

THE HAMLET OF ASSENDON CROSS

Some thoughts on the historic buildings and their setting in the hamlet.

Assendon Cross, now Lower Assendon, is located where the parishes of Bix and Henley used to meet and consequently the northern half of the hamlet was in Bix and the southern part in Henley parish until the 20th century.

The Tithe Maps of both parishes of 1840 and 1843¹ are used to identify the historic buildings, which existed at that time and allow us to leave out all later development for the purpose of this article. Most, but not all, of the historic extant buildings have been investigated in order to assess their approximate ages and earlier purposes, i.e. farm houses, cottages and business premises.

Further maps, which are of limited help with regard to the buildings, are the 1725 Stonor and 1788 Fawley Court estate maps, as neither covered more than part of the area. The Stonor map shows 4 buildings at 'Assendon Cross' in the ownership of the Stonor Estate; unfortunately it is not possible to locate them geographically with any certainty. But knowing that 'The Golden Ball' and the three houses immediately north of it as well as the rectangular field called Slaughter Ground belonged to the Stonors in 1840 and up to 1919² it is tempting to see them as the small group also shown on the 1725 map³.



The Henry Davis map of 1797 confirms that Assendon Cross was the name given to the settlement where the Old Oxford and Fawley roads crossed the Stonor valley road near the top of the Fair Mile, or what was then the top of it. I always assumed that the situation changed when the road was turnpiked in 1735. But not according to the Davis map, which still shows the old road lay-out before it was by-passed. The Assendon Cross marked on the 1797 map still clearly shows its historic importance as a settlement taking advantage of and serving the travellers to and from Henley.

1797 Davis map of Oxfordshire

The Fawley Ct. Estate map of 1788 shows Hawes's Farm⁴ and a row of cottages near-by along the east side of the Stonor Road. Whilst the farm and barns survives little altered, the latter have been replaced by modern houses. The road towards Henley Park is now only a narrow track and public footpath.

¹ See copies of both maps at the end of the paper p.17

² Sales Particulars, Simmons & Sons, 1919 on behalf of Lord Camoys, page 4

³ See page 4

⁴ See map page 10

The 1919 OS map (see P.3) as well as the Sales Particulars are also useful, as they show the footprint and location of the buildings in detail. The plan also shows the 'Golden Ball PH' set back behind a track, which led from the Stonor road to the sharp bend of the Old Oxford Road with the present Cob Cottage (the nearest building to the west of the Golden Ball) also accessed from it. This track is also marked on the 1840 Bix Tithe Map and has only quite recently been closed off by a gate, which now encloses the Golden Ball's garden. This garden was clearly a separate piece of land, which seems to have been divided to create two plots, the one at the south for a small one bay b & f cottage. This is the former May Cottage, now Mayflower. Deeds for it go back to 1814 and a 99 year lease granted to John Tomalin, labourer, for a cottage '*erected and built on the Waste of the Manor of Bensington*' by the then lord of that manor, the Rev. Sir Francis Stapleton.

Was the garden of the Golden Ball also part of the formerly unenclosed space, i.e. the manorial waste on which the road systems converged, its shape and the unusual curvy boundary between the two suggests this. However, the two parts were in the possession of different lordships. It is interesting that the Stonor Estate owned this part of the plot and the Golden Ball itself, 6 cottages and a large field behind until 1919. A pity that the Stonor papers remain inaccessible to help us understand more about this settlement at the cross roads, but it is unlikely that the above documented use of the 'Waste of the Manor' was the only land so described in the area.

The information from all these maps shows the importance of the area as a crossing point of several roads and points to a possible reason for the existence of the number of small houses and cottages there. Some are aligned along the south-north road through the Stonor valley, but set back from the modern road, which is narrower than the wide road of the earlier maps. Others are aligned with the further roads and tracks which come into this meeting place of road junctions; i.e. Hawes's farm is aligned with the track from Fawley; Pilgrim Cottage and Orchard Dene look towards the Old Oxford Road as do the Golden Ball and Cob Cottage, which seem to have abutted it directly.

Unfortunately a number of the buildings identified on the C19th Tithe Maps have been replaced by modern dwellings, i.e. Nos. 231, 236, 237, 192 (Henley), 37 (Bix).

The Buildings

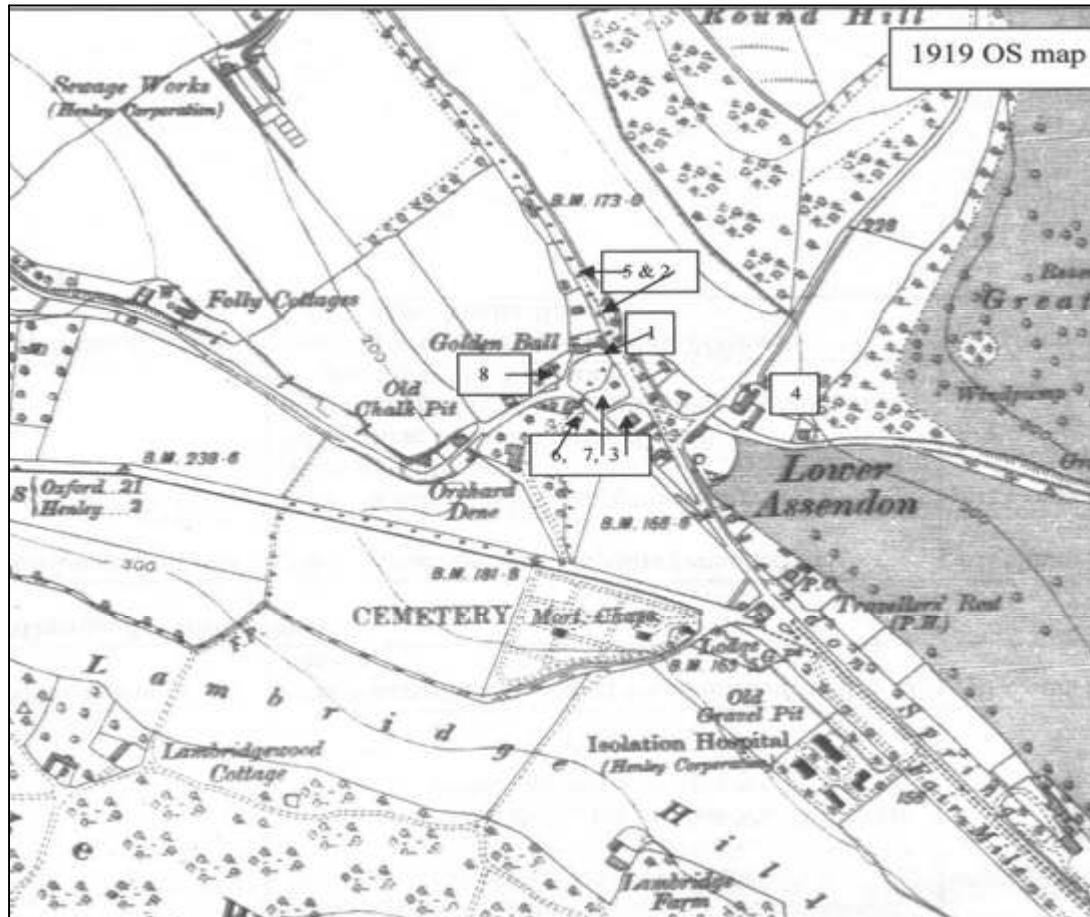
The earliest extant buildings are timber framed dating to around 1600- 1640. These are 'Pilgrim Cottage', 'Handy Water Cottage' and probably the 'Golden Ball', which has remains of timber framing in some walls and is a lobby entry house in plan form.

All are modest buildings of two bays and rear outshuts, mainly with gable end stacks, but by the standards of the time of their construction there is little doubt that these timber framed buildings belonged to farmers rather than cottagers, although subsequently their farming activities would have been reduced over time for a variety of reasons, usually amalgamation into larger farmsteads. Subdivisions of farm houses for labourers accommodation are a frequent occurrence and are documented at Pilgrim Cttg.

The next group are brick and flint buildings of possibly late C17th, but more likely of 18th and early C19th dates. These are 'Hawes Farm', 'Spring Cottage', 'Orchard Dene Cottage', 'Cob Cottage' and 'Mayflower'.

Hawes Farm, which appears to have been in the hands of an independent farmer in 1788, was by 1843 owned by G.H. Crutchley and farmed by James Sharp, who was also the tenant of Middle Assendon Farm. A typical example of amalgamation of land often making one of the farm houses redundant.

Gazetteer of Buildings



1 The Golden Ball. Since 1812 rented by Brakspears and Appleton from the Stonors, formerly rented by the Wallingford Appleton brewery⁵ The Sales Particulars by Simmons and Sons of 1919 include the 'Golden Ball', a garden and its outbuildings for sale by Lord Camoys. On the Bix Tithe map, No. 34, it also shows the outbuilding.

The P.H. stands gable end onto the main road, but is set well back from it with an outbuilding formerly running to the edge of the road. The latter was probably a stable/barn and is clearly shown on the 1919 plan of the Sales Particulars, below. A photograph over the fire place in the bar of the pub, taken early in the 20th century shows a little of these outbuildings close to the east gable of the house. The position of both the house and outbuilding are similar to those of Home Farm in Middle Assendon, where the farm house also looks south into its yard (which here no longer exists). Similarly 'Handy Water Cottage' looks south, rather than towards the road, and could have had farm buildings in the paddock shown under Lot 4 in the Sales Particulars. The Golden Ball now looks south into a large garden, but the maps all show a track in front of the building connecting the valley road and the old Oxford road. The

⁵ F. Shepherd, *Brakspear's Brewery 1779-1979*

front door would have been accessed directly from this once important lane and any outbuildings would have had to be located to the side, as they are shown on the above map. It almost looks as if the lobby entry house was purpose built to take advantage of the passing traffic.



The Golden Ball, south elevation

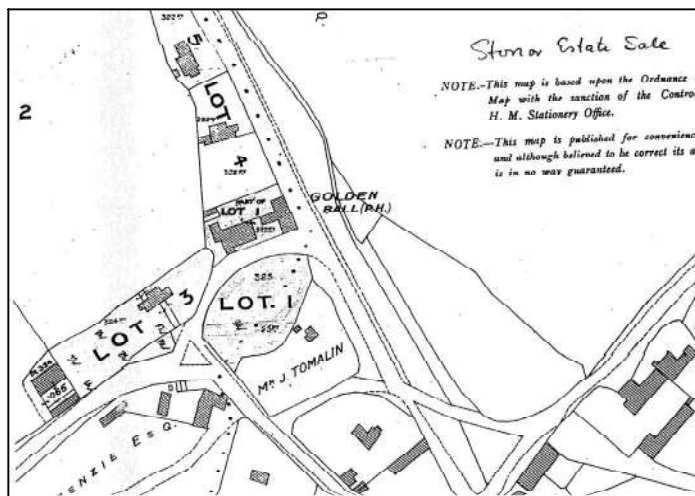
The two storey bay-window wing is an C18th addition



Sketch excerpt of 1725 Stonor Estate map. The building at right angles is looking south, just like the Golden Ball; the other three small cottages appear to be located on the verge, facing the road.

The Golden Ball is a lobby entry house⁶ in plan, with a central ridge stack and a heated room on each side and outshut at the back. No door opening is visible into the existing lobby against the stack, but the painted brickwork probably replaces earlier framing. From literary evidence ('Gone Rustic' by Cecil Roberts) we know that there was a narrow turned staircase directly behind the stack, which would confirm the lobby entry plan. The width of the stack is just over 2 m and there is room in front as well as behind the stack for a lobby and narrow turned, staircase.

The building has been extended to the left, where the two-storey bay window and gable end stack are. There remains part of a timber framed stud wall on a low masonry plinth on the line of the westward extension. Next to this wall is a straight staircase with turned bottom steps, accessed via a plank door; below it is the cellar access door. A further, now blocked door is located in the above mentioned stud wall.



Map excerpt from the Stonor Estate Sale by Simmons & Sons, 1919.

The Golden Ball is Lot 1 showing the former outbuilding before this made way for the car park between PH and road. The map also clearly shows the lane directly in front/south of the PH, one of several crossing of the 'waste ground' at Assendon Cross. (Also see No 7)

⁶ See glossary P.17



Photograph taken inside the early C18th extension, the room with the large bay window.

The stud wall, the former external west wall of the earlier building, is visible on the right. The corner post and the narrow wall studs stand on a projecting masonry plinth (hidden from view here), confirm that this was formerly an outside wall. On the r.h. of the stud wall is the upper part of a plank & ledge 'stable' door (painted white) to the stairs behind, now blocked. They may originally have been the direct external access to the cellar.

The heavy intersection ceiling beams support the joist, hidden under plaster.



Some of the many apotropaic or ritual marks cut into the timber bressumer, spanning the wide brick stack in the main bar.



Early 20th photograph of 'The Golden Ball' with lane crossing from the Stonor Road to the Old Oxford Road running in front of it. This historic lane has recently been enclosed and is now part of the garden of the P.H.



View of the roof structure. A queen strut truss with collars clasp the purlins in front of the brick stack, which is located in the centre of the building. Behind this can be glimpsed the rear roof structure, which is hipped, indicating that it was formerly thatched, once the typical vernacular roof covering of the area.

The 'Golden Ball' is listed as late C17th, but the reason for this is not substantiated in the listing description in any way. It could equally and more likely date from c 1600. This is indicated by its surviving timber framing and very substantial, over 2 m deep stack, with ritual marks in the original long timber bressumer.

2 Handy Water Cottage



East gable with stack and queen strut truss⁷ (mostly hidden by the stack, but intact inside)



South front elevation

⁷ See glossary P 17

In the 1840 Tithe Returns of Bix is is described as a cottage & garden (No 35 on T. M ⁸), owned by Lord Camoys of Stonor, its tenant was John Stotford. It was owned by the Stonors until the 1919 sale (see above). It is located close to the Golden Ball, on the plot to the north of it with a small paddock between them, and like the P.H. it looks south rather than to the main Stonor road. It is timber framed of 1 ½ storeys. Its plan form is that of a two-bay house with very substantial external brick stack and later bread oven at the east gable. There is a lean-to attached to the north side of the easternmost bay. A third bay was added to the western gable, which may not have been for domestic use and is of poor quality, mostly second hand timbers. – The original 2 bays may date from the mid 16th to early 17th century and represent a modest, but typical Chiltern farmhouse or small-holders cottage.

The east has the original framing with the queen struts from tie to collar, still extant internally. The south front has been much ‘restored’ with modern replacement studs, a porch and bay window.



The small first floor window appears to be a 17th casement, hung on iron pintels, very probably lighting the former staircase lobby between the first floor rooms.

Part of the spiral wrought iron Catch is just visible behind the leaded lights.

3 Pilgrim Cottage

This is located within Henley Parish and the Tithe Returns of 1843 (No 232 on map) show it as a house and garden, the latter then extending over the neighbouring plot, now occupied by a mid 20th century house. The owner was William Plumbe with James Slater as a tenant. He was still there in 1851 (Census Returns).

⁸ See tithe map P. 17

It is located between the main Assendon valley road and the Old Oxford road, shown on the Davis map, but its front elevation looks west toward the latter. In its garden stands a garage in a similar location as the outbuilding, which is shown on the 1843 Tithe Map.



Pilgrim Cottage. East elevation with catslide roof of former dairy on the right (lower dormer window inserted 1930s by Cecil Roberts) and east-west running cross wing on the left hand side.

The south-north range is a timber framed two-bay building of 1 ½ storeys, much underbuilt in brick and also flint (all painted white), probably with external stack at the southern gable originally, but extended with a wing to form an L-shape across that end enclosing the back of the stack. A long and low outshut at the north/east side, with the floor 1 ½ m below ground level and the catslide roof reaching down to the ground are an interesting, and very probably early part of the building. The stud wall between it and the main house is visible inside the outshut.

The trusses in the later wing are of the collar and clasped purlin type; those of the earlier two bays are not visible in the attic. The only part of the framing exposed at ground floor level is the east stud wall which divides the sunken outshut from the main house.

This building would greatly benefit from a detailed recording to assess the sequence of its development. However, even with only the benefit of a brief visit it is quite clear that this was the dwelling house of a working farm in the context of the Chiltern economy, which was not a wealthy farming area. The substantial, sunk outshut on the north-east side indicates cool food storage, very likely a dairy.

Cecil Roberts, writer and former owner from the 1930s onwards, describes the house in his book 'Gone Rustic', 1934, Hodder & Staughton. It had first been bought in the 1920s by an American retired lady who named it after the Pilgrim Fathers. She had evicted two tenants

when she bought it. However the 1843 Tithe Returns as well as 1841 and 1851 Census Returns only show one tenant: James Slater and family, bricklayer; son a baker and later a labourer. (NB I have so far only got info. on the first two Census Returns and later censuses may tell us about more occupants and when the division into two cottages occurred)

The building is listed as mid 17th century, but it could easily also date to the mid C16th. Its two timber framed bays with gable end stack, outshut and first floor accommodation within the roof are very similar to Handy Water Cottage, but whilst this remained a modest building until the 20th century, Pilgrim Cottage was extended with a slightly taller, substantial cross wing on its south side, still in the timber framed tradition. An extension to accommodate labourers would unlikely have been of the quality and size of rooms seen here, although later subdivisions to accommodate two families was a fate many farmhouses suffered in the C19.

4 Hawes Farm is located in Henley parish, on the east side of the valley, within the fork created by the Fawley road and the track to Henley Park. The 1788 Fawley map marks it and its fields as Hawes's Land and refers in particular to the porch of the barn, which was on Mr. Freeman's land, presumably then of fairly recent construction. In 1932 it was part of the Fawley Ct. Estate and up for sale and retained only 6 of its acres compared with 38 acres in 1843 when the Tithe Returns (No 225 on the H. Tithe map) were made.



Hawes Farm, north elevation

It is a brick and flint building of 2 storeys and attic with several later extensions. Its earliest part is a two-bay building with rear outshut⁹. Its north facing windows have moulded, flat brick arches. It is built parallel to the Fawley track, which is not well defined on the Tithe

⁹ Outshut or lean-to, see Glossary P.17

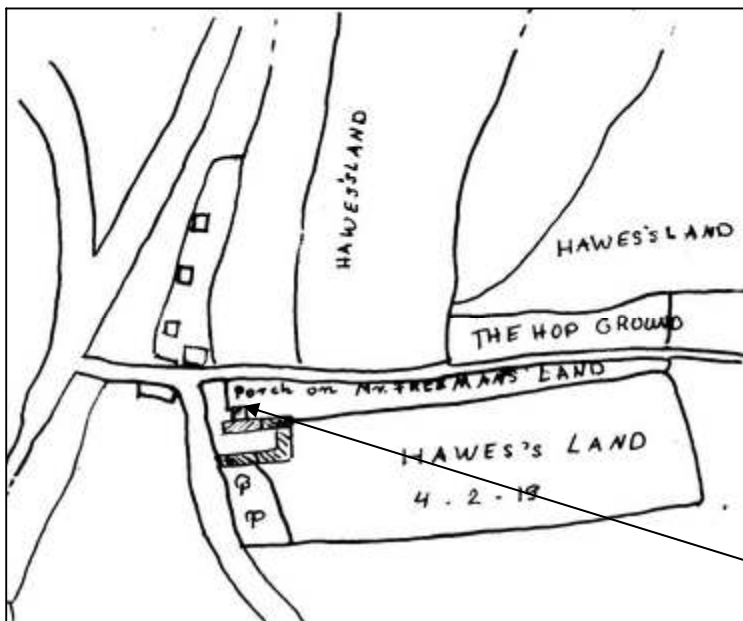
Map, but clearly marked on the earlier estate map. There is no sign of a front door in this elevation, which can possibly be explained by the fact that the narrow slip of land it bordered belonged to Mr. Freeman of Fawley Court.

The rear outshut runs across the whole south elevation and is separated from the main body of the building by a large lateral stack and a timber stud wall; this type of internal wall is seen in many brick and flint buildings and found in all the other buildings described here, all of which have rear outshuts. The roof of this outshut was raised to allow for more first-floor accommodation. The trusses, consisting of queen struts, collars and clasped purlins, show this clearly in the attic rooms through raised rear rafters, as well as the brick and flint work, particularly in the north/east gable.

On the ground floor the main body of the house consists of one room with lateral stack. There is evidence that the staircase was formerly located next to this stack. However, there is no sign of the former principal entrance door. Access is now gained through a side door from a later, probably 19th century extension to the east. There is another later extension on the west side, which runs into the timber framed barn and joins this to the house.

The house is listed as early 17th century, but its brick work looks more like late 17th or early 18th century, by which time the use of brick and flint was becoming more commonplace in the Chilterns with the increased production of bricks in many locations. Earlier in the 17th century brick and flint buildings were reserved for the wealthy classes, as bricks were still luxury items. ('Oxfordshire Brickmakers' by James Bond at al, Oxon Museums Service No. 14). Two excellent early examples are the Manor House c.1602 and Burrow Farm c. 1605, both in Hambleden, illustrated in 'Chilterns Flint'¹⁰. Both these have contemporary ovolo mullion cross windows, which confirm their status. Such features are absent at Hawes Farm, which is a simple vernacular building, but substantial with its 2 storeys and attic. The location of its stack in the long wall rather than at the gable end or in the centre as in the lobby entry plan, sets it apart from the more common plan forms found here.

This is one of the few farm houses, which were extended over the years and whose outbuildings mostly survive to this day. However it too started as a two-bay, two storey



Hawes's Farm and the large barn porch, shown as built on **'Mr. Freeman's land'** in 1780/88 (the exact date of the map is not clear).

This is an excerpt from the large Fawley Court Estate map, displayed in the Henley River and Rowing museum.

The offending porch

¹⁰ Chiltern Conservation Board, 2003



South gable of the barn with its long projecting porch on the left, which is marked up on the map above as having been built on '*Mr Freeman's Land*', very likely without permission at the time the map was drawn up.

building with the ubiquitous rear outshut seen in all the brick & flint dwellings in this locality as well as elsewhere in the Chilterns (e.g. near-by Little Bix Bottom Farm and Middle Assendon Farm). If it had not continued as a farm through the 19th and into the early 20th centuries, with its barn, stables and extensions, it too might have been called a cottage, or cottages through subdivisions to accommodate a rapidly expanding population; the fate of so many former farm houses

5 Spring Cottage is located to the west of the Stonor road, standing parallel to it with its front door looking east. It is set back from the road and located on a long, narrow strip of land adjoining the road. It appears to share this roadside strip with its neighbours to the south (Handy Water Cottage) and north (The Long Cottage, alas rebuilt in the 20th century; No 37 on Bix Tithe Map); all were in the ownership of the lord of the manor, Lord Camoys of Stonor in 1840 (No. 36 on T.M.) and remained so until their sale in 1919. At that time it was let to Messrs. Froud & Sons for £ 7 16 s p.a. ; presumably the same family who had the timber mill in Middle Assendon and who were a major local employer.

It is a brick and flint cottage of two storeys with external south gable end stack; of one bay and outshut originally but apparently very early on extended by the addition of a half bay, also in flint, but lacking a plinth. (The rear extension is 1970s). The internal dividing walls are of rather poor quality framing, using narrow and oddly shaped studs, upstairs the one visible tie beam is slightly cambered with narrow queen struts. The external brick and flint work with brick arches, brick quoins and brick string course is well executed and traditional.

This building does look very much like a purpose built labourer's cottage of 18th century date. It may have been erected by the owner for his employees, or it may have been built by its first occupants on the waste of the manor with the owner's consent. A very similar, slightly larger and earlier building to Spring Cottage stands a short distance away; this is Orchard Dene Cottage (see below).



Front east elevation, showing the straight brick join between the earlier, l.h. building and the extension to the right. The flat brick arch over the door is probably a modern repair.



Spring Cottage

Stud wall of poor quality and quite eccentric timbers between the main room and the smaller one on the north side, an early extension, now housing the entrance hall, door and staircase.

On the extreme left of the picture one can just see a little of the rear stud wall between outshut and main room, also built of timbers of small scantling.

6) **Orchard Dene Cottage** is located within the south side of the bend of the Old Oxford Road. It is now L-shaped as a result of a link with a 19th century brick stable. The original cottage is a two-bay brick and flint cottage with external brick stack and rear outshut. This outshut forms part of the original building, as it is divided from the main g.f. room by only a slight timber stud wall, the same type of slight internal walls divide the two rooms on ground and first floors. There are signs at first floor level that the outshut roof was slightly raised. The brick stack also seems to have been altered, i.e. reduced in width.



South elevation of Orchard Dene Cottage, a two bay b.& f. building with gable-end stack and rear outshut.

The gables seen on the extreme right are part of a former stable of late 19th century date; the central building with large dormer is a later link building between the two.

In 1840 it was part of the Fawley Court Estate let to Thomas Rashall, (No 31 on the Bix Tithe Map); in c.1788 the Freeman map seems to mark it as No. PP1, Reeves; part of Freeman's land. This is still the case in 1919, where it and the neighbouring Orchard Dene House are marked on the plan of the Stonor Estate Sale as belonging to W.C Mackenzie Esq (then the owner of the Fawley Ct. Estate). Its stable was reputedly used for large horses, hired to pull carts up the very steep incline of the Old Oxford Road, (verbal information from present owners). It is several times mentioned by Cecil Roberts in connection with stabling of horses and grooms' accommodation for the large house.

Orchard Dene Cottage is larger than Spring Cottage and has a substantial outbuilding in the form of the stable, which it probably only acquired when the main house was built in the second half of the 19th century. Otherwise it is so alike to Spring Cottage in its plan form and use of slight scantling timbers for internal partitions that a similar building date for both may be assumed, although its bricks appear to be earlier. Unfortunately there are no records about their construction, except that both cottages belonged to owners of large, adjoining estates and were probably built to serve their tenants or represent encroachments on the waste of the two different manorial holdings.

The masonry consists of roughly coursed field & chalk flints (field collected and quarried flints used together) The bricks are of good quality, locally made and of irregular sizes around 2 ¼ inches. The small window to the left of the stack is a late 20th century insertion. The stack appears partly rebuilt, as two outlines of vertical brickwork in the flint indicate.

Neither the brick and flint, nor the internal stud walls can be dated with any confidence, but the use of bricks for small houses only became common during the 18th century when brick became a cheaper alternative to timber, with some known exceptions dating to the late 17th century (Mapledurham, The Forge, the date 1691 is picked out in brick on the front flint façade)



Orchard Dene Cottage, rear outshut



South gable end stack

7) **Mayflower Cottage** is located on a plot, which appears to have been gained from dividing the area of land in front of the Golden Ball PH. See Tithe Maps of Bix and Stonor below and also 1919 O.S. map and plan of Stonor Estate sales particulars, where May Cottage is shown, but is not for sale. On the 1843 Henley Tithe map it is shown (No. 237) as a mere spec, in the ownership of the Stapletons of Greys Court and occupied by John Tomalin.

Deeds belonging to the present owner confirm the ownership of Sir Francis Stapleton of Greys Court in 1867 in a 99 year lease granted to John Tomalin on the death of his father, who had first been granted a 99 year lease in 1814 on a cottage '*erected and built on the Waste of the Manor of Bensington, bounded on the west by the old Turnpike Road, on the north/east by the road leading to Watlington and on the north by the garden belonging to the Golden Ball*'. He had to pay £ 20 for the lease at a yearly rent of 2s6d.

The Tomalin family only sold the cottage in 1939 since when it has been enlarged a great deal, mainly in the late 20th century. However, the earliest part, the one-room cottage with gable end stack to the north and outshut on the east side can still be recognised. It is built of roughly coursed field and chalk flints. The gable end stack is now within the house and appears to have been brick built (the masonry is under a thick layer of render). All later extensions have also been brick or brick and flint built. The former outshut wall has been raised with brick work, creating upstairs accommodation and an irregular M shaped roof.



Rear, east elevation. B.& F wall of outshut with raised brick wall and new roof above and modern inserted g.f. window



Front, south elevation. The one-bay original cottage is on the left, the area to the right of the down pipe is C20th.



The above photograph is of the large inglenook fire place at the former gable end of the one-bay ground floor room. Beyond the opening is the modern staircase, which rises between the stack and a itchen extension of uncertain date.

The spine beam has a narrow, irregular chamfer, the joists are machine cut. If they are original to the building a construction date of early to mid 19th century is indicated.

The reference to a 99 year Lease of 1867 going back to the earlier lease of 1814 and to the cottage or tenement built on the 'Waste of the of the Manor of Bensington' suggest a building date of 1814 or just before, but this cannot be confirmed. The most interesting information from the Deeds is the confirmation that it was built on the 'Waste of the Manor', something which is very likely also true for several of the other small houses at the cross roads.

8) **Cob Cottage formerly know as Toads Cottage**



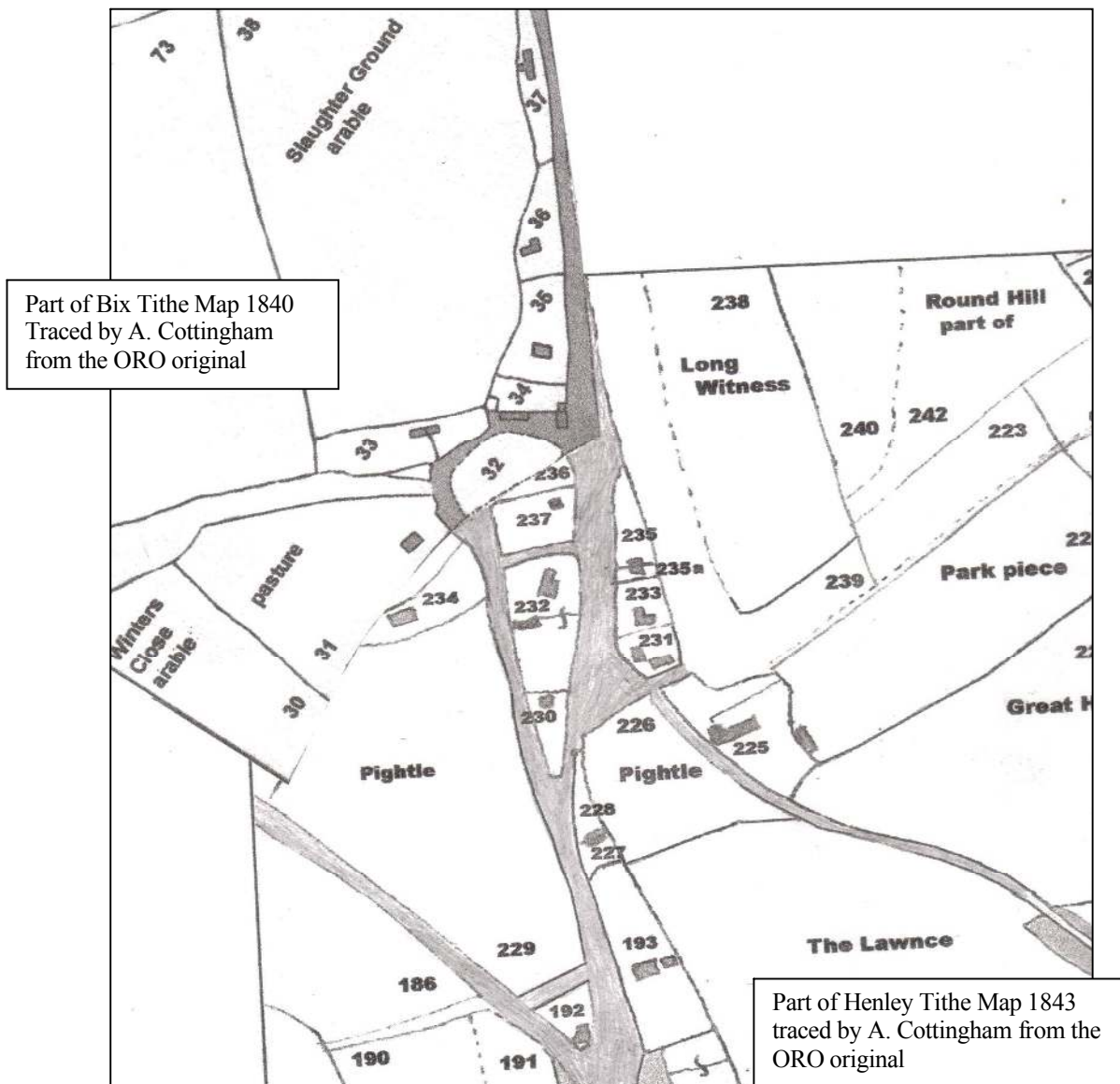
South-west gable with external brick stack and lean-to catslide roof

This appears to be a three-bay building, its south front facing a former spur of the Old Oxford Road. It has been so altered internally as well as externally with extensions to the north and east, that there is very little left of the original, except for some of the external walls and the large brick and flint stack on the outside of the west gable. This is very much a characteristic of the houses here. I was told that there had been a further stack in the eastern part of the building, but this was removed by a previous owner, its exact location is unknown.

It is shown on the Bix Tithe Map (No.33) as two narrow, semi detached cottages in the ownership of the Stonors and occupied by George Norcutt and another. The Stonor Sales Particulars of 1919 show it still as two cottages, brick, flint and tiled. One is occupied by Wm. Piercey on a quarterly tenancy of £5 4s with living room, small pantry and 2 bedrooms; the other was occupied by Wm. Herridge and had 2 living rooms, 2 bedrooms. Both had outside earth closets.

The cottages have been greatly extended and altered internally and one can only guess at a building date, probably in the late C18th early 19th when brick and flint had become more widely available. It was probably built to satisfy the growing demand for rural labourers' accommodation.

TITHE MAPS (EXCERPTS) OF BIX AND HENLEY joined up by R.Gibson
 Their boundary running across the hamlet of Assendon Cross



GLOSSARY

Roof truss with queen struts between tie beam and collar

Central entry into a lobby

Direct entry into the main room

Left: A 2 ½ bay house with central stack. There is an entrance lobby in front of the stack and a winder staircase at the back. It is known as a 'LOBBY ENTRY PLAN' and was a great advance in comfort, keeping the heat inside the house and providing up to 4 fire places for the ground and first floor rooms.

Right: A single cell cottage with rear lean-to or 'outshut' over which the main roof extends by way of a cat's slide. It has an external gable end brick stack.

Conclusion: The evidence from the surveyed existing buildings indicates that this was a hamlet with at least four substantial houses for South Oxfordshire Chiltern standards, either farm houses or small-holders dwellings, built between c. 1600 and 1700, i. e. **Pilgrim, Handy Water, The Golden Ball and Hawes Farm.**

A two-room house with fire-place and upstairs accommodation or storage space was not a hovel in the 16th or 17th centuries. Pilgrim Cottage for instance had a substantial outshut, sunk into the ground, very likely a purpose built dairy; it also has an early timber framed extension, doubling its size. 'The Golden Ball' was a solidly built lobby entry house, of the same design and perhaps period as 'Little Bix Bottom Farm', shown on the 1725 map and probably pre-dating the map by 80 – 100 years. The Golden Ball may have been a farm house with a side line as an ale house, this is how most rural pubs started, and during the 18th century becoming a public house, increasingly tied to a brewery. If it had been purpose built as an inn, its plan form would very likely have been quite different to allow for the accommodation of travellers. Of course we don't know how substantial the outbuilding was and what purpose it served.

Before land was amalgamated into fewer and fewer hands, many dispersed small farmsteads existed in the Chilterns as the Harpsden 1586¹¹ map demonstrates. Some became cottages over time, others disappeared altogether. Without such a map for Bix we may never know the earlier settlement pattern. However, the 1843 Henley Tithing Map certainly shows a larger number of small, but now vanished houses at Assendon Cross.

The other cottages, all in brick and flint, although not necessarily much smaller than their timber framed neighbours, are purpose built to house an increasing population; **Spring Cottage, Orchard Dene, Mayflower, Cob Cottage**, all with large gable end stacks, large kitchen/living rooms, some of one cell, some of two-cell plan, all with rear outshut. Some may have been built on the manorial waste, i.e. land taken from road verges and small areas of commons no longer required, although so far there is only written proof for one, i.e. Mayflower; Spring Cottage and Cob Cottage seem to have been built on narrow strips of land adjoining the roads, usually also owned by the manorial lord.

The late C18th and C19th see an increase in the number of agricultural labourers, a response to more intensive farming and the general population increase. The needs of travellers here at the cross roads also had to be increasingly catered for as road travel improved. The Froud Brothers steam mill and timber business in Middle Assendon would have needed plenty of hands too, Spring Cottage is one example of their tenancy.

The brick and flint cottages of one and two rooms, with attic accommodation, gable end stacks and outshuts are built to a pattern. They were probably built to fill the needs of an increased labour force and b & f would not have been used as building material in a well wooded area until bricks became cheap enough to become commonplace. As the production of bricks increased so did the use of flints. Sound chalk flints occur in thick bands between the clay beds. (*Chilterns Flints, Chilterns Conservation Board, Bdg. Design Guide*, S 2.10). The use of chalk flints in the walls demonstrates that much of the building material came from the clay pits. The weathered, easily shattered flints were picked from the Chiltern fields.

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¹¹ John Blagrave Map 1586 ORO