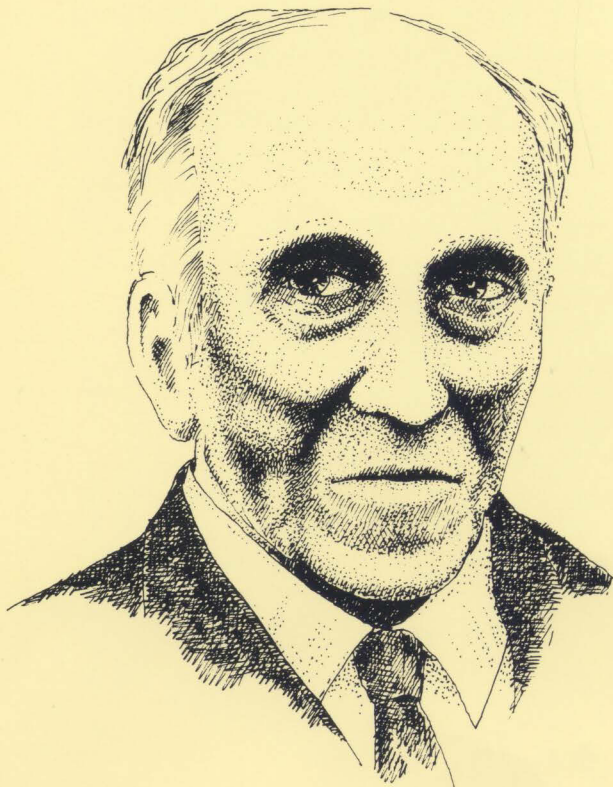


# The development of modern Farmoor 1900 - 1974



Boycott Franklin



John Hanson

SECOND EDITION - 1992





# The development of modern Farmoor 1900-1974

This is the story of a farmer who bought a farm but lost interest in farming the unproductive land and sought to exploit it in other ways.

It is the story of a farm, of medieval origin, which was slowly stripped of its land to help meet the regional demands for housing and water. In the end even the farmstead was demolished for the site to be redeveloped.

It is also the story of how a dispersed population, dependent on the local land, was overtaken by a growing community dependent largely on Oxford.

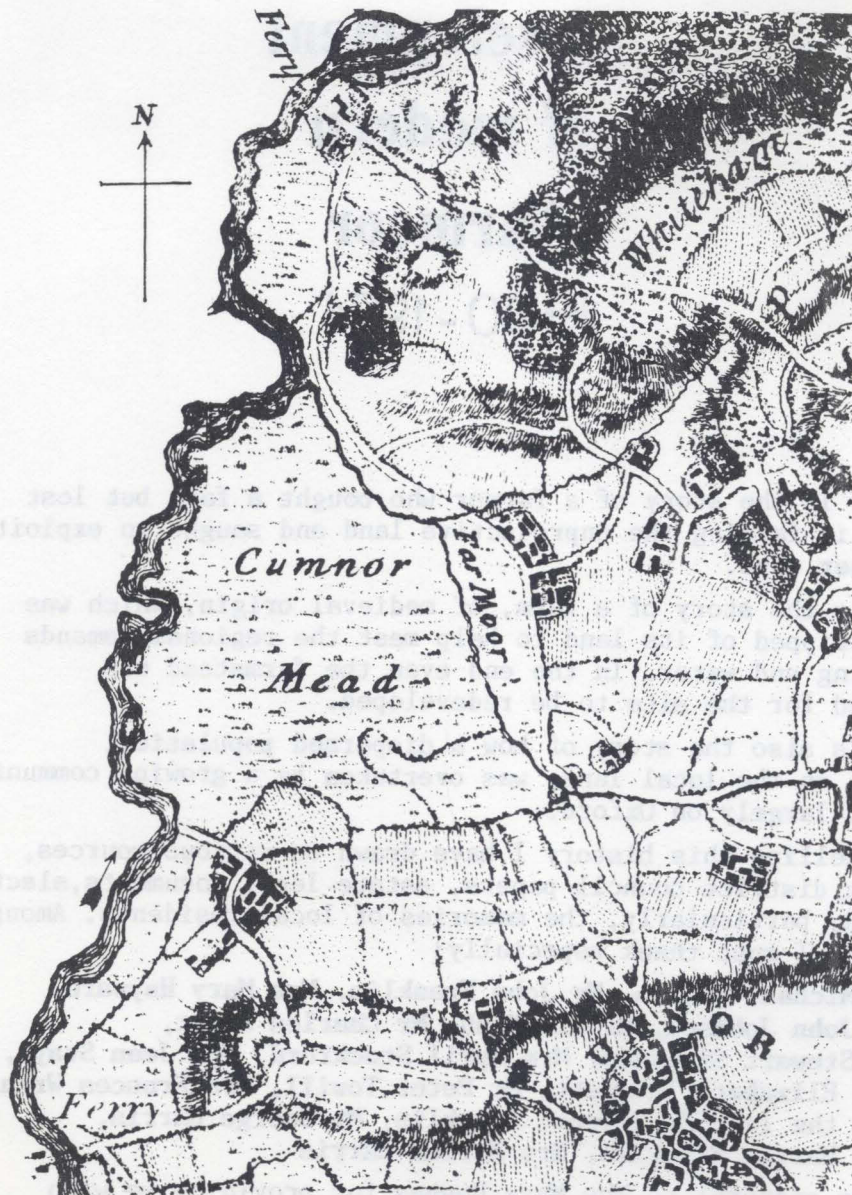
In telling this history I have drawn on various sources, including district council papers, estate legal documents, electoral lists and, particularly, the memories of local residents. Among the latter I must thank especially:

**Mr Michael Baston, Mr John Franklin, Mrs Mary Hayward,  
Mr John Johnson, Mr Jim Nash, Mr Charles Siret,  
Mr Stewart Simmonds, Mrs April Stockford, Mrs Jean Stayt,  
Mrs Elizabeth Thornett, Mr Peter Towill, Mrs Frances Wren  
and the late Mr Boycott Franklin, Mr George Harris,  
Mrs Martha Franklin, Mrs Miriam Harris**

I am grateful to **Mrs Mary Hughes** for providing me with information about the Dunphy family, enabling me in this second edition to correct certain inaccuracies.

*John Hanson*  
1992





Rocque's map of 1760 is the earliest surviving map.



## INTRODUCTION

Farmoor came into existence as a modern settlement in 1924. The name however is much older and the area has a history dating back over 2,000 years.

The stretch of damp, green pasture lying beside Cumnor Meadow, the site of occasional prehistoric settlement, was known to the medieval inhabitants of Cumnor as 'the far moore'. It was in this context that the name first entered manorial records.

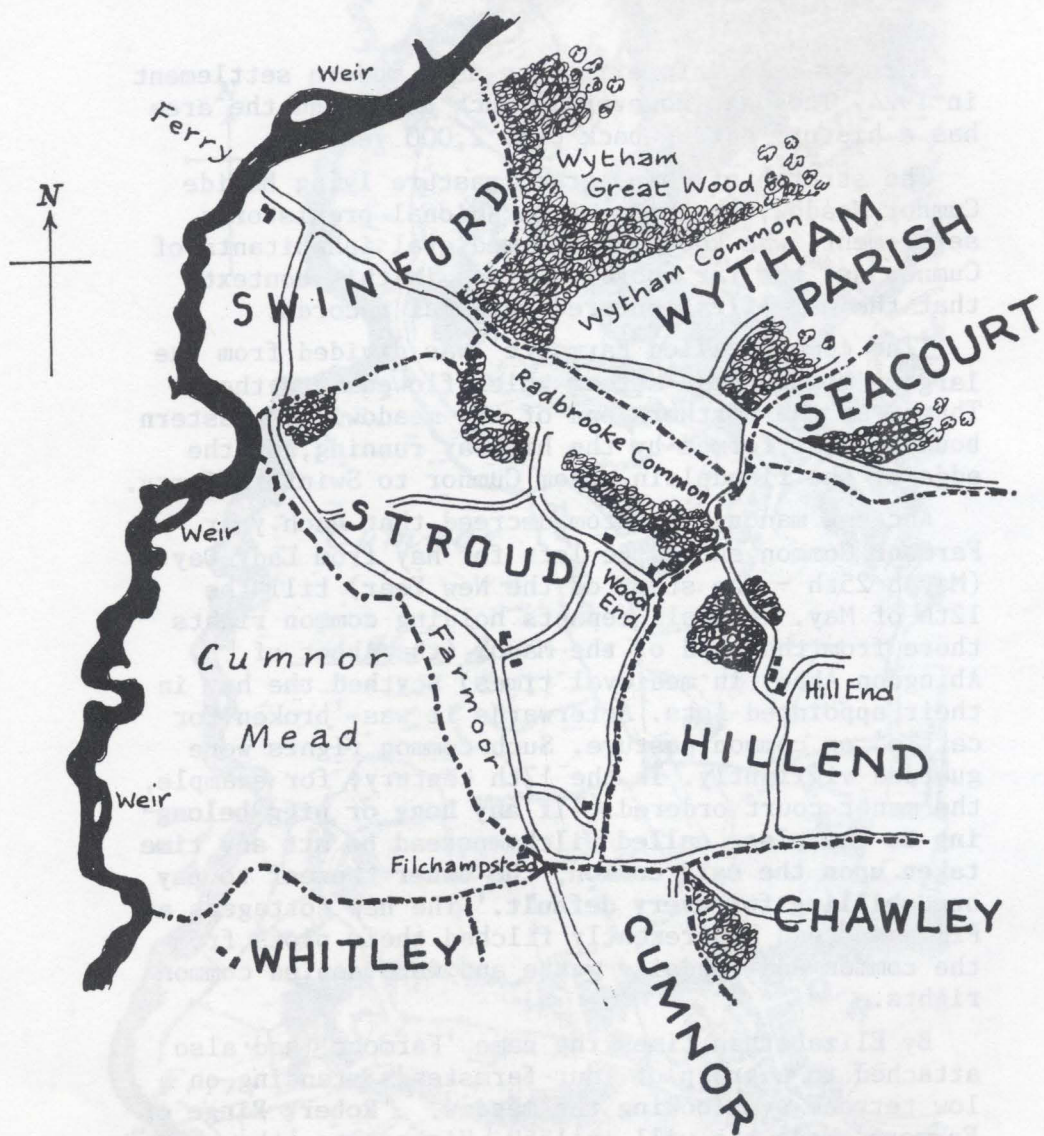
'The common called Farmore' was divided from the larger meadow by a stream which flowed into the Thames at the northern end of the meadow. Its eastern boundary was formed by the highway running, at the edge of the floodplain, from Cumnor to Swinford ferry.

Ancient manorial custom decreed that each year Farmoor Common should be left for hay from Lady Day (March 25th - the start of the New Year) till the 12th of May. Then all tenants holding common rights there from the Lord of the Manor (the Abbot of Abingdon Abbey in medieval times) scythed the hay in their appointed lots. Afterwards it was 'broken for cattle' as common pasture. Such common rights were guarded vigilantly. In the 17th century, for example, the manor court ordered: **'If any hogg or pigg belonging to the place called Filchampstead be att any time taken upon the said common, the owner thereof to pay one shilling for every default.'** The new cottagers at Filchampstead had recently filched their plots from the common and roadside waste and were denied common rights.

By Elizabethan times the name 'Farmoor' had also attached to a group of four farmsteads standing on a low terrace overlooking the meadow. **'Robert Ringe of Farmore'** made his will in 1559. His estate, though much changed, can be identified today as Frank Webb's Valley Farm.

Farmoor and Cumnor Meadow lay in a natural amphi-



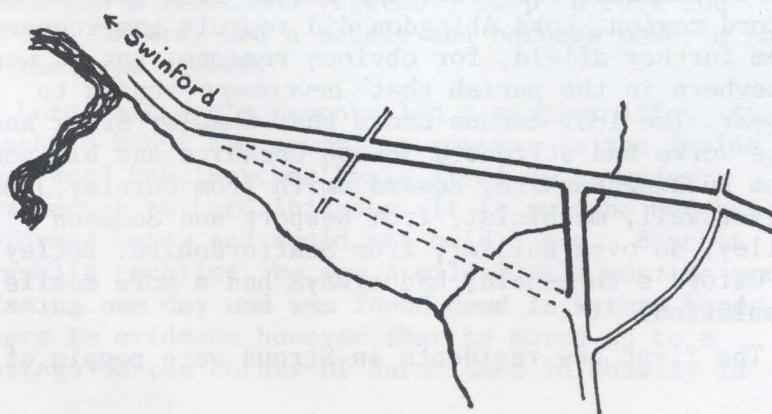




theatre, flanked to the south by the Cumnor ridge and to the north by Wytham Hill. It is hemmed along the west by the Thames.

The Farmoor farms lay within Stroud, a tithing or administrative unit of Cumnor Parish. Stroud extended from Radbrooke Common (afforested in 1946) on the upper slope of Wytham Hill to Filchampstead, and from Wood End to the Swinford boundary. The name 'Stroud' denoted damp scrubland, probably the area close to modern Stroud Court, where a Saxon settlement may have existed. The district was known as Stroud till the end of the last century and was still used in the 1930s for Land Tax purposes.

The manorial system of farming with its open fields shared by many tenants survived until the Enclosure Act of 1814, when common rights were lost. The energetic 5th Earl of Abingdon, as Lord of the Manor, was also responsible for a realignment of the local highways. The old route over Wytham Hill from Botley to Swinford, turnpiked in 1769 when the bridge was built at Swinford, was closed. The Earl did not like being overlooked at Wytham and thought the road gave poachers easy access. The new road along the valley was built in 1811-12. The Cumnor road took a short cut to it. The stretch that had hitherto run to Swinford and of which lower Mayfield Road is a remnant was no longer needed.





The old 'green way' along the floor of the valley from Dean Court to Filchampstead lost its importance to local inhabitants. Some of the 'churchways' and lanes across the valley have survived as footpaths.

The break-up of the manorial system brought less security of tenure and the engrossment of farms led to fewer farmers and more labourers. Some farmhouses became labourers' cottages. Neither this trend nor the new road however changed the historical pattern of dispersed rather than nuclear settlement in the last century. People remained dependent on the land. In 1841 only two men out of forty-five men in Stroud and Hill End tithings were not employed in farming.

The population of Stroud (which is to say Farmoor, Wood End, Jumpers Hole, Filchampstead and Skinner's Weir) was about 85 through the last century, very close to what it was in medieval times. It was the population that the land could support and there was no other livelihood to be gained, apart from hurdle-making, wood-selling and 'higgling' at Filchampstead. For women a little cash could be gained by laundrying and sewing. Sons and daughters who could find no work locally drifted away, as they had always done, mainly to the city. The population of Cumnor parish declined in late Victorian times, reflecting the falling fortunes of agriculture after the repeal of the protective Corn Laws in 1870. But Stroud had no surplus to lose.

Few families came into the valley from outside the Oxford region. Lord Abingdon did recruit gamekeepers from further afield, for obvious reasons, but it was elsewhere in the parish that newcomers tended to appear. The 1881 census shows that Chawley Brick and Tile Works had attracted Joseph Cheshire and his son from Buckinghamshire, Edward Smith from Burnley, James Calverswell, machinist, from Newport and Sampson Nalley, an oven builder, from Staffordshire. Botley, on Oxford's threshold, had always had a more mobile population.

The first new residents in Stroud were people of



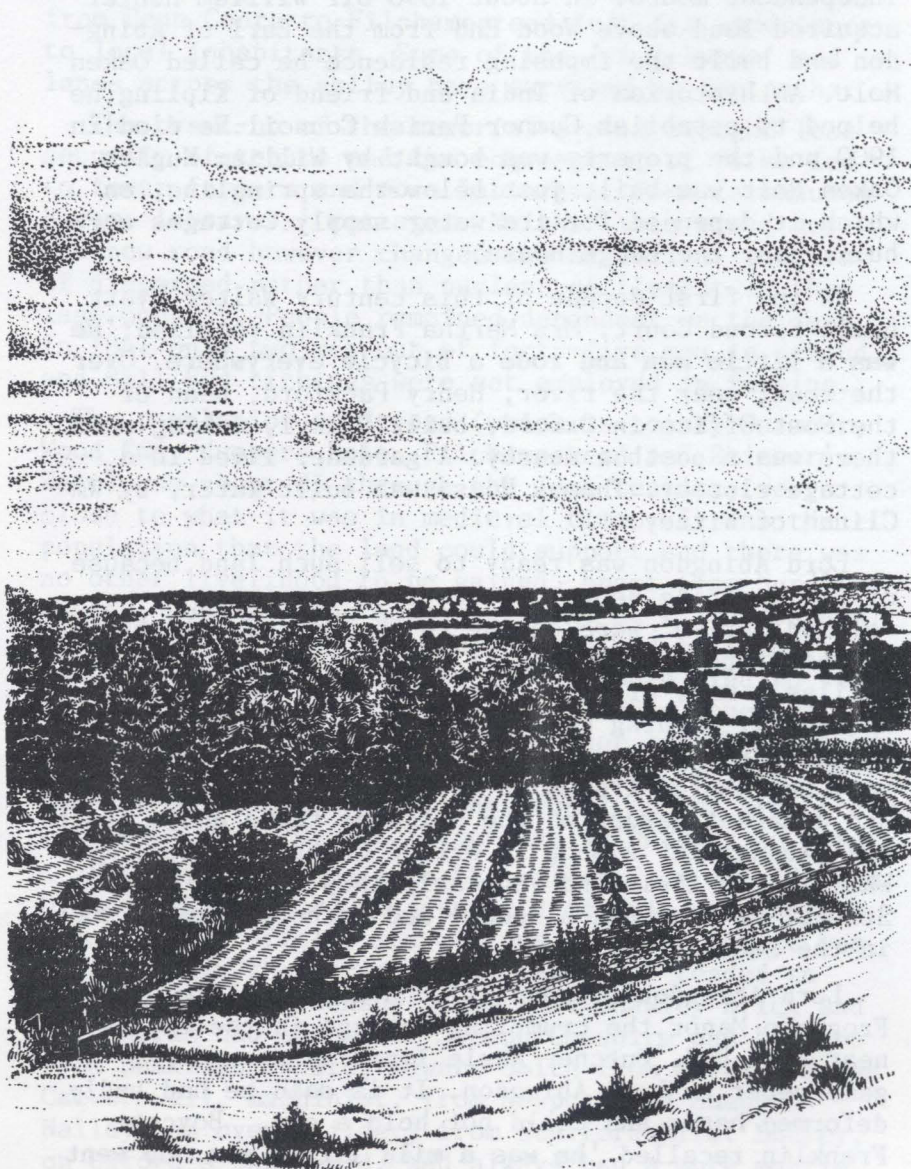
independent means. In about 1890 Sir William Hunter acquired land above Wood End from the Earl of Abingdon and built the imposing residence he called Oaken Holt. An historian of India and friend of Kipling, he helped to establish Cumnor Parish Council. He died in 1900 and the property was bought by William Hughes. Oaken Holt was built just below the springline, on which it depended for its water supply. Cottages were built near the Lodge House.

In the first decade of this century Walter Wyatt built Stroud Court. Mrs Martha Franklin recalled: **'He was a little man and rode a bicycle everywhere.'** Over the road, near the river, Henry Packford, head of the Post Office in Oxford, built Pynkyl, making sure there was a postbox nearby. A gardener lived in a cottage closeby. Thames House was built later, by Wm Clinch of Witney.

Lord Abingdon was ready to sell such land because of his mounting debts. The days of Cumnor as a 'closed parish' were coming to an end. He sold plots on the slope of Cumnor Hill for the building of 'villas', many of which were built for men who, by hard work, gaining college contracts and perhaps weighing their produce more carefully, had become very successful tradesmen in Oxford. Fred Mortimer had a market garden on the hillside there and a fruit and greengrocer's shop in Oxford Covered Market. Mr White ran a fruit and vegetable shop in Park End Street. Mr Wray had a saddle and harness maker's shop in the same street.

Lord Abingdon's tenants led a simpler life. At Froghole Manor, the crumbling cottage in the fields near Wood End, 'Butcher' Neale lived as an under-gamekeeper to Lord Abingdon. It is said he had badly deformed hands and could not hold a gun. Boycott Franklin recalled **'he was a mild little man. He went missing one day and was found dead in Wytham Woods.'** There is evidence however that he moved up to a cottage on the corner of Hurst Lane in Chawley in





Looking across the valley from Cumnor Hill.

(After Taunt 1912)



1915, perhaps to be employed at the brick works.

At Wood End Farm Fred Podberry was the tenant. The gamekeeper's cottage at the top of Bean Wood was the home of Joseph Phillips. In 1910 he sent his children Amy and Thomas to Cumnor School when Wytham School was closed for a time. It was a long walk.

On the bend of the Cumnor road before Filchampstead, John Abel built the first bungalow in the area. It was a 'colonial' style of housing and many people went to see it. Even as late as 1945 it was listed in the Polling Register as 'the bungalow Farmoor'. It had 5 acres of land and by 1913 was being run, according to the local Directory, by 'Mrs Ellen Abel, farmer'.

At Farmoor itself the two farms were tenanted by a succession of farmers on short, unprofitable leases. **'You took a one year lease and had to give a year's notice.'** One tenant was Fred Butterfield, who was in fact a tenant of Hill End Farm for many years; he had a butcher's shop in Oxford Covered Market and was a city alderman. He was seldom on his land, though this did not stop him from advising other farmers what to do. Boycott Franklin was not impressed.

In 1910 Richard Castle came to Farmoor Farm cottage with his wife and daughters, having lived before at Eaton, Cumnor and Wytham. The farm was then held by Edwin Franklin.

At Filchampstead two cottages by the road were soon to be demolished. One was occupied by John Rouse whose grandfather had lived there. **'The cottage was falling to pieces'**, Mrs Harris remembered. There were flowering currants and snowdrops in his garden. His wife did laundry work, using when necessary water from the nearby stream and even the floodwater that frequently covered the road in winter. The other cottage was occupied by Henry Mitchell, who later moved to a cabin on the same plot. Mitchell plied as a carrier, keeping his cart and pony in sheds across



the road. For some years after the Great War too he carried into Oxford the hampers of washing done by local housewives. On Abingdon market days he took farmers' livestock and poultry to and from the market. His daughter Mabel walked to Cumnor School - in 1927 she would marry Fred Haywood and make her new home next door at Filchampstead. Nearby was Maximillian Mitchell who, a resident recalls, **'worked at White's greengrocery in Oxford, delivering goods to colleges and around all his working life.'**

In 1912 the children attending Cumnor School were at last provided with 'good spring water', kept in large earthen jars, fresh each day. The well water had long been suspect. A Cocoa Club was started by Mrs Cole, the headmaster's wife, to provide a lunch-time drink at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d a mug for those who walked a long way to school and could not go home for lunch. The school was closed for a time owing to an outbreak of scarlet fever.

In the wooden house beside Pinkhill Lock, Harold Smith was in charge, noted for his prize-winning gardens. He had succeeded Siret in 1909. But at Skinner's Weir, the orchard, cottage and little 'Fish Inn' on the island, the former home of old Joe Skinner, was no longer to be seen, though the bridge over the river remained. Joe's father had once shot 60 ducks in one morning shoot on the meadow. Joe had courted his wife over in Stanton Harcourt and one of his daughters married Siret at Pinkhill Lock. The scene here was described by Thacker in his 'Stripling Thames' as **'one of those places that artists love.'**

Such was the scene that was overtaken in 1914 by the Great War. Boycott Franklin, Richard Castle and other local men went into the army. It was a scene of dispersed dwellings, often with primitive facilities, and a scattered community in which 'older' families were tied by a deep network of kinship.



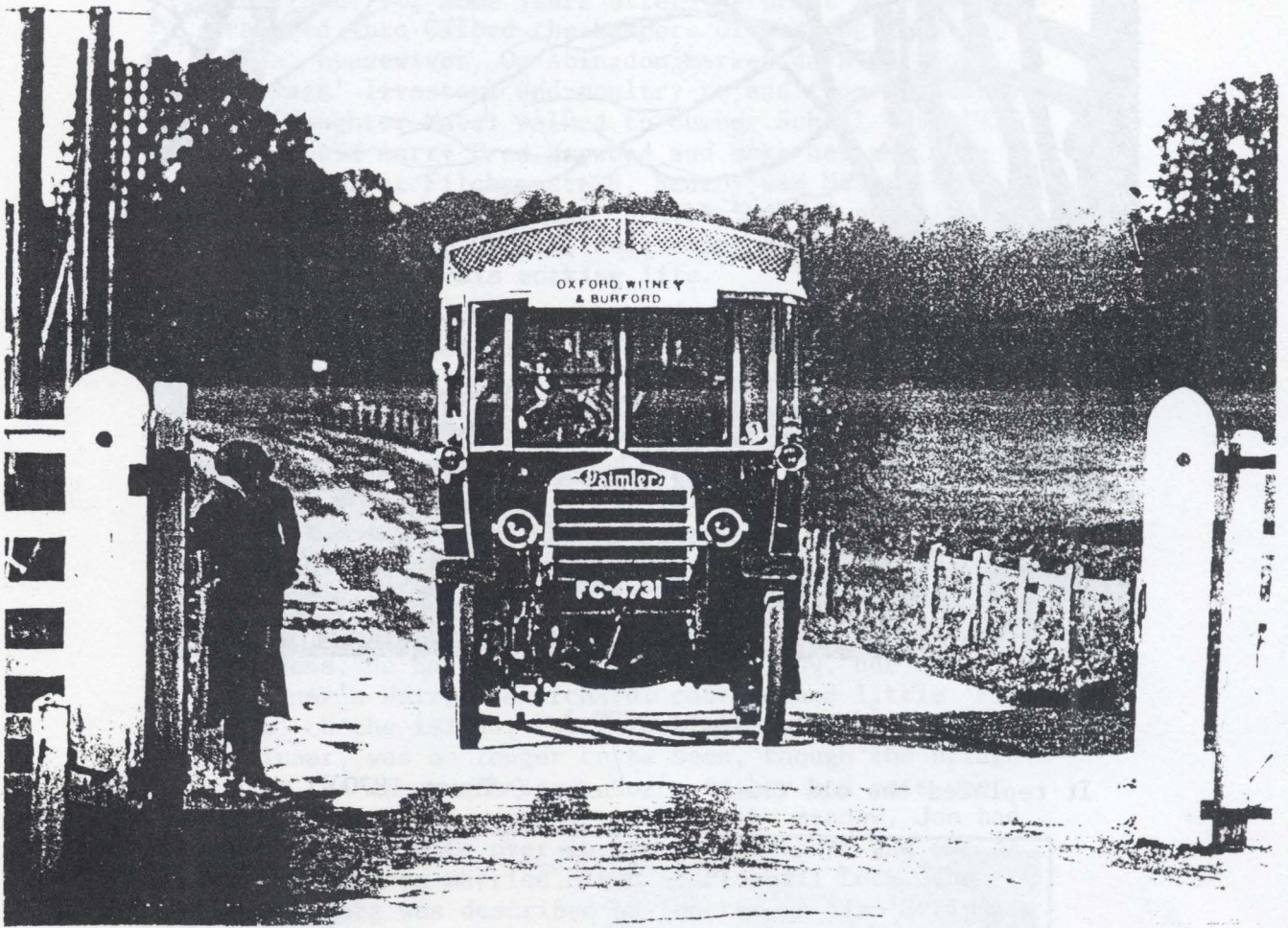


Skinner's Bridge ( after Taunt 1889 )

It replaced the old flash weir below ( Taunt 1870)







The Burford and Witney bus arriving at Swinford toll bridge.  
The Oxford Bus Company paid an annual fee.



## A FARM CHANGES HANDS

By 1919 a bus service had been established by the City bus company from Oxford to Witney and Burford. It passed along the Eynsham road, from Botley, and crossed Swinford toll bridge. This was a boon to those who needed regularly to visit Oxford for previously they had had to walk, cycle, or ride on Mr Harris's carrier's cart from Eynsham on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the market days. During the war the service had been maintained by his wife and son George. A local city bus service extended only to the bottom of Cumnor Hill, where the horse-drawn buses first, and now the motor buses, turned round.

The Eynsham road was now better served than Cumnor village, for when a service to Faringdon was started it by-passed the village. Later a limited market day service was introduced for Cumnor, but by then the Eynsham road, the main road west from Oxford and designated the A40, had an hourly, daily service.

Economically however the valley was suffering. Orr, in his 1918 survey of agriculture in Berkshire, found the area 'strangely isolated' and under-developed. The farming land was still owned by Lord Abingdon and his grave financial difficulties prevented worthwhile investment in his properties. He was in fact selling his Wytham estate to Raymond Ffennell, who had taken a short lease of the 'Abbey' during the war. A sitting tenant prevented Ffennell from taking immediate possession and the family divided their time between camping out in style on Wytham Hill and sailing to sunnier climes in their ocean-going yacht. Lord and Lady Abingdon went to live at New Cumnor Place, where the Jervois sisters were already resident. Oaken Holt was occupied by Charles Ross, a businessman. He obtained a council licence for the storage of calcium carbide, presumably for batteries for lighting.

Young Daisy Long, whose father worked and lived at Oaken Holt, walked to Cumnor School. On the way home she and her companions would collect a can of milk



from Mrs Hickman at Leys Farm in Cumnor for Mrs Mitchell at Filchampstead. She remembers the flooded meadow and the slides when it was frozen over. At Filchampstead the road was often awash. A great treat in those days was the village fair, which came in October to the yard of the 'Bear and Ragged Staff' **'There were the swinging boats, the noisy gas lights of Spurrett's stall.'** In the evening there was dancing in the barn, with Jimmy Bennett on his accordian.

The Armistice had brought talk of building a 'land fit for heroes' but what soon followed was an economic recession. A policy of importing cheap food from the Empire and the Americas deepened the slump in agriculture. Lands that had freshly been under the plough for the war effort were returned to nature. Farmers found it hard to make a reasonable living. As farm incomes were reduced, so the wages of farm workers were cut to around 25s a week. Standards of living fell. Some farmers in the parish turned to market gardening and dairying, where prices were not subject to foreign competition, for their less intensive methods could not compete with the large-scale, increasingly mechanised cereal production of the American prairies. In the valley however the land was too heavy for market gardening.

In 1920 Boycott Franklin married Martha Clinch. The banns said that she was of the parish of Saint James in Shirley, Southampton, but the Clinch family were known as brewers in Witney. When they moved into Farmoor Farm it was badly neglected. Suckers from an elm tree were coming up through the red brick floor of the kitchen. There was one water pump to serve the farmstead and the livestock. He had 90 cattle on Cumnor Meadow, one per acre, and the boundary between farmers' land was still marked by old 'meerstones'.

At Wood End, George Pratley farmed. Joseph Odell and Tom Buckingham were living in the farm cottages behind. Froghole was occupied by Christopher Irwin



and his family, who was followed by Albert Bateman in 1922 and then by Edwin Scarrott, who came from Chilton in 1927 and left, probably for Kirtlington, the following year.

The tenant at Valley Farm was George Webb, who in his youth had been a cattle drover at Hinksey. Cattle bought at Newbury market could be brought to Oxford by rail the same day in the 1890s but they were still driven along the roads to the farms. George's son Jack, born in 1890, said his first memory was of being on a haystack while the cattle were fed below. The family had spent some time at Tilbury Farm above Botley Pound, when it was a stud farm. By 1910 it was run by Hedderley, who had a saddlery and leather shop in Market Street, Oxford. Tilbury then stabled and grazed cab horses and brood mares for 'Macs', who ran a horse cab business from the Randolph Hotel. In 1924 George Webb farmed at Farmoor and Denmans.

In Farmoor Lane George Tredwell, 'a little man with a moustache' Martha Franklin recalled, came to the cottage there. He had been a milkman living at Swinford cottages. Though Ernest Broadis, probably from Minster Lovell, soon took his place the lane was known as Tredwell's Lane for many years after.

At Stroud Croft Major Cavill Worsley was resident in 1920, while at Swinford Farm Thomas Franklin, the father of Cyril and Boycott, maintained the family's long tenancy there. Lord Abingdon was persuaded to build the first bathroom in the district at Swinford Farm. There were peacocks in the grounds.

The first significant change came after the Law Union and Rock Insurance and the Eagle Star Insurance Companies agreed to the mortgagees of Lord Abingdon's estates selling his farms in Cumnor parish. Lord Abingdon was described as 'the beneficial owner'. Some of his debts dated back to a marriage settlement of 1858. Sales were generally by auction.

Some local farms were bought by sitting tenants. Thomas Franklin, described in the local Directory as a 'wool merchant and farmer', bought Swinford Farm. Several years later George Webb bought the bungalow



and five acres known as 'Oxleas Farm', on the Cumnor road, in addition to two farms in Cumnor village. His dairy herd produced two churns of milk a day, one of which went to Howse's dairy at Elm Farm in Botley (now the site of the shopping parade). George Webb did not however buy Valley Farm, nor Denmans, where he had held leases. Denmans was acquired by John Gee, whose family had a market garden outlet in Oxford's Banbury Road. Valley Farm was later bought by Harold Alden, an Oxford butcher with a shop in the Covered Market. Harold Tyrrell, who bought farms at Cumnor and Chawley, was another with premises in the market. He turned to market gardening, like John Gee.

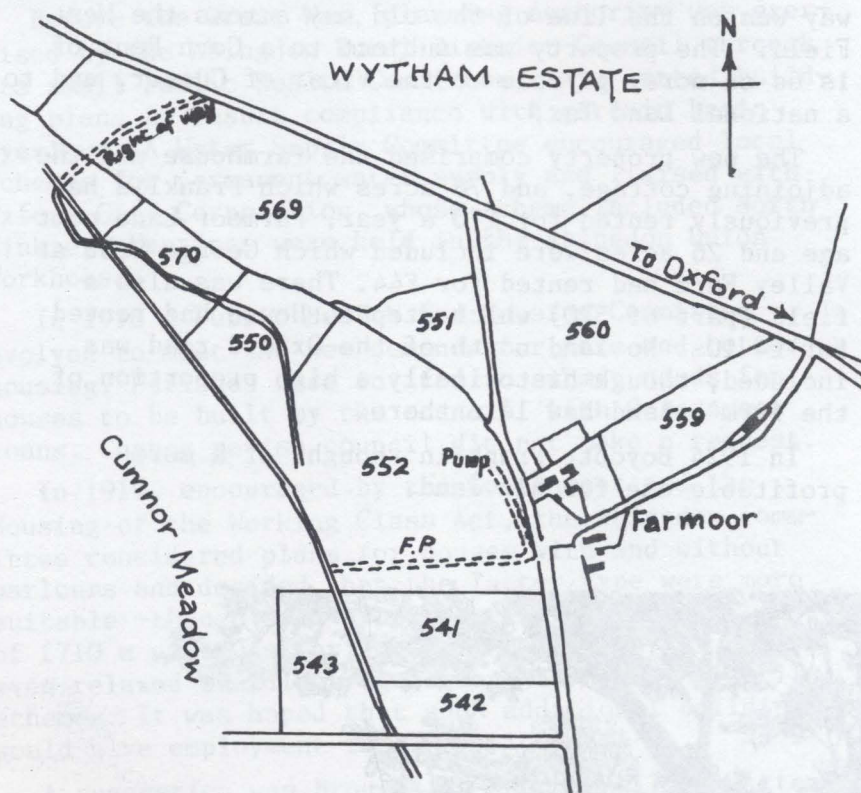
Wood End remained in the Wytham estate, held by Raymond Ffennell, the lands extending along the north side of the Oxford road.

The most important purchase in relation to the future of Farmoor was Boycott Franklin's of Farmoor Farm in 1922. It can be argued that if this farm had been run intensively and successfully, modern Farmoor would not exist for it was built wholly on this land.

Boycott Franklin bought **'all that farmhouse, out-buildings, cottage, lands and premises situate in the Parish of Cumnor in the County of Berks, containing 113 acres 3 roods and 9 perches or thereabouts'** for £3,000. To do this he took out a mortgage for £2,000 with two of Lord Abingdon's mortgagees: Oswald Turville Petre and Brigadier General Stanhope Pedley. The interest was 5%.

Most of the land was held as security against the loan, so that it could not be sold without clearance. The freehold was subject to a lease granted to Eric Hamilton Rose on 31st December 1919 of the shooting, fishing and sporting rights over the Wytham estate, of which these lands had formed part. Right of way to the water pump in the field opposite the farm was granted to the tenant of Valley Farm next door. A way was also granted from the Oxford road to Cumnor Meadow





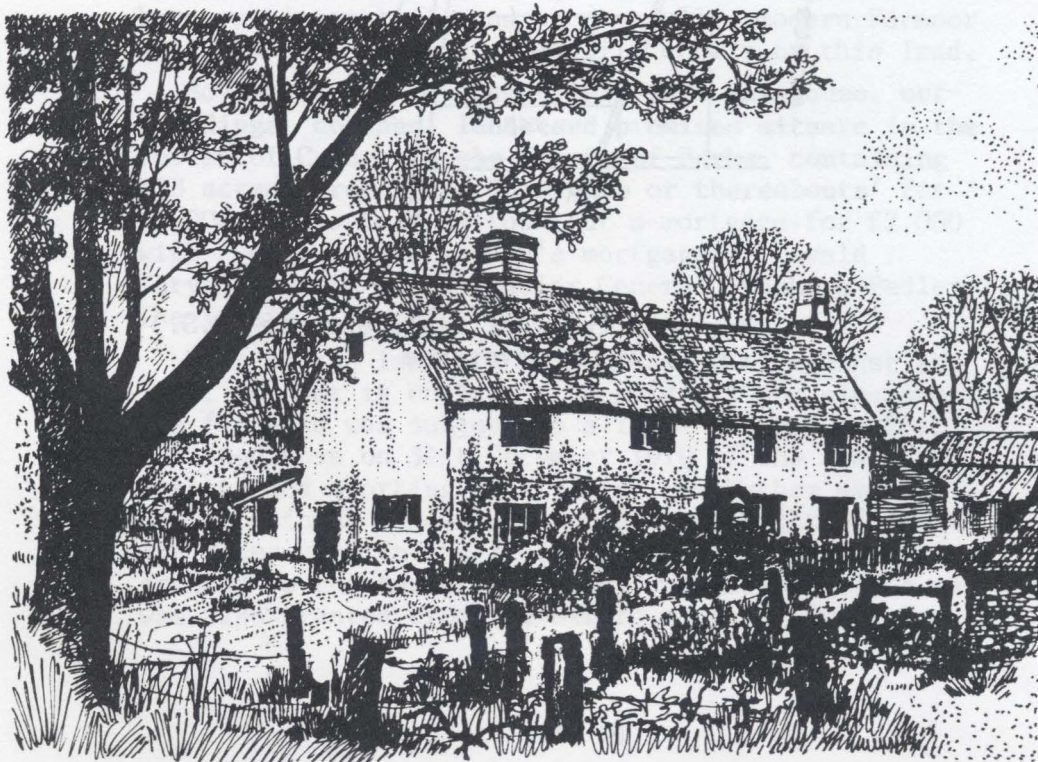
Map with relevant field numbers (O.S.)  
in the 1922 Conveyance



to Edwin Franklin of Red House Farm. This right of way was on the line of the old way across the West Field. The property was subject to a Corn Rent of 1s 6d an acre, payable to the Vicar of Cumnor, and to a national Land Tax.

The new property comprised the farmhouse and the adjoining cottage, and 78 acres which Franklin had previously rented for £70 a year. Farmoor Lane cottage and 26 acres were included which George Webb at Valley Farm had rented for £44. There was also a field (part of 570) which Stephen Howse had rented for £4 10s. No land north of the Oxford road was included, though historically a high proportion of the farm's land had lain there.

In 1924 Boycott Franklin thought of a more profitable use for his land.



Farmoor Farm



## A QUESTION OF PLANNING

Before the Great War, planning authority was exercised by the Abingdon Rural District Council through its small Public Health Committee. This vetted building plans to ensure compliance with certain basic bye-laws. A Water Supply Committee encouraged local schemes for permanent water supply and liaised with Oxford City Corporation, whose scheme included North Hinksey. Meetings were held in the Abingdon Union Workhouse.

In 1918 a Public Health and Housing Committee evolved to meet the new demands for more and better housing. Parishes were invited to submit needs for houses to be built by the council, with Government loans. Cumnor parish council did not make a request.

In 1919, encouraged by the Government and the Housing of the Working Class Act, the Abingdon committee considered plans for houses with and without parlours and decided that the latter type were more suitable - though both types were later built. A cost of £710 a unit was envisaged. The Ministry of Health even relaxed building regulations to assist council schemes. It was hoped that such additional building would give employment to ex-servicemen.

A suggestion was brought to the council committee in July 1920 that some of the huts at the Milton Ex-Army Depot might be purchased for the purpose of housing. It was 'resolved that the idea not be entertained.'

Inspection was hindered by lack of professional council staff and in 1923 it was decided to appoint a Highway Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector, at an annual salary of £250. The Ministry of Health objected that one man could not do both jobs. An appointment was made but by July 1926 the Committee was minuting that the role of Sanitary Inspector could no longer be undertaken by the Highway Surveyor.



It was one of the Inspector's tasks to examine, as 'building surveyor', the plans of proposed buildings and to recommend to the council their acceptance or grounds for refusal. In 1922 an ex-army hut for J. Betts on Cumnor Hill was approved. The inspector's concern was with water and drainage rather than any architectural considerations. The legislation on architectural control was in any case limited.

When a home was ready for occupation it was to be visited by the Inspector, who advised, as 'Inspector of Nuisances', whether a certificate of occupation should be issued. The Sanitary Inspector's first concern in Cumnor parish in 1923 was in fact the outbreaks of scarlet fever and diphtheria. In the latter case at least, patients were sent to the isolation hospital and their homes disinfected. When inspecting new houses his attention focussed on the water supply, his verdict resting on an analysis of several samples. An old cottage at Cutts End in Cumnor was declared unfit for habitation and, following other complaints, he found some homes in Botley were without water, the supply being the responsibility of Lord Abingdon, who was very slow responding to the Inspector's letters. Also in Botley he found that the contents of the urinal at the 'Carpenters Arms' were being emptied into the local stream.

In June 1924 he reported to committee: 'I find that Army huts are in course of erection at Cumnor... These were commenced without plans having been submitted.' He saw Boycott Franklin who said 'he was unaware that it was necessary to submit plans for this class of building.' The July committee meeting minutes recorded the receipt and approval of plans.

In August Franklin applied for permission to occupy the huts 'which he has erected in a field by the side of the main Eynsham Road. The matter has been held up,' the Inspector reported, 'owing to the analysis of the water supply not being satisfactory.'



He is willing to provide a temporary supply from his own source and is arranging to provide a proper piped supply from the hill above, to serve all the huts which have been erected.' A certificate of occupation was granted in September, when work had started on the permanent water supply.

It is difficult to be sure where the water for analysis was obtained. It must have been either from the stream in the field or from the farm pump. The latter however was the temporary source offered. Mrs Elizabeth Thornett recalls that when she and her husband moved in, water was brought from Farmoor Farm every other day in a milk churn. Some washing was done with water from the nearby stream. The permanent supply came not from 'the hill above' but from a well which Franklin had dug in the field behind what is now 'The Firs'. The water was piped to a small reservoir, protected by a corrugated iron canopy, behind the Oaklands site, from where it was piped to the dwellings. It was later John Franklin's task, as Boycott's son, to clean out the reservoir at regular intervals.

Jim Nash throws additional light on these events. He came to work for Boycott Franklin in 1924. He did a milk round in Botley and Osney in the mornings and drove a tractor in the afternoons. It was one of the first tractors in the district. He also took milk churns into Jericho in Oxford where Boycott had a dairy and shop.

"I drove the tractor to near Abingdon", he recalls, "to collect the huts. They were in a field - yes, in sections. They might have come there from the Milton depot, I'm not sure. I helped put the huts up, and did a bit of decorating and all that. I got on well with Boycott - a decent sort."

He remembers the water supply problem. "One day, Boycott went to Hanborough for a man, stopped at Stroud Wood to cut hazels and they went up the



fields to Beacon Hill to divine for water. They traced underground water down the hill to the pump opposite the farm, but he decided to dig a new well behind the first bungalow site on the Oxford road."

He also recalls that Alfred Thomas had a cafe in the first hut at Oaklands. **"It only lasted about one summer. Cup of tea and a cake, that was about all."** Thomas moved to Thame in 1927 and Jim Nash was then living in Eynsham.

The minute books of Abingdon Rural District Council do not tell the whole story. A number of factors spurred this development at Farmoor and the leniency of planning controls was only one of them.

The land on which the huts were erected was not easy to farm profitably in the economic conditions of the 1920s. The soil was only of moderate quality, heavy and ill-drained. As pasture it was suitable for dairying but this was labour intensive. The purchase of the farm freehold presented an opportunity to exploit the land in other ways. Franklin was however heavily mortgaged and with most of the land held as security against that debt his options were restricted. He needed to raise cash, both to reduce the mortgage and to free some land from the mortgagees for sale for building.

Another major factor was the high demand for living accommodation. There was a severe shortage in Oxford and the need for more housing was accepted. Between 1921 and 1931 Oxford grew at a faster rate than any British town except Bournemouth. Some isolated rural districts in the region were experiencing a decline. Abingdon Rural District, responding to a Ministry of Health offer of loans for council-built housing, identified a need for 150 such houses. The country generally was in an economic recession but Oxford had thriving industries in Morris Motors



(1912) and Pressed Steel(1926) which drew in immigrant workers and their families from other parts of the country, particularly South Wales. Employment in the University was little affected by the weak national economy. As Oxford's population rose through the 1920s by 41%, a housing shortage became acute. Improved bus services made it feasible for workers to live outside the city - many cycled. While the constriction over Magdalen Bridge to Cowley, and distance, made commuting less attractive to people living west of the city, the Cumnor area appealed to those, for example, railwaymen, who could not find a home in the overcrowded streets off the Botley Road. Some Cowley workers did cycle from Farmoor and Eynsham.

The villas climbing up Cumnor Hill tended to be 'middle class' properties, affording attractive and therefore expensive views across the countryside to the Cotswolds. In Botley and along the road to Eynsham, lower income homes were in demand by families who saw easy accessibility to the city. Cumnor had made a nil return to the first survey on council house needs and the first such homes to rent were not completed till 1928.

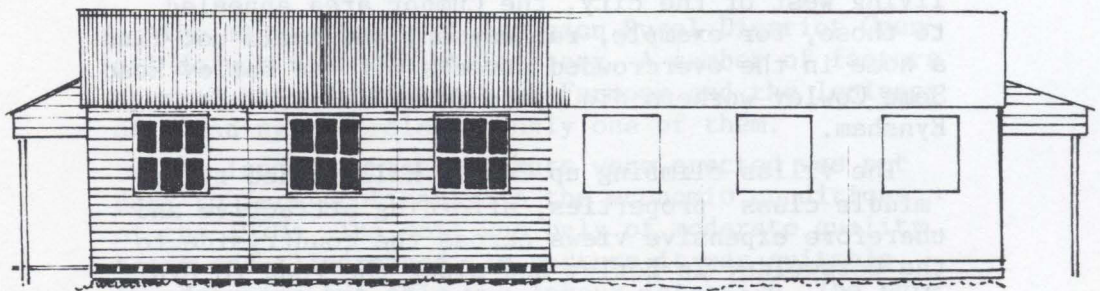
In the 1920s the population of Cumnor parish rose by 46%. Cumnor's growth was part of Oxford's expansion for there was no growth in employment within the parish. The new residents found their jobs in Oxford. Other villages in a similar situation near Oxford were Yarnton (39%), Kidlington (57%) and Garsington (36%). Eynsham, beyond the toll bridge, saw a growth of only 19% while more isolated villages were little affected: Northmoor (6%), Standlake (4%), Stanton Harcourt (1%).

History is of course full of 'ifs'. If Lord Abingdon had enjoyed considerable wealth, he might have refrained from selling or developing his lands and

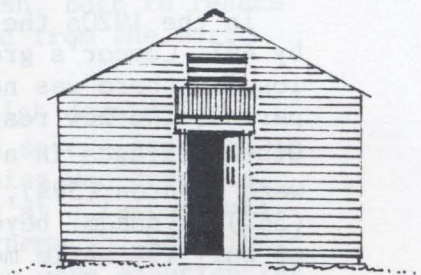


Cumnor would have remained a 'closed' parish. But it was not to be.

The army huts for Farmoor came in wooden sections and were roofed with corrugated iron sheets. Regulations required that they stood on brick or concrete piers.

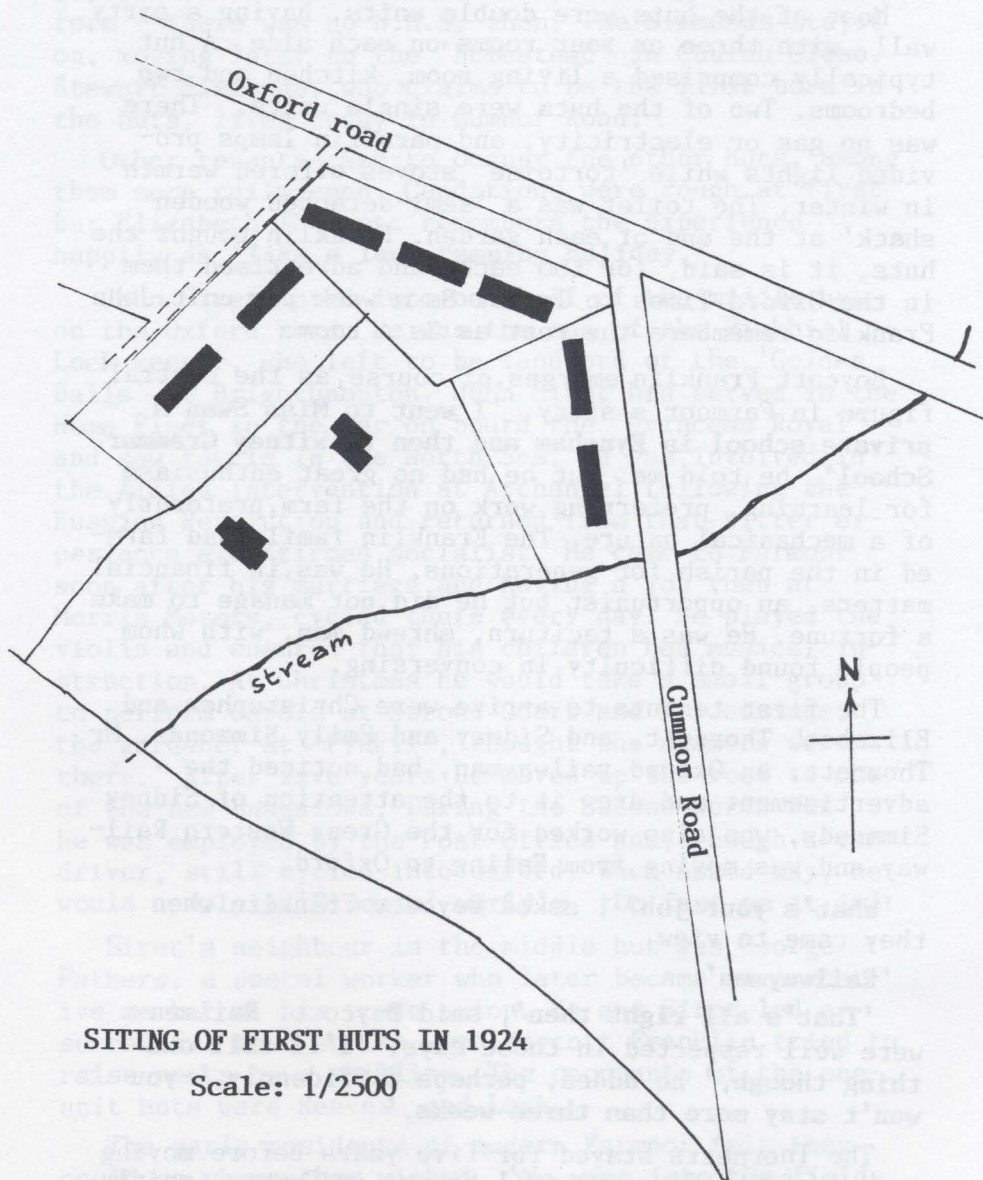


**SIDE ELEVATION**



**END ELEVATION**







## A NEW COMMUNITY

Most of the huts were double units, having a party wall, with three or four rooms on each side. A hut typically comprised a living room, kitchen and two bedrooms. Two of the huts were single units. There was no gas or electricity, and paraffin lamps provided lights while 'tortoise' stoves offered warmth in winter. The toilet was a 'semi-detached wooden shack' at the end of each garden. Franklin bought the huts, it is said, for £60 each, and advertised them in the Oxford Times to let at 8s a week per unit. John Franklin remembers the rent as 2s a room.

Boycott Franklin emerges, of course, as the central figure in Farmoor's story. **'I went to Miss Swan's private school in Eynsham and then to Witney Grammar School'**, he told me. But he had no great enthusiasm for learning, preferring work on the farm, preferably of a mechanical nature. The Franklin family had farmed in the parish for generations. He was, in financial matters, an opportunist but he did not manage to make a fortune. He was a taciturn, shrewd man, with whom people found difficulty in conversing.

The first tenants to arrive were Christopher and Elizabeth Thornett, and Sidney and Emily Simmonds. Mr Thornett, an Oxford railwayman, had noticed the advertisement and drew it to the attention of Sidney Simmonds, who also worked for the Great Western Railway and was moving from Ealing to Oxford.

**'What's your job?'**, asked Boycott Franklin when they came to view.

**'Railwaymen'.**

**'That's all right then'**, said Boycott. Railmen were well respected in those days. **'I'll tell one thing though,'** he added, perhaps diffidently, **'-you won't stay more than three weeks.'**

The Thornetts stayed for five years before moving to one of the first council houses in Cumnor, mainly on account of their son's health. Mrs Thornett became one of the two district nurses in the parish, cycling



everywhere in all weathers and providing her own uniform - there was no N.H.S. then. The Simmonds stayed on, moving later to the 'Homestead' in Church Close. Stewart Simmonds, who claims to be the first born in the huts, lives today in Cumnor Road.

Other tenants came to occupy the other huts, among them more railwaymen. Conditions were rough at first but Elizabeth Thornett remembers the experience happily as **'like a long camping holiday.'**

John Siret moved into one half of the middle hut on the Oxford road. He was the son of the Pinkhill Lock keeper, who left to be landlord of the 'Golden Balls' at Brighthampton. John Siret had served in the Home Fleet in the war on board the 'Princess Royal' and saw battle in the North Sea. He was involved in the Allied intervention at Archangel following the Russian Revolution and returned from that bitter experience a confirmed socialist. He came to Farmoor soon after his marriage and having a job then at Morris Motors, cycled there every day. He played the violin and ensured that his children had musical instruction. At Christmas he would take a small group to perform carols at Stroud Court and Mr Jennings, the gardener at 'Pynkyl', 'thought the mummers were there.' After five years he moved up the road to one of the new bungalows. During the Second World War he was employed by the Post Office and, though a van driver, still cycled into Oxford. When asked why, he would complain **'Bloomin' world's too fast as it is'**

Siret's neighbour in the middle hut was George Fathers, a postal worker who later became an executive member of his trade union. He and Siret led a successful rent strike when Boycott Franklin tried to raise rents by a shilling. The occupants of the one-unit huts were Reeves and Lock.

The early residents of modern Farmoor felt they could go where they wished. **'We went into the fields to pick mushrooms -as big as tea plates.'** They wandered freely on the meadow, where they found fire kindling. Mr Ffennell would give permission **'to go**



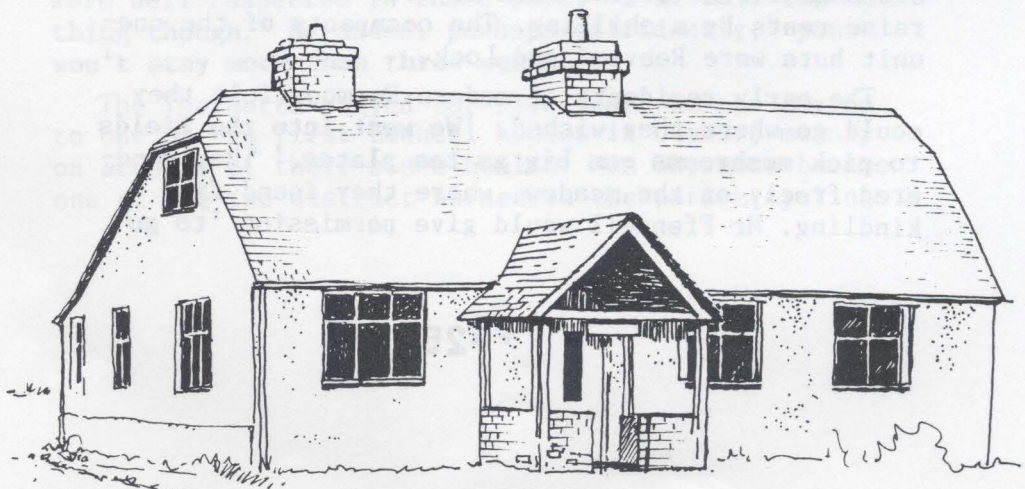
## A NEW COMMUNITY

into Wytham Woods - but not pick daffodils.'

The Oxford Road (the A40 till the 1930s) was becoming busier. In 1924 there was the first fatal accident, just west of Red House Farm, when a motorcyclist, trying to overtake a slow, steam-driven lorry, skidded and was thrown into the lorry's drive belt. An inquest was held at Red House Farm, where Edwin Franklin lived, and during the noisy proceedings Henry Packford made an appeal for public safety on the roads.

Seeing the success of the first huts, Cyril Franklin, a brother of Boycott, living at Swinford Farm, decided to emulate him by erecting more huts at what later became 'Oaklands'. Alfred Thomas seems to have been in the first of these but in 1927 he moved to Thame. Frank Leach came to no.5 and, as in most cases, his sons went to Eynsham School before being transferred to Cumnor; in 1929 he moved on to Headington. Horace Winder and his family came and went within a few months, but Russell Christmas stayed almost five years before going to London.

Mrs Martha Franklin meanwhile became involved in parish affairs. She was a founder member of Cumnor W.I. and served on the first committee. Meetings were then held in the Old School. **'Miss Jervois of Cumnor Place was queen of the village in those days,'** she later reminisced. Martha was a trustee for the new village hall in Cumnor when it was built in 1927. The new residents of Farmoor did not generally feel such a strong attachment to Cumnor village, the heart of the parish. Most of their interests lay in Oxford.



'Farmoor Rise'



In 1925 Boycott Franklin made another important decision. He decided to abandon farming and instead to concentrate on his engineering interests by starting a garage. He first step was to pay off £100 of his mortgage to gain the release of field 551 beside the Cumnor Road. A fresh Conveyance extended the remaining mortgage over a legal term of 3,000 years. The release enabled him to erect 'Farmoor Rise' in the southern half of the field. It was actually an army officers' hut, to which he added a brick wall envelope and a tiled roof. (It was demolished late in 1989 to be replaced by two linked houses). 'Farmoor Rise' was Boycott's home for the next 29 years. He was granted a certificate of occupation in March 1926 and Farmoor Farm was let to a tenant farmer.

In August 1926 Franklin submitted plans for another bungalow, close to the corner of the Oxford and Cumnor roads and five months later for an adjoining garage on the corner site, having released that land from the mortgagees' hold. The garage comprised a large wooden workshop and painted on the gable was: **'SECOND HAND CARS LORRIES AND MOTOR CYCLES. ANY MAKE SUPPLIED. WIRELESS SETS, PARTS AND ACCESSORIES. OVERHAULS OF EVERY DESCRIPTION.'** On the opposite side of the road junction, where there is now a lawn, Boycott had a cabbage patch.

This was not one of the first garages in the area. Most villages near Oxford had one : White's in Appleton, two in Botley, George Hicks' in Oxford Road in Cumnor. Franklin obtained his R.D.C. licence to store petrol in June 1927.\*

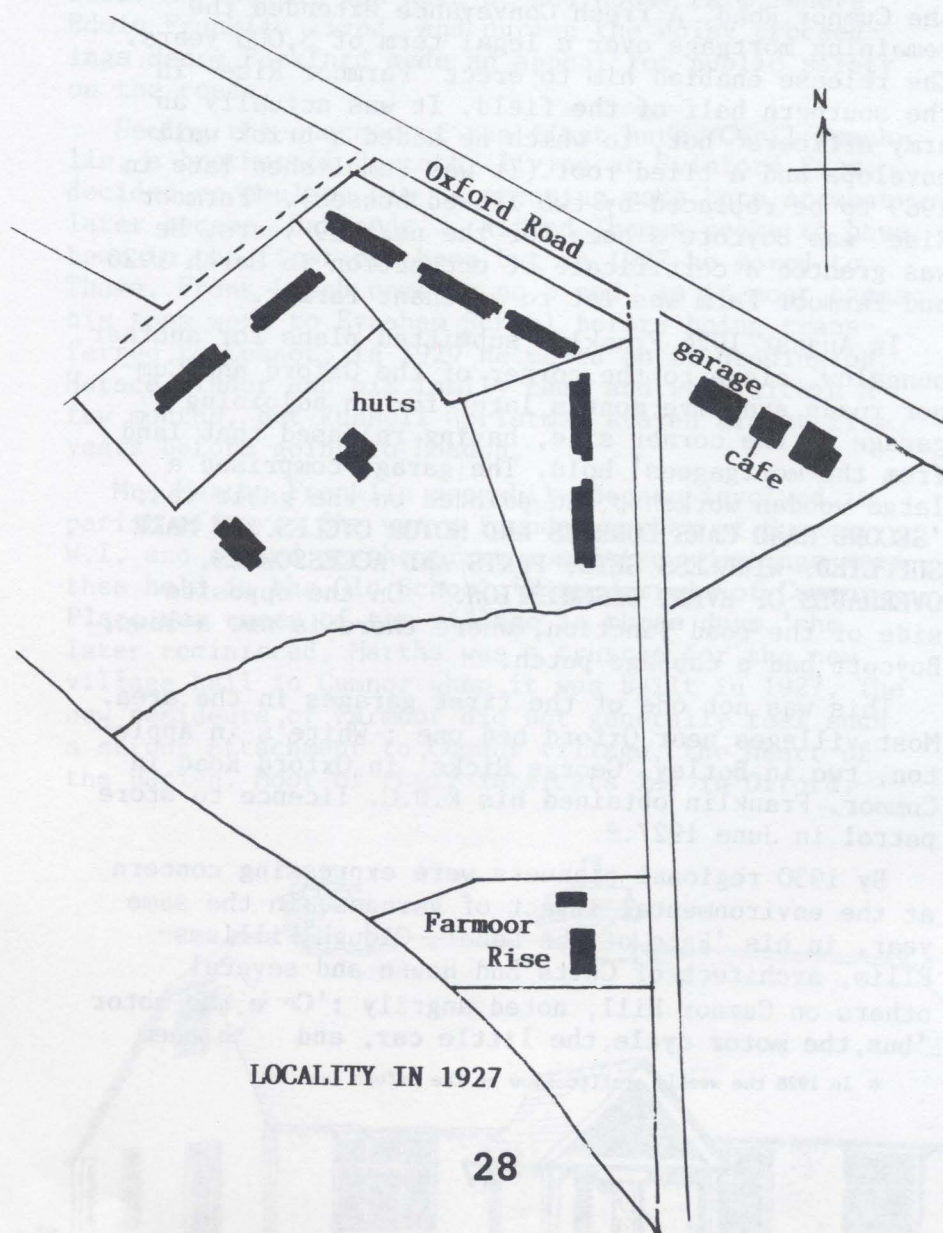
By 1930 regional planners were expressing concern at the environmental impact of garages. In the same year, in his 'Face of the Land', Clough Williams-Ellis, architect of Cutts End House and several others on Cumnor Hill, noted angrily : **'Car the motor bus, the motor cycle, the little car, and the them**

\* In 1928 the weekly traffic flow on the Oxford Road was



the 'ribbon building' along the roads, the squalid establishments to serve the machines and their passengers and the touting announcements to catch their insensitive eyes.'

A small wooden cafe was added between the garage workshop and the bungalow, run by Mrs Brown.





In 1928 Franklin began to sell off parts of his land to builders for bungalows. It began with ribbon development along the Oxford road, part of field 569, released by the mortgagees, being sold to Clinch, a relative of Martha Franklin. The first two bungalows were built close to the road but the district council then moved back the building line. After building four bungalows, Clinch went bankrupt. Stephenson's, the builders' merchants, acquired the next several plots in lieu of payment and bungalows were not built there till much later.

When John and Violet Siret moved into the fourth bungalow in September 1928 they paid £550. The deeds still protected the shooting rights of the Wytham estate. Their neighbour at 'Sunnybank', no.3, was Fred Nation and his wife. He ran a motorcycle and sidecar.

When George and Miriam Harris moved into no.10, their view extended south across the meadow to Bab-lockhythe and the Berkshire Downs. George was the son of the Eynsham carrier but after the war the new bus service put an end to the business and George became a carpenter. He cycled up to Cumnor church from Eynsham for his wedding to Miriam Castle. She had left school at 12 with a Labour Certificate and gone into domestic service at 2s6d (12p) a week. Her father Richard lived at Farmoor Farm cottage.

The semi-detached houses on the Oxford road (nos. 19-24) were built by Prickett. He became bankrupt when nos.25 and 26 were only at the footings stage. Those sites, lying open for several years, became a children's playground. The finished houses were sold for £600. No.19, the show house, was bought by Edgar and Eva Dunsby.

The roadfrontage on the Cumnor road between the huts and Farmoor Rise was also developed with bungalows to a standard plan. One or two were retained by Franklin and let for rent. No.5 was taken by Clarence and Violet Hough, who came from Shepherds Bush. He is



remembered as 'a smart man, fond of walking. In his retirement he was a stage door attendant in Oxford.'

The first three bungalows overlooking the meadow in what became lower Mayfield Road were built by Pimm of Eynsham. The new occupants were asked to name the unadopted lane and agreed on 'Mayfield Road'. It was rough and gravelled. **'It's no better now than it was then'**, says Johnny Johnson. The lane ended at a gate, by the stream, giving access to the meadow. It was part of the old highway to Swinford which became redundant in 1812.

Mrs Frances Wren came to a new bungalow here in 1929 as a newly-wed. She had been working as a lady's companion in Oxford; her family home was Buckingham. She and Fred Wren alighted at Farmoor corner on their first visit and seeing the rough garage forecourt, asked the first workman they saw where they might find a Mr Franklin. **'He said he was Mr Franklin. I've never been so surprised in my life. We squeezed into his two-seater car, with his old dog in the back, and went round to see the bungalow.'** The deposit was £50 and Fred Wren sold his motorbike to pay it. The building society mortgage was £1 a week.

**'When people come here sometimes'**, Mrs Wren says, **'and they say what a nice place to live, I tell them they ought to have been here when we first came.'** The gate, where the ducks are now, opened into the meadow and you could walk right across it to Skinners Bridge and on to 'Bablockhigh'. You could see for miles. The meadow used to flood in winter, reaching the road to Cumnor, and some years, when it froze over, people went skating there. In summer there were lots of flowers: 'cuckoos', 'milkmaids', cowslips and so on. Children would go and pick bunches of them. **'Yes, there were snakesheads, 'blue butchers' and cotton grass'.**

Fred Wren was a brass moulder, working in Oxford, and later Witney. Like many in the new neighbourhood, he was a keen gardener.



John and Alice Johnson came to Mayfield Road after their honeymoon in 1929 and were in fact the first to move in there. He came from Gloucester. He didn't need a significant mortgage for the £750 bungalow, he claims, as he'd **'won enough on the horses.'** He recalls the garage at Farmoor as untidy and littered with old wrecks, but he bought his first car there -a 'Trojan' with solid tyres for £25. He'd had a motorcycle before. He found Boycott Franklin **'rather grumpy'**. **'I used to go shooting with Raphael Tanner from Farmoor Farm. Wild duck at night as they flew overhead. It was nice to hear them drop in the water when you couldn't see 'em.'** He also went shooting on the meadow for rabbits and hares, and in Franklin's orchard on the corner of Mayfield Road with an airgun for rats. 'Johnny' spent his working life as a photographer with the Oxford Mail & Times, and many of the photos he took of celebrities and royalty are in his treasured album. He had a well-tended garden with a small ornamental pool.

Leonard Westall and his wife came to the third bungalow from Oxford.

The needs of this growing community led Mrs Sheppard to start a shop at the end of her hut at the top of Cumnor Road. She began by selling caramels from a table outside her door. She bought them from Delamere's in Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford. Soon she had crates of lemonade, and paraffin. The shop took over the room. She wouldn't sell anything on a Sunday and people had to take care when they ran out of paraffin for their lamps. Signs on her hut proclaimed **'Farmoor'** and **'Wills Gold Cigarettes.'**

Thus a new community grew on the fields of Farmoor and Boycott Franklin reduced his mortgage principal to £1,600. In 1930 however he took out a secondary mortgage for £300 to build the 'Homestead' in what is now Church Close. Known at first as no.11 it was let for rent.

Development of a different kind occurred at Filc-



hamstead, where Harold Alden, of Valley Farm, brought in four railway carriages to be used as homes. Henry Mitchell was still at Filchampstead in the 'Cabin'. Mrs Franklin remembered long afterwards how one day she ran over one of his chickens, '**a scrawny old bird**', and he charged her top price for it.

Life in the new bungalows was not idyllic. Oil lamps were used for lighting. The council had given consent for Abingdon Electric Supply Co.Ltd. to bring power to all villages but by 1930 supplies reached only to Cumnor Hill. There was piped water (a water rate was paid to Mr Franklin) but cooking was usually done on a 'black range', burning coal and wood. '**It was nice for cooking but hard to clean**', Mrs Wren recalls. Washing was done in a copper, which had to be heated. Coal was delivered by Mr Barrett's horse and cart from Eynsham. Bathrooms were not built and many bungalows had a large zinc bath hanging on the outside wall. The toilet was a detached wooden shed, often adjoining the coal shed under one roof.

When Raphael Tanner became tenant of Farmoor Farm, he delivered milk, ladlelling it out of a small churn.

The hourly bus service to and from Oxford was available but most men cycled to work. The 6d(2½p) return ticket might not sound much now but with most wages between £2 and £4 (farmworkers less) it was a considerable expense. One young mother cycled regularly to Wolvercote to visit her in-laws, with one child on the front and another on the back.

Boycott Franklin was now keeping old cars in the field behind the garage and on ground behind the shop. A Cumnor farmer remembers: '**They were lying around. There was an old Bugatti -worth a fortune now. Boycott paid '£1 a leg' for 'em and soon got his money back on the spares. He was a pretty sharp customer - he'd sell anything.**' To the young Stewart Simmonds he was '**a kind man, a man of his word.**'

The first intrusion onto ancient Cumnor Meadow came



in 1929. John Curtis & Sons of Botley moved their gravel extraction operations from Stanton Harcourt to the southern end of the meadow, having agreed a contract with a farmer whom Hubert Curtis remembers as 'Long Webb', a very tall man. Gravel extraction continued there till 1936 when operations moved to Radley. Hubert Curtis built the modern white house above the meadow on 'Tumbledown Hill' in 1933 - a concrete building in the Art Deco style. The young Mrs Curtis would **'gaze for hours at the herons on the meadow. And the pee-whits. You never hear pee-whits now.'**

In the first years of the community, children on the Oxford road attended Eynsham School. It was nearer for walking, and Cumnor School was suffering from overcrowding. Rather than send children over the river to Oxfordshire however, Berkshire County Council decided in 1926 to provide transport to Cumnor. Boycott Franklin won the bus contract, acquiring a small Bedford bus. Tom Towill, who had come from South Wales to a hut in Oaklands and worked at the garage, was the driver. In March 1927 Cumnor Parish Council recommended to the Education Authority in Reading that the service should be extended to carry the children from Dean Court and Stimpsons Cottages.

Times were hard. One resident remembers well the 1929 march by unemployed Welsh miners who passed through Farmoor on their way to London. Some people ran out to greet them. Lorries passed in the other direction, taking food supplies to the Welsh valleys. When Peter Peterson came home to 16 Oxford Road one day he saw smoke rising and found two Welshmen there. They had been walking for two days and were desperate. Mr Peterson, a baker at the Cadena in Oxford, allowed them to stay several weeks, paying them to dig over the garden and make an access with railway sleepers to the main road.



## A CONCERN TOO LATE ?

In the 1920s the population of Farmoor and its nearby settlements trebled to around 300. In previous centuries it had been constant around 80, increasing only at the turn of the century.

This population growth could not occur without some cost to the visual and natural environment. Such an issue was not a serious consideration at the time and far more significant changes were to follow later.

Early planning legislation was inadequate and, as we have noted, applied locally with little vigour. The District Council was ill-equipped to deal with the environmental and planning issues raised by big surges in housing development. Elsewhere by 1930, however, these issues were being taken seriously. A Regional Survey of Oxfordshire, undertaken by members of the new regional planning committee, pointed to a need for co-ordinated planning and architectural controls. In the rural zone around Oxford, it reported in 1931, the **'villages are showing very pronounced evidence of the increasing influence and spread of Oxford: indeed, having regard to the rapid extension of Oxford during the last fifty years, it is surprising that they still retain so much of this rural character.'**

Oxford's influence, it was observed, was very marked on its east side, most easily reached by bicycle from the industrial area of Cowley. Cumnor village retained, through its relative isolation, much of its old rural character in this period. Farmoor lost it.

If Oxford could be compared with New York in terms of pressure on restricted space, the Survey suggested, the Botley area was comparable with New Jersey ! In Botley certainly, suburban development was already very evident.

The recommendation of a special planning approach to Oxford included parts of Berkshire: Wytham, the Hinkseys, Cumnor Hill and the valley around Hill End



(but not quite reaching to Farmoor). A rural zone running from Cumnor to Boars Hill was envisaged in the survey as appropriate only for 'loosely developed' housing - in other words, low density. Hinksey Hill and Boars Hill were seen for 'better types of residence': such houses could 'include chauffeurs' or gardeners' cottages.'

The south side of Wytham Hill was not to be used for housing development, being **'the most beautiful piece of rural scenery within many miles of Oxford.'** It would however, the survey added, be ideal for university extension if the need should arise. For his part, Raymond Ffennell, the owner of Wytham Hill and a keen member of the Oxford Trust, was against development there and was determined to safeguard his 'sacred hills.'

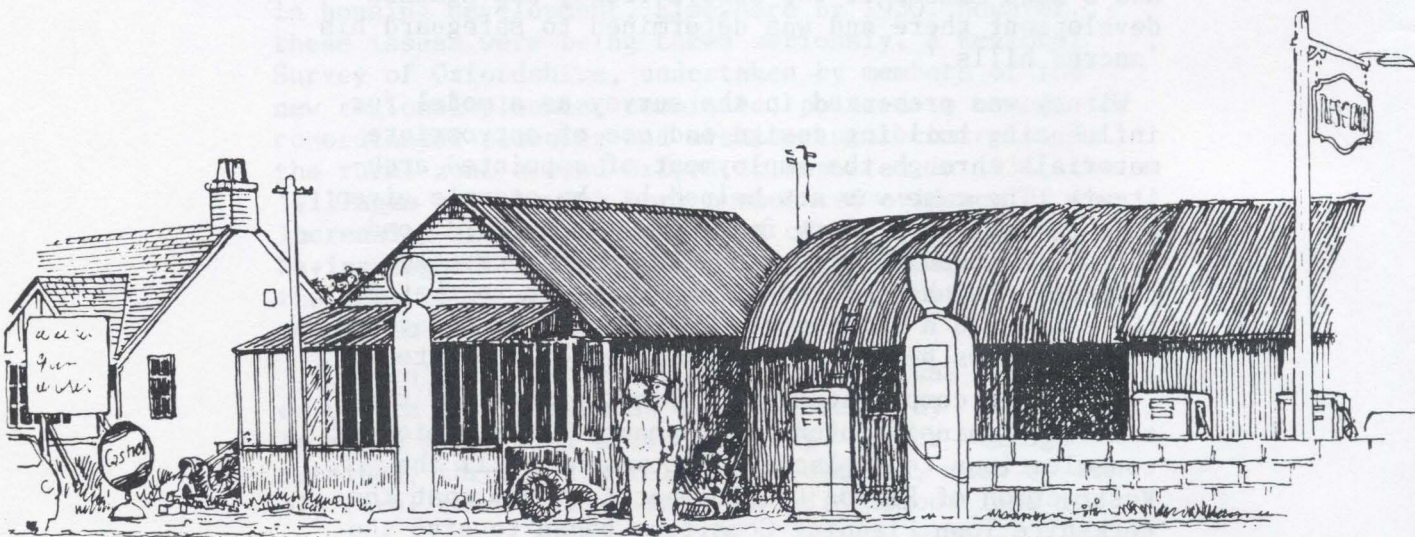
Witney was presented in the survey as a model for influencing building design and use of appropriate materials through the employment of appointed architects. The case was not helped by the example given of a struggling poultry farmer on the Burford road who was allowed to occupy an old railway carriage provided that he carried out his promise to thatch the roof, add a chimney stack, insert some old iron-frame windows he had by him, and render the exterior.

The main complaint of the planning lobby at that time was against ribbon development. Wider regional consultations took place but it was not till the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act 1935 that the Berkshire Town Planning Committee began to give the matter urgent attention. A scheme for shops in Botley for Stephen Howse, submitted by Oxford Estates Ltd., was one of the early applications to come under scrutiny. A service road was included. Berkshire established a Special Joint Sub-Committee for Restriction of Ribbon development. Its dozen members included (ageing gentlemen being reluctant to forego their old military titles) a Brigadier General, a Lt.Colonel and a Vice-Admiral, and one woman.



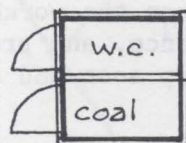
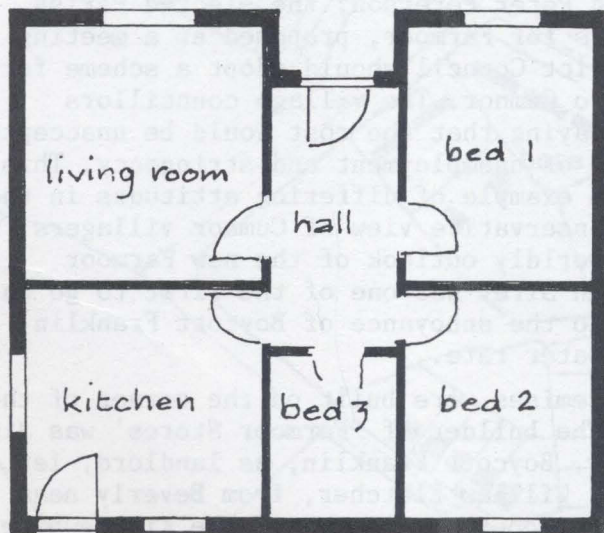
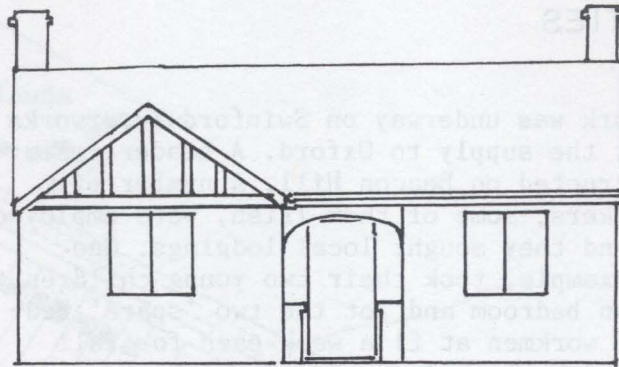
## A CONCERN TOO LATE?

All this was too late for Farmoor, where ribbon development along the Oxford road had taken place when there was less critical awareness of environmental needs. The one concession was the pulling back of the building line (after two bungalows had been started). A service road to distance further the dwellings from the main road and avoid direct from them onto it never materialised, if it was seriously envisaged. Nor was the space landscaped as planners were now suggesting. No further opportunities arose for there was no more building in Farmoor of note till the 1950s.



1970





TYPICAL BUNGALOW FORM OF 1928/9.



## THE THIRTIES

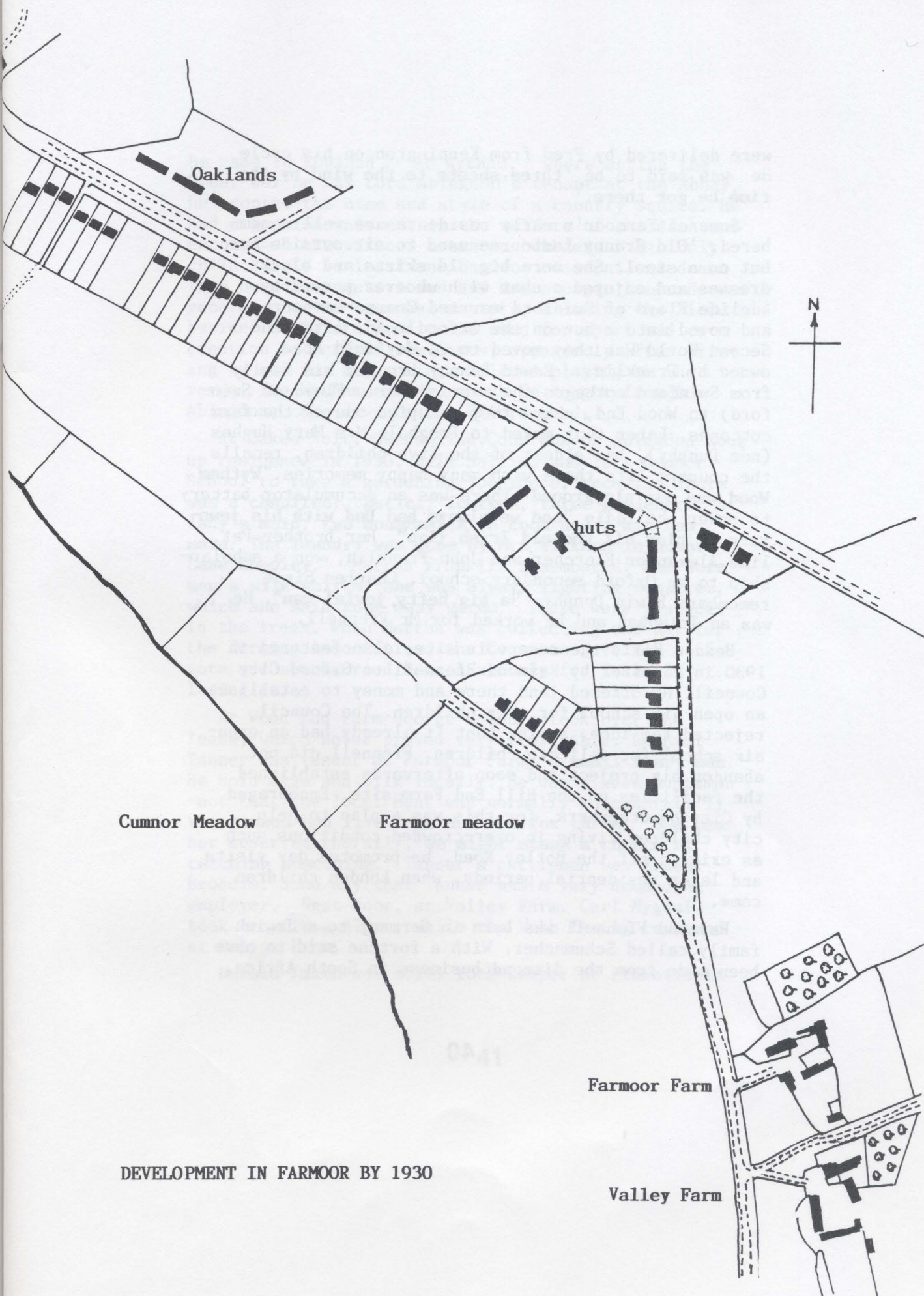
In 1930 work was underway on Swinford Waterworks to supplement the supply to Oxford. A header reservoir was constructed on Beacon Hill. A number of itinerant workers, some of them Irish, were employed on the site and they sought local lodgings. One family, for example, took their two young children into their own bedroom and let the two 'spare' bedrooms to four workmen at £1 a week each for full board and laundry. It helped to pay the mortgage in hard times.

A piped mains supply became available to Farmoor. John Siret and Peter Peterson, the elected Parish Council members for Farmoor, proposed at a meeting that the District Council should adopt a scheme for a mains supply to Cumnor. The village councillors rejected it, saying that the cost would be unacceptable in a time of unemployment and stringency. This was perhaps an example of differing attitudes in the parish: the conservative view of Cumnor villagers and the more worldly outlook of the new Farmoor community. John Siret was one of the first to go on mains water, to the annoyance of Boycott Franklin, who lost his water rate.

New shop premises were built on the corner of the Cumnor road. The builder of 'Farmoor Stores' was Jim Webb of Cumnor. Boycott Franklin, as landlord, let the two units: William Fletcher, from Beverly near Hull, took the grocery section, and the Kibblewhites ran an off-licence in the other half. One outcome of the Beacon Hill work was a demand from the workmen for postal facilities. As a consequence, and probably with Mr Packford's help, the new shop soon had a Sub-Post Office.

The daily paper round was kept by Mrs Sheppard, who wheeled them round in a wooden trolley. Later her son Harold did the round on his bicycle and continued to do so into the 1960s. In Cumnor village the papers





DEVELOPMENT IN FARMOOR BY 1930



THE THIRTIES

were delivered by Fred from Kennington on his cycle. He was said to be **'three sheets to the wind by the time he got there.'**

Some of Farmoor's early residents are well remembered. **'Old Granny Lambourne used to sit outside her hut on a stool. She wore big old skirts and black dresses and enjoyed a chat with whoever passed by.'** Adeline Floyd of Swinford married George Lambourne and moved into a hut on the Oxford road. After the Second World War they moved to 24 Mayfield Road, owned by Franklin. Edwin Dunphy brought his family from Swinford cottages (he married Doris Floyd of Swinford) to Wood End, where they occupied one of the farm cottages. Later they moved to Froghole. Mrs Mary Hughes (née Dunphy), the eldest of the five children, recalls the country life there with many happy memories. **"Wytham Wood was our playground".** There was an accumulator battery to power the radio **"and we always had Dad with his jews-harp to play all the old Irish jigs".** Her brother Pat, like Alexander Fletcher and John Franklin, won a scholarship to an Oxford secondary school. Charles Siret remembers Edwin Dunphy- **"a big, hefty, jovial man".** He was an Irishman and he worked for Mr Ffennell.

Beacon Hill, the reservoir site, also featured in 1930 in an offer by Raymond Ffennell to Oxford City Council. He offered land there and money to establish an open-air school for city children. The Council rejected the idea, saying that it already had an open-air school for delicate children. Ffennell did not abandon his project and soon afterwards established the facilities on the Hill End Farm site. Encouraged by City headteachers, for this was a plan to help city children living in over-crowded conditions, such as existed off the Botley Road, he promoted day visits and later residential periods, when London children came.

Raymond Ffennell was born in Germany to a Jewish family called Schumacher. With a fortune said to have been made from the diamond business in South Africa,



he came to England. At Wytham, where during the Great War he was Lord Abingdon's tenant at the 'Abbey', he adopted the name and style of a country squire. He had a genuine interest in the welfare of children and encouraged the various artistic hobbies of his only child, Hazel. At least one Farmoor resident was drawn into her drama activities and mouth-organ band. He was generous too in communal matters, allowing the field beside the Oxford Road to be used for sport and recreation by Farmoor residents, apparently after driving by one day and seeing children playing on the verge. The Wytham estate, which he bought from Lord Abingdon, came down to the Oxford Road.

At Oaken Holt, Gwendoline, Countess of Abingdon took up residence in 1930. Bill Sallis, who left Cumnor School to take a gardening job there, recalls: **'There was a chauffeur, butler, footman, three gardeners, a lady's maid, two housemaids, a cook and a kitchen maid. The laundry was done by Mrs Wickson in Hurst Lane, Chawley.'** Martha Franklin remembered: **'She wore men's silk shirts - she was always lighting bonfires, which she said kept away germs.'** There were peacocks in the trees. When Martha was collecting one day for the Nursing Association, the Countess gave her a £5 note and she hurried home anxiously for fear of losing it.

At Wood End Farm George Podbury took over the lease, which never proved very profitable. Raphael Tanner was tenant at Farmoor Farm, **'a small tubby man.'** He sold eggs and milk locally. He was a keen huntsman - not that the local Hunt was normally successful. **'If the hounds had five legs and the fox three,'** one member observed ruefully, **'we might stand a chance of catching something.'** Tanner's cattleman was Ernest Broadis. Some say that Tanner was a very demanding employer. Next door, at Valley Farm, Carl Mygdal took over from Alden, while the Webb family remained at Oxleas Farm.

Harold Smith was still lock-keeper at Pinkhill in



the 1930s, but perhaps less conscientious than in his youth. **'When he cycled up to the 'Talbot', you had to operate the lock yourself.'** The river banks near the lock were a popular place in summer: **'There would be dozens of people and children there by the river - it was like a lido.'** **'The best spot was 'Green Bank' below the blue bridge. The water was shallow there. Children would come down from Cumnor as well, two on a bike.'** One day a pram and baby slid into the river but were rescued by Mr Jennings, who lived in the gardener's lodge at Pynkyl House (a maid lived nearby in a converted railway carriage- **Smoking** compartments).

John Siret's was one family that was **'always by the river'**. He had a boat, which was actually an old sea-plane float carved out like a punt.

Many remember the 1930s as a time of happy childhood, with the freedom of the summer meadows and the river. Children learned to swim under Swinford Bridge. Every Sunday the Harris family would walk to Eynsham to visit the grandparents. Then there were the secret expeditions into Wytham Woods, to the pool, the dark haunted chalet among the beech trees, to Russell Crick's gamekeeper's cottage at the top of Bean Wood, surrounded by snowdrops in spring. In late summer, Michael Baston says, the boys were lured there by **'the lovely greengage tree in his garden.'** Most gardens now had a fruit tree, but as one Cumnor resident remembers of his childhood: **'I went scrumping in Percy Walker's orchard. I know we had our own orchard but his apples seemed to taste better.'**

And there was school. Mr Cole, **'Pontius Pilate'**, and his wife had retired in 1924 after some 30 years and his place was taken by Denton Brown, who also became a keen member of the church choir, and of the village cricket team. Infants went to Mrs Smith's room (now the Lounge in the Old School); **'she was gorgeous', 'very nice'**. She had married John Smith, the carpenter and son of the Chawley Works manager. They lived in the Abingdon road. When the vicar, the Rev Henry Hall, vis-



ited the Infants Class, Jean Stayt recalls, '**we were frightened to death.**' Hall, who had succeeded the Rev. Arthur Wilkinson in 1929, had been 35 years a schoolmaster and he did not enjoy good health.

There were two Miss Lambournes on the school staff for a time, which was confusing. But Beulah Lambourne, born in Cumnor, married Arthur Boyles, Henry Brooke's gardener, in 1932. Being a qualified teacher she took the top class, with the headmaster; she introduced netball to the school. The other Miss Lambourne came from Appleton each day on her bicycle. A country dance enthusiast, she taught three generations at the school. She had a bakelite cup which she would drop on the floor to show the strength of this new material. On the last day of term she would bring her record of 'The Laughing Policeman' to play to her class as a treat.

Children took their own lunch and those who took an Oxo cube or cocoa powder were given hot water. In 1930 school milk was introduced and, to monitor the new scheme, children were weighed to see if they put on weight. In winter there was competition to obtain a place near the stove.

Denton Brown died in 1935 and his successor was Samuel Stevens, who was still headmaster when the school transferred to its new buildings in 1952. In 1935 conditions in the old school were poor. The district council sanitary inspector commented very unfavourably on the bucket toilets across the school yard and on the absence of running water. The playground was in a bad state, as the School Managers had noted several years previously. Pressure on classroom space continued and in 1932, when the limit of 162 pupils was reached, some Farmoor children were sent to Eynsham School. In 1935 however the enrollment of 8 Farmoor children included some transferring back. The eight were: Sheila Walker, Peter Towill, Joyce Walker, April Johnson, Barbara Price, Brian Fletcher, Pauline



Taylor and Shirley Wren. Three years later Mr Stevens enrolled Ron Baker, Stewart Simmonds, Michael Baston, Enid White, Jeane, William and Philip Siret, and Joyce and Betty Nation. The increased numbers led Boycott Franklin to acquire and adapt an old hearse for school transport. This apparently led to a headline in a Paris newspaper: **'English schoolchildren go to school by hearse.'** It was driven by Mr Fox of Standlake or sometimes by Jack Gardiner.

A Boys Brigade group, started by Chapel leaders in Cumnor, was joined by several Farmoor boys. Outdoor meetings were held at Lower Whitley. Occasionally, led by Mr Stevens, and band playing, they marched to Sunday church. Jean Harris's brother played the trumpet, though neighbours' complaints drove him to practise out of earshot at Skinners Bridge.

For adults the working hours were long. Evenings were spent in the vegetable garden, and mothers made their children's clothes, even the coats. This was from economic necessity for there was little spare cash to spend on clothes off the peg. When many wages were cut in the slump, more than one family had to negotiate a reduction in their mortgage payments to 10s a week. The garden produce was invaluable: **'What with the veg and the strings of onions and the fruit trees, we kept ourselves in veg and fruit for most of the years.'** Elizabeth Thornett believes, from her nursing experience, that such enterprise, 'with the keeping of a pig and the occasional rabbit from a farmer for 1s, made for a healthy diet, far healthier than many town dwellers'.

Many families could never afford a real holiday in the 1930s. **'I came here in 1929'**, one wife recalls, **'and the first holiday we had was in 1956.'** The only chance of a break was to stay with relatives.

In 1935 a summer camp, one of several, was organised on Cumnor Meadow for 62 unemployed Welsh miners by the University Labour Club and Balliol College.



'The more dons that can come to these camps the better,' said one report, though, as the Sub-Rector of Exeter was kicked playfully in the posterior during a rugby game, 'they must be prepared for a literal interpretation of the foot of ignorance being raised to the seat of knowledge.' Some mornings were spent at an archaeological dig at Faringdon, afternoons at games, especially all-in rugby on the meadow, evenings at hobbies and entertainment. Meals were provided in a marquee; typically 8.00am porridge, sausages, bread, butter and marmalade, and tea - 10.00am stew, potatoes, fruit tart, bread and tea - 4.30pm bread, butter, lettuce, tea 7.30pm bread, butter, cheese, cocoa.

It is the singing in the evenings that is remembered. 'I always looked forward to that concert.' 'Oh, it was gorgeous. All from the valleys you see.' Concerts took place on the meadow beside Pinkhill Lock and lights would be strung up. In 'Flow Gently Sweet Afton', the sluice gate would be opened for added sound effects. And the final song was 'Goodnight Ladies'.

On four Sunday evenings in the summer, 1935, open-air services were held in the recreation field north of Oxford Road. There was a choir and a portable harmonium and the singing was augmented by Welsh voices. These services were arranged by St Aldate's Church, Oxford. Martha Franklin recounted: 'The vicar of Cumnor, the Rev. H. Hall, was elderly and in poor health but he was concerned that building was continuing in Farmoor and that the district was so cut off from the main village. Very few people had their own transport and there was no meeting place.'

Thus Cumnor links with St Aldate's, its Rector the Rev. Frank Cragg and his curate, the Rev. Ronald Lunt, led to the evening services. It was agreed at the end that Farmoor needed a church. Boycott Franklin agreed to give a plot of land, the corner of the field behind the shop, for a wooden hut and within three months the first service, Harvest Festival, was held in St Mary's Church. 'An old organ was found, an altar table came



from Cumnor, which had a wonderful early Victorian frontal; chairs and forms, two hanging oil lamps, a coal stove with its round chimney pipe; from the Rectory Room of St Aldates came a Cross and candlesticks for the altar.' For that first service people brought in their garden produce and they hung every beam with travellers' joy.

Money was raised in the community, in Cumnor and St Aldates parish. On 2nd February 1936 St Mary's was dedicated by Bishop Shaw. **'It's a nice little church,'** one elderly resident observes, **'and it's a pity the new folk don't go there more.'** In 1990 a project was conceived for a new building.

The founding of Farmoor's own church marked the growing independence of its community and the lessening of Cumnor's central role. The perceived distance of Cumnor is reflected in a letter from a Farmoor resident to Mr Stevens at Cumnor School in April 1939.

**'Dear Sir**

**I am sending my grandson to School today he is here for a time to see if it will do him good as he is not very well Kidlington dont suit him..Mr Davy the School Board man he say he will see you for me as I cannot climb that Hill ....'**

In April 1937 the Parish Council agreed with the Oxford Postmaster that the postman delivering letters down to Farmoor should have a half day holiday a week.

The school letter is also a reminder of the ill health suffered by many children in the period between the wars. It was not unusual for children to be sent away to relatives in the hope that the 'air' would suit them better. Planners' emphasis on health aspects was based on a justified concern.

There was no further house building in Farmoor in the 1930s and the community gained a certain stability. Kelly's Directory for 1935 listed: William Fletcher at Farmoor shop, Elizabeth Franklin at Swinford, Carl Mygdal,



farmer, at Valley Farm; Boycott Franklin, motor and electrical engineer, at Farmoor garage; Geoffrey Podbury at Wood End farm, Raphael Tanner at Farmoor Farm, George Shepherd, newsagent. Mrs Dean resided at Stroud Croft and Henry Packford at Pynkyl.

In the late 1930s a new A40 was built from Headington to Eynsham, running north of the Thames and Wytham Hill. This reduced the traffic flowing along the Botley to Swinford road, which was relegated to the A4141.

The meadow was the scene of other activities in later summers: it was used by the University Gliding Club. Kronfeldt, an Austrian aviator, was one of the instructors. **'When I heard about it,'** says Hubert Curtis, **'I went down, very excited, and joined.'** He later bought a noisy light aircraft from Kronfeldt.

The meadow entrance was between nos.2 and 3 Oxford Road, opposite Oaklands, and a storage shed was erected on the meadow's edge. At first a bull-nosed Morris was used to tow the rope lifting up the gliders. Mike Baston and Charles Siret remember the blue winch which was then used, with a man standing by with an axe to cut the rope in the event of a glider being unable to release it. That happened on one occasion without mishap. One day a glider came down on the other side of the river.

Some who came gliding were well-known personalities of the time. Amy Johnson came, and Peter Towill recalls she charged 2s6d for her autograph, in aid of the gliding club. She had a green MG car. Jean Harris was surprised that such a famous lady should look so small and ordinary. She obtained her autograph and her brother got her another, without charge.

Kronfeldt is credited with starting the gliding. But Captain Rattray, an English aviator, was killed in an accident when his glider plunged into the meadow. Pieces of plywood were kept as mementoes of the tragedy.



As early as 1912 planes had landed on the meadow and in the 1930s there was a strip beside Skinners Lane (this path across the meadow to the bridge was also known by some as 'Kissy Lane') where biplanes would occasionally land. The gliding came to an end before the war, and had to move to Stokenchurch, when high power transmission lines were planned to cross the area - the line of the small pylons today.

In 1938 Boycott paid £46 for redemption of Land Tax on the 91 acre farm tenanted by Raphael Tanner. The papers referred to the land 'in the parish of Stroud.'

Botley School was built in 1938 to take all local children from the age of 11 till they left school at 14. Charles Siret left just before the war and was offered a job both by Cyril Franklin, who had taken over Swinford Farm, and by the Oxford Co-operative Society, regarded by Cyril as virtually a revolutionary organisation. Charles went to the Co-op.

Kelly's Directory in 1939 listed:

#### Residential

Mrs Beeson Thames House  
William Fowler 'Kanowia', Eynsham Rd  
Henry Packford Pynkyl

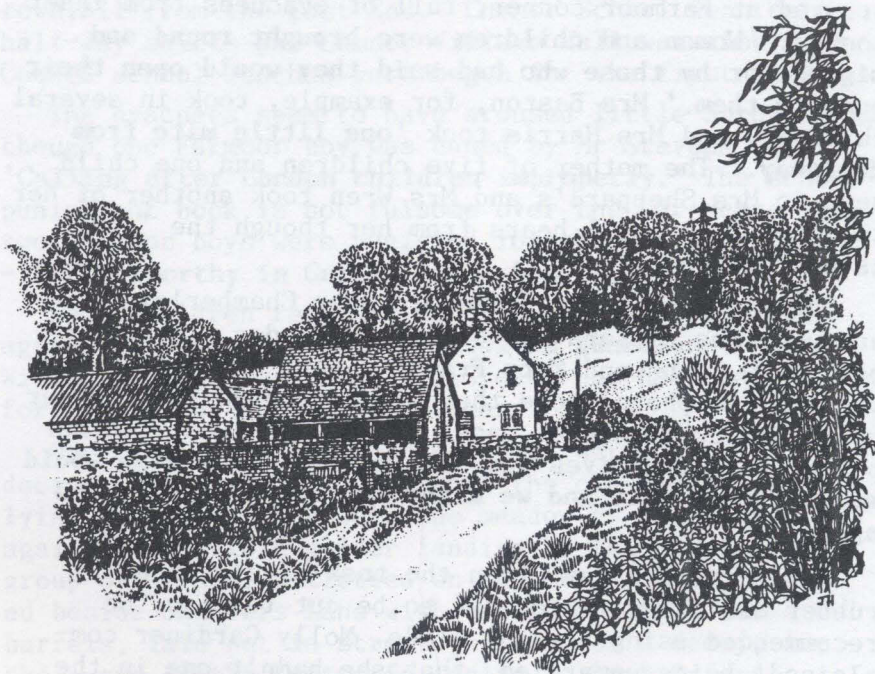
#### Commercial

Harry Smith Pinkhill lock  
William Fletcher shopkeeper & P.O.  
Boycott Franklin motor garage  
Cyril Franklin Swinford Farm  
Harry Mitchell smallholder, Filchampstead  
Carl Mygdal farmer, Farmoor  
Geo Podbury farmer, Wood End  
Geo Sheppard newsagent, 25 Oxford Rd  
Raphael Tanner, farmer, Farmoor

Harry Breeze worked at the garage, with its Cleveland Discol pumps, and lived in the adjoining bungalow. Bob Simmons worked there too and lived in



half of the first hut past the shop.



Wood End Farm (sketched in 1976)



## WORLD WAR TWO

**'It worried me when they started to issue gas masks,'** Peter Towill recalls. The threat of war loomed larger. Rumours of evacuees ended when a coach arrived at Farmoor corner, full of evacuees from inner London. **'Women and children were brought round and signed for by those who had said they would open their home to them.'** Mrs Baston, for example, took in several children, and Mrs Harris took **'one little mite from Holloway.'** The mother of five children and one child went to Mrs Sheppard's and Mrs Wren took another of her children (she still hears from her though the 'girl' is now over 60).

Not everyone heard Prime Minister Chamberlain announce the declaration of war on Sunday, 3rd September, 1939. John and Mary Franklin were on holiday and when Martha phoned home they were dismayed that father told them to return at once. Jean Harris was with her parents and relatives and **'we thought everything would start immediately and we might not see our relatives again.'**

John Franklin was given the task of distributing rubber ear plugs, which had to be cut to size. He recommended using a razor blade. Molly Gardiner complained, being unmarried, that she hadn't one in the house.

Boycott Franklin was made chief air raid warden and was issued with a bright, white helmet. He didn't like to wear it, he said, because it showed up too well in the dark and the Germans might spot him. The other wardens were Mr East and Charles Smith (the lock-keeper's son) at Oaklands, and Mr Jennings.

A 'Home Guard' force was formed at Botley. At the start Raymond Ffennell (who had in the past claimed the title of colonel) was in command but it was found necessary to replace him, whether on grounds of inefficiency or prejudice against his German origins



(though he may not have visited Germany since the 1936 Olympic Games), it is difficult now to judge.

Schooling with the increased numbers raised some difficulties. There were about 140 evacuee children in the parish from Stepney, Bow, Holloway and Silvertown, all from the East End. Cumnor School went onto half-day shifts and Cumnor Village Hall was also used. Cooked school lunches were begun for the first time.

The evacuees seem to have aroused little antagonism, though one Farmoor boy was caned by Mr Stevens for **'Calling after London children improperly.'** The school punishment book is not fulsome over the war years but two Farmoor boys were punished for the offence: **'Caned - Untrustworthy in Garden - radishes.'**

Some children returned to London, even came back again. In 1940 Edgar Dunsby took as guardian Vivienne Willis, age 12, from Bethnal Green. She had stayed for two months the previous year.

One of the early consequences of war was the decision of authorities to move the old car bodies lying around Farmoor onto the meadow as obstacles against a possible glider landing by the Germans. A group of airmen, billeted on the Cumnor Road, camped beside Skinners Lane with orders to light tar barrels, laid out in street patterns as a decoy, in the event of the Luftwaffe trying to bomb Oxford.

Oaken Holt was taken over by the headquarters of the Westminster Bank, which moved from London. Stroud Court was later occupied by a manufacturer of steel furniture.

Farmoor had a relatively uneventful war. Several residents remember seeing the German squadrons flying overhead in the late autumn of 1940 on their way to bomb Coventry. Fields across the river near Stanton Harcourt were cleared for an airfield, used as a training and operational base for Whitley bombers. These slow, ungainly aircraft became a familiar sight. Alexander, son of William Fletcher at the



shop, was killed while flying a Whitley. He was only 19. Another family's son is said to have been lost when the 'Hood' was lost in the Atlantic.

On one rare occasion a German fighter plane flew low along the Oxford road to attack circuiting bombers and a passing cyclist rode straight into the ditch. An incendiary bomb fell near Beacon Hill and was dug up by John Franklin. And one night a random strafing resulted in bullet holes in Molly Gardiner's shed and George Harris even found a bullet embedded in one of his bags of compost. Trivial incidents sometimes outlast the memory of major events.

Some events of course had nothing to do with the war. In 1943 Raymond Ffennell, shortly before his death, made an important bequest. As his daughter Hazel had died in 1939, he had no heir, and wishing to preserve his 'sacred hills' he bequeathed Wytham Hill and its woods to Oxford University. He sold the rest of the estate to the university, on conditions to safeguard the environment. Thus the Podburys at Wood End Farm became university tenants and the 'Woods of Hazel' became a restricted area for ecological research.

At Swinford Farm, Cyril Franklin ran into problems in farming the land efficiently and Boycott had to assist his brother, using his own experience. There was a critical need nationally to increase food production. German and Italian prisoners of war, held at several local camps including Lower Whitley, were sent to work on some farms, including Valley Farm, being run by Jordan. Several worked at Swinford Farm. **'I found them quite efficient', said Boycott, 'though one, by the name of Fritz, pruned my plum trees.'**

To increase production, Boycott cleared fields known as 'Blacklands' below Beacon Hill that had run wild for years, and planted potatoes. In September he approached Mrs Wren and enquired whether she would like a sack of potatoes. This offer turned out to be return for a day's potato picking. Boycott needed



help but would or could not pay for it. She said she could help for a day or two, though she found him hard to talk to and in any case didn't want to be submerged in potatoes. It was back-breaking work but on the way home she dropped in on Mrs Drewett, who lived at the top of Oaklands, and had a chat and some of her baked bread and fruit pudding.

In 1942 Boycott Franklin had paid £150 to Lord Abingdon to be relieved of the liability to pay the vicar's corn rent. Lord Abingdon agreed to pay such rents on the Farmoor land. These rents were remnants of the ancient vicarial tithes. Later the same year Franklin was able to pay off the remainder of his 1922 mortgage.

A wartime incident became evident when Stewart Simmonds visited Mr Keen one day at Pinkhill Lock. Keen, who had succeeded Harold Smith, was an old sailor and was tattooed from neck to toe, **'with a ring of roses at his throat and a snake that twined round his back.'** His son lived at Oaklands. Stewart often had to go there as his geese liked to escape to the river. On this occasion they saw large timbers in the water and walking upstream found that the bridge at Skinners had burnt down. The likely vandals were never found.

Another fire occurred when Edwin Dunphy's Frog-hole Manor burned down. Firemen blamed it on an oak beam in the chimney structure. Dunphy's two sons and two of his daughters served in the armed forces. Conditions in the Farmoor huts were deteriorating. A student who accompanied Mr Galpin, the agent, on his rent-collecting round, saw rat holes in the floors of some huts.

The end of the war against Germany, and later Japan, was marked by celebrations. One was held in 'Seed Field' behind the Oxford Road bungalows, with a bonfire, and dancing that went on into the night and into the road.



## THE POST-WAR YEARS

The post-war period of austerity did little to alleviate the condition of those living in huts at Farmoor but it did release a certain energy in the community.

One person who set things in motion was a Canadian, Frank Andrews, who came to no.2 Oxford Road. A carpenter by trade, he had served in the Allied Forces. **'A great character - exuberant! He'd join in anything.'** He was often down at Swinford Bridge, helping children to swim. His scheme to provide hot teas for fishermen along the riverbank, requiring his young volunteers to cycle down to the river with kettles of boiling water, failed. Of a rather wild disposition he one day jumped on a race horse which Mygdal kept on the meadow, but was thrown off, breaking his shoulder.

The annual Farmoor Flower Show arose from a first meeting held in Andrew's bungalow, which was packed. John Siret, Alfred Hoult, Eric Westall and Mrs Justin were among the organisers. John Siret had been involved in the Tilbury Field joint flower show before the war, with his companions from the Carpenters Arms in Botley. **'He was a keen, old-fashioned gardener. He would bring a sack of cow manure back from his walks to Skinners.'** When he retired, he still cycled into Oxford to work as doorkeeper at the New Theatre. He knew which artists wanted a crate of beer left at the Stage Door. Often it was shared. Perhaps it was as well that the road home to Farmoor was not straight.

The first flower show was held in the field to the south of lower Mayfield Road. Mike Baston remembers winning 'Bowling for a pig', provided by Beamant, who had taken over Valley Farm. Mike bought another to go with it and, like several other people, joined Botley Pig Club. He kept the pigs with Stewart Simmons' goats, chickens and geese, which frequently ran out across the field that is now Meadow Close.



Andrews and his family returned to Winnipeg in Canada where later they were tragically killed in a flood disaster.

In the 1950s the infilling of Mayfield Road and the land behind it took place. **'The top of Mayfield Road was lined with 'posts' which were old car leaf springs, hammered in by Tom Towill.'**

Some of the building arose from the needs of the younger generation now reaching maturity and marrying. Boycott Franklin was ready to sell a plot in those circumstances. A new network of kinship was emerging in a community where **'everybody knew everybody else.'**

In 1954 Peter Stockford and Peter Towill built bungalows on plots in lower Mayfield Road. There followed a spate of development as Boycott Franklin sold off land to individuals and to builders, particularly Jordan. The huts were dismantled to make way for new homes. In 1955 a planning application was submitted for Church Close, the land bought by Cyril Jordan, builder. There was a reference to the 'unmade service road' along the Oxford Road. The homes in Church Close were completed between 1959 and 1961. By 1961 the infilling of the land between Mayfield Road and Cumnor Road was virtually complete.

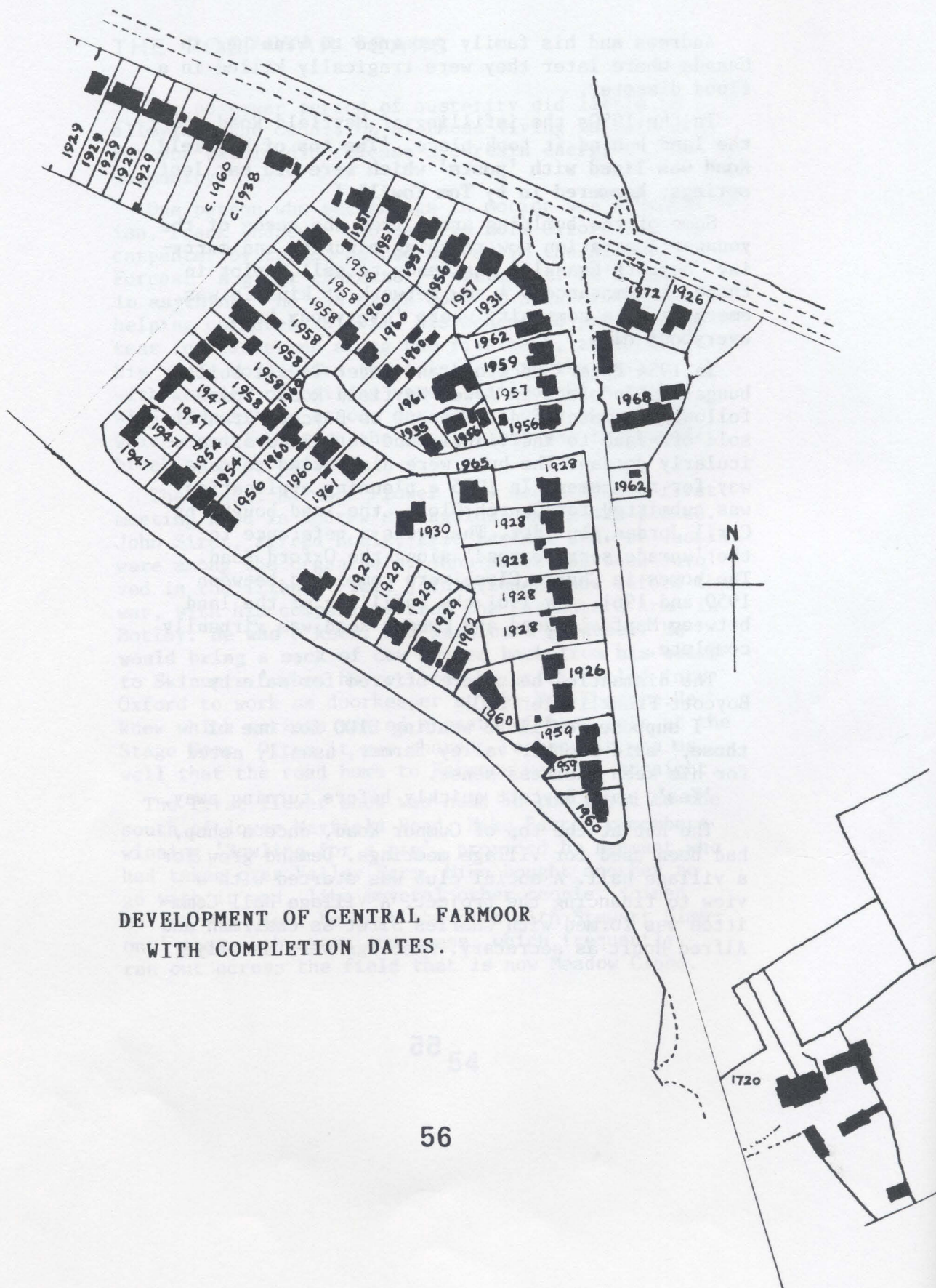
The dismantled huts were offered for sale by Boycott Franklin for £50.

**'I suppose you'll be wanting £100 for one of those,'** said another valley farmer, usually noted for his keen business sense.

**'Yes',** said Boycott quickly before turning away.

The hut at the top of Cumnor Road, once a shop, had been used for village meetings. Demand grew for a village hall. A social club was started with a view to financing the project. A Village Hall Committee was formed with Charles Siret as chairman and Alfred Hoult as secretary. Meetings were usually







held at Swinford Farm, where Boycott was **'always polite and generous.'** He provided the plot for the new hall. A 50% loan was obtained for the hall but a great deal of enterprise was needed before building could take place. The opening ceremony was held one foggy, cold morning in December, 1962. There was disappointment that no local Press responded to the invitation to attend. **'After all, it was quite an achievement, wasn't it.'** Indeed it was.

Charles Siret remembers helping to dismantle the hut on the hall site. **'Never seen so many mice in my life. There must have been hundreds.'** Franklin had been keeping sacks of grain at the back.

Farmoor W.I. was founded as a further spur to building the village hall. Martha Franklin recalled that ten local members of Cumnor W.I. were each given a 'dowry' of £1 to start their own institute. Both Martha Franklin and Alice Johnson were ready to serve as the first President and as neither was willing to stand down and an election was thought inappropriate, it was left to the toss of a coin. Mrs Johnson won.

There were other changes in the post-war years. Oaken Holt became a training centre for the Westminster Bank for a number of years before the Bank moved to Heythrop and the estate was bought by a Burmese millionaire as a Buddhist Centre. Stroud Court was purchased and converted to a private international college for girls.

Raphael Tanner, growing old and ill, retired to Standlake (he died at Cirencester aged 93). Stewart Simmonds attended the farm sale and bought nine waggon wheels for a shilling each. He sold them to the landlord of the 'Shepherd's Hall' near Freeland. John and Sheila Franklin lived at the farm for a time. It was later let to students. In 1982 the farm was sold, two years after Boycott's death, and the farmhouse with adjoining cottage was demolished to make space for redevelopment.



By 1958 the Water Board's plans for the Meadow were known and Boycott Franklin entered an agreement with Amey Aggregates Ltd. of Wootton for gravel extraction, at £250 an acre, on his lands there that were to be lost to the proposed reservoir. A few months later he sold 'Farmoor Rise' in Cumnor Road to Harold and Joan Revell. The road frontage was then 140 feet but nos.7-9 were soon built on the southern part of the site. In 1960 the old orchard site on the corner was sold to Cyril Jordan, who built the house for Jack Gardiner.

Work started on the first reservoir in 1962. **'We watched the reservoir being built. It spoilt our view across the meadow.'** Huge yellow bulldozers and earth movers performed their daily dance like huge scorpions. Much of the meadow which for two thousand years had been harvested for hay and grazed by common rights, an open playground, disappeared for ever. The pumping works and offices were opened in 1967. It was a few years before some rights of way were restored.

With the fields north of Oxford Road no longer accessible and Water Board land hemming the lower Mayfield Road, the community was penned in as it had never been before. A few Farmoor residents joined the angling club or sailing club when they were formed but generally the local population was alienated from its rural environment.

Harry and Molly Webb, having acquired Valley Farm, lost some of the best pasture for their fine dairy herd.

In 1964 the ferry boat at Bablockhythe sank and the ancient ferry service stopped.

There was change at the garage too. Percy Eadle bought the site, with its sheds and rusting Discol pumps in 1972, and redeveloped the site. Soon there was a modern workshop, a wide concrete forecourt, a broad, bright plastic canopy, and new pumps selling cut-price Jet petrol. We almost needed sunglasses to



drive in.

Farmoor was still '**a funny old place**', perceived by many passing drivers as another piece of ribbon development without any real character. But the proximity of Oxford and rising property prices was making it attractive to a wider market. When Ralph and Mary Hayward (they now live at Swinford Farm) left the cottage they had extended in Farmoor Lane, it was bought by Dr. Charles Caine, a mathematics don, who later sold it to Dr. Anthony Kenny, who was to become Master of Balliol. David Kirby who moved into no. 1 Church Close was a brilliant young scientist (he moved to Boars Hill before dying as the result of a traffic accident in America). Farmoor was in fact becoming more widely representative of the working population.

There were of course farcical moments. The wife of a quality control manager at British Leyland was driving her new car, allowed her for publicity purposes, round a corner when the front door fell off. One evening, Farmoor Wives Club, a short-lived but lively group, organised an Xmas dinner with homemade wines, husbands invited. Never was such a variety of exotic brews seen and tasted. Things might have been all right if the Woodward brothers, who then manned the Swinford tollgate, had not brought in a large can of lager, which husbands went on to enjoy. Next morning there was hardly a gentleman to be seen for hours.

With its own hall, shop and sub-Post Office (managed by Stan and Marion Duncombe in the early 1970s) and church, Farmoor had gained, largely through its own efforts, the usual trappings of a village, with a degree of independence. It remained however part of Cumnor Parish, sending three representatives (usually without election) to the Parish Council. Local enterprise gained a small recreation field for children, John Gordon playing a significant part.

1974 brought several major changes that were to affect Farmoor's future significantly. Work had begun on the second reservoir, at the southern end of the meadow. A team from the Oxford Archaeological Unit



made a hasty excavation of a prehistoric site revealed by aerial photography, near Lower Whitley, and their finds were exhibited in the village hall. As the completed Stage II reservoir, designed to meet the demands of a 400,000 population, began to fill with its 3,050 million gallons, chironomid larvae began to breed in its depths and the Farmoor 'midge' problem was created. That however is another story.

Local government reorganisation in 1974 moved Farmoor, with Cumnor and Wytham, into Oxfordshire. No longer was the Thames to be the county boundary. The move was not popular but logistically it made sense to be dealing, in local government matters, with Oxford rather than Reading.

In 1974 work started on the 'Wimpey estate'. Boycott Franklin had succeeded in 1972 in his application for housing development on the land behind the Oxford Road gardens.\* Historically part of Redcroft Furlong in Farmoor West Field, it was now an ill-drained piece isolated from other agricultural land. Several applications were made and rejected by the planning authorities. The idea was opposed by most local residents, who valued the open space and their views. The field was of very limited agricultural value, fenced to the south by Thames Water property. One plan was for a small number of bungalows. Wimpey Limited took an option on the land and when a final application was rejected by the District Council, an appeal against the decision was made to the Ministry. John Siret entered a letter against development and one resident supported Franklin. Peter Walker, the minister then in office, overruled the council and gave permission. The land remained a subject of much local debate, particularly in relation to the number of houses and the need for a children's play area.

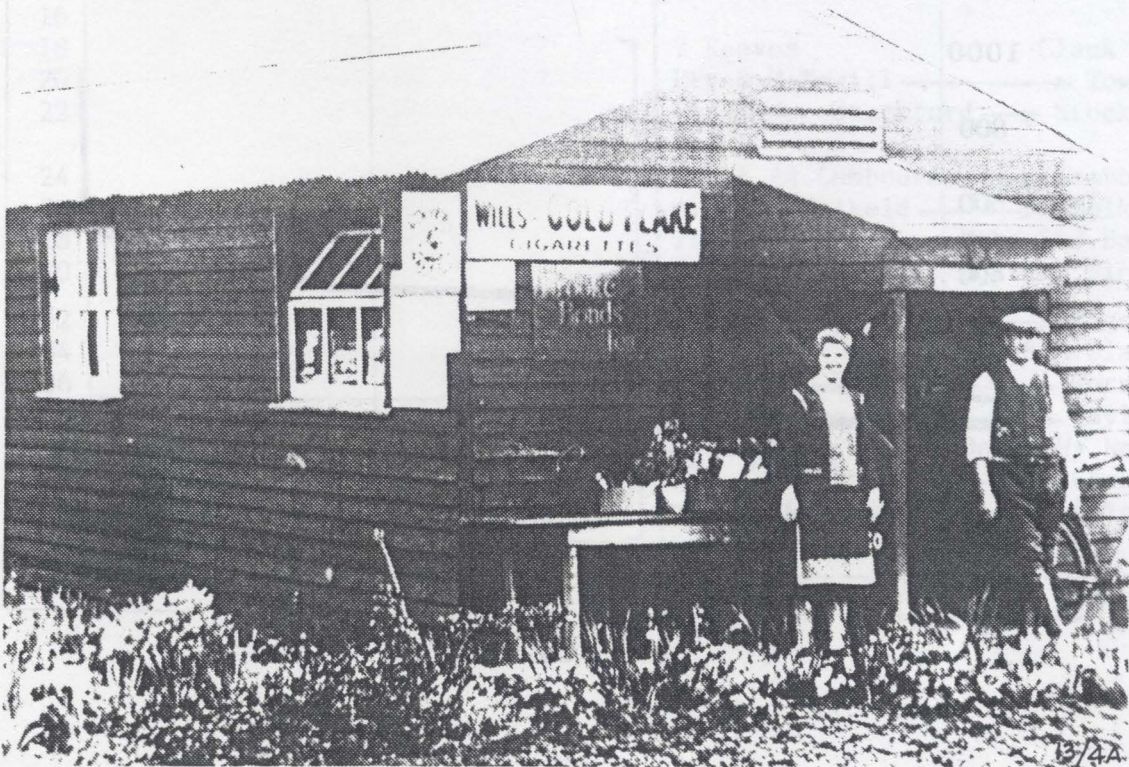
The show house advertised the opportunity to buy new, modern homes for around £20,000, the publicity showing a certain flair and licence: **'Our development is pleasantly situated in the unspoilt village of**

\* Planning permission was refused for the field east of the garage





Boycott and Martha Franklin 1970



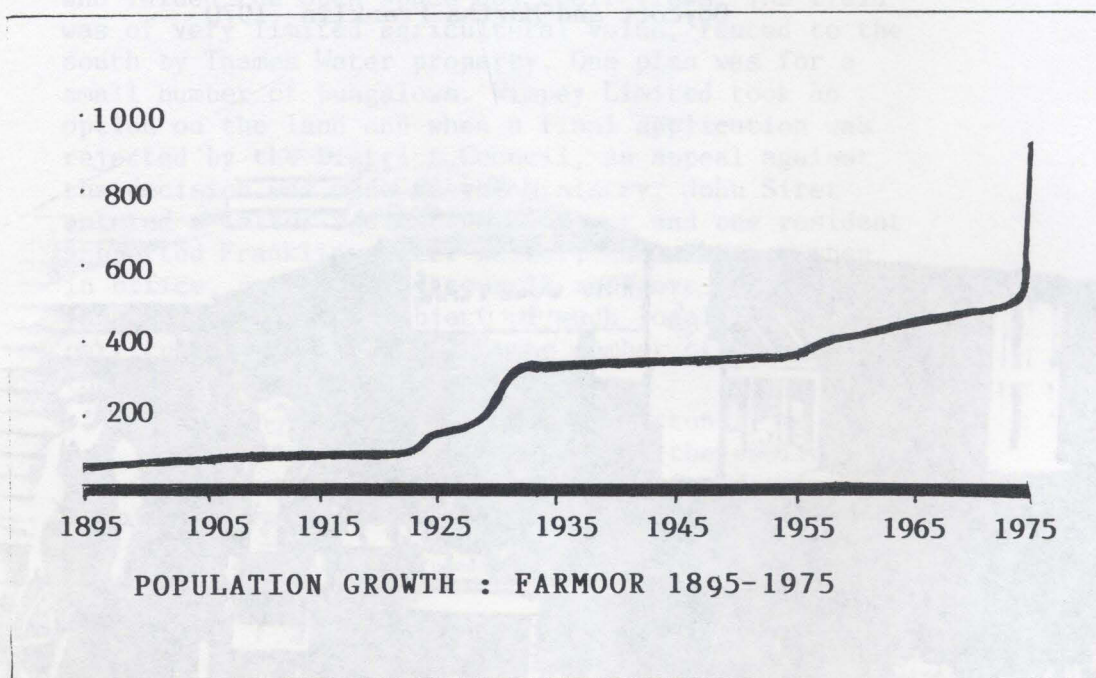
Mr and Mrs Sheppard outside their shop 1930



Farmoor, some  $3\frac{3}{4}$  miles west of Oxford, on the borders of Oxfordshire and Berkshire.' Someone evidently was not quite sure where the new boundaries lay. Mention was made of a village 'library', presumably the several shelves of books in the village hall. **'Both Infant and Primary Schools are within reach of the Estate.'** By car? **'Secondary and Grammar Schools are located at Botley.'** The Grammar School has still not been found. **'Express Green Line operate an express bus service to Heathrow and Gatwick.'**

Some of this came as surprising news to local residents.

The new estate almost doubled the population of Farmoor and was to alter significantly its character. In some ways history was repeating itself after a period of fifty years, with Boycott Franklin again the central figure. As in the 1920s, two populations, with different roots and expectations, needed to adjust to become one community. But that's another story.





## FARMOOR RESIDENTS 1924- 1974

The following pages are an attempt to list the householders who lived in Farmoor in the period 1924 - 1974. The record is incomplete and no doubt inaccurate, on account of conflicting memories and particularly the absence of clear addresses before 1950.

These lists should therefore be seen as records to amend and add to.

MAYFIELD ROAD			
1930	1945	1962	1973
4		Vic. & Ny Payton	Payton
4A		Len & Cy. Samsworth	Samsworth
6	Jn & Al. Johnson	Johnson	Johnson
8	Ln & .Westall	Westall	Al. & S. McDowell
10	Fr. & Frs. Wren	Wren	Wren
12	Preston	?	Ant. & Jn King
14	Ln. & .Gardiner	Gardiner	Arth. Gardiner
16			?
18		? Reeves	Clack
20		Ptr & M. Towill	Towill
22		Ptr & Apr. Stockford	Stockford
24		Geo & Ad. Lambourne	Lambourne
26		Arth. & J. Salkeld	Salkeld
28		Fred Fayers	Mike & J. Baston
30		Cyr. & .Clack	Adr. & G. Nicklen
32		Ln & My Rogers	Rogers
34		Jn Minns	Ron & M. Clargo
36		Arth. & Fr. Warner	Warner
38	huts	Cyr. & R. Taylor	Taylor
40		E. Coombs	Dav. & Wy Newton
42		Alb. & Jn Charlett	Charlett
44		J. & .Cooper	Gilgrass



CUMNOR ROAD				
	1930	1945	1962	1973
P.	huts		'59 Woodward	Ern. & Jud. Woodward
Z.			'57 Cambrey	Rol. & M. Andrews
EV.			'56 Ptr & S. Busby	Busby
1	Wm & N. Preston	John Clinch	St. & E. Simmonds	Simmonds
2	Rt & M. Price	Price	Price	Price
3	Edw Roberts*	Alb. & E. Parmenter	Alan Podbury	Jack Podbury
4	?	Har. & A. Sheppard	Sheppard	Geo. & M. Green
5	Cl. & Vi. Hough	Hough	Hough	Hough
6	Boyc. & M. Franklin	Franklin	Arth. Seals	Gilb. & J. Lerner
7			Robt Cambrey	Ray & Iris Johns
8				Eliz. Smith
8A				Edith Davis
9				Ern. & Dor. Couling
9A				Robt & El. Cooling
Cnr			'60 Gardiner	Dk & Jn Sutherland

CHURCH CLOSE				
	1930	1945	1962	1973
1	huts		Dav. & Jn Kirby	Nl. & B. Chadderton
2			Ern. & M. Woodley	Woodley
3			Jn & Jy Gordon	Gordon
4			Alb. & Jn Horwood	Horwood
5			Br. & Sh. Johnson	Johnson
6			Hy & Gr. Winstone	Winstone
7				Al. & K. Roe
8				Cecil Doble
Bn				Neil & B. McColl
Ya			Hy. Print	D. & C. Merrow-Smith
Ho		Sid. & Em. Simmonds	Hy. & Jean Stayt	Stayt

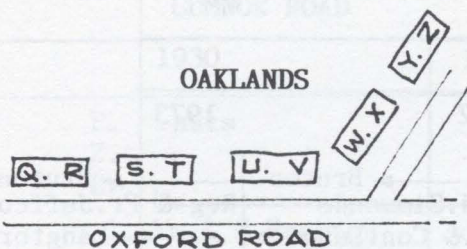
\* He owned the Scala cinema in Oxford



# OXFORD ROAD

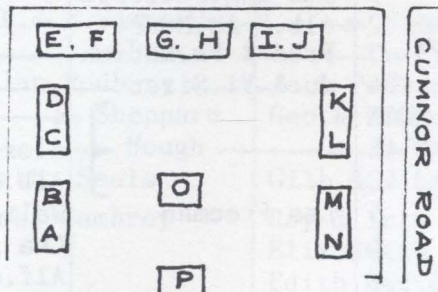
	1930	1945	1962	1973
Firs	Cyr.Ver. Hill	Eric & Al.Bruton	→ Bruton	→ Bruton
1	Jms & Ag.Pudifoot	?	Sid.Simmonds	Reg & Fr.Jeffcott
2	Alb.& An.Money	?	Ar.& Con.Langford	→ Langford
3	Fred & Ph.Nation	→ Nation	→ Nation	→ Nation
4	Jn & Vi.Siret	→ Siret	→ Siret	→ Cha & Yv. Siret
4A	}	Alex & Lo.Farthing	Cha & Yv. Siret	Jms & Lo.Floyd
4B			→ Farthing	→ Farthing
4C			→ Reeve	→ Reeve
5	Les Freeman	Walt.Humphries	Jos.Haynes	Bertr.& H.Powell
6		Cha Alexander	Saml Bradley	Don.& Joyce Miles
7		Alf.& Eth.Holland	Fred Bonny	Ian & Janet Hill
8	Mont.& Hil.Shaw	Emma Matthews	→ Ern.& E.Matthews	→ Matthews
9	Alf.Parmenter		Rich.& Ed.Honey	→ Honey
10	Geo & Mir.Harris	→ Harris	→ Harris	→ Harris
11	Cha.& E.Gardiner	→ Gardiner	→ Gardiner	→ Gardiner
12	Jack Hansen	Ern.Runnacles	Har.& K.Witham	→ Witham
13		Geo & Mab.Justins	→ Justins	→ Justins
14	Har.& Win.White	→ White	→ White	→ White
15		Reg Bigg et al	Walt.& D.Quelch	→ Quelch
15A				Agnes Archer
16	Pet.& M.Peterson	→ Peterson	→ Peterson	→ Peterson
17	Nig.& Vi.Timbrell	→ Timbrell	→ Timbrell	→ Timbrell
18	Herb.& Gl.Blake	Hen.& V.Print	Kath.Harwood	→ Kath.Harwood
19	Edg.& Eva Dunsby	→ Dunsby	Ern.& L.Thrussell	→ Thrussell
20	Jos.& M.Willis	→ Willis	→ Willis	→ Willis
21	Maisey.Belcher	Maisey.Belcher	→ Maisey.Belcher	
22	Ern.& M.Gibson	Wm & E.Sheppard		Edw & C.Blackhall
23		Frank & E.Rushen	→ Rushen	→ Rushen
24		Olga Baston	Mich.& J.Baston	→ Baston
24A		}	Al.Cambray	Pet.& M.Covenay
25			→ Shepherd	Alfred Hoult
26	huts	huts	Cecil Rees	Thomas
27			Tomkins	Ron & Pat Cooper
28			Pet.& Pam.Smith	→ Smith
29			Stan & Jan.Horne	→ Horne
30			Gibbons	Ron & Eil.Judd
Sh. i		Wm Fletcher	Wm Fletcher	Stan & M.Duncombe
ii		Alf.& Hil. Hoult	→ Hoult	Dean
Gar.	Arthur Brown		Jn & Sh.Franklin	Norm.& M.Milton
OAKLANDS				
	1930	1945	1962	1973
1	huts	huts	Doug.& Br.Finch	Ant.& L.Singleton
1A			Ron & Ol.Timson	→ Timson
2			Reg & B.Marshall	→ Marshall
3			Edw. Hancox	→ Hancox
4			P. & J. Jackson	→ Jackson
5			Wm & P.Jackson	→ Jackson
6			Hen.& Ol.Smith	→ Smith
7			Wm & L.East	→ East
8			Edw Keen	→ Alan & C.Keen
'S'.				Jn & J.Coates





FARMOR TURN

OXFORD ROAD



# HUT RESIDENTS 1924-1956

A : Bowler, later Newl, then Warner

B : Granny Lambourne, later ..

C : Scrivens

D : ?

E : Sidney Simmonds, later Fletcher, then Cox

F : Chr. & Eliz. Thornett, later Reeves

G : Geo Fathers, later Wm & Vict. Floyd

H : John Siret, later Fred Warner

I : Lambourne

J : Simmons, later Clack, then Newl

K : Sheppard (shop), later Rogers

L : Edwin Humphris

M : Quainton, later Laver

N : Vernon & Olive Acott

O : Granny Cox, later Albert Reeve ?

P : George Lock, later Farthing

## Oaklands -

Q : Alf Thomas, then John Webb, to Donald Parker, then Ern. Buckingham

R : , later Albert & Dorothy Sirett

S : George & Edith Lovelock, later Edwards

T : Thomas & Lillian Towill

U : Reg Collacott, later Edmund Head

V : Frank Leach, later Jn & Sar. Jones, then Oswald Baker, then Stan Dunn

W : Ern. & Mary Johncock, later Henry & Olive Smith

X : Arthur Haynes, later Fred & Ethel East

Y : Joseph Cox, 1925 Russell Christmas, later Mary Holland, Tho Edwards

Z : Charles & Ellen Drewitt







