebe: Lot 5 was to become the main part of the lands of Learig - so named by Mrs Dyke who built it because she came from Learig in Scotland. Lot 6, north of the Taplow end of the track leading to Nearway Road, Burnham, (now Eastfield Road), was to have a crop of wooden and brick bungalows, some of which remain. Lot 8 was south of Eastfield Road, and is the area from opposite Bingham Road to the Geest yard: this was used for housing, the land being sold at £5 per foot frontage - the depth was 360 ft. Lot 7, on the other hand, was purchased by a nurseryman and established as an orchard (Bayley's Orchard) from which fruit was sent to Covent Garden Market. It was not developed until 1949, and is now Bayley Crescent, Bingham Road and the extension of Byways. Lot 9 was a one acre site next to the Bath Road. Lot 10 consisted of two large fields south of the Bath Road. The northern section is not developed, and is used for show jumping events from time to time; but to the south are a series of long narrow one-acre plots on which individual houses were built in the 1920's.

Until this time there was an annual Hitcham Fair every year on the Windmill Field (now the Marshgate Trading Sstste). This was

well known for miles around; is it possible that this is how Fairview Road got its name? The story of these houses has not yet been fully studied; nor have we at hand the date at which the horticultural requisites works was built on the Windmill Field. What is clear from early maps is that when the glebe lands were sold gravel, sand and chalk extraction had already commenced in Taplow, Hitcham and Lent Rise - but in 1919 there was no 'works' on the map. The other odd feature of note from the 1919 map is that apart from the Horse and Groom and the buildings next to the Bath Road at the Hag Hill corner, there were no houses next to the Bath Road between Cippenham Lane and the Dumb Bell.

10. A LITTLE HISTORY OF MARSH LANE

It was noted in the last section that some houses had been built in Marsh Lane at a point where the old footpath leads off to the southeast at some time before 1919. By that date the map shows two groups of houses in that area. The reason was presumably that this was the cheapest building land available in the parish; it is certainly low lying and liable to become waterlogged. It appears likely from two events that the earliest buildings were erected in about 1912. One event was the licensing of the Mission Room for Divine Worship and the administration of the sacrament of Holy Communion by the Bishop of Oxford in 1912; the other was the co-option of Mr D. Redfearn to the Parish Council, in 1914 "as it was felt that the Marsh Lane district should be represented on the Council." The Mission Room was sited on a tiny plot on the glebe land at the first bend. It was closed and sold in 1924 to the new owner of the adjacent site, Mr Edwards, whose daughters still reside there in the house which Mr Edwards built in 1923.

At this time Marsh Lane had no footpath, gas or electricity. The refuse collection round started in 1925, and subsequently the area was transferred from the old Hitcham Parish Council to the enlarged Taplow Council. The second attempt to maintain public worship in the area commenced in 1937, when Canon Evans was Rector. A building which had been built at the west end of Ye Meads was called the Brazil House Hotel, after its Brazilian owner, and was subsequently called Ye Meads House. Canon Evans hired a room and in it Holy Communion was celebrated monthly and each week there was Sunday School and Evensong. This room came to be known as 'St. David's' and prayer books with that inscription can still be seen at church. Evening service was conducted normally by lay readers, of whom Mr Wallis was a Hitcham man (and its first Scoutmaster.) He died recently, but Mr Stratford of Slough is still an active Reader. A further Reader was Mr Edward Harding of Burnham. He was a baker, but was successful in becoming Reader in 1938, was ordained deacon in September 1941, and priest in 1942, the year when Canon Evans died. Mr Harding then moved to Cowley, Keynsham, Forces

chaplaincy, Bradfield (Essex) and Chaddlesworth (Berks) where he died in 1971.

In 1939 this active congregation was given a sum which enabled the parish to purchase a plot of land called Hatherdale for the purpose of erecting a church hall. This plan was put into abeyance due to the war; planning permission was gained, but the land was eventually sold in 1968. The Sunday School had long since lapsed; in 1949 it was decided to go to the church for Evensong, so that a seven seater taxi was booked to make the Sunday evening journey for 6d return. The transport scheme was imaginatively described as the 'Marsh Lane and Hitcham Church Motor Haulage Transport Co. Ltd. (very)' . Monthly communion services were held in private houses after Ye Meads House was sold, and until 1973 when the holding of regular services in Marsh Lane ceased. The Sunday evening taxi service still runs, though at a greater cost than before. When the Marsh Lane people come to church they can reflect that the £50 before expenses which was the sale price of the Mission Room was put towards the £195 needed to provide the present choir stalls in 1926.

The Motorway lies just to the south of the parish, and was planned originally as a Maidenhead by-pass in 1938, when it was felt that there would be access from Marsh Lane, and consequently a significant future for that area. The bridge piers which had been constructed were used as part of the M4 works. The Scouts who had met in Marsh Lane subsequently met in the W.I. Hall, and eventually by amalgamation became part of the 1st Burnham and Hitcham Scout Group.

11. THE CHURCH IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The church has been kept in good order ever since the repeat restoration of 1876. From time to time improvements have been made, and as we look around we can see the pleasing results. The wire doors to the porch were fitted in 1910, the Positive Organ was fitted in 1914 and was hand-blown until 1959, when an electric blower was fitted. In 1920 the VWar Memorial was erected; another War remembrance was the gift of a new peal of bells by Col. Lionel Hanbury in thanksgiving for the safe return of, his daughter and himself. The bells were erected in 1919 at a cost of £587.7.6.

More obvious is the provision of the handsome vestry in 1926. It was paid for in part from the proceeds of the sale of the school, so that it is in trust terms an educational building, for that was the restriction placed on the disposal of the school funds. The Hanburys also made a contribution to this cause, and thus the old iron vestry was taken down. The 800th anniversary was celebrated in 1926, and to celebrate that it was decided to

remove the old 1866 pine choir stalls and replace them with oak stalls. This was done, in 1928 following public subscription, though the cost of clergy stalls (£12 each) was considered to be too great. The pews in the nave were replaced at the gift of Col. Hanbury in 1938, thus giving the church its present appearance at ground level.

But we must look up as well. The old gas lights had been replaced by newer ones with round white globes in 1907; in 1938 this was changed to electric light, though the present large central chandelier was a gift of Col. Hanbury in 1953, the year before he died aged 90.

The church tower had been covered with plaster in 1912, but the tower was restored at a cost of £500 in 1953; over half the cost was raised by one sale of work. During the last twenty or so years there has been steady and careful attention to the fabric of the church, but there have been no substantial changes. Change has been much more in the area of our patterns of worship and in the provision of those items which assist us as we worship. In 1975 for the first time the church came onto mains water supply - we had done without for the first 849 years.

The size of the parish has led the diocese to review its clergy allocation and in due course it is probable that Hitcham might become part of a 'Group Ministry' in the Burnham and Taplow area. With this in mind no Rector was appointed when the Rev. Dr. Frank de Jonge retired in 1973, but a Priest in charge was appointed who has most of the functions of a Rector, but without 'freehold for life'. The parish also plays its part in the work of the Burnham Deanery (i.e. the Slough area) and has for some years been privileged to have provided one of the senior officers of that Synod. Another aspect of the changes within the church is that it is felt that the present Rectory might be too large, but at the present moment it also finds a use as a homely church hall, suitable for social gatherings if not for anything too well-attended.. The joy, and yet the despair of the Rectors of Hitcham is its Rectory garden, which is of considerable extent - about 6 1/2 acres all told, containing a most exciting variety of plants and tress, large and small: even a fig tree and vines.

12. SOME HITCHAM BUILDINGS

A number of buildings have already been mentioned; after this section I quote from a brief history of Nashdom prepared by the Abbot in 1976. As has already been made clear, Hitcham has had two public houses. The Waggon and Horses was pulled down and has been replaced by Hitcham Vale, but the Maypole still stands. The visitor will notice that the Maypole consists of one large 'end-terrace house' and two smaller sections which resemble

cottages. This is probably what they were, greatly altered over the years as trade increased and the two attached cottages were bought to allow the extension to take place. The Maypole has been owned successively by Wheelers Wycombe Brewery, then by H. and G. Simonds about 30 years ago, then merged with the Courage group in 1962. At first a Beer House, it was granted a full on-licence in June 1954: no doubt a response to the rapidly growing local population. The old Maypole is now the adjacent house, and because Eastfield Road is newer than that old pub one will actually find that the cellar extends under Eastfield Road. The date when the old pub closed and the present site came into use has not been traced so far - in 1843 the present pub was still cottages; what is now the car park was still orchard. At the east end of the pub we are told that a sloping roof provided a shelter for some barrels.

The Women's Institute Hall was opened on April 15th 1930 after some donations had been generously given towards the cost. It was so placed that it might serve both Taplow and Hitcham and was built by Mr. Mitchell of Eastfield Road. The Scout and Guide huts were opened in 1965 (the Scout Headquarters on June 12th) on land which is leased from the Taplow and Hitcham Recreation Ground. This area, which was once part of the West Field, was cut first by the railway and then by the road, and was subject to gravel extraction in the 1950s in particular. A local firm then purchased it to use it for a factory site but local opinion was backed by enough enthusiasm to prevent this and to ensure that the land would remain an open space. To this end a lease of the land was negotiated with Lady Gage, a legatee of Lord Desborough who had been also landlord of the present allotments. Prior to meeting in their new Headquarters the cubs met in the W.I. Hall, and the Scouts in the Drill Hall. The Drill Hall, a pre-war building of uncertain date, is now used by the Thames Valley Police who took it over in 1971-2. Opposite is the rapidly expanding headquarters site and offices of the Bishop Organisation, formerly used for Woods' Nursery.

In the north of the parish is the Cenacle. This house, in Parliament Lane was originally Hitcham Place and was owned by Sir Henry Kimber. During the war it was used by the B.B.C. and afterwards it was used as a private nursing home (during which time it was extended) and as a language correspondence school. It is now the home of Sisters of the Cenacle, a Roman Catholic order which includes in its aims educational activities, the holding of retreats and general philanthropic work. The Sisters came to Hitcham in July 1968 and opened the house in December.

13. NASHDOM

The house now known as Nashdom Abbey was built by Prince Alexis Dolgorouki (1846-1915) in the years 1907-8, though it was

reputedly his English wife, born Fanny Wilson, who supplied the money. (When Fanny died she left £46,000 but her will gives little clue to the history of Nashdom or of the Dolgorouki family history.) As architects for this project the Prince and Princess engaged Sir Edwin Lutyens, acclaimed the greatest architect of the day. The name "Nashdom" which they gave to the house is simply that Russian equivalent of "Our House." The thirteen acre site would have had two particular attractions in addition to its proximity to London and Windsor. First, it was an island site bounded on all sides by roads, and secondly it had a fine avenue of mature sweet chestnuts - so mature indeed that they had to be felled within sixty years of the house's completion.

The date of the purchase of the site by the Dolgoroukis was perhaps 1906, judging by the boundary marks that were inserted into the ground near where the house was to be built, and carved with the characters "D 1906". The first definite date that is known is provided by Sir Edwin Lutyens' planning application to the Eton Rural District Council, dated 21st November 1906. The first drawings for the house are interiorly almost identical with the building eventually erected, but exteriorly they show a marked Continental character, which was modified to give the house a more typically English idiom.

Although seemingly large from the outside, the accommodation inside the house is less than its imposing facades might suggest. In addition to the Prince's and Princesses' bedrooms there were probably only twelve that could be considered guests' rooms, as opposed to those that were set aside for the staff. Notable features of the interior of the house are the large ball-room with its minstrels' gallery and the stone internal stairways from the front door. For their period, the house and its outbuildings were up to date, having central heating, damp courses and a private electricity supply generated in one of the outhouses.

There was no lavish scheme for the garden such as was characteristic of many of Lutyens' houses, full advantage being taken instead of the mature chestnut avenue and fine woodlands. There is, however, an impressive terrace wall, achieved by a skilful use of the fall of the land, and a rose garden contained within a circular brick wall.

The Prince and Princess were not to live long in their impressive new house. They died on 25th June 1915 and 2nd August 1919 respectively, and are buried in one grave immediately adjacent to the church porch in Hitcham churchyard. This grave has a monument which incorporates a Russian ikon.

After their death the house, while remaining the property of the

Dolgorouki family, was leased by a succession of tenants, including the Astors. It was eventually bought in 1924 by a community of Anglican Benedictine monks, founded in 1914, whose property in Pershore, Worcs., was proving too small for their growing numbers. Their move to Nashdom (which name they retained) was delayed until 1926, so at the time of writing, the monks have been in the house exactly fifty years, and the Dolgorouki mansion has been a monastery for the greater part of its history.

The community added a new wing to the house in 1967-8, but apart from that the buildings are substantially as Lutyens and the Dolgoroukis left them. The house built for the declining years of the aging couple has known since the arrival of the monks a vitality that can never have been envisaged, but the motto under the Dolgorouki arms on the south facade of the house, might almost have been seen as a portent of the future with its words: "None but God".

(Contributed by the Abbot of Nashdom.)

14. ROADS OLD AND NEW

It is not possible to define any prehistoric or Roman routes in the area, though it is quite likely that they existed. Reference has been made earlier to the neolithic and Roman remains found near the Bath Road; early remains have also been found nearby in Burnham (near the Police Station) and in Taplow but they do not suggest any specific point at which the Thames might have been crossed. Records of early times suggest that there was a bridge or ferry in the South Ellington area, that is in the general area of Ray Island, and other references suggest a crossing point in the area around Hedsor Wharf, or perhaps further west. In the south it is possible that an east-west route passed Huntercombe, Burnham Abbey, and West Town Farm, thence past Amerden and across the Thames to Bray. This has never been bridged.

What seems very likely is that Taplow Common Road predates the present Bath Road, and that this former road led to an easy crossing point in Hedsor parish. The Bath Road attained its present status with the passing of the Turnpike Act of the 18th Century. and in some places, for example in Burnham parish, it cuts across old field boundaries as it pursues its way across the uninhabited southern fields. This is quite apparent on the maps of c. 1800. Until 'Clinker Cottage' adjacent to the Sewage Works was built (as a pair of cottages) there were no buildings near the Bath Road in Hitcham; they were built after 1779. The main road through the parish was therefore Taplow Common Road, and in the former pub The Waggon and Horses we have evidence of a wealth of passing trade which had diminished by the mid 19th century. This inn was near the

junction of that road (which crosses Hitcham at one of its narrowest points) and the old north-south road through the parish, and the 'east-west (or more accurately ENE-WSW route) from opposite Whitebrook Common (Maidenhead) to East Burnham Common. This route combines the old line of Parliament Lane and that of Russell Cellar Lane (now closed.) It has been pointed out that Parliament Lane's name may be linked with the fact that a conflict of the Civil War took place on Whitebrook Common.

The intersection of these routes, in the valley floor, is the area called Hitcham Bottom, which previously boasted a farm and a number of settlements. We have seen how the development of Dropmore led to de-population, and to the diversion of Russell Cellar Lane. The Taplow side was also affected by road diversion, for Parliament Lane was originally reasonably straight if of uneven width between the intersection with Hunts Lane (now a path) and Hitcham Bottom.

The most intriguing route is the north-south route. It can be traced, as a continuous routeway if one brings together information from historic maps of various dates: it links Dorney Church in the south, Hitcham Church in the centre, and Beaconsfield and Wooburn Churches by branching routes) in the north. The components of the route are: a track from Dorney to the M4; a section where no right of way now exists (as it did in part till 1815) past West Town Farm; a possible track (never clearly shown) to the Bath Road near the sewage works entrance; present-day Hitcham Road; the continuation northwards, without the dog-leg near the Grovefield Hotel as far as Huntswood Road; on via the Rose Hill area, to the east of or across Nashdom land. Here we find the route marked by a track (closed 1812) starting at a gate, and leading past Cabrook and thence along the parish boundary to Dropmore House. Hence paths could be followed towards Wooburn, past Abbotts Wood Mill and Sheepcote towards High Wycombe, or via Hicknaham Farm to Beaconsfield. Though this road is likely to have existed in and since mediaeval times it was probably of limited use - probably as a drove road between woods and marshes, though it might have been a road to market. As if to reinforce the local importance of the route, the parish's two main gravel pits (mentioned above) both lie alongside this route.

Two other roads of antiquity appear to have been the road which is variously called Taplow Road, Boundary Road and Hill Farm Road as it passes across and along the edges of the parish, and Hitcham Lane. Both of these roads appear on every map from the late 18th century, if not earlier. Hitcham Lane is part of an apparently old trackway which passes all the old (pre-1600) churches of present-day South Buckinghamshire: Taplow (the site of the old church in the grounds of Taplow Court), Hitcham, Burnham, Farnham Royal, Stoke Poges, and Wexham. Other routes

of more local significance include Marsh Lane and the old track leading south-east from it onto the marshes; Huntswood Lane; the road which joined the existing sections of road running east-west from Hedsor Lodge to Cedar Lodge and for a short distance at Littleworth Corner near the public house. Ono road which has gone is Love Lane, which ran southwards as a continuation of the track at the Gore - this north-south road, a branch off Taplow Common Road, once went along the west side of the Gore houses and continued south of Hitcham Lane to a point approximately due west of the Pheasant Public House in Lent Rise Road. This road, together with most of Hunt's Lane and Meads Lane (the road from Hitcham School to Hitcham Bottom) were stopped up as 'unnecessary' by decision of the Vestrey Meeting of 1867-8. The diversion of Parliament Lane, creating the southern curve, took place in 1866, though the parish surveyors of Highways were reporting that a Mr Ranking who I believe resided in Taplow Lodge was encroaching on the roads in the area: this was probably on the wide verges rather than the track surface.

There is much more research yet to do, but it seems that the northward turn of the east end of Huntswood Road was consequent on the stopping up of Meads Lane (which was either named after a tenant of an adjacent cottage, or after the meadows of Hitcham Park which lay largely in the valley bottom.) Hag Hill Lane may be of a similar date, forming part of another longer track.

Roads which developed subsequently were, in approximate order: the 'parson's track' from Hitcham Lane to the old Rectory at Hitchambury; the diversion of Hitcham Lane to the south side of the church; the various Dropmore estate diversions; Station Road; Fairview Road; Byeways (Byways); Eastfield Road (formerly a path); Oxford Court (later North View, then removed) Institute Road; Ye Meads; Bayley Crescent and Bingham Road; the Marsh Lane diversion where it crosses the M4; Maypole Road; Hag Hill Rise; Green Close; and Cavendish Close. Hag Hill Lane has had at least three names (Hagg Hill Lane, Cross Lane, and Gravel Pit Lane); Hitcham Road has also been called New Town Lane and 'the road from Hitcham Church to the railway arch.'

15. HITCHAM FARMS

This is a topic where it has not yet been possible to study all the available evidence nor to find what else is available. The position in 1779 (Inclosure Map Award) was that there were farms at Sheepcote, Hales Corner (Farmer: Mr. Nicholson), Cabrock (or Cavebrook or Cayebrook), Hitcham Court (or Manor Farm), Hitchambury (the Rectory) and Hill Farm. Poplar Farm was not established until after 1919. Some of the 1779 farms were called 'homesteads' and were possibly places where the Lord of the Manor had established new farms following the redistribution of lands at an earlier enclosure. Cabrock Farm, which appears

to have been on the site of, and used some buildings of, a former chapel which had belonged to Little Marlow Priory at the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, was in 1629 described as 'the farm of Calbrooke called the chapel' and has now vanished without any physical trace at all. Hales Corner is a fascinating cottage with gardens and Sheepcote is much more developed and even has a small theatre in an old barn it is said.

Many of the old buildings of Hitcham Court Farm have gone, but the historic tithe barn remains, well restored externally, though inside the total change shows that what happened was virtually a complete rebuild. A further project which has yet to be pursued when volunteers come, is the study of surnames in the parish. Farming families in the 18th century included Aldridge, Ball, Compton, Eves, Sodding and Wells. In the next century one can add Webster, Langfield, Crocker, Trumper and Howard.

16. EASTFIELD ROAD

Various references have been made to Eastfield Road. Like New Town, it reflects some strands in the history of the parish. It contained the parish's second Beer House, or pub; it has always been the centre for our shops since they were first established about 60 years ago. The only other shops were the former Post Office in Hitcham Road in the New Town and the general stores on the Bath Road. The shop in Marsh Lane closed some years ago. There are two garages, one on the Bath Road and one at the Station. The first shops in Eastfield Road seem to have been bungalows built on part of the glebe land plot 6 and adapted as shops; it was their development which probably led to the decline of the Post Office. The new shops included Osbourn's cycle shop (now Seal's), Wakefield's general stores with barber service; a sweet shop which appears to have doubled as the unofficial (and illegal) betting shop, and a greengrocer. At this time, 1920-21, the road was called Nearway Road as well as Eastfield Road: the former name had already become established from the Burnham boundary eastwards from Milner Road, but it was soon superseded by Eastfield Road throughout.

Like Marsh Lane, Eastfield Road started without footpaths, lights or road surface; even now the road is simply formed by the accretion of many layers and has never been properly structured and rebuilt for the heavy loads it bears. The land in Lot 8 of the glebe land, south of the road, was sold at £5 per foot of frontage and the houses built there were the 'best' in the road. A six-seater large car (3 facing 3) ran along the road on its way from Slough to Maidenhead (Bear Hotel), the fare being 6d. Until the 1950's the buses were all single-deck as they turned south at the Maypole to go under the railway. The increasing population of Burnham and the erection of council houses on Lot 7 (occupied since 1920 by Bayley's Orchard) proved the need for

more and bigger buses. Gone were the days of the stile near Milner Road; later saw the end of Mrs Mitchell's Sunday Evening hymn sessions, of Harding's coal yard, which became Geests' yard, and the grocer's shop (which is now just a Post Office.) Gone too, with one exception, is gas lighting in the houses, which was normal when the houses were erected. At the rear of the houses on the south side, a new estate has developed, in two stages. The older part of Maypole Road was built on the land previously used for the house, stables and grounds of Mr Dyke's House, Beech Lodge, subsequently Woods' Nursery. They have now a new office block south of the railway, Beechwood House (the old names are retained thereby.) The newer Council Houses of Maypole and Fairview Roads are built on the five acre Field which was given for the poor by Lord Grenville in exchange for the original Poor's Field at Hitcham Lower Heath. Little did he realise that the land he was giving had so much more potential than the waste land he was gaining. The 5 acres were sold to the Eton Rural District Council for a substantial sum, so that the Hitcham Poors Land Trust Charity now has a good regular income from interest, and this is administered by Trustees appointed by the Parish Council, together with the Rector, and one co-opted member.

17. THE RECTORS OF HITCHAM (where known)

1167 John the Clerk
 1186 John de Chiswick
 1210 John de Merton
 1262 Robert died, Rector. (1269 also given)
 1269 Robert de Aeale, presented by Prior & Convent of Merton
 1277 Richard de Herringwell
 1287 Robertus de Worling
 1324 Edmund de Burnham
 1342 Elias de Sco. Edmundo
 1361 Thomas, Rector, died
 1361 John de Wroxton
 1405 John Akerman exchanged with John Barton; (Thorley, Herts)
 1406 John Barton exchanged with Lewis Kinnerdsley (Rowbarrow, Somerset)
 1438 Robert de Manfield
 1444 Thomas Nordrym resigned
 1444 Robert Kokesey, presented and resigned
 1477 Robert Whitehead
 1483 Richard Appulton died
 1483 Richard Spearman (Spurman)
 1515 William Sampson
 1522 Richard Erington (Evington) resigned
 1531 John Belfield, A.B.
 1536 Thomas Beabe (Beake)
 1538 Robert ap Griffith, the last Rector. presented by the Priory

1553 Thomas Story, presented by the Queen (Mary)
1555 Batholomew Green
1556 John Ball
1569 Thomas Hall, presented by Roger Alford (Lord of the Manor)
and his wife. Buried 1592
1593 Robert Floide (Lloyd)
1629 William Sargeant (Sarjeant). Died 1657
1660 James Herring
1667 Dr. Phil. King died
1667 George Evans, D.D.
1701 William Montague, A.M.
1702 Richard Sleece. Also Rector of Farnham Royal from 1721
1729 Thomas Archer
1743 Edmund Gibson
1771 Henry Sleece
1785 (1778 on church list) Thomas Pulton
1811 Joseph Goodall
1833 W.M. Grover
1866 William Carter
1869 Edward Balston, resigned at once to effect an exchange
1869 Herbert Cornish
1873 George Frewer
1905 Edward Carter
1916 Harold Wilson
1923 W.H. George
1930 Lewis Evans
1943 Bernard Harvey
1949 Godfrey James
1962 Frank de Jonge

In 1973 following the retirement of the Rev. Frank de Jonge the Bishop of Oxford suspended Presentation to the Benefice of Hitcham for an initial period of five years. Hence in 1973 a Priest-in-charge was appointed by the Bishop.

1973 G.Denham Bayly-Jones, Priest-in-charge.

18. THE MAIN DATES OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

The Nave, is probably 12th century, or possibly earlier if we can believe a suggestion that there was a Saxon church. Possibly the church was established as a thankoffering or expiation at the time of the Conquest. No accurate date can be ascribed; nor can 1126 be explained, The chancel is 14th century, as is some of the glass and the two bigger nave windows. Another leaflet gives much greater detail, and space and time have not permitted it being copied here as well.

EPILOGUE

This booklet has been prepared with care, but some 'facts' are not as clear as they ought to be, so that some years' more work is needed before we can be satisfied that every statement in this book is totally correct.

It would be very helpful if you, the reader, would let the compiler know of any inaccuracy or additional information. The parish has a history of over 850 years; many records have been lost, including some fairly recent Parish Council minutes. A range of records exist in the County Records Office and have been referred to as far as time and travel difficulties have allowed. But what of the items stored in someone's attic? What can be found out by studying old photographs?

Local history is fun. Why not join in seeking more of Hitcham's Heritage?

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