OLD HORSEPATH

AND CUDDESDON'S LOST WATERMILL

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS INTO A LOST OXFORDSHIRE VILLAGE AND ITS PLACE IN THE LANDSCAPE : 1962 - 2018

HORSPATH
2018

At Sally Humphrey's suggestion, this is an updated version of the investigations into the "lost" medieval village of Old Horsepath, with additional notes on a "lost" watermill at Cuddesdon and other more recent findings.

Caveat.
This is, in essence, just a narrative version of an intermittent archaeological diary I've kept on Old Horsepath. It documents my intermittent discoveries, both in the archives and in the field, over the last 50-odd years regarding the village and its wider landscape setting. It is not an academic paper in any sense of the word: it is simply a private record for the Walker Family and their friends.

It is dedicated to Bob and Muriel Walker, who gave me every encouragement to explore the archaeology of their farmland for nearly half a century and, more latterly, to Denis, Sarah and George, who have been equally enthusiastic and supportive.

I sincerely hope I have not inadvertently transgressed any copyright issues: if so I will be happy to either acknowledge the source or redact it.

Chris Pym. Oxford 2018

CONTENTS

THE "LOST" VILLAGE OF OLD HORSPATH

AND CUDDESDON'S LOST WATERMILL

An Investigation: 1962-2018

Present writers of guidebooks and websites seem unsure as to which of the two Horsepaths was the earlier, and which begat what. Even the Victoria County History for Oxfordshire (VCH) Vol 5 p. 177 *ff* covers its bets by suggesting in one place that modern Horspath had Roman origins; then in another it suggests that Old Horsepath may have been the earliest with Anglo-Saxon origins.
However, Frank Emory in his magisterial "Oxfordshire Landscapes" (1974: *p64)* has no such doubts " *...the original Horspath settlement was sited like Old Wheatley, Cuddesdon and Garsington villages by a spring at about 400 feet on the limestone hill: the present village is the result of migration to, or better survival at, Lower (Church) Horspath*".

My own curiosity about Old Horsepath was piqued back in the early 1960s when one retired farm worker then living in a cottage behind Manor Farm casually mentioned to me as I was searching for medieval pottery in water-mains trench in his back garden (as one does), that "*the Devil moved the church from Old Horspath down to where it is now".* But he knew nothing more.

Usually, this old tale regarding abandoned villages is an oblique reference to a greedy medieval landowner (The Devil), wanting more pasture for his ever-expanding flocks of highly profitable sheep, and thus flattening an inconvenient village and moving the peasants elsewhere. Good media headlines, but only true in some cases, and then mostly of those of the 15th & 16th centuries. However, not a soul in the village at that time – I'd ask -could tell me *exactly* where Old Horsepath had been, and even popular local history books weren't much help, simply calling it "a lost village".

Actually, it turns out that Old Horsepath never really *was* lost: only mislaid. The evidence of its approximate location buried in academic sources, old maps and, for

those lonely seekers who could read the ground after heavy winter rain, in fragments of often grotty medieval pottery scattered across the newly-ploughed fields.

At first sight it may seem difficult to "lose" a village, yet Maurice Beresford in his ground-breaking book on the "*Deserted Villages of England"* published in 1954, recorded no less than 500 so-called "lost or missing English villages" abandoned in Britain between 1340 and 1750. Their one-time existence could be proven from medieval tax documents and other historical records (some even with the taxpayer's' names), yet were not on modern maps.

Today, the total of recorded Deserted Villages in Britain is nearly 3000. The modern generic name for them is "Deserted Medieval Villages" (DMVs). Beresford listed 15 known DMVs in Oxfordshire in 1954: today we know of 146. The location of most of these is now known, although some only approximately, as with Old Horsepath until fairly recently. But some really *are* lost, and remain so to this day. For example *Bispedone, Hunesworde, Tilgardesle* are missing without trace, along with the mysterious lost manor of *Derehyde* on Shotover, which had twenty cottages and a 100 acres in 1358 according to the VCH.
An interesting research project for aspiring young archaeologists: a whole lost village up there somewhere.....

The causes of a DMV's demise are sometimes known: the Black Death in many cases; on occasion, in the 16th century, forced removal of the villagers to another area to increase sheep farming area; climate change (of which more later), soil deplenishment and so on.

So this, then, is the story so far as I can determine at present, of one such "lost" village. At present we have only the bare bones of the story, requiring a leap of imagination to bring that long-forgotten settlement back to life. But they *were* real people, they and their children toiled in *our* fields and walked on *our* hills and shaped the landscape over six hundred years ago. Our ancestors.

Documentary Evidence for Old Horsepath since 1086

The very name of the village can cause problems for the researcher in old documents: *Overehorsepath* (*sic*): *Horsepath Superior* and *Upper Horsepath*. The present modern village was variously known as: *Horsepath Inferior, Lower Horsepath, Nether Horsepath, Church Horsepath* and *Horsepath Major.* And in 1912, for some no doubt delicate reasoning by the Parish Council, the village lost its "e" and became simply Horspath. (*Oh to see the minutes of that meeting!*) I have kept to the original spelling for the old village.

Interestingly, since very early times Old Horsepath was a separate manor from Lower Horsepath, with a separate Manor Court and its own field system beyond the Hollowbrook. Also Garsington and Cuddesdon originally had two manors.

Old Wheatley also appears in the early records. see:-

<HTTP://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp96-116#h2-0017>

There is growing speculation (and increasing proof) that in a growing number of cases these separate manors were originally derived from Romano-British estates which in themselves were likely to have been Iron-Age or older land-holdings. And then taken over again, initially more or less intact, by the Anglo-Saxons in the 6th century AD and, after much fragmentation, became the basis of the ecclesiastical parishes of the nascent Anglo-Saxon church. And then, after many changes, became the basis for the modern parishes we have today.

Food for thought. Especially in the case of the two Horsepath manors.. (**See appendix 1 for an amplification of this intriguing idea)**

The Written Evidence

1086. The first written evidence for Horsepath as a settlement is in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was in essence an inventory for William the Conqueror of his newly captured province. Full of errors, lies and omissions (therefore similar to any modern tax-returns to the Inland Revenue.) and thus full of pitfalls for the unwary scholar. But it's all we have from that remote period.
The entry for "Horsepath", while stating that there are 15 tenants *etc*, makes no mention of another Horsepath.

(NB: Recent research has proved beyond doubt that the majority of villages mentioned in the Domesday Book, or even those NOT mentioned, but in existence today, have archaeologically proven origins well before that date. Indeed, many have clear evidence of occupation right back to the Bronze Age – circa 2500 BC to 800 BC. And recently discovered cropmarks of what could be an Iron Age settlement near the Cuddesdon turn might well put Old Horsepath into that category. We shall see. More research is needed.

1122 St. Frideswide's Cartulary (I.28) lists St. Frideswide's receiving tithes from *two* Horsepath villages. Both were in *demesne*, i.e., belonging to, and probably farmed by, the Lord of the manor using his villeins as labour.

1225. **Sandford Cartulary** (i 74-75.) Bernard de Mulet grants all his lands in Upper and Lower Horsepath to the Knights Templar.

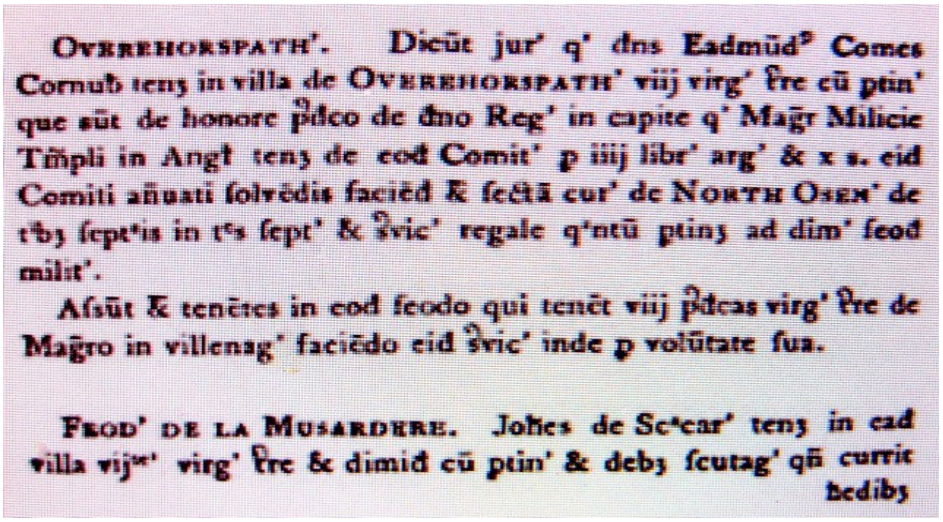
1279. Rotuli Hundredorum *" OverHorsepath had 6 tenants with 6 virgates of land."* The Hundred Rolls were commissioned by Edward I. In essence a second Domesday Book, and a far more reliable record of land ownership by Hundred (county division) of occupation and tax-return.
(NB: A virgate was primarily a measure of tax assessment rather than area, usually reckoned as notionally equal to 23 acres. So the manor of Upper Horsepath had about 140 acres.)

1316. **Nomina Villarum.** Upper Horsepath is mentioned, but no details are given.

It was a survey carried out for Edward II and contains a list of all cities, boroughs and townships in England and their lords for taxation purposes.

1377. Poll Tax Returns. In this nationwide survey undertaken to raise monies for Edward III's French wars, Upper Horsepath was taxed at 61s 11d with 19 named inhabitants over 14, both male and female, as being liable for the nationwide 4d tax due to Edward.

The digitalisation of Poll Tax returns for a few Oxfordshire villages are available online from the Public Record Office, but not for Old Horsepath as yet, only a file record number of the original 1377 parchment roll. Further research in the Oxfordshire County Record Office shows no local copies of the original 1377 document are available, so access to the Public Record Office at Kew is needed to see if those original Medieval Latin records can be retrieved and thus to see if any surnames from that period are still in evidence today. One fly in this particular ointment is that Medieval Latin is *very* difficult to transcribe and to translate – see for example part of the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum entry for OVEREHORSPATH *(sic)* (below)



Overrehorspath'. Dicūt jur' q' dns Eadmūd' Comes Cornub tenz in villa de Overrehorspath' viij virg' ℞re cū ptin' que sūt de honore p̄dco de dno Reg' in capite q' Magr Milicie Tēpli in Angł tenz de eod Comit' p iiij libr' arg' & x s. eid Comiti aūuati solvēdis faciēd & fect̄ cur' de North Oxen' de t'bz sept'is in t's sept' & ℣vic' regale q'ntū ptinz ad dim' feod milit'.

Assūt & tenētes in eod feodo qui tenēt viij p̄dcas virg' ℞re de Magro in villenag' faciēdo eid ℣vic' inde p volūtate sua.

Frod' de la Musardere. Joñes de Sc'car' tenz in ead villa vij'' virg' ℞re & dimid cū ptin' & debz scutag' qñ currit bedibz

No further documentary details are available purely for Old (Upper) Horsepath in any of the later administrative returns. Hence the conclusion must be that the village was either deserted, or so depopulated, as to be beneath the tax-collection radar within a century after 1377, and any tax returns incorporated into those of Lower Horsepath.

However, limited test-pitting higher up in the valley to the east of the source of the Hollowbrook *(see later paras below*) has yielded pottery sequences right through to the mid 18th century, so someone was living in that area close to the spring.

Archaeological and fieldwork evidence

The Victoria County History of England (VCH), Oxon, vol 5, p177 (1951) lists three pointers as to the location of Old Horsepath at or around OS SP5884 0473:-

1) A field name "Old Horsepath" occurs in the 1847 Tithe Award map near to the source of the Hollowbrook.
2) There is now a farm named "Old Horspath Farm" at SP 58640433 about eight hundred yards SW of the Hollowbrook source. This farm is not shown on the Tithe Award map and was built later around 1900, but perhaps reflects faint local memory of the old village.
3) The VCH quotes "a local antiquary" (*possibly the parson*) as saying he saw "indications of foundations" near the source of the Hollowbrook in 1882.

In 1975, I dug a number of 1 sq. yard test pits in a line about 50 yards eastward uphill from the Hollowbrook spring. These produced a layer of uneven cobblestones, one small fragment of roof-tile and a piece of a large-bore clay pipe (thus probably Victorian: earlier ones had a small bore as tobacco was expensive back then) plus a few animal bones, but no diagnostic (datable) pottery.

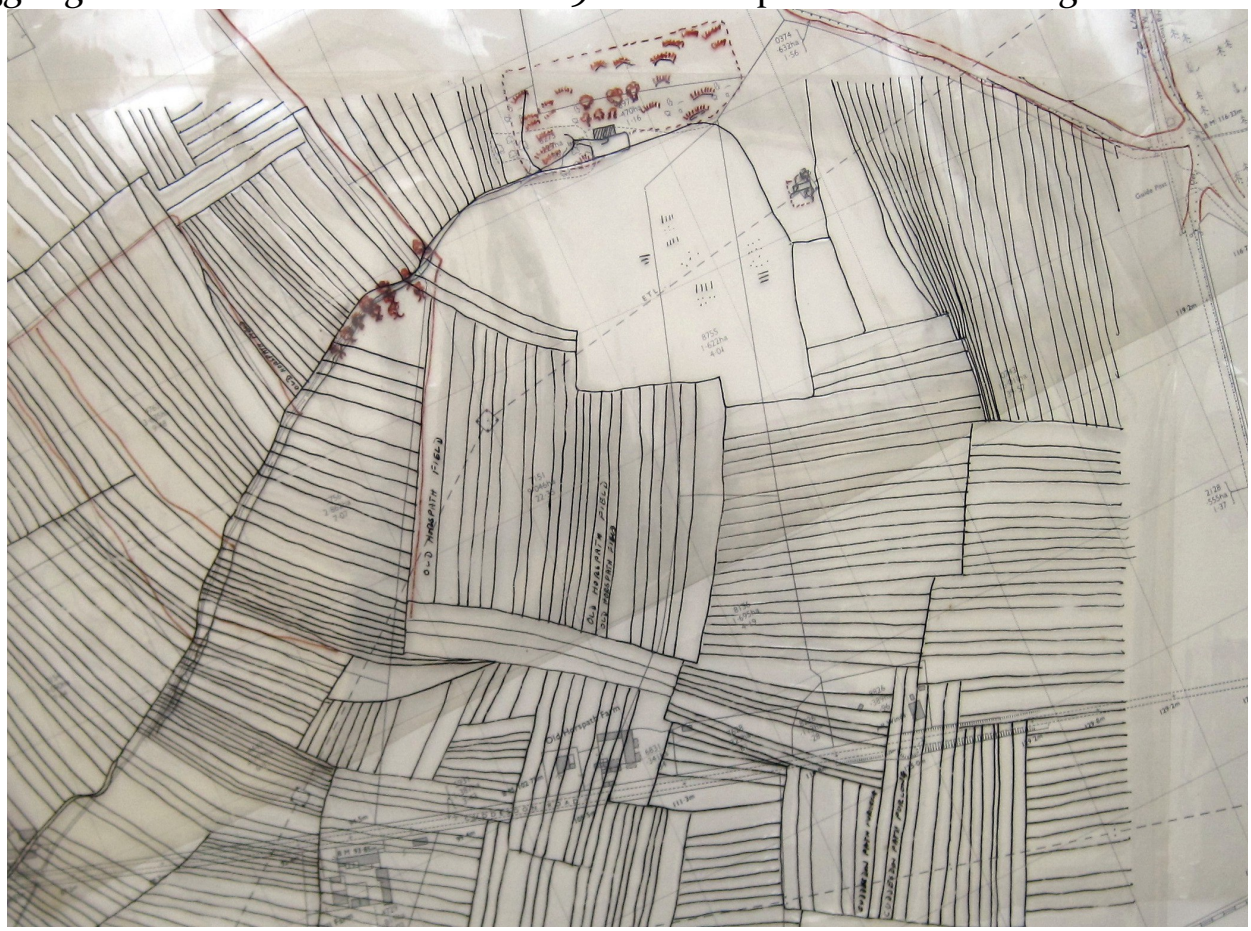
However, the following year (1976) systematic field-walking with my young daughter Caroline (then just three..), to the south-east on the field above the spring after ploughing & harrowing had finished, produced a quantity of 12th to 14th century potsherds (now in the the County Museum), plus several discrete areas of stones. (see photos below) These occurred across an area of approximately 300 X 300 yards. Caroline had eyes like a hawk and unlike me could spot the difference between muddy pottery and equally muddy chunks of the local ironstone. Without her discoveries further research would have probably died a death right there and then.

(*Unfortunately the temperature was close to zero and she had turned blue – but still*

keen none-the-less. Her mother was less than complimentary when I got Caroline home... Her interest in archaeology waned somewhat after that..)

Old Horsepath stone foundations looking towards Coombe Wood in 1976

To try to zero in more accurately on the village site's original position, I got a photocopy of the relevant portion of the 1848 Horsepath Tithe Map from the Bodlean Library and traced the field strip outlines on to a sheet of clear plastic. My assumption was that the ancient field strips would retain a negative impression of the space occupied by the old village. This was then overlaid - with some projector jiggling to match the scale - onto the 1906 OS map with the following result:-



1848 Tithe Map overlay onto modern OS map

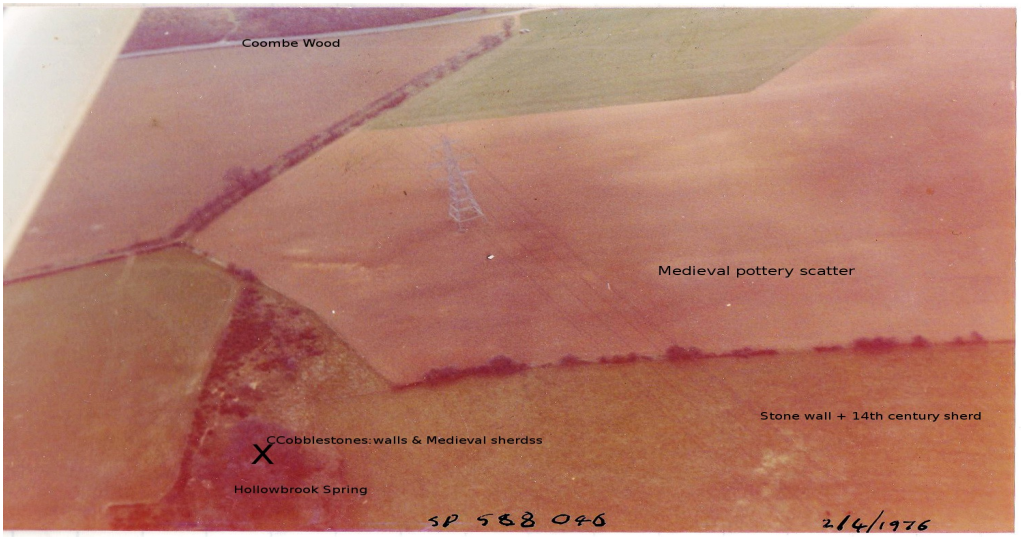
The blank area immediately below the Hollowbrook Spring coincided precisely with the pottery scatters and stone rubble photographed above.
It seems likely that the stone rubble from the house foundations made the redundant site unattractive to possible to the non-mechanised farming tenants after the village had finally been abandoned, whenever that was.
Small trial trenches to the north-west of this site in the grass pasture (just behind the white horse in the second photo and beyond the modern hedge) produced some enigmatic low limestone walls, a lot of charcoal, and an all-important sherd

of 13th /14th century Brill Ware *within the walls* about 18" down; thus giving them a reasonably secure date.

It is dreadfully tempting to interpret these as perhaps the (burnt ?) remains of the ancient village church. It would almost certainly have been constructed of wood, wattle & daub & thatch on a minimal stone foundation, but then, so would all the other village houses, including a possible manor house. So an expensive geophysical survey would be needed to recover the ground plan to be able to say one way or the other. I wonder if the Stonepit Charity would fund such a survey?

If Old Horsepath church *was* found it would also be interesting to locate graves as it is likely that the Plague victims would be buried there but, unlike the graveyard at modern Horspath where later burials would have destroyed earlier evidence, at this site they would have been among the last interments and the skeletal material – if any – might reveal much DNA and other data on the lives, occupations and causes of deaths of the inhabitants.

Later that year I was able to get aerial coverage of the site (*see below*) with a friendly Cessna 172 pilot and added my field notes to the print.



Aerial view 1976

(At which point my job changed and I spent the next twenty years frequently working abroad and thus had no opportunities or time for British archaeology.)

After a heaven-sent early retirement, when the inmates took over the Blackwell Export bookselling asylum, I was at last able to focus at on various archaeological projects I'd had in mind. Thus in 2001 a local microlight pilot took me up on several occasions to check for crop-marks on various archaeological sites around the county in which I was interested: Old Horsepath being one of them.

The air photo below of the Old Horsepath site (digitally enhanced in false colour to bring out some crude detail). Although very faint, it shows the vague outlines of the village precisely where Caroline had picked up the medieval sherds in 1976, and where the blank area was on the 1848 Tithe overlay map. Over the intervening twenty years virtually all the stones had vanished and no trace of them at all exists today on the field, although the hedgerow is littered with them, for obvious reasons.

Aerial view of Old Horspath site from 1800ft. Cropmarks of Old Horspath

Finds from the Hollowbrook Spring

Later in 2001, Bob Walker asked myself and my wife Mary to restore the badly overgrown Victorian pond below the Hollowbrook Spring to create a fishing reserve for his grandson George. Over six months we felled & cleared away a tangle of trees and bushes before an excavator was brought in to deepen and widen the old pond. A careful watch was kept on the spoil heap but nothing medieval emerged.
The spring outlet was also hidden by brambles & fallen trees and took much effort

The spring outlet & bed after cleaning and restoration. (The beer bottles are a much later deposit...)

to clear. We raked out the stream bed close to the spring source to clear a mass of water weeds and discovered, to our great surprise, many medieval potsherds buried in the gravel. I suspect that there are many more still buried at lower levels.

The Ashmolean identified the sherds as mostly local Oxford & Brill ware dating

from the 13th century on, presumably from broken water-carrier vessels.

However, a curious anomaly among the finds was several sherds of German Rhineland “Bellarmine” or “Bartmann” wine flagons. They are quite distinctive with medallions on the sides. The medallion is popularly supposedly to be that of: a) the face of a popular mythical “wild man of the woods” (a Bartmann); or b) that of one Robert Bellarmine, a German cardinal who had opposed both Protestanism and alcohol with equal vehemence and was thus ridiculed by the potters:-

Bellarmine sherds from the Hollowbrook spring

These flagons had a long production history, circa 1500-1750, and were used for transporting liquids, mostly wine. The vast majority were produced in and around Cologne, mostly for Rhineland wine, although some copies were produced later in London.
Quite what they were doing in the Hollowbrook spring is an interesting question.

Maybe they were “empties” from the Bishop's Palace at Cuddesdon or from the wine consumed on-site by parties from the palace? I guess we shall never know.

Rhineland Bellarmine flagon with broken neck

In Summer 2006, about 100 yards from the spring to the east in roughly the same area I had seen the cobblestones some years before, I opened a series of one yard square trial test pits down to the sterile natural (clay). (*Sadly, the photographs I took of the excavations were lost when the hard-drive on my PC failed in a power surge).(see below for location.)*

Site of the 2006 dig looking West. The dark area to the right of the left-hand tree marks the excavation area. Pond in background.

No cobblestones were seen, but the disturbed topsoil contained a few sherds of 19th century pottery, mainly willow-pattern. Then some 12" down were a good number of medieval and post-medieval earthenware potsherds, plus a few dark glass fragments which appeared to be from 17th & 18th century wine bottles (wine again!)

Some of the good (diagnostic) medieval sherds were products of the Brill/Boarstall pottery industry which had a long history of operation from around AD 1100 up to AD 1600 in coarse-ware (kitchen pots) and fine-ware (table usage). Their superb table products, made from the mid 13th to mid 15th century, are common from excavations within Oxford City. (see complete examples below)

Examples of the Brill potteries fineware jugs (Ashmolean)

These sherds from Old Horsepath with their knife-slash handle decorations, are from similar jugs of the AD 1350-AD 1450 period, the high point of their output. (*see below*)

Excavated Old Horsepath Brill jug handles with knife-slash decoration.

Lower down still and close to the clay subsoil were a number of sherds of Romano-British pottery: mostly gray-ware pots from the 3rd/4th century East Oxfordshire Romano-British Pottery Industry, and a few fragments of mortaria (gritted fabric food-mixing bowls) from the same kilns. These had narrow inverted rims, thus dating them to the mid to late 4th century.

These were not the usual heavily abraded single sherds frequently found in many fields across southern England, deposited by dung carts from the kitchen middens from the nearest villa. These sherd's edges were reasonably sharp & not showing signs of any great wear, and the quantity at a single location arguing against dung-cart deposition. (*see below*)

Sample of AD 4th century Roman pottery from the excavations

The inference being that they had been deposited not too far from where they'd been used some 1600+ years ago. However, so far I have not seen any other evidence of Roman occupation in the surrounding area, especially not that from villa-type buildings, such as hypocaust tiles or painted wall plaster. (But as Mick Aston used to teach, "*Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*"!)
The more likely scenario in my view is that they perhaps came from outlying round-houses of a local native British settlement: one of which certainly existed a few hundred yards away towards the Cuddesdon turn from the Wheatley-Garsington road as a large circular crop-mark was seen from the air by a survey

aircraft some years ago and was interpreted in the Sites and Monuments Record as an Iron Age round-house.
More recently however, an old photograph has come to light, taken by a local pilot around 1990. He saw what appeared to be a collection of hut circles in the same place and photographed it (on film). After some digital manipulation to enhance the poor image, I got the following faint cropmarks:-

Cropmarks of probable Roman/Iron age farmstead and possible square ("Celtic") field closes to the east of them, with further hut circles. Cuddesdon Turn at top of picture and the old track across to Littleworth is to the left.

If this *is* a Roman/Iron age farm-stead (rather than, say, a Bronze-Age one) it is interesting that it does not "respect" the Littleworth track, as the track cuts across the top left-hand corner of the fields, thus the track – rumoured in a local history pamphlet to be mentioned in a charter of AD 956 (but I am unconvinced) and now the parish boundary - must be of a later period than the crop-marks.
Field-walking after heavy rain might well provide good dating evidence for this site

by means of diagnostic potsherds – the Iron Age pottery being very different from that of the Roman period or that of the far earlier Bronze Age. (*NB: this field walk was done in early December 2017, but a fast-growing crop of rape all but obscured the soil so we shall have to wait until Denis Walker has ploughed this field again. However, several Mesolithic flint tools were picked up close to the edge of the field, adding a fascinating detail to the picture of a peopled landscape some 8000 years ago.*

Well-documented Iron Age roundhouses persist throughout and beyond the Roman period well into the Anglo-Saxon era. These are settlements of the original British farming population and, after the Roman conquest, probably enforced (?) workers on Romano-British estates.

The large Roman villa at Wheatley was less than a mile away above the Cuddesdon Brook on Castle Hill and would have been a likely employer. Its large bath-house was excavated in 1845 but the main villa was never found. (Roman bath houses were nearly always situated some distance away from the main house due to fire risk from the hot-water furnaces.)

For interest, see link below for the 1845 villa excavation report :-

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-1132-1/dissemination/pdf/002/002_350_356.pdf>

To briefly complete the settlement picture in the Hollowbrook Valley since the end of the last Ice Age about 10,000 BC:- Lower down in the test pits close to the natural (clay), were many examples of Mesolithic flints. Here are a few:-

Most were skin-scraping tools from around 6000 BC, (some 3000 years before Stonehenge was even begun.) But one was an excellent flint knife – second in from the right at top - and still very sharp. I used it later experimentally to skin a Roe deer and it was more effective than a modern skinning knife. Not bad for an 8000 year old tool…
These people survived because they were clever and well adapted to their unforgiving environment; not ignorant as they are sometimes portrayed. And most of us still carry some of their genes according to recent DNA research.

It's worth bearing in mind that because of lower sea levels, at that time Britain was still joined to mainland Europe. (but sea levels were rising fast – see link below). This vast submerged area, rich in Mesolithic tools and artifacts dragged up by fishing boats, is now known as "Doggerland" and is the subject of much fascinating research. See :-

<www.nationalgeographic.org/maps/doggerland/>

Similar scatters of Mesolithic flints, mussel shells and curious pieces of white crystal are found on the Horspath Allotments some 150 yards below the allotment spring, and in the field below the railway embankment along the Oxford Road when the site was undergoing the mandatory archaeological survey prior to the planning of the new sports field. I suspect many more of these intriguing sites will show up in future – once we know what to look for.

Clearly, the hill-slopes around Horspath have been a favoured spot for our earliest Holocene forebears over the last 8000 years.

Tracks from Old Horspath to the Hollowbrook spring

In 2006, test pits dug within fifteen yards of the spring on the eastern side revealed traces of two semi-metaled tracks, one above the other and clearly leading uphill in the direction of Old Horspath. The upper layer (18 inches below modern ground level) yielded a few sherds of mid-Victorian willow-pattern pottery. The lower level track, a further 12" down, had fragments of a simple Staffordshire cream-ware plate from the early 1800s.
The waterlogged ground prevented deeper excavation, but it seems that flooding

near the source of the spring had made improved access necessary over the last 300 years. Deeper excavation in dry weather might reveal more even earlier tracks and artifacts. It might also give us some elusive wooden utensils and leather goods from the medieval period – far and away the most common household artifacts at that time, but of course the majority do not survive except in waterlogged ground, which biases our view of contemporary household goods greatly.

Some interesting digging to be done!

Site of tracks test pits at bottom right behind the bonfire. The spring is hidden by bushes immediately above it.

LIVING IN OLD HORSEPATH IN THE 14thCENTURY

Not for nothing has the 14th century been called “calamitous”. From the English

kings' foreign wars in Europe and excessive taxation impoverishing this country; to continental-wide famines that were both weather and war-related; to the first catastrophic outbreak of the Black Death in 1348. All conspired to cast an ominous shadow across the century: one that reached into every village and hamlet in the country. Both Horsepath villages would not have escaped these calamities although sadly we have no surviving records at village level for this.

The Great Famine: In early 1315 unusually heavy rain affected much of northen Europe. Throughout the spring and the summer the rain continued and temperatures remained cold. Grain could not ripen, thus crops failed. Straw and hay for animals could not be stored either, so there was no winter fodder for them.

Food prices in England *doubled* between spring and midsummer of 1315 and famine became inevitable. Salt, a neccessity for preserving meat, also became increasingly expensive as brine would not evaporate in wet weather. As always, stores of surplus grain were limited to royalty, the barons, wealthy merchants, and the Church. But even these stocks were raided by the King to feed his continental army. Hence the poorer classes simply went hungry as they had no reserves. Many cases are recorded where tree-bark was harvested in an attempt to stave off starvation.

By 1317 survivors were so weakened by diseases and, because so much of the seed stock had been eaten, it was not until 1325 that the food supply slowly returned to a semblance of normality. During which time our poor villagers – the very young and very old as usual - would have starved to death.

Historians estimate that 10–25% of the English population died during the famine.

While the later Black Death (1348 onwards) would kill more people, the impact of the Great Famine lingered on for many years, weakening the general health of the population and making them far more prone to diseases like the recurring plague.The famine also led to a sharp increase in crime. Inevitably the hungry poor would resort to any means to feed themselves. The famine also greatly undermined the poorer class's confidence in the Church and the King's government for their blatant failure to deal with the resulting crises.

The eventual "Peasant's Revolt" of 1381 was a direct result.

(Note: An amusing (and accurate) video of this event by Terry Jones (the Python) is on youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMrv=E2CwRsQ>)

Class and Status in Old Horsepath in the 14th century

Ever since middle Saxon times, English society had been split along very rigid class lines, where each inhabitant knew exactly his or her place in the strict social hierarchy.

By the 14th century the Norman barons (half-civilised Vikings at best) and their descendants had ruthlessly refined their feudal exploitation of the Saxon lower classes. The Church also made very sure of its income by ensuring that its own tax-gathering rules were strictly followed.

Thus every village had its lord; for example a knight, abbot, bishop, or some feudal Norman entrepreneur who owned multiple estates or even clusters of parishes. These lords were separated by a vast gulf from the rest of the inhabitants, whom they regarded merely as their chattels. Even their language was often a corrupt form of medieval French, unlike the lower classes who spoke a Germanic dialect (Anglo-Saxon).

One telling example of this exploitation is given by Richard Muir in his "*Lost Villages of Britain". I* quote :-
*"On taking over a tenancy, the peasant paid an entry fine: when his daughter married he paid a 'merchet (*marriage*) tax', and when he died a 'heriot' tax, usually consisting of the family's best beast. Throughout his life he was plagued by petty fines exacted by the six-weekly manor court: his master's bailiff issued a perpetual sequence of demands for labour service and other 'voluntary' boon work on the demesne* (the Lord's land). *The Church in turn took a tithe of one-tenth of his produce and shared in the death duties, often removing yet another beast. Not surprisingly, peasant life oscillated between poverty and starvation."*

Both Horsepath's Norman lord was originally Roger d'Ivry, a companion of William the Conqueror. By 1122 the manor's tithes went to St. Fridewides and were stated to be from both villages and had become part of the Honour of St. Valery, a Berkshire knight's family. In the early 13th century Richard son of John Musard held the title.

Sometime before 1242–3 he had granted all his Horspath land to the Templars, whose order he later entered himself. In the 14th century the Hospitallers, who succeeded to the Templars' property, were holding a court in Lower Horspath, which was presumably the court of the manor, as well as one in Upper Horspath for the former St. Valery manor. So the lords of both manors became the Templars and then the Hospitallers (now the St. John's Ambulance brigade) after the Templars were disbanded in 1312.

Subsequently the manors were acquired by Cardinal College (Christ Church today) presumably as part of Thomas Cromwell's endowment of the grand college he'had promised to Henry VIII. As much of the land today is owned by Brasenose and Magdalen colleges, I assume it came via Christ Church?

(Light relief: *Horsepath's first recorded murder.....* *Half of the Musard manor in the early 13th century was held by one John de Scaccario of the heirs of Ralph Musard. Interestingly, Andrew de Scaccario of Horspath was alleged in 1234 to have been murdered by Peter Mimekan of Headington. He must have had the Horspath property, for John de Scaccario, almost certainly his son, was holding it in 1254, along with 2 hides at Baldon.*

Athough divided by class barriers, the village was in harsh reality a community united by the need to survive by utilising their lands to raise crops & beasts in order to eat, and to meet the heavy burden of obligations to their lord which the manorial system imposed. We have no information at all (as yet) on the way the social structure of our village played out historically, but there are many extant records across England from manor courts of this period from which historians have extrapolated to get a good idea of what that social structure implied.

To escape the mind-numbing details of the class structure, the following website is perhaps easier to digest :-

<https://faculty.history.wisc.edu/sommerville/123/123%2013%20Society.htm>

One dire consequence of the feudal class system, plus an increasing population, is clear: poverty was an endemic and acute problem in pre-plague villages, as many

peasants had little or no land at all. Poor peasants (*villeins*) could find some employment during the peak periods, and at harvest time they were allowed to glean but as many manor court records show, for much of the year many had no choice and lived by begging and by pilfering food, firewood and anything which helped them to survive. As a result both the landlord and the peasant community attempted, via the manor court, to reduce the number of the poor in the village and to control their activities.

Unlike other higher-ranking villagers, poor peasants who committed offences were often expelled from the manor, and those who were permitted to stay were

required not only to pay a fine, but also to give pledges for good behaviour. The manor court also fined those who harboured "undesirable" poor peasants.

For example, between 1270 and 1348, 151 native-born Halesowen villagers were noted in the court rolls as taking refuge with local tenants. At least 128 (85 per cent) of them did so with their relatives. This suggests that, during the period under study, caring kin-folk were the main agent for poor relief in the parish. There *was* no other form until Elizabethan times.

It is impossible to measure the number of unfree peasants in England in the late fourteenth century, but we can gain some idea of their proportion in the rural population from earlier records. For example, it was estimated that in the four midland counties covered by the Hundred Rolls of 1279, (Huntingdon, Bedford,Bucks and Oxford) 63 per cent of the peasant landholders were unfree. There were marked local and regional variations in the ratio of unfree to free tenants in England at that period. None-the-less, it is quite possible that the proportion of villein tenants (feudal tied serfs) also amounted to almost two-thirds of all the peasant landholders in England. The two Horsepaths would have been no exception.

The subsistence crises between the 1290s and the 1320s must have caused some increase in the overall proportion of unfree tenants, for in many villages the cottagers and smallholders, who were mostly free peasants, suffered a far higher mortality rate, as judged by surviving records. On the other hand, in the immediate post-plague period, the overall proportion of unfree tenants must have declined through migration, even though this was not yet on a massive scale because the demand for land in most areas was still quite strong. From the 1279 returns for the four midland counties already mentioned, a sample of 6,757 peasant

households of which 4249 (62.9 %) were noted as villeins.

No doubt the combination of the sharp rise in real wages and the steep fall in rents and land prices in the late fourteenth century caused by the Black Death, as well as the erosion of the landlords' coercive powers in the fifteenth century, permitted an exodus of serfs. Some unfree peasants left their home manors and settled in distant places, but the majority settled in nearby villages and towns. The serfs' exodus during this period uprooted many villein families from villages in which they had lived for many generations and drastically reduced the kinship networks in these villages, thus destabilising the only form of social security in difficult times.

The Black Death: From the various census & poll tax returns Old Horsepath village could never have been more than perhaps a dozen (?) or so houses in the few decades before and after the Black Death. From the 1377 Poll Tax Returns, Old (Upper) Horsepath was taxed at 61s 11d with 19 named inhabitants over 14, both male and female, as being liable for the nationwide 4d tax for Edward III's French Wars.

A rule of thumb used by the Medieval Village Research Group (MVRG) is to add 50% in these cases to get an approximation of the total population (say 30), and then a further 50% to get the (post famine), pre-plague (1348) population numbers – so perhaps about 45 souls. Thus the village population had dropped by over 50% 27 years after the first onslaught of the Black Death alone. The inference is that in the previous century, Old Horsepath may well have had a population of 60 to 70, hence perhaps up to 25 dwellings?

By comparison, Lower (modern) Horspath had 60 named inhabitants listed in 1377, hence a comparison total of around 135 (up to 40 dwellings?) prior to 1348 and again, a drop in population of over 50% due to the Black Death alone.

(In terms of real living people, around 79 villagers had died in the two villages in, or subsequent to, the Black Death (let alone those deaths caused by the Great Famine). For a comparable impact, if those percentages were applied to modern Horspath today, it would mean that about 650 village residents would have died. A truly terrible catastrophe by any measure.)

What did Old Horsepath look like?

Despite the UK's nearly 3000 recorded DMV's, **no** original peasant huts, hovels or houses have survived , only those better-built oak frame houses of the more wealthy classes. Nonetheless, it's worth trying to imagine what the old village houses might have looked like at the time of the probable last phase of the village – the 1377 tax investigation.

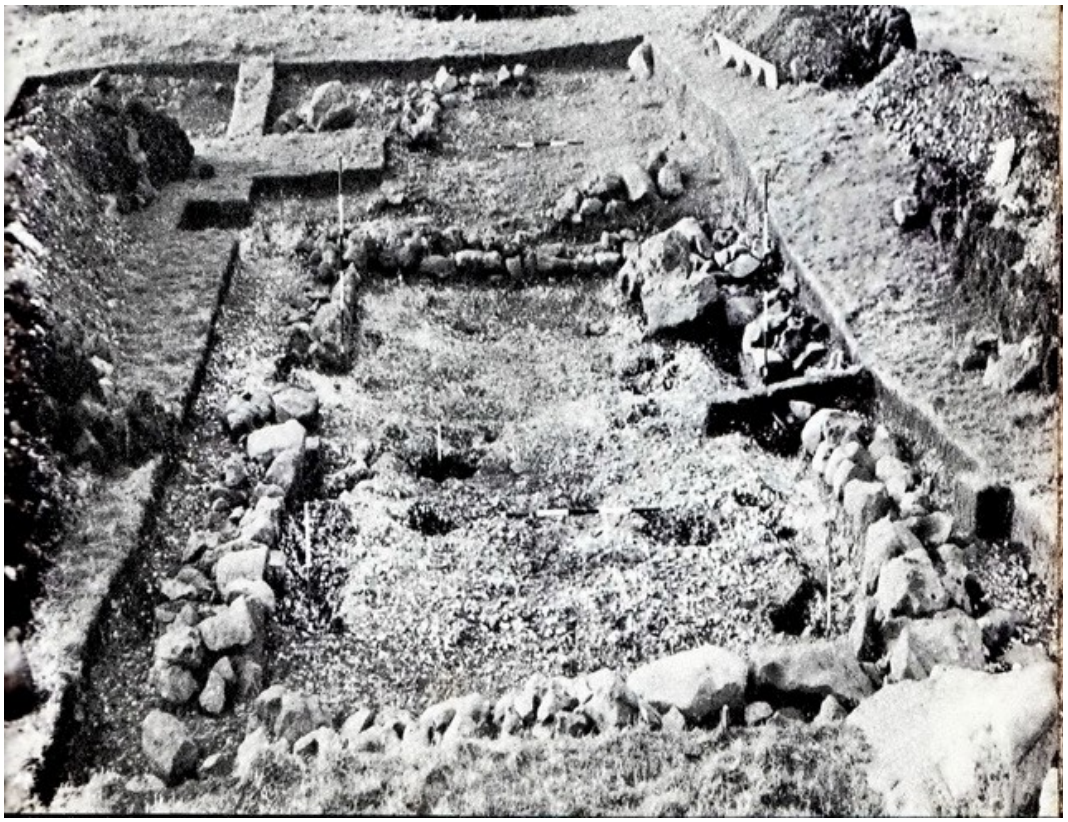
Exteriors: Over the last thirty years much excavation and cropmark survey work has been done by the Medieval Villages Research Group (MVRG) hence we have a pretty good idea **in general** of what the average DMV *plan* may have looked like and a few brave artists have attempted reconstructions from those, but we have little real idea as to what Old Horsepath itself may have looked like to a traveler of the 13th & 14th centuries. Stone-robbing, mechanised deep ploughing and soil erosion over the years here has inevitably destroyed almost all the surface evidence.

The imagined reconstruction of a peasant house (or hovel) based on excavated ground plans from DMVs in southern England is shown below:-

Reconstruction: West Barton DMV house with separate woodstore.

House ground plans.
The oddest thing to modern eyes is the way in which plans of excavated DMV houses appear to “dance” around their original site over the life of the village. This is due to the flimsy and thus ephemeral nature of their construction: thatched roofs over wattle & daub walls on a low stone foundation (in this part of the country). It appears that re-building frequently took place almost every generation on a slightly different axis as the organic structures decayed. Fire, too, may have played a part given the use of open fire hearths and naked flame illumination from rush-lights.

Foundations:
The minimal stone foundation courses in Old Horsepath's case were of Wheatley limestone rubble bound together with clay (no mortar was found attaching to any stones in 1976.) An excavated example below:-



Typical 13th/14th century house foundations in Southern England

Walls:
On top of the stone foundations would be a rough timber sill, drilled to take the vertical uprights of (probably) hazel to allow weaving of more hazel cross-bands to make a strong lattice. This would then be coated with daub from both sides – a sort of plaster infill mixture of clay, animal manure & straw. Modern experimental reconstructions have shown them to provide surprisingly warm and wind-proof insulation for the houses. The thatched roofs would have needed a considerable overhang to keep the walls dry for obvious reasons.

Examples of making wattle and daub from the recent Plimouth *(sic)* settlement reconstruction in Massachusetts New England USA:-

Windows and doors:
The position of doorways is usually obvious as gaps in the foundation courses. Excavations in Southern England have shown many examples of socket-stones or iron hanging pivots, together with keys, padlocks, hinges and latches, so even these apparently flimsy structures often had solid wooden doors.
The archaeological record has little evidence regarding windows. Sometimes small hinges and latches are found, probably from wooden shutters. Glass is never found in rural cottages until Tudor times.

Roofs:
Capping timber poles around the top of the walls into which the the hazel uprights were fixed kept the whole lattice structure in place, with rafters from them up to a ridge-beam to take the straw thatch (or more likely bracken in Old Horsepath's case). Many of these rafters would have been simple wooden poles with little real carpentry involved: another reason for the short working life of these peasant houses. Internally there would have been additional roof-post supports, as many post-holes show in excavations elsewhere. Especially the brilliantly excavated and restored West Stow DMV in Suffolk, where a collapsed roof due to a house fire showed a structure of oak rafters with hazel rods woven between them.

Interiors:
We have little evidence of internal partitions and furniture as yet. Sometimes changes in floor levels indicate where a partition would have been and small, non-structural, internal post-holes too, may be clues. Many excavations show a separate byre at one end of the house for animals: useful additional heat in cold weather. These so-called “long-house” plans survive even today in the cobb-walled and thatched Devon long-houses.

Floors:
In this part of the country DMV excavations have shown little evidence of hard floors, i.e., cobble or flag-stones. Most had simple earthen floors, often showing a distinct concave depression due to continued sweeping, to the extent that the walls themselves were undermined: thus a complete lack of interior finds upon excavation. (*the idea that these were stinking hovels is well past its sell-by date*). Another clue to this scrupulous hygiene is that phosphate analysis – the result of

animal or human waste residues – draws a blank *within* the floor areas, while giving high readings *outside* the house. In fact an area of *negative* phosphate results surrounded by high phosphate levels is a good indicator to the excavator of the presence of a house. Nowhere near as exciting as Roman villa archaeology which is perhaps why so few have been scientifically excavated!

Heating and cooking:
The central hearth was the norm in the DMV. It consisted of a fire lit directly on the earthen floor, or perhaps on a bed of small stones, or an area of rammed clay with stone kerbs.
In a few cases there are examples of side fire-pits in addition to the main hearth, which may have been used for additional baking over hot ashes. In many cases there were small post-holes on either side of the hearth which we think supported a roasting spit. In one example a large pottery vessel had been sunk into the floor near the hearth, presumably for water storage. Frequently, as well as a central hearth, we find small clay ovens in the corners of rooms, presumably for baking bread.

One rather simplistic (?) reconstruction of the interior of a medieval hovel. Hearth in foreground. The comfy-looking (?) bed is under the window.

Fuel:
There is almost no evidence as to which particular types of wood were used for the hearth fires as very little charcoal from hearths has been analysed, or indeed recognised, in excavation. What *is* known is that the typical medieval woodland management from at least Domesday onward up until recent times consisted of "coppice with standards".
This ancient forestry system is where the underwood of (mostly) hazel in this area was cut in regular cycles of between four and 15 years for walling, hurdles, sheep pens *etc;* while the standard, or full-sized timber trees (usually of oak and ash), were allowed to mature over far longer periods to provide structural timber for larger houses or wagons.
The frequent cropping of the under-wood thus provided for a wide variety of woodland crafts and for the all-important making of faggots for fuel.

Re-enactment: Fuel faggot being fed into a Tudor bread oven. 200 years later than our village, but the faggot hasn't changed.

(NB: the immaculate, chainsaw-cut (sic!), fireplace-sized log piles shown in many period TV documentaries are utter nonsense: most villagers' wood-yards consisted of literally hundreds of hazel faggots. Plus an assortment of waste dead wood –

mostly windfall branches got by peasants from the Lord's forests by the ancient and lawful practice of gathering "by hook or by crook". (shepherd's hook or crook.)

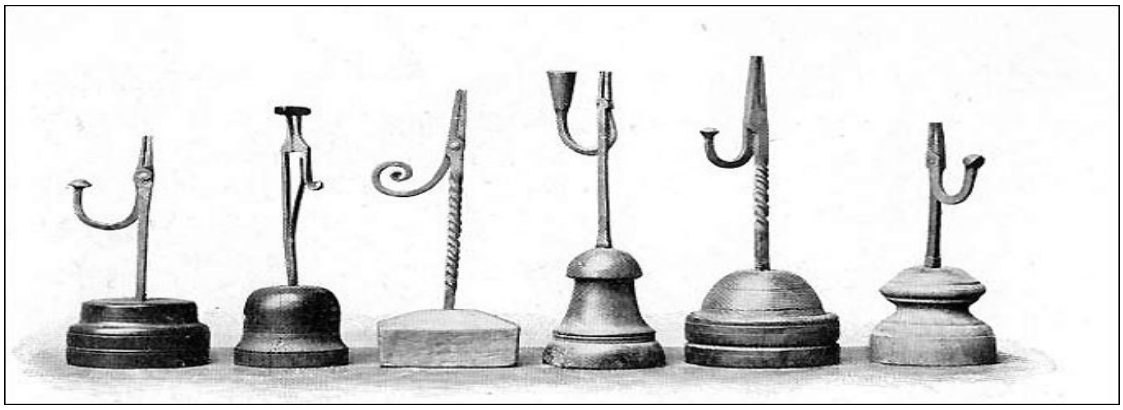
It's worth bearing in mind that many rural forestry workers - my grandfather among them- made a living from this trade right up to the first world war and beyond. As recently as 1962 I noticed (while waiting for a Landrover to take me to work in Bernwood Forest), coppiced hazel faggots from Bernwood were regularly on sale in Stanton-St-John. One cottage backyard opposite the church was stacked high with hundreds of them. Not for fuel at this late date, but for runner bean and pea sticks! Happily a practice now enjoying a revival in these more environmentally friendly days, in preference to bamboo canes imported from the Far East.

Lighting:
Rush lighting was the most economic way of lighting the interior of medieval houses to add illumination when craft work (e.g., sewing) was going on. Hearth fires were rarely out and most cooking was done over hot embers, as in modern barbecues, hence not especially useful for illumination. Rush lighting has been around for millennia and was still being used in rural Ireland and Wales in the early 20th century. They even made a brief reappearance during WW2.

The "rush light" was made by first harvesting the abundant soft rush (J*uncus effusus*), then drying and stripping off most of their skin apart from a small longitudinal strip which preserved their stiffness. This process would expose the firm absorbent pith beneath that then served as a rudimentary wick. The pith was soaked in rendered animal fat. Animal husbandry was commonplace among the lower classes, and the fat easily obtainable. After the fat had congealed and dried, the pith was an ignitable source of light.

Typical crude blacksmith-made rushlight holder.

Rush-holders came in a variety of shapes & functions:-



The more expensive models came with a candle-holder too (centre, above). Even tallow (animal-fat) candles had to be bought: rushes were free. Expensive beeswax candles were strictly for the upper classes, or churches on feast days.

The rush would be placed in the jaws of the rush-holder usually at about 45 degrees (the weight of the movable handle keeping it in place) and the upper end lit. If placed nearly vertically it would give less light but last longer. In our period (13th/14th centuries) the rushes were usually about a foot long and experiments show they lasted for up to 15 minutes. Much later, in the nineteenth century, Gilbert White (of "*Natural History of Selbourne*" fame) observed that his rushes were nearly 30 inches long and lasted for up to an hour.

If more light was needed for close work, the rush could be placed horizontally in the jaws and lit at both ends and although giving better light, also burned more quickly. This practice is the origin of our modern phrase: "*burning the candle at both ends*". Many later commentators remarked that rush-light was far superior to that from tallow candles, which gave off a putrid smoke.

Diet :
Those at the bottom of the social scale at this time ate very simply. Cereal crops in this area were mainly barley (for beer), oats (for pottage) and rye for coarse bread (wheat needs rich soil). Most people ate preserved foods that had been salted or

pickled soon after slaughter or harvest. Bacon seems to have been available at times as the poor often kept pigs, which, unlike cows and sheep, were able to live in wooded areas fending for themselves. *Pannage* for Autumnal acorns and *agistement* for keeping forest undergrowth in check using pigs are common in forest contracts of the period.

Peasants also tended to keep cows (nine shillings & fivepence per beast to buy in 1350) so a large part of their diets would have included dairy produce such as buttermilk and cheese. The Common above Old Horsepath was called "Cow Common" in the Tithe Map of 1847, as was the one above Lower Horspath near Shotover and almost certainly had a long history before that.

Rich and poor alike ate a dish called *pottage*, a thick soup containing vegetables, or oat bran (*frumenty*) and, very occasionally for the poor, meat.
An obvious additional source of food was from the hedgerow or woods in season; hazelnuts, blackberries *etc, etc.* and the many edible wild plants still found on Shotover and around the present village today.

Water Resources
The Hollowbrook spring was obviously the main water source for the village as evidenced by the quantity of pottery sherds found in the gravel spring bed . Nevertheless, it was a walk of some two or three hundred yards from the village down to the spring. It underlines the fact that close proximity of water supply was <u>not</u> a key factor in siting any settlement, then or now. Other factors like soil, aspect and drainage were clearly more important.
Mick Aston once observed the willingness of villagers in the Africa today to walk considerable distances to get water: he claimed the reason being that the water carriers were mainly women. Enough said..

(*It must also be said that many ancient civilisations – the Minoans especially, but the Indus Valley culture and the later Sassanians too - had mastered hydraulic technology millennia ago, to the extent that they were able to bring fresh water from many miles way, the Minoans by use of sub-soil siphons and cone-shaped Venturi clay pipes across valleys when necessary for drinking, bathing and sanitation. The Minoans even developed sand and charcoal filters – technically excellent even today – for their drinking water at Knossos on Crete.*

Visitors to the Minoan Bronze Age city of Akrotiri on Santorini are frequently amazed when one points out a flush toilet on the first floor of one building: and all this 3,500 years ago. But doubtless the countryside was left to basics.)

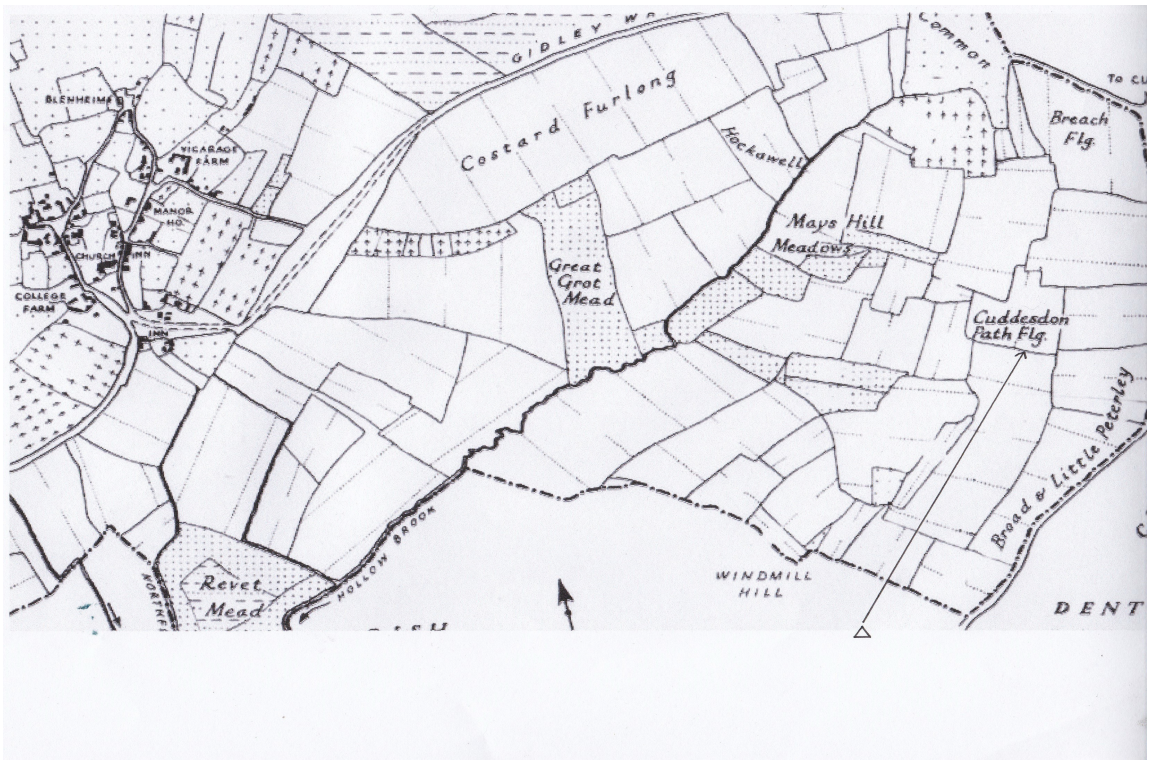
However, on the track leading up to Old Horsepath there appears to be another spring outlet much closer to the village which was piped in many years ago and the outlet seems to be close to the main spring itself, causing a deep bog for any idiot Landrover driver tempted to drive too close to the main spring loaded with logs. Twenty years ago Mary and I were clearing large ash logs from the hillside further downstream and did just that. We used the *entire* load of ash logs to try to create a platform on which to escape. We failed. And then had to call out John Heritage with the farm's biggest tractor to haul us out. The ash logs are still there..

A small test pit next to this higher spring should provide some dating evidence of its use.

VILLAGE ROADS

All human settlements inevitably have footpaths, tracks or roads to enable social communications & trade with other settlements within their catchment area. No village exists in isolation and for a better understanding of the overall working environment of both Horsepaths, we need to try to understand the villages' network of communications (roads and tracks *etc*) to and from them as these would obviously reflect the economic and social needs of the villagers.

In this context, one of the (Old Horsepath) fields named in the 1847 Tithe Map is called “Cuddesdon Path Furlong” (see sketch below). Its position relative to the present Cuddesdon turn seems odd, as the *modern* turning is several hundred yards east of that field.



However, Richard Davis' 1797 map of this area (below) shows an earlier road leading across the Garsington-Wheatley road from the Cuddesdon Path Furlong to join the present Cuddesdon road some way south of Coomb Wood. So at a time when Old Horsepath was active, that road would have provided more direct access from Old Horsepath (and Lower Horsepath) to Cuddesdon. (see below)

Davis Map of 1797. Lost road is in the centre, at bottom, below Coomb Wood

Why this particular road ? (or muddy track as it would have been in winter.) One reason might have been the need to process cereal crops grown in Old Horsepath. Cereal seeds *could* have been ground by using a hand quern. However, given the acreage of Old Horspath (140 or thereabouts including pasture for cattle,) the volume would have been too much (in my view) for hand-grinding given the small village's female population available for such labour ,hence it's likely that the cereals would have been carted to the nearest watermill.

> (NB: *The windmill at Wheatley was probably not built until the early 17th century. The earliest record of that mill – there were two originally - is a sale poster dated 1671, but it was advertised as being "ruinous" at that time. Certainly no windmill or miller is cited in the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum for Wheatley.)*
>
> *See:*https://wheatleyarchive.org.uk/2013/01/23/wheatley-windmill/ *for more details.*

The nearest would have been the watermill at Cuddesdon. (not the stone built watermill on the River Thame that still exists today - albeit now as domestic flats. That building originated in the 18th century). Records show there was an earlier wooden building on roughly the same site as shown by the entries in the VCH for Cuddesdon. And *another* one higher up on the Cumb Broc (Cuddesdon Brook). As this "lost " road and the mill would have been of considerable importance to both Horsepaths as it was closer, so I researched it in some detail:-

See appendix 2 for details of the mill on the Cuddesdon Brook

Other access roads.

There must have obviously been a road to Old Horsepath from the current village. After a lot of detective work I'm pretty certain it ran from Gidley Way, opposite & lower down from Butts Road, across the top of the Horspath Allotments, (*that area is named as "lynchets" in the OS map of 1830, often a sign of a man-made path cut into the side of a hill*), then behind the extended gardens of the houses on the Cuddesdon Road, down into the Hollowbrook valley, then up towards Old Horspath. See photo below of the final stage of that road.

2017 photo of the end section of track from Old Horsepath to Lower (modern) Horspath. Old Horspath Farm over the hill to the right.

Old Horsepath is up on the ridge to the left: the other direction of the trackway leads straight down to the Hollowbrook and has no possible modern function.

Obvious local destinations from Old Horsepath would have been: Cuddesdon: Garsington: Wheatley and Oxford. However, roads or tracks are very difficult to date for the simple reason that they have often been in use since the first agriculturalists settled the land in Neolithic times or later.

As far as the Horspath area is concerned, in the late 1300s the Garsington-Wheatley road was definitely in use at that time as we have a charter of AD 956 (*a sort of verbal map describing the boundaries*) for the twenty hides of land belonging to Cuddesdon, in which that road is named as a "Street" (*straete*)", an Anglo-Saxon word possibly, but not always, meaning a paved Roman road.

Also, the back road to Shotover from Blenheim is certainly medieval: in the lower parts it is paved in the medieval manner. It also linked Lower Horspath to the main Oxford - London road at that time which ran across the top of Shotover, and is presumably (?) part of the *Horsepadan* origin of the village's early name.

The present Oxford Road is also at least medieval in origin as its course runs directly from Sandy Lane next to the Southfield Golf Course (a less wet route out of Oxford before the Cowley Road was made), to modern Horspath, skirting the southern edge of the then 13th century Templar's wood (Bowley Field *et al*) and, with the trackway to Old Horspath, would have provided access to Oxford itself. Exactly how old that road is is anyone's guess.

The planned Saxon city of Oxford that we know today only dates from around the late 9th century, although there is increasing evidence that there was settlement here in Roman times, See :-

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/445/oxford_archaeological_resource_assessment>

However, a rather interesting new piece of evidence has recently emerged on a possible unknown (to me at any rate) Roman Road within our area.

From the Berks. Bucks and Oxon Journal,Vol 28, published in 1898, I found therein "*Notes Archaeology of Oxford and Its Neighbourhood"* by Percy Manning, (note XXXIV. pp27*ff* :-

"*Roman pottery is often found in the brickfield on the north side of the old road over Shotover Hill, just at the western end of the hill....(9 lines on pottery types redacted.....)*

*In the bank on the north side of the brickyard, is a section cut through a bed of stones some twenty feet in width, diminishing from a thickness of about one foot in the middle to almost nothing at the edges. It is evidently a road. It lies over 100 yards east of the line shown on the ordnance survey map as that of the Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester. The course of this road is by no means clear at this point, and it is possible that the surveyors have made a mistake in their line, and laid down the road to far to the west. If, however, the ordnance map is correct (it is, as the Eastern By-pass building work proved. CJP)., we must assume that the road shown in the section is a branch road leading up Shotover Hill, possibly to a villa, which remains yet to be discovered. A similar branch road at Beckley, Oxon, about four miles north on the Alchester road, was noticed and described some years before it received an explanation, in the discovery of a villa to which it led some half-mile from the main (*Roman; cjp.) *road.*

About 600 yards east of the brickfield, on the northern slope of the hill, more Roman pottery was found about two years ago by some men digging sand."

This branch road is about 200 yards beyond the present Old Rd bridge over the eastern by-pass on the uphill, ie. eastern side, and would appear to be heading toward The Ridings and thence perhaps either to a villa somewhere near Westhill Farm, or continuing to Lower Horsepath and then possibly to Old Horsepath. Or both. (there was also another Roman branch road on the opposite side of the main Roman road leading off westward to the extensive Roman kiln-field on the present Churchill Hospital site.)

The *possible* village footpath extensions of the trackway from Old Horsepath down to modern Horspath, above the allotments; along the course of Wrightson Close; Ford's Close and below Manor Farm, then across the farmland below Westhill Farm, The Ridings (and perhaps beyond to the Roman branch road) is an interesting possibility if one allows for a missing stretch across the railway track and the gardens of the Manor House (built well after Old Horspath was abandoned) Maybe a simple coincidence, but food for thought anyway and the implications of this (if proven) would be very interesting indeed. (I was unable to squeeze a usable map into this document.) Further research is needed here!

This route, apart from being much shorter than any other, *may* have been a preferred route from Headington Quarry to the two Horsepath villages in medieval times, before the climate worsened and the fields below Westhill Farm became a quagmire in Winter. If indeed it *was* used in Winter.
That route would have been ideal (no hills to climb) for heavy carts of building stone for the church (built in the 1200s) and other older buildings in Lower (modern) Horspath, compared to the alternative route over Shotover to the Wheatley quarries.
But how one distinguishes between Wheatley, Garsington and Headington limestone I know not, as they are all part of the same Coralian Limestone geological series. If it *were* possible to distinguish between the two, and St Giles' church *is* of Headington Quarry stone, then this route is a distinct possiblity and needs further research. (*Are there any petrologists in the village?)*

One other local track probably of medieval origin is the old (and still active) footpath from the bottom of Gidley Way to Garsington. (*the present Cuddesdon Road was made after Enclosure in the 1860s*). It passes close to a field named in the 1847 Tithe Map named "Revel Mead" right on the parish border with Garsington. (Perhaps a place of revelry for both Horspath and Garsington at harvest home or other celebrations?) Not that this would have affected Old Horsepath as they had their own connection via the old Wheatley-Garsington road.

Two other tracks or roads, probably of considerable antiquity, are now known to have existed in this area. One, with a very stony foundation, leads from the Roman kilns on Little Peril field by Brasenose woods, straight across toward what is now modern Horspath and independent of the present footpath. One can only guess at its purpose, but the potters must have lived somewhere close by. Roman Horsepath perhaps?

Another track leads from the same kilns up to Westhill Farm and probably beyond, towards the Roman kilns on The Row (where the reservoir now is). A Google Earth view of this latter track shows a dense mass of what are almost certainly hut circles (Iron Age? Roman?) running parallel to the present tarmac road to Westhill Farm. Denis Walker has given me permission to do some trial excavations here. Any helpers about? If a few test-pits on these hut circles produced diagnostic Roman era pottery we might well have the potters' village. (A truly "Old" Horsepath !) More research needed!

(NB:*Both tracks/roads were pointed out to me by the late John Heritage as they caused him considerable annoyance when his plough hit them and the shear-link broke.*)

*But these latter tracks are beyond the scope of this paper on Old Horsepath, and belong to another study, now in progress on the "**Origins of Early Horsepath**". As I said before, a Time-Team style "Big Dig" of planned one-metre test pits in village gardens, perhaps organised by The Hub and the village school (?) would be fascinating and add much to the village's foundation and early history, as well as encouraging a new generation of archaeologists.*

Any support for this out there? See :-

http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Business/Business%20Services/Archaeological%20Business%20Services/2011-11-07%20How%20to%20Dig%20Your%20Back%20Garden.pdf

The end of the village

The causes of depopulation and abandonment of villages in Britain as a whole were many and varied. In the past, the Black Death (Plague) was usually considered the prime suspect in books dealing with the subject. The Black Death first entered Britain in 1348 subsiding in 1350 with recurring outbreaks in 1361, 1374, and regularly over the next 300 years until it finally disappeared in 1665. But the 1348 epidemic was by far the worst. As previously mentioned, estimates are that almost 50% of the British population died.

In Oxfordshire we only know of two such villages (*Tusmore* and *Tilgarseley*) that were totally depopulated by the Plague, as by chance the surviving records explicity state as much. But more may well have suffered a similar fate and inevitably most of those that did survive were shrunken to one degree or another. What is not in dispute is the fact that the Black Death indiscriminately reduced village populations to one degree or another across the country and lead to a serious shortage of labour in all rural occupations; especially so in agriculture. There are many contemporary reports of vast numbers of fields - and thus farms - going out of use and reverting to wasteland.

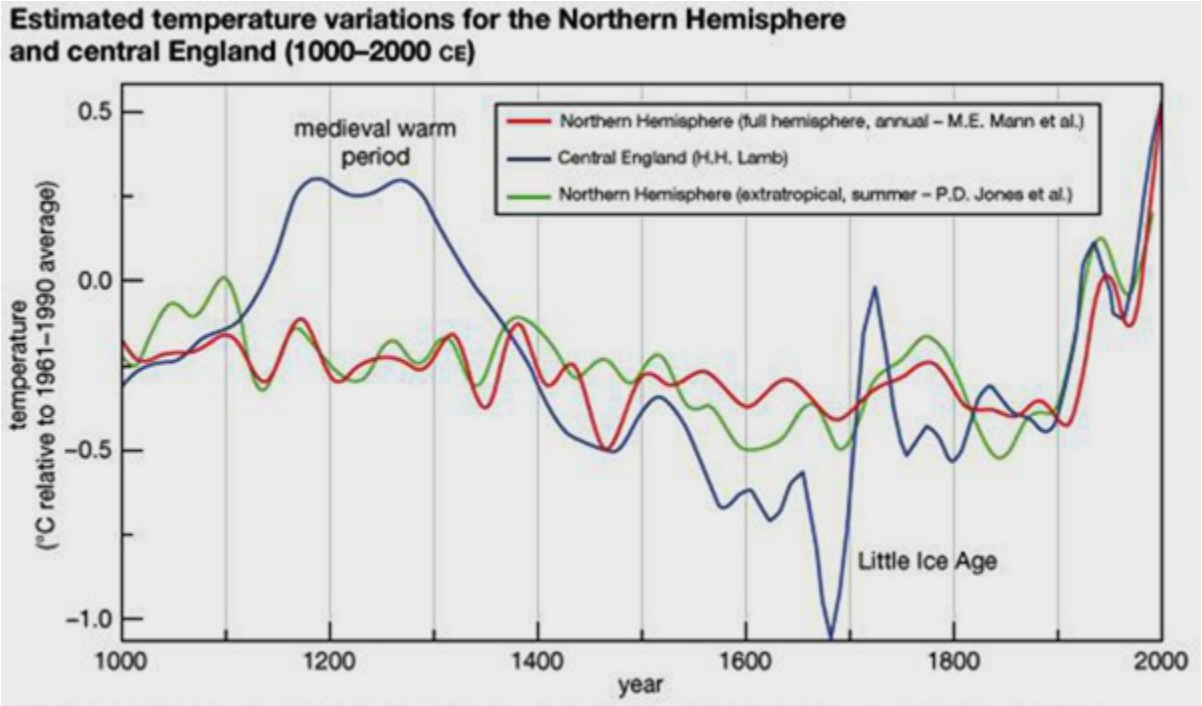
For those feudal serfs (essentially semi-slaves) who *did* survive, it also meant the eventual end of the hated feudal system. As employer competition for scarce labour inevitably pushed wages up, the feudal tied-labour system (slavery by any other name) could no longer be enforced and thus fell into disuse.

Many villages shrank to a shadow of their former selves at this point: *one* of the reasons in my view that Old Horsepath disappears from the records after the Poll Tax returns for 1377 (*although see note below re climate change*).
Since the tax returns for 1428, 1524 and 1665 do not mention Old Horsepath at all,

the conclusion must be that the village was largely deserted within fifty years after 1377 and the unoccupied houses slowly crumbled back into the soil.
However, the previously mentioned pottery yields from the test pits higher up to the east from the source of the Hollowbrook, and from the spring itself, are good evidence that a few hardy souls were still living near the Hollowbrook spring area well after that time – perhaps up to the late 18th century, to go by the pottery finds.

(Again, in Poll Tax, or census terms, these people would have been included in returns for Lower or modern Horspath and are thus invisible to us now.)

Climate Change: More recently, the new bogeyman of climate change as a reason for hill-top or exposed village desertion has entered the picture as better historical meteorological data has become available**:** the graph below tells its own story:-



Note the blue line: the increasingly cold climate in Central England from AD 1300 to AD 1670 (The Little Ice Age) and the previous Medieval Warm period from around AD 1150 to 1350.

(It is perhaps worth recalling that during this same Warm period, the Vikings were able to found two viable colonies on Greenland from about the year AD 1000 onward, until they too were abandoned around AD 1350.)

Although still slightly controversial due to the apparently negative impact it has on the currently "fashionable" short-term thinking re recent man-made climate change, this new view of climate change in the Middle Ages has become widely accepted by most serious historians. It certainly lends weight to the notion of population decrease caused by poor crops and starvation *on top* of that caused by the Black Death.

The hilltop situation of Old Horsepath village, exposed as it was to the worsening weather at the beginning of what is known today as "The Little Ice Age", would have made it increasingly untenable for crops, let alone human beings in their flimsy hovels. Even today with our waterproof boots & windproof clothing, it is a bleak and inhospitable site in Winter:-

Old Horsepath field in February 2017…

The soil up there is very poor – a mix of Portland Sands, Shotover Ironsands & Kimmeridge Clay that requires much expensive fertilizer to produce any sort of a viable crop.
So perhaps a surviving family moved down into that snug little valley of the

Hollowbrook Spring in the late 16th century and built a new home there where their ancient ancestors had once lived? The cobblestone layer above the spring, later post-medieval pottery and improved track surfaces would tend to support that notion.
Further research work is necessary in the valley – more test pits and a deeper examination of the track-ways leading to the spring itself. Any volunteers?

And it is still a beautifully peaceful little valley, where we have hard evidence that people have lived over the last 8,000 years and with a history and peaceful atmosphere all its own.
Today, it is a dedicated organic nature reserve, begun some forty-five years ago by Bob and Muriel Walker as a sanctuary for many wild animals and flowers, and now maintained & managed by his son Denis & grandson George. Long may it remain so!

CJP January 2018

Caveat: The site of Old Horsepath itself is on private property and is active farmland. In any case there is absolutely *nothing* to see apart from a few enigmatic stones in the hedgerow.
Also, to deter metal detectorists the area has been seeded with metallic swarf.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Romano-British Estates into Modern Parishes?

Much academic ink has been spilt in the last century over the vexed question of "Continuity" between Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon eras. What exactly did the Anglo-Saxons inherit? Did they invade *en masse a*nd ethnically cleanse the land of its ancient British population by a prolonged war? Or did they find a countryside devoid of inhabitants because of a catastrophic plague, introduced from the eastern Mediterranean, then ravaging that area as some historians argue? See:-

https://www.ancient.eu/article/782/justinians-plague-541-542-ce/

The academic arguments continue to this day, but a commonsense farming approach is to ask why on earth the Anglo-Saxons would have completely ignored a man-made landscape of hedgerows, ditches, fields and farms and started over with a clean slate of their own making?? My own view is that being sensible chaps they used what was already in existence and carried on with that.
So it is that much research since the 1950s into ancient and modern landscape boundaries has begun to reveal "ghost" outlines of large estates dated to the 7th century, clearly derived from Roman estates and even those of much earlier periods. Some perhaps even going back to the Bronze Age.

The seminal pioneering work was done by Prof Finberg on the large parish of Withington in the Gloucester Cotswolds. A 2006 Time Team programme re-evaluated the site.
See :-

http://www.bgas.org.uk/tbgas_bg/v127/bg127195.pdf

Finberg was able to show conclusively that Withington parish is based on an ancient Roman estate centered on an imposing Roman villa and *several other contemporary ancillary Roman settlements.* The land attached to the villa emerged as a 7th century estate given over intact by an Anglo-Saxon king to the local monastery belonging to the See of Worcester. Its later history, with a few minor boundary changes can be documented right through the Middle Ages to the

present modern parish. Since then, other investigations into parishes where surviving Anglo-Saxon charters exist, now suggest that the same pattern appear to hold good for many other modern parishes too.
If this possibly pertains to the Horspath and other local parishes as well, perhaps we should be looking for that central Roman Villa and its ancillary settlements?

Apropos of which, recent field-walking at Garsington by Patti Blaza has revealed substantial amounts of Roman-British pottery from the late 3rd & 4th centuries, centered on the higher of the two manors, (although some sherds of high-status Gaulish Samian ware from the 1st & 2nd centuries were found as well, but these may well be heirloom pieces). The later sherds are from the nationally significant Romano-British East Oxfordshire potteries, which run on either side of the Roman Road in East Oxfordshire and which crosses the parish at its western edge. The sheer quantity of R-B sherds from Garsington indicate that a Roman era farm-stead (at least) once existed here. A close watch is being kept by Patti to see if any further evidence of a building emerges.

We also have an enigmatic scattering of RB sherds in the Hollowbrook valley beneath the Old Horsepath site and, to my surprise, in 1974 I accidentally found considerable amounts of 4th century pottery on the Howe Trust allotments on Mill Lane at Wheatley while looking at a friend's allotment there– a long way from the villa site on Castle Hill, so perhaps this site is an ancillary Roman settlement?

*(**NB**:* T*he present Horspath Parish has two known 3rd/4th century pottery-kiln sites from the nationally significant Roman pottery industry: a very extensive one on the Row near the reservoir on Shotover and more on the other side of the lane below the old pig farm, and the other next to Open Brasenose wood close to the old Roman road with about 15 kilns discovered so far (many more could be hidden beneath the trees of Open Brasenose wood).* Pace *the idea of "Continuity", this site clearly continued its pottery-making well into the Anglo-Saxon period as I found examples of classic Saxon potsherds with stick-end stamp decoration in the debris of a well-used Roman-era kiln in 1972. (now in the Oxfordshire Museum)*

The arguments for these survivals are complex, but simply put it would seem that often a pre-Roman estate belonging to an Iron Age Catavellauni chieftain in our area and possibly even originating in the Bronze Age was taken over by a Roman

big-wig after the Conquest in AD 43 and, after the Roman administration ended 400 years later, the estate passed into the ownership of an eminent Anglo-Saxon chief, with the descendants of the British villagers working for their new lords: as they continued to do for the new Norman Warlord elite after 1066 (*and all that)* until the Black Death finally finished off the Feudal system in the late 14th century .

However, after Augustine's conversion of the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity by about AD 800, the newly converted descendants of the original Anglo-Saxon chiefs began granting much of many of the estates to their local monastery (*to ease their way into Heaven no doubt – a process later dignified by the Catholic Church in their sale of indulgences; until Martin Luther stepped in, that is!)*

Although it has to be said that many other Anglo-Saxon kings also gave away portions of these estates to their cronies for political and other reasons. In the year AD 956 alone Eadwig made over **seventy** sizeable gifts of lands alone.
See below for the complete list of his gifts during his reign (files S582 – S672) :-

<www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/ch_date/0900.html>

One of those charters, S587 in Peter Sawyer's list above, is one in which King Eadwig gives 20 hides of land from Cuddesdon (later to become the parish of Wheatley), to Aelfhere, an Ealdorman in the then adversarial state of Mercia. A possibly curious move indeed in my view as it gave Mercia *both* banks of the River Thame, then a lawless frontier between Mercia and Wessex (but Anglo-Saxon politics is not my subject) Eadwig was called "A Wanton Youth" at the time even though he only reigned for four years. His unwholesome reputation stems from the story that he was found "*in a compromising situation*" at the time when he was supposed to be presiding over his coronation feast! With whom, sadly, we are not told. But it shows clearly the way in which original tribal (and perhaps Roman) estates were broken up during the reign of the Anglo-Saxon kings.

The original charter, for those interested and with a copy of "Anglo-Saxon For Dummies" to hand, is below. In essence it's a verbal map of the 20 hides, some features of which are still in evidence today.
(Note **Cu'enes dune** = *Cuddesdon:* and ***healhtunes****, which my copy translates as*

"The Grove of the Peasants". It took me a while to figure out what it is: today – Holton!) :-

*"Is syndon ˇa land gemæru to **Cuˇenes dune** .xx. hida. Of hryˇera forda on holanford, of holanford on lahhanmere, 7lang riˇiges on bradan mædwa, ˇæt swa norð 7lang fura on set ˇorn, of set ˇorne on fulan riˇig on anne pyt, of ˇam pytte 7lang riˇiges on ˇæt heafod lond, of ˇam heafodon 7lang fura on pricˇorn, on foreweardne eanferˇes hlau, of eanferˇes hlawe 7lang fure, ˇæt on an riˇig, 7lang riˇiges ˇæt on ane dic, 7lang dices on drygean broc, ˇæt swa 7lang dices on mærwelle broc, 7lang broces on mærwelle, of mærwelle on ˇæt heafod lond, on gerihte to stræt, ˇonne east 7lang stræte oˇ ˇæra stræta gelæto, ˇonan rihte norˇ ondlong weges oˇ ˇa heafdo, ˇæt on mær weg, 7lang mærweges ˇæt on butan ceorla graf on fost broc, of fost broce on ˇone hliðweg, 7long weges on hina gemæro, 7long hina gemæres on ˇa hlydan, of ˇæra hlydan on ˇa stanbricge, 7long **healhtunes** gemæres on risc dene, ˇæt of risc dene on gerihte on ˇæt ˇriex, of ˇam ˇriexe on ˇa stræt, 7long stræte on holan broc, 7long broces on herpaˇ ford on **Tame,** 7long Tame ˇæt eft on hryˇera ford.*

For those without the essential lexicon, I later found Tom Hassall's translation of this with commentary is in his "Wheatley Records", page 28 & 29, published by the Oxfordshire Record Society in 1956. (*I now have a PDF copy of this extract if anyone is interested*.) Interestingly though, none of these grants concern lands in Horspath parish, so perhaps it had an owner, or owners, over which even the kings' writ did not run. But who and why?

I am still trying (without luck so far) to get hold of a copy of J.Bond's "*The Reconstruction of the Medieval Landscape: The Estates of Abingdon Abbey*" published in the Landscape Journal of 1979 to see if it had any holdings in Horspath that might shed light. A long shot but… My reason being that the eventual benefactor of all this largess in our region was mostly Abingdon Abbey; itself sitting on top of what is increasingly looking like a significant Roman town by a ford or bridge over the river Thames, from the latest excavations there. See:-

<http://oxoniensia.org/volumes/2007/brady.pdf>

One of the key findings of the research on parish development is that the administration and control of these early British estates - a crucial but unsung function down the ages (think of the Parish Council today)- was usually centered on some place of particular secular or spiritual importance at that time, perhaps an ancient hill-fort or even a large farmstead, or a specific place with special historical significance for them, known as a *caput*. In the Roman period we are fairly certain that the local villa would have fulfilled that function, for obvious reasons.

Curiously, the *caput* for the very large Bullingdon Hundred by the 14th century, when it is first mentioned in print (but would have had a very long unknown history before that), was a place on the border between Horspath and Cowley, roughly near the Council sports field below Open Brasenose Wood. (see sketch map from VCH further below)

This location is right on the main Roman road from Dorchester to Alchester (near Bicester) hence enjoying excellent internal communications across Roman Britain and very close to the entrance to the Roman kiln-field by Open Brasenose Wood, and the probable link road up to the extensive Roman potteries on the Row (the

reservoir field) and thus in a prime place to control storage, sales and nationwide distribution of the potters' wares from the Horspath kilns. There was also a branch road to the left further up on the old Roman road, leading to the extensive kiln-site around what is now the Churchill Hospital, so the *caput* chiefs wherever they were could well have had a controlling influence on those kilns too.

Here the plot thickens. The distribution of Roman villas in east Oxfordshire is pretty well known. They seem to occupy sites roughly about every two miles or so on either side of the old A40 road from High Wycombe onward. But there *appears* to be a gap in the very area of the kilns at Horspath & Shotover: between the large Wheatley villa and the one at Headington Wick above Barton.
A university lecturer on Romano-British Pottery at Rewley House in the 1970s was of the opinion that the whole Shotover area was a " tribal reserve". Presumably like Native American reservations? But when closely questioned by the class he offered no real evidence.

Given that we know there was standardisation of (especially) mortaria sizes across the East Oxfordshire Roman potteries and this points to some sort of controlling organisation or overseer, certainly by the 4th century when the industry was at its zenith. The big question is where did he, it (or she) live? Is there an as yet undiscovered villa under the trees up on Shotover itself? Could there be a grand villa like the one at Wheatley lurking close to the Roman road beneath BMW or their sportsfield? It's not impossible! See: -

<https://theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/apr/17/amazing-find-roman-villa>

The "smoking gun" evidence for me is the high probability of the branch road off of the main Roman road through the area leading up toward Shotover. See note on Manning's report on p.47 (above).
One customer of the Queen's Head (one of Nigel Webb's friends) told us that he'd seen Roman material coming out of the ground near the parking lot of the Roman Way Club during an excavation for building foundations, but I was never able to follow it up. (more research needed! here). Nigel tells me it was at the far left-hand corner of the sports field under the tarmac. Also a Roman farm was discovered during the building of the Homebase store on the corner of the eastern Bypass

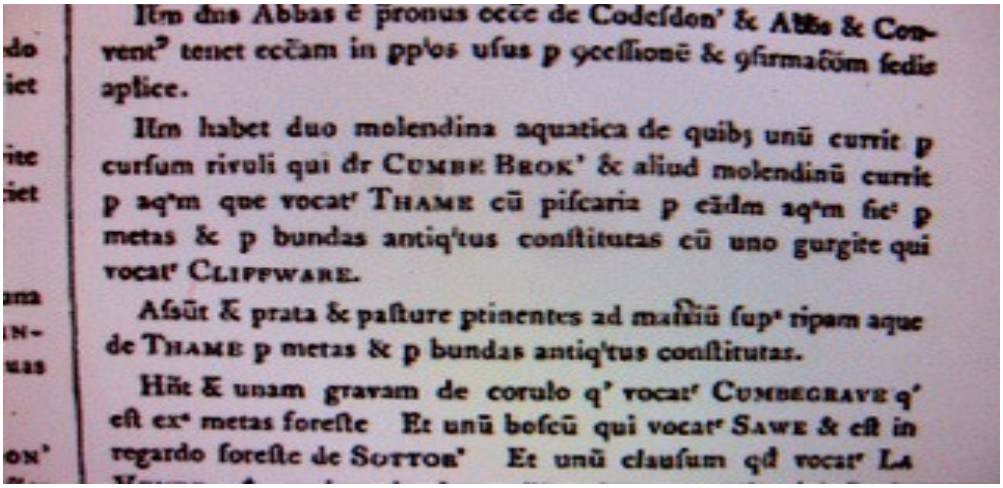
junction with the Slade.

The majority - say 80% - of known Roman Villas conform to something of a pattern. They are *usually* situated within a mile or less of a Roman road; are on or above the local spring-line; and face south to south east. In our case, I feel that investigations east of The Ridings on Shotover (i.e., above the spring-line) would be a start. Also, the Westhill farm area would be well worth exploring in detail as it sits on a man-made platform facing south-west with an excellent spring running alongside it and the field patterns below it look to me to be infill in a larger (older?) field system. In 1990 I found 4th century RB pottery scatters along the stream that leads to the Oxford road on the southern side of these fields.

In my view, this whole subject is a key area for further local investigation by an informed local history group.

APPENDIX 2 The Lost Mill on the Cuddesdon Brook.

Despite opinions to the contrary (*below*), the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum for Cuddesdon clearly mentions <u>two</u> mills in Cuddesdon at that time. An otherwise excellent Wheatley local history pamphlet published in the 1980s that I was shown, categorically disputed that any mill could have been located on the Comb Broc:- " *the suggestion that a small mill existed on Cuddesdon Brook itself has neither evidence nor water power to support it*". But the author did not understand the development of watermills in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Many of them were sited on leats diverted from hill-side streams or brooks, thus requiring less massive structures, well within the technology of that period.



Itm dns Abbas ē pronus ecce de Codeſdon' & Abbs & Conuent' tenet eccam in pp'os uſus p ꝯceſſionē & ꝯfirmacōm ſedis aplice.

Itm habet duo molendina aquatica de quibꝫ unū currit p curſum riuuli qui dr Cumbe Brok' & aliud molendinū currit p aq'm que vocat' Thame cū piſcaria p eādm aq'm ſic' p metas & p bundas antiq'tus conſtitutas cū uno gurgite qui vocat' Clifware.

Aſsūt & prata & paſture ptinentes ad maſſiū ſup' ripam aque de Thame p metas & p bundas antiq'tus conſtitutas.

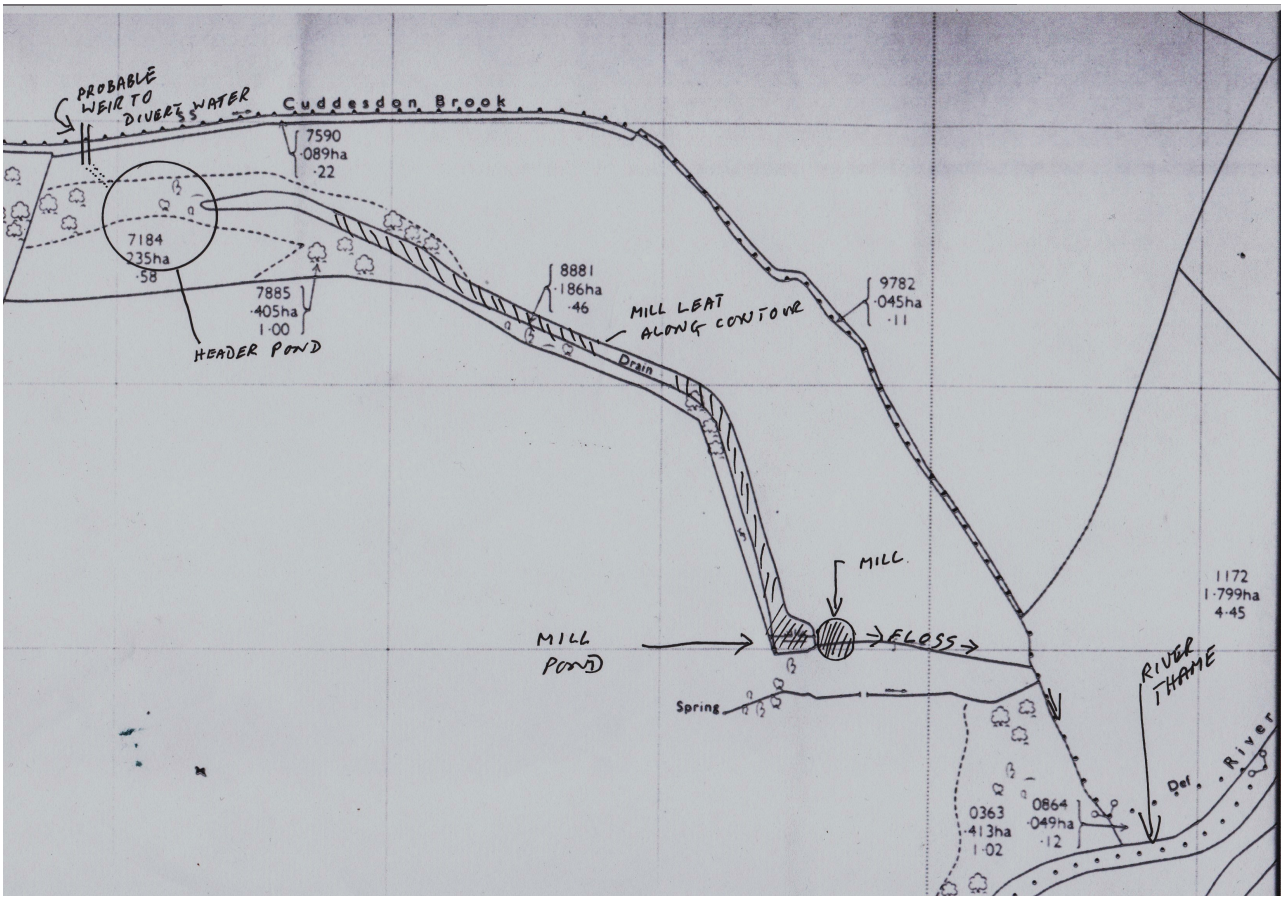
Hōt & unam gravam de corulo q' vocat' Cumbegrave q' eſt ex' metas foreſte Et unū boſcū qui vocat' Sawe & eſt in regardo foreſte de Sottor' Et unū clauſum qd vocat' La

Cuddeson watermills in the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum:"habet duo molendina aquatica"

One was on the River Thame, although the actual building at that time would have been of wooden construction, not stone as now; the other higher up (as stated in the 1279 Rotuli Hundredorum above) on the Cumbe Broc (Cuddesdon Brook today) and about a mile closer to Old Horsepath than the mill on the River Thame.

I re-discovered the remains of this mill in Summer 2000 by walking down *in* the Cuddesdon Brook stream from Coombe Wood toward the River Thame. And sure enough, through the hedges at low sun angle I saw the slumped, eroded banks of what looked like a header pond a few yards away from the brook. Unsurprisingly, there was no trace of any weir structure in the brook that would have been necessary to divert water into the header pond, although careful excavation might show some traces remaining.

Beyond the pond (as described later below) was a deep leat (called a "drain" on the modern OS map) running from the pond along the contour line toward the mill, while the brook itself descends quite steeply in the same direction (see diagram below).



Author sketch

The mill leat, looking upstream towards the header pond and the Cuddesdon brook to the right

I could find no obvious trace of surface mill structures around the dam wall or pond area but the dense undergrowth made searching very difficult.
However, with the permission of the landowner I made a small excavation behind the dam wall outlet and about two feet down found the elm boards that guided the water over the sluice (*see below*) The boards were of the consistency of cheese. So some, at least, of the original internal workings from the mill's latest iteration (around AD 1600?) are still *in situ*.

Elm sluice board. Mill dam to right.

From there the mill outlet discharged into the floss and thence back into the Cuddesdon Brook some 30 yards below:-

Confluence of mill floss with Cuddesdon brook.
Mill is uphill behind the photographer,

From its location the mill is probably an earlier one than the one sited on the River Thame that was named "Cliffware" in 1279. Much simpler to build than the far larger and complex structures needed on more substantial river like the Thame which would inevitably have needed protection against winter floods and the powerful currents. And, to judge from its overall layout and its position on the side of a steep slope, it was *probably* late Anglo-Saxon in origin. Although, during the 1845 excavation of the Wheatley Roman Villa (*see page 21 above*: *page 335 of the original report)* a **three foot** diameter millstone of Red Sandstone (possibly from Heidelberg or Staffordshire) being used as a whetstone. A millstone of this size can only have come from a water-mill as it is obviously far too large for a domestic hand-grinding quern.

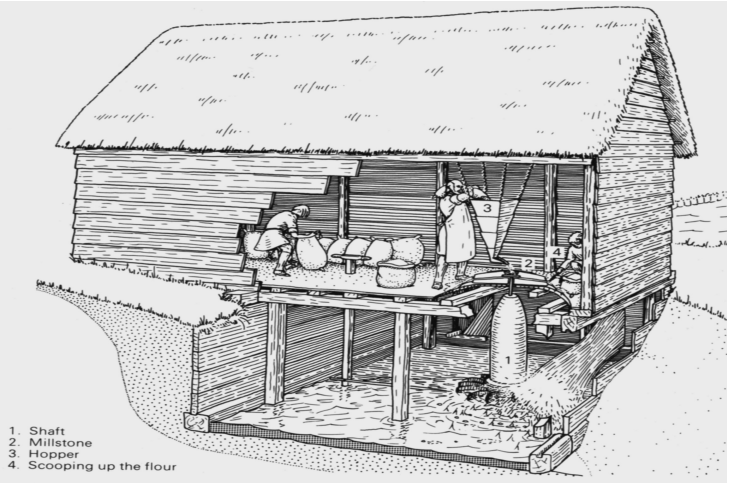
So it is just possible that the Cumb Broc mill had its origins in the later Roman era. A few deep test pits around the edges of the mill site to access the lowest levels might well provide proof in the shape of Romano-British pottery. (more research needed!)
A Roman watermill would actually make good sense given the large acreage devoted to cereal crops in virtually all later (4^{th} century) Roman estates in this region. (*We know the cereal acreage was extensive from the dimensions of the grain storage pits and barns on villa excavations. From these, archaeologists have calculated backwards to give a very rough estimate of cereal acreage.*)

As with other mills of this period, it followed their practice for diverting water for the mills from small, steeply-running streams, along a specially dug ditch (leat) that roughly followed a contour line, albeit with a very slight downhill gradient.

Thus our "lost" mill used the small flow from the Cuddesdon brook (as described earlier), diverted into a header pond of about a quarter of an acre - the banks can still be seen at low sun levels - and from there ran into a leat (called a "Drain" on the OS map and some of it still stone revetted on the uphill side near the mill-pond) And then along the contour line for about a quarter of a mile, turning left into a still existing, but heavily overgrown, millpond:-

Overgrown mill pond in 2000 looking uphill towards Cuddesdon. A spring in the field above apparently still feeds this pond.

The header pond, leat and mill-pond together acted as a sort of storage battery for the mill. Once all were full of water, the miller could open the inlet weir to the mill and begin milling.
The machinery drive was *probably* a more primitive horizontal turbine rather than a vertical water wheel, given the unsuitable terrain. (*See sketch below*). The "charge" would probably have been sufficient for several hours of milling. For further milling the miller would have to wait for the whole water reservoir to re-fill.



A reconstruction of late Anglo-Saxon horizontal turbine watermill

Incidentally, the VCH entry for Cuddesdon records from the *Chronicles of Abingdon Abbey* – a major landowner at Cuddesdon before and after the Norman Conquest - that a mill was lost (destroyed) during the Danish (i.e., Viking) invasions of AD 1013 – 1016 when Oxford itself was besieged; but which mill is not explicitly stated. The same VCH entry records more details of both mills owners in the 16th & 17th centuries:-

"There is an 18th-century water-mill standing on the Thame, which once belonged to Cuddesdon manor. It is known that Abingdon Abbey had a mill here, which it lost during the Danish invasions, but afterwards recovered. The mill was the cause of much strife with the Bishop of Lincoln's tenants at Great Milton, who threatened to destroy the weir in 1066, but were foiled by Abbot Ealdred, supposedly with the aid of the miraculous bones of St. Vincent. Later they or their descendants twice destroyed the mill enclosure, and in 1108 the bishop made them repair it. In 1279 the mill weir was called 'Cliffware', and in 1397–8 the sacristan of Abingdon Abbey had 13s. 4d. from the mill. Its farm was worth £5 in 1539.

A second mill, on the stream called 'Cumbe Brok', is mentioned in 1279. It is not clear whether it was this mill or the mill on the Thame which was granted to Robert Browne in 1545. In Elizabeth I's reign his mill had passed from George Bartlett to John Barston, whose family came to own both the mills. From Richard Barston (1613) they descended to his son Thomas, who was dead by 1624, and in a document of 1678 are referred to as 'Down' and 'Overshot'. They were owned by William Broadwater in 1705. The Thame mill, rebuilt about 1800, is still workable, but has been inactive since about 1935 and serves as a store.

A fishery, or perhaps originally two as in 1086, went with the Cuddesdon mill. Domesday Book records that two fisheries and the mill rendered 12s. yearly to Abingdon Abbey. One of these fisheries stretched from the Thame mill to the weir in Wheatley meadow; in the modern period its ownership generally followed that of the manor. It now belongs to the present lord, Magdalen College."

(NB: This VCH volume was written in 1957)

See:- http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol5/pp96-116 for more details.

APPENDIX 3: Wages and Prices in the 14th century

It is very difficult to get an accurate picture of what our peasants at Old Horsepath would have paid for their goods or, indeed, what they might have been paid for their services, but this data set gives the best picture I can find at the moment.
It should be remembered that a very high percentage of peasant transactions at this time would have been by means of barter, or exchange of services, not outright purchase. Hence this data is heavily skewed by "retail" prices in attempting to get at real-world costs of living.
Also, there seems to be no specific mention in these files of wooden goods such as plates, bowls and cups. These must have been turned out on local primitive pole-lathes for a fraction of the price of the ceramic versions mentioned in the files. We know of many worn-out examples – often elm or beech - from waterlogged excavations: on dry sites they would not have survived at all. Given the low incomes at the bottom end of the social scale, a purchase of a clay pot (costing a half-penny in the files) would have been worth half a day's pay; not something to be undertaken lightly.

These files were extracted from:

<http://medieval.ucdavis.edu/120D/Money.htm>

and

<http://web.archive.org/web/20110628231215/http://www.fit.qut.edu.au/~mcarthur/medieval.html>

I've greatly reduced the file to exclude items of little interest to this paper, except to

show the great disparity between the classes and over time, where appropriate.

TOOLS

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
2 yokes	4s	c1350	[3]	170
Foot iron of plough	5d	"	"	"
3 mason's tools (not named)	9d	"	"	"
1 spade and shovel	3d	1457	"	"
1 axe	5d	"	"	"
1 augur	3d	"	"	"
Anvil	20s	"	"	"
Bellows	30s	"	"	"
Hammers	8d-2s 8d	"	"	"
2 chisels	8d	"	"	"
Spinning Wheel	10 d	1457	[3]	170

HORSES

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
War Horse	up to £80	13 cen	[3]	72
Knight's 2 horses	£10	1374	"	76
High-grade riding horse	£10	13th cen	"	72
Draught horse	10s-20s	13th cen	"	"

Note: Horse prices varied dramatically; for instance, they doubled between 1210 and 1310.

FOOD AND LIVESTOCK

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Wine:				
Best Gascon in London	4d/gallon	1331	[2]	194
Best Rhenish in London	8d/London	"	"	"
Wine:				
Cheapest	3d-4d/gal	Late 13 cen	[3]	62
Best	8d-10d/gal	"	"	"
Ale (beer comes later):				
Good	1.5d/gal	14 cen	[2]	201
Medium	1d/gal	"	"	"
Poor	.75d/gal	"	"	"
Ale:				
First-rate	1-1.25d/gal	1320-1420	[3]	58
Second-rate	.75-1d/gal	"	"	"
Ale (best):				
Somerset	.75d/ gal	1338	[3]	210
London	1.25d gal	"	"	"
Beer, good	1d/quart	late 16 cen	[8]	xx
Dried Fruit (eg raisins, dates, figs, prunes), almonds, rice	1-4d/lb, up to 6d	14 cen(?)	[3]	62-63

Spices (cinnamon, cloves, mace, pepper, sugar, etc).	1-3s/lb	"	"	"
Pepper	4s/lb	mid 13 cen	[9]	218
Pepper	6d/.5lb	1279-1280	[3]	11
Saffron	**12s-15s/lb**	**14 cen(?)**	**[3]**	**62-63**
Cow (good)	10s	12 cen(?)	[7]	30
Cow	9s 5d	mid 14th	[1]	99
Cow	6s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Ox	13s 1.25d	mid 14 cen	[1]	99
Sheep	1s 5d	"	"	"
Wether:(castrated sheep)				
Somerset	9d-10d	1338	[3]	210
London	1s 5d	"	"	"
Pig:				
Somerset	2s	1338	[3]	210
London	3s	"	"	"
Fowl	1d	"	"	"
2 Chickens	1d	14 cen	[4]	78
2 Dozen Eggs	1d	"	"	"
Goose (in London)	6d			
	7d-8d asked	1375	[2]	198
80 lb cheese	3s 4d	late 13 cen	[3]	114
Salted herring (wholesale)	5-10/1d	1382	[2]	198-199
Salt conger	6d each	1422-1423	[3]	69
Oats:				
Somerset	1s/quarter	1338	"	210
London	2s 2d per quarter	"	"	"
Cost of feeding a knight's or merchants household per year	£30-L60, up to £100	15 cen	[3]	199

Related note: around 1380, these are the average costs per day of feeding people on an estate: lord, 7d; esquire, 4d; yeoman, 3d; and groom, 1d.

BOOKS AND EDUCATION

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Monastery School	£2 (approx) per year	1392-1393	[3]	
Oxford University:				
Board	104s/year	1374	"	"
Clothing	40s/year	"	"	"
Instruction	26s 8d/year	"	"	"
Other University:				
Minimum	£2-£3/year	Late 14 cen	[3]	75
Student of good birth	£4-£10/year	"	"	"
7 Books	£5 (approx)	1479	[3]	76
126 Books	£113	1397	[3]	77
To Rent a book	.5d-1d per pecia**	mid 13 cen	[9]	172

** A **pecia** is 16 columns of 62 lines of 32 letters, i.e., 31 744 letters, or about 7 500 - 8 000 words. Rental period is not specified, but I would guess a year; books were rented to be copied. (copying the Bible took 15 months)

BUILDINGS

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Rent cottage	5s/year	14 cen(?)	[3]	208
Rent craftsman's house	20s/year	"	"	"
Rent merchant's house	£2-£3/year	"	"	"
Cottage (1 bay, 2 storeys)	£2	early 14 cen	"	205
Row house in York (well built)	up to £5	"	"	"
Craftsman's house (i.e., with shop, work area, and room for workers) with 2-3 bays and tile roof	£10-£15	early 14 cen	[3]	205
Modest hall and chamber, not including materials	£12	1289	[3]	79-80
Merchant's house	£33-£66	early 14 cen	[3]	205
House with courtyard	£90+	"	"	"
Large tiled barn	£83	1309-1310	[3]	79

CLOTH AND CLOTHING

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Fashionable gown	£10, up to £50	late 14 cen	[2]	53
Gentry:				
Shoes	4d	1470s	[3]	79
Boots	6d	"	"	"
Purse	1.5d	"	"	"
Hat	10d, 1s 2d	"	"	"
Craftsman's tabard and super-tunic (apron)	3s	1285-1290	[3]	206
Reeve's robe (dark brown)	6s 4d	1349-1352	"	176
Reeve's red robe	5s 3d	"	"	"
Peasants (wealthy):				
Linen Chemise	8d	1313	[3]	175
Shoes	6d	"	"	"
Woolen garment	3s	"	"	"
Fur-lined garments	6s 8d	early 14 cen	"	"
Tunic	3s	"	"	"
Linen	1s	"	"	"
Landless serfs' tunics	1d-6d	mid 14 cen	"	176
Cloth for peasant tunics	8d-1s 3d per yard	early 14 cen	"	"

Best Wool	5s/yard	1380	[3]	78
Silk	10s-12s per yard	15 cen(?)	"	"
The worth of cloth provided yearly by a lord to:				
esquires	2s 11d/yard	1289-1290	[3]	78
yeomen	2s/yard	"	"	"
lesser servants	1s 7d/yard	"	"	"

Note: loose tunics take 2.25-2.5 yards. In the late 14th century, shorter doubled (lined) tunics, known as doublets, became fashionable, requiring 4 yards

WEAPONS

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Cheap sword (peasant's)	6d	1340s	[3]	174
Musket	16s 6d-18s 6d	"	"	"

MARRIAGE

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Sample peasant dowries:	13s 4d, 35s 11d, 57s, 63s 4d	14 cen(?)	[3]	179
For serfs,fees **to lord**, depending on wealth	1s-13s 4d	14 cen(?)	[3]	179
Wedding feast, wealthy peasant	20s	"	"	"
Wealthy peasant wedding total	£3-£4	"	"	"
Dowry for esquire's daughter: up to	£66 13s 4d	15 cen	"	84
Dowry for baron's daughter	£1000 +	"	"	"

Note: these costs will be widely varying depending on circumstance.

FUNERALS

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Brass monument, with a figure incised, on marble base-- fitting for lesser aristocrat	£8	early 14 cen	"	"
Bishop Mitford's funeral				

(with 1450 guests!)	£130+	1407	"	"

TRAVEL

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
Queen's chariot	£400	14 cen	[1]	99
Lady Eleanor's chariot	£1000	14 cen	[1]	99
Chariot	£8	1381	[3]	72
Chariot maintence	1-3s/year	14 cen	"	"
Barge	£10	"	"	"
Iron-bound cart	4s	c1350	"	170
Guide for a night	1d	14 cen	[1]	129
Ferry ride per horseman	1d	"	"	"
Keeping an earl's warhorse				
82 days in summer	36s 9.5d	1287	[3]	71

Note: The following prices at an inn in 1331. For one day, 3 men with 4 servants spent: Bread, 4d; beer, 2d; wine 1.25d; meat, 5.5d; potage, .25d; candles, .25d; fuel, 2d; beds, 2d; fodder for horses, 10d. The four servants staying alone sleep 2 nights for 1d. Generally, all 7 spend 2d a night on beds; in London, it is 1d per head.

MISCELLANEOUS

Item	Price	Date	Source	Page
6 silver spoons	14s	1382	[2]	24
2 gold rings with diamonds	£15	"	"	"
Gold Ring with ruby	26s 8d	"	"	"
3 strings of pearls	70s	"	"	"
6 gold necklaces	100s	"	"	"
Fee to enroll an apprentice:				
with mercers (rich merchants)	2s	14 cen	[2]	111
with carpenters	1s	"	"	"
Fee to join guild at end of apprenticeship:				
with mercers	20s	"	[2]	111
with carpenters	3s 4d	"	"	"
Fee to join guild	6s 8d-£3	14 cen(?)	[3]	208
Fee to gain freedom of a town (to enjoy its exemption from feudal duties, I assume)	3s 4d-20s	14 cen(?0	[3]	208
To empty a cesspit in a city	6s 8d	15 cen(?)	[3]	209
Candles				
Somerset	1.5d/lb	1338	[3]	210
London	2d-2.5d/lb	"	"	"
Candles				
tallow	1.5d/lb	15 cen(?)	[3]	74
wax	6.5d/lb	1406-1407	"	"
Vat	4d	1457	[3]	170
Barrel	3d	"	"	"
Bottle	4d	"	"	"
2 buckets	1s	"	"	"
1 sheet	4d	"	"	"
1 mattress	2d	"	"	"

4 pillows	4d	"	"	"
3 boards for a bed	4d	"	"	"
2 sheets, 4 blankets	5s 8p	1349-1352	"	"
Duke's bed of cloth of gold, with blue satin canopy	£182 3s	1397	[3]	77
Table	6d	1457	[3]	170
Chair	3d	"	"	"
Chest with necessaries thereto	2s 2d	"	"	"
2 chests	6d each	"	"	"
Metal ewer	6d	1349-1352	"	"
Brass pot	2s	"	"	"
Basin and ewer (wood?)	8d	"	"	"
Basin and ewer (metal?)	2s 8d	"	"	"
Towel	6d	"	"	"
Coffer	1s	"	"	"
2 stools	8d	"	"	"
Clay cooking pot	.5d	1340s	"	174

Note: most of these come from inventories of peasants' belongings. The fine goods would be more expensive.

Note about lighting, a great houses could use 100 lb of wax and tallow in a single winter night. Others, not as rich, would merely go to sleep earlier.

WAGES

Profession	Wage	Date	Source	Page
Mercenaries:				
knight banneret (commoner of rank leading a company)	4s/day	1316[4]	78	
knight	2s/day	"	"	"
man-at-arms or squire	1s/day	"	"	"
Regular Army				
Esquires, constables, and centenars (*company leader of 100 men)*	1s/day	1346	[4]	79
Mounted archers, armoured infantry, hobilars,(*mounted light cavalry*) vintenars (*platoon leader)*	6d/day	"	"	"
Welsh army platoon leader	4d/day	"	"	"
Archers	3d/day	"	"	"
Welsh infantry	2d/day	"	"	"
Labourer	£2/year max	c1300	[3]	29
Barons per year	£200-500+	c1300	"	"
Earls per year	400-£11000	c1300	"	"
Master mason	4d/day	1351	[2]	24
Master carpenter	3d/day	"	"	"

Carpenters' Guild stipend to a sick member	14d/week	1333	[2]	156
Weavers	5d/day, no food	1407	[2]	146
Chantry priest per year	£4 13s 4d	1379	[2]	24
Squires per annum	13s 4d-L1	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Carters, porters, falconers grooms, messengers	5s-8s 8d per year	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Kitchen servants	2s-4s/year	14 cen	[1]	116-117
Boys and pages	1s-6s/year	14 cen	[1]	116-117

Note: To get a very rough sense of wage increases over 250 years, the following chart gives the averages of daily wages in (old) pence for thatchers

Decade	Thatcher	Thatcher's mate
1261-70	2	-
1271-80	2.5	1
1281-90	2.25	1
1291-1300	2.5	1
1301-10	2.5	1
1311-20	3	1.25
1321-30	3	1
1331-40	3	1.25
1341-50	3	1.25
1351-60	3.5	2
1361-70	3.5	2
1371-80	4.25	2.5
1381-90	4	2.25
1391-1400	4.25	2.75
1401-10	4.5	3
1411-20	4.75	3
1421-30	4.5	3
1431-40	4.5	3.25
1441-50	5.25	4
1451-60	5.5	3.25
1461-70	4.75	3.75
1471-80	5.25	3.75
1481-90	6	3.75
1491-15TIMT00	5.5	3.5
1501-10	5.75	4
1511-20	5.25	4

FINIS