

Field Names of Headington (including Old Headington, New Headington, Quarry, Barton and Wick)

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Background and Area Covered

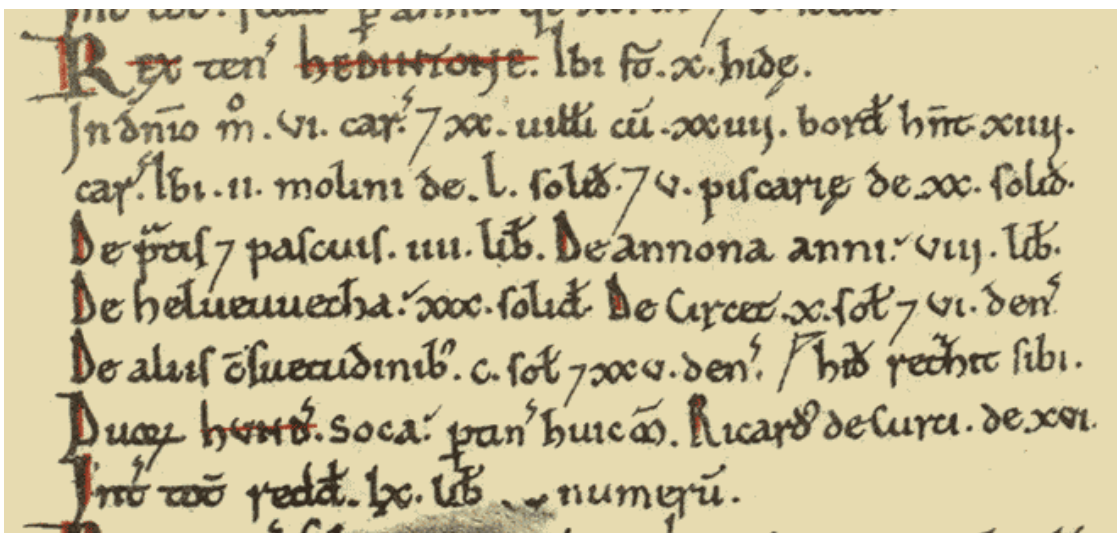
The story of **Headington**, its parish boundaries, manor, influence and importance in the history of Oxford is one of expansion, contraction and, finally, modest resignation. The names of places and fields in Headington not only reflect its past royal connections -- they can also guide us towards an understanding of the work and pastimes of the people who lived here, as well as providing a picture of the land and how people used it.

Iron Age, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Headington

The origins of the name **Headington** are not completely clear, but it most likely derives from the Old English *Hedena's dun*, meaning 'Hedena's hill', when it was reputed to be the site of the palace or hunting lodge of the Mercian Kings. *Dun* often denotes a large flat hill, usually with room for a settlement on the top, and this is precisely the shape of the hill on which Headington sits. It is possible that the name *Hedena* is related to an older Norse name of *Heðinn*.¹ Henry Alexander feels that the name originally referred to 'the down of Headda', and comments that Headda is a very common personal name in Old English.²

Excavations in Barton Lane show evidence of Stone Age occupation, and on the old Manor Ground there are indications of Iron Age settlement in the 7th century BC, and there is evidence of Anglo-Saxon burials in the present-day Stephen Road. The Romans found the dry, sandy soil in this area preferable to the lower land near the river Thames and its tributary, the Cherwell, and the hilltop position of Headington and its proximity to the white clay of Shotover encouraged a thriving and nationally important pottery industry, centred on the area now occupied by the Churchill Hospital.

Headington is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 (see excerpt below), where the first line reads: "The King holds HEDINTONE. 10 hides there".



During the Middle Ages Headington Manor extended to the west and north of the river Cherwell, and included Port Meadow and much of what we now call North Oxford and Binsey, and stretched as far west as Botley. All of this land was held in the Manor of Headington, and the Lord of the Manor held the rights to pasture his animals there.³

Over several centuries, the Manor of Headington passed in and out of Royal hands. In the first part of the 12th century the manor was taken out of royal possession by the Empress Matilda, who granted it to one of her supporters from Brittany, Hugh de Pluggenait. The Crown regained the Manor in 1280, and in 1299 it was included in the dowry granted to Margaret, the second wife of Edward I, but it subsequently passed into other hands.^{4,5}

The hamlets of **Barton** and **Wick** practically adjoined Headington, and were divided by the 'Brook'. Barton was first mentioned in 1246, but by then it was already known as 'Old Barton' ('Aldebarton'), indicating that its origins are more ancient.

William Camden, writing in his *Britannia* in the late 16th century, says that King John gave Hedindon [sic] to Thomas Basset as a barony and that 'Tradition says it was in the Saxon times a nursery of the King's children: it seems likewise to have had a Royal seat, where King Ethelred resided.'⁶

Modern Headington

The Enclosure of the parish in 1802⁷ provides us with a record of the ownership of land in Headington and some of the field names therein, and various maps of estate sales help to fill in the picture.

As the centre of Oxford grew, and the influences of the colleges extended, much of Headington was in the possession of colleges, particularly Corpus Christi and Magdalen. In 1868, 216 acres near the top of Headington Hill were incorporated into the city of Oxford, but at the end of the 19th century Headington parish still covered more than 2,200 acres. In 1928, much of the rest of Headington parish was incorporated into the city of Oxford, and what was left was divided between the neighbouring parishes of Horspath, Forest Hill and Elsfield.

Today, the area of Headington north of the London Road is usually called 'Old Headington', and that south of the London Road is called 'New Headington' and includes Wood Farm and land down to the border with Cowley. To the east are Barton, Sandhills, Risinghurst and Shotover, and to the west Marston and St. Clements.

The villages of Old Headington, Barton, Quarry and the hamlet of Wick were all closely connected, both physically and historically, and it was the construction of the Eastern Bypass ring road that severed that connection and isolated those communities, not only from Headington, but from Oxford itself. The ring road also distorts the position of Open Magdalen Wood, Brasenose Wood and Open Brasenose as they would have been seen by the people of these communities. Open Magdalen Wood is now cut in half by the ring road, and Brasenose and Open Brasenose are separated from Headington Quarry and Wood farm by it.



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1. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire: Pt. 1*, English Place-Names Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 30. Gelling feels that the first element is probably a personal name, *Hedena*, perhaps related to the name *Heoden* found in *Widsið*, corresponding to Old Norse *Heðinn*.
2. Henry Alexander, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire: Their Origin and Development* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), 123.
3. H.E. Salter, *Medieval Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 31.
4. Christopher Hibbert, *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford*, (Papermac, 1992), 166.
5. "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullington hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 160.
6. William Camden, *Britannia: or a Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland*, revised by Edmund Gibson, 2nd edition (London: Printed for Knapton, Darby, et al., 1722), 302.
7. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).

Field Names in Headington

The names of fields in Headington reflect land usage, custom, industry and local geology. Because much of the land in Headington was either stony or of poor quality, there was a relative absence of arable farming land compared to neighbouring parishes, and little natural meadow land. So it was inevitable that much of the enterprise was channelled into exploiting the natural resources, and in particular the quarrying industry, and this is reflected in the field names.¹

Traditionally there were four great fields that covered all of Headington (both old and new):

- **North Field** (covering the present area around Barton)
- **Pound Field** (Old Headington, bounded by the modern Old High Street on the east, London Road on the south, and extending west towards Pullen's Lane)²
- **South Field** (which is possibly a renaming of an older field called **Downe Field**,^{3, 4} and Downe Field is mentioned in the inquisition on the lands of Katherine Rede, who died in 1498).⁵
- **Quarry Field** (the modern Headington Quarry area, extending a good distance to the west)

By the 18th century there seem to have been three great fields left:⁶

- **Brockholes Field** (just west of the old village of Headington and sloping down to the Cherwell, but north of the present-day London Road)
- **South Field** (to the southwest of Old Road, running down towards St. Bartholomew and Cowley)
- **Quarry Field** (running east and southeast of the village towards Shotover Forest, and west and southwest of the village as far as Gypsy Lane, lying between the present-day London Road on the north and Old Road on the south)

These great fields were gradually subdivided, and new field names were given to the smaller parcels of land.

On either side of the Brook dividing Barton from Wick was a long strip of meadow called **Towne Meade**, and as early as 1320 there is reference to **Wyke Field** beyond it. **Barton Field** and **Between-Towns-Field** (i.e. between Barton and Headington) are names that appear in the 18th century.

Barton is a relatively common name in Oxfordshire (Middle Barton, Steeple Barton, Westcote Barton), and although its name could derive from the Old English *beretun*, meaning 'barley farm', it is more likely that, given the known royal connections of the area, the Barton adjoining Headington derives its name from a later meaning of *beretun*, i.e. 'a grange situated in an outlying part of a manor where the lord's crop was stored'.⁷

Wick probably derives from Wick Farm, and one can still see the farm and its unique well house today (although it is no longer a functioning farm). Its name probably derives from the Old English word *wic*, meaning 'outlying farm premises',⁸ but John Stow, in 1598, refers to the fact that 'in diuerse Countries, Dayrie houses, or Cottages, wherein they make butter and cheese, are vsually called Wickes'.⁹

Thomas Langdon's 1605 map

In the early 17th century, Corpus Christi College commissioned Thomas Langdon to produce a map of some of its holdings in Headington and Stanton St. John. This map details many of the field names in Old Headington, and sheds some light on land layout and usage.¹⁰

Field names listed, such as **Quarry Pittes** and **Quarry Hedge**, demonstrate the extent to which Oxford stone was being mined at this time, and **Limekiln Moore** and **Limekiln Furlong**¹¹ point to another flourishing industry in this part of Oxford, while **Cley Close** probably reflects the outcropping of Kimmeridge clay that is a feature of Headington.¹² **Oxforde Waye**, indicates the importance of Headington's proximity to the centre of learning in Oxford, and **Wheatehill**, **Duck Meade** and **Houndes Moor** indicate some of the farming and pastimes of the area.¹³

1. "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 163.

2. The origin of 'pound' in this field name, probably lies in the late 14th century meaning of 'enclosed place for animals' -- similar to its meaning today, referring to a public enclosure used to keep stray dogs or livestock -- and often designating a holding field where animals were kept before they were moved to market.. It derives from the Old English word *pund*, *pundfaldl*, meaning 'land by an enclosure for stray animals', and many examples of the use of 'pound' in this way can be found in fields both in the UK and Ireland. See John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), 173.

A variation of Pound Field can be found in the name Pinfold, which also designates a field containing a pound for stray animals. See K. Cameron, *English Place Names*, Batsford: 1996), 234.

3. E. Evans, "The Manor of Headington" in *Oxford Archaeological Society Reports* (Oxford: 1928), 213.

4. 'Downe' is derived from the Old English word *dūn*, meaning 'hill, moor, height, down, mountain' - See Online Etymology Dictionary. "*Down* (n.2)." Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.etymonline.com/>.

5. "Inquisition on the lands of Katherine Rede, widow of the Bailiff of Shotover, 1498," in *Calendar of Inquisitions*, Hen. VII, Vol. II, No. 237, Oxfordshire History Centre.

6. "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 163.

7. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire: Pt. 1*, English Place-Names Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 431-2.

8. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 254.

9. *A Survey of London by John Stow*, Introduced by C.L. Kingsford (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), Reprinted from the 1603 edn., 218.

10. Thomas Langdon, Map of the estates of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Map No. 17, November, 1605, reproduction, Oxfordshire History Centre.

11. Furlong comes from the Old English *furlang* was used to describe the main division in a common field, originally meaning the length of a furrow. The word came to be applied to the block of strips which were all of the same length. 'Furrow', from the Old English *furh* denotes a piece of arable land. See John Field, *A History of English Field Names* (London: Longman, 1993), 14.

12. Thomas Thomson, *Outlines of Mineralogy, Geology, and Mineral Analysis* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1836), 118.

13. W.O. Hassall, *Oxfordshire Maps at Corpus Christi College, Oxford*, Publication number C00522, (Microform Academic Publishers, n.d.), 8-9.

Old Field Names in Modern Headington

Many old field names of Headington have survived to the present day, occasionally in their original form, but often commemorated in modern street names, and what follows is a selection of some of the more interesting of these.

Bury Knowle

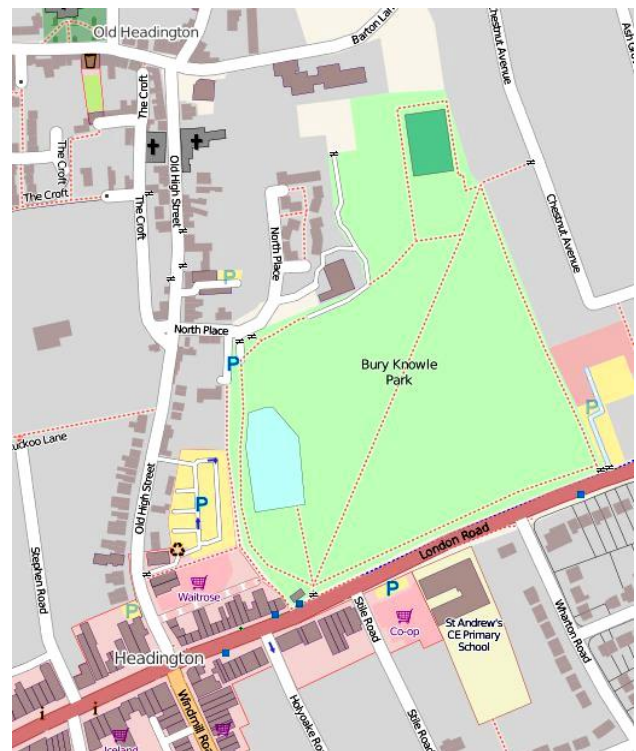
The modern Bury Knowle Park still denotes the same green space that it has occupied for centuries, and it serves as an interesting example not only of the origins of the elements of place names, but also of the importance of field boundaries and ancient rights of way along and through these fields.

History

Late in the 18th century a new road was built, making Headington more accessible to and from Oxford city, and it became a more attractive place for wealthier Oxford citizens to build their country homes.¹ In 1795 Joseph Locke, an Oxford goldsmith, banker and Mayor (in 1813 and 1829), purchased land in **Berry Knowle furlong**.²



This extract from the Enclosure has been rotated for comparison with the modern map



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The 1804 Enclosure Award does not mention Bury (or Berry) Knowle as such, and the area we now know as Bury Knowle was put together by Locke from just over six acres that he was awarded in Sheepcut Furlong in central Headington.³ This land had previously been part of Headington Manor, and the area of Locke's land roughly follows the boundaries of the present-day park.

Locke built Bury Knowle House on the north border of the land, and we can find no earlier references to the name Bury or Berry Knowle, although the words that make up the name indicate that it is likely its origins are older. In addition to the reference in Walker's article cited above, a reference to Berry Knowle Furlong occurs on the 1858 Court Roll: Manor of Heddington, Digby Latimer.

Etymology

The origins of the name Bury/Berry Knowle are unclear. It is possible that Bury/Berry stems from either the Old English *beorg*, meaning either a natural hill or a burial mound, or *burh*, indicating a fortified site, or earthwork, as both are common constituents of field names, appearing as 'Barrow', 'Borough', 'Bury', or 'Berry'. *Burh* has also been used to denote 'land by or with a fortification or fortified manor house.'⁴

Gelling and Cole point out that *beorg*, as a 'rounded hill, or tumulous' is characterised by 'a continuously rounded profile . . . in settlement names it usually refers to small hills, sometimes glacial drumlins.'⁵ However, almost all examples given by Gelling and Cole show '*beorg*' as being the second element of a place name (e.g. Hanborough, Warborough') rather than the first element, as it is in Bury Knowle. Halliwell gives two alternative meanings for 'Bury' as: a) house or castle; and b) a rabbit's burrow (a form used in the South of England).⁶ James Bond notes that 'unless early forms of the name survive, it may be impossible to ascertain from which of the two roots the modern name is derived'⁷

'Knowle' could well be a corruption of the Old English *cnoll*, meaning a hilltop, or hillock, or land with hillocks.⁸ Given the seemingly ancient origins of the two elements of this name, it seems odd that there is no definite reference to it before the mid-19th century. There is no evidence of either a burial mound or a fortified site at this location, but Bury Knowle is near to the summit of the hill on which Headington sits, and where a fortified site would seem more likely, so it would fit well with Knowle being derived from *cnoll*, meaning a hilltop or hillock.

The word 'furlong' comes from the Old English *furlang*, and was used to describe the main division of a common field. It originally referred to the length of a furrow, although it eventually designated a block of strips which were all of the same length. 'Furrow', from the Old English *furh*, denotes a piece of arable land, and in the modern sense, a long, narrow trench made in the ground by a plough, especially for planting seeds or irrigation.⁹

Right-of-way conflict

Ancient rights of way through and along defined field borders were cherished by citizens, and in the instance of Bury Knowle this led to a near riot. Along the western border of the modern Bury Knowle Park, a path between two stone walls leads from the London Road end of the park northwards between the Park and the Waitrose car park. This is the same path that marked the western side of Locke's land in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and had traditionally been the funeral path used by the men of Headington Quarry to carry their dead from the Quarry to St Andrew's Church. The path originally went from the Quarry through fields, at the end of which a stile led them over what is now the London Road and then up through Sheepcut Furlong at the western end of Bury Knowle and on to St. Andrews Church. That stile is now commemorated in Stile Road, which intersects with the London Road opposite the present-day Bury Knowle Park.

The citizens of the Quarry area were primarily labourers and the distance from their homes to the Church was a long way to carry a coffin on their shoulders, so the right of way through Sheepcut Furlong was important to them. When Locke was awarded the land through which the path went, he resented part of his holdings being used by the public and built a wall across the path, thus forcing the Quarry citizens to take a longer route to the Church along Old High Street.

The citizens of Quarry were furious at this breach of what they felt was an ancient right through existing fields, and they destroyed the wall, which Locke then rebuilt. The destruction of the wall and its rebuilding by Locke occurred three times before the Quarry

people accepted defeat, and six of their men subsequently appeared before the Oxford Assizes in June of 1807, in connection with the vandalism and were sentenced to six months imprisonment. ¹⁰

The citizens of Quarry then rejected Headington altogether, including its church, and instead embraced Methodism, engaged a Methodist minister and subsequently raised money for a chapel, which was opened in 1830. ¹¹ The history of Bury Knowle and the ancient right of way through it thus led to a dramatic change both in the life and in the religious practices of a whole community in Oxford.

1. Stephanie Jenkins, Headington Community website. "Headington History: Listed Buildings and Structures; *Bury Knowle House*". Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.headington.org.uk/> .
2. Rhona Walker, "Bury Knowle House in Context: Its History, Design, and Architecture" *Oxoniensia* 72 (2007), 42.
3. "Lots 28, 54, 55, 57, 57A, and 58" in Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre.
4. John Field, *English Place Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 34.
5. Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place Names* (Shaun Tyas, 2000), 145.
6. J. O. Halliwell, *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, Obsolete Phrases, Proverbs and Ancient Customs from the 14th Century* (John Russell Smith, 1860), 221.
7. James Bond, "Oxfordshire Field Names: A Progress Report on the County Survey," *Oxfordshire Local History*, Vol I, no. 4 (Spring 1982), 8.
8. B. Griffiths, *A User-Friendly Dictionary of Old English* (Heart of Albion Press, 1993) .
9. Field, *English Place Names: A Dictionary*, 270.
10. Stephanie Jenkins, Headington Community website. "Headington History: Miscellaneous; *The old funeral path . . .* ." Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.
11. Headington Community website. "*The old funeral path.*" <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.

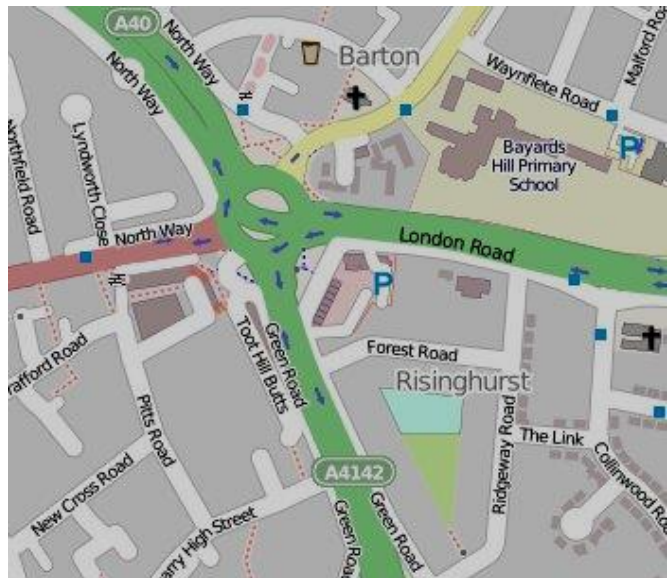
Toot Hill Butts

As you cross the Green Road roundabout from the direction of London, going towards Headington, you will see on your left a street sign that says Toot Hill Butts.

This is a reference to an ancient piece of land that was known as **Toot-hill Butts Furlong**. Toot-hill Butts Furlong is mentioned in the 1802 Enclosure Award as a marker for the start of **Green Road**.¹ Green Road then ran from Toot-hill Butts Furlong to **Quarry Copse**² at the bottom of **Shotover Hill**.

Christine Bloxham and Susanne Shatford describe how Green Road lies on the line of the Roman Road that connected Alcester to Dorchester. They say that the original name of Green Road had been Toot-hill Butts³, and that the highway ran through an ancient field of that name meaning 'look-out hill'.⁴

John Field gives the meaning of 'toot', the Old English word *tōt*, as 'land on a look-out hill'.⁵ He gives possible definitions of 'butt' as coming from the Middle English word *butt*, meaning 'a section of common arable field which is shorter than other pieces in the furlong, owing to the irregular shape of field boundaries, or owing to two furlongs meeting at an angle. The Old English word *butt* means a tree stump or land covered with stumps of trees'.⁶ Gelling also gives a definition of 'butt' which is a slight variation on the Middle English one. Dating from the 13th century, '*butt* is used to describe strips of land abutting on a boundary often at right angles to other ridges in the field.'⁷ Field gives two examples of where 'butt furlong' is used in other field names in Oxfordshire: North Newington and Watlington.⁸



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Green Road also had a particular meaning which related to its usage: from medieval times green roads were wide, grassy drove roads or driftways that were used for moving livestock long distances to fairs and markets. This practise continued until the coming of the railways.⁹

1. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR 126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).

2. This land would have been roughly where Raisinghurst is now. 'Copse' is an alternative form of 'coppice', which is derived from an Old French word *copeiz*, meaning 1) young growth shooting from stumps of felled trees', and 2) plantation of young trees.
See: John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 268. According to the *Victoria County History*, Headington was allocated 250 acres in Quarry Coppice as compensation for the disafforestation of Shotover in the reign of Charles II.
See: "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 157-168.

3. The spelling of 'Buts', with one 't', is the only example we can find of this spelling.

4. Christine Bloxham and Susanne Shatford, *The Changing Faces of Headington, Book One* (Witney: Robert Boyd Publications, 1996), 108.

5. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 236.

6. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 268.

7. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire: Pt. 1*, English Place-Names Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 433.

8. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 34.

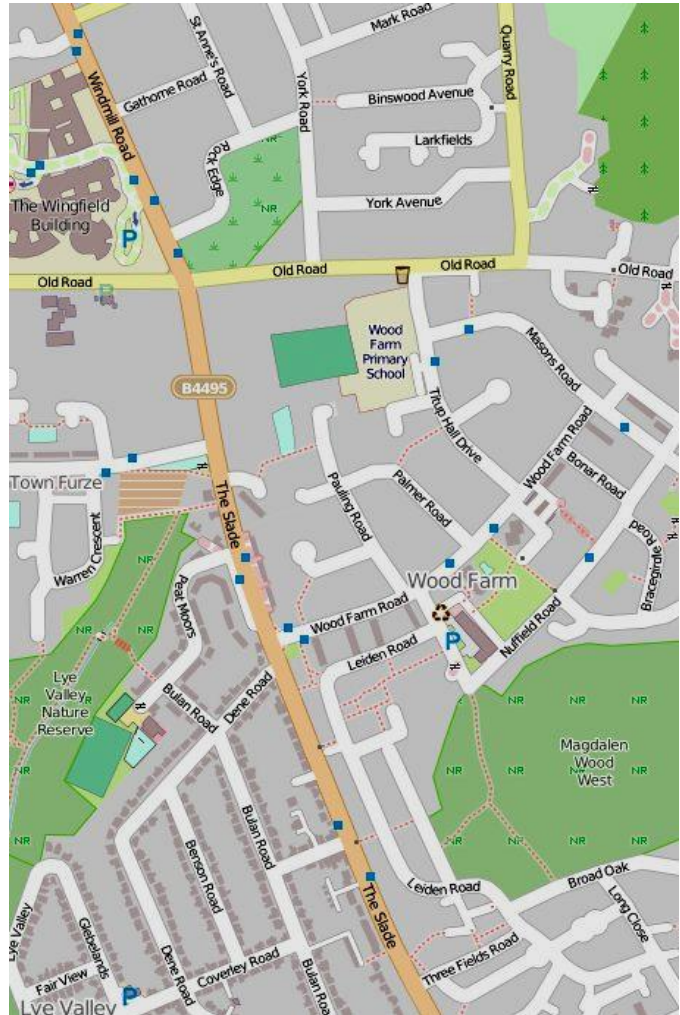
9. Bloxham and Shatford, *The Changing Faces of Headington, Book One*, 108.

The Slade (and neighbouring fields)

In the Enclosure Award, the **Slade** is referred to as common land. The entry for Plot 4 describes it as: '... one acre situate in a certain part of the common called the Slade.'¹ This was apparently a wide swathe of land with its northern border roughly where Old Road intersects with Windmill Road, going down towards Cowley, and with Open Magdalen Wood, Brasenose Wood and Open Brasenose on its eastern side.

The enclosure of the Slade also seemed to include some enclosure of Open Magdalen, which in turn created tension amongst the villagers of Quarry. Previously, the villagers had rights to use Open Magdalen Wood as common land, but after enclosure the college planted trees there.

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The Quarry villagers burnt the trees down, and when subsequently a tenant farmer sowed corn there the villagers cut it down also.²

Gelling gives a definition of 'slade' that originates with an Old English word *slæd*, meaning valley; specifically a flat-bottomed and damp valley.³

On the other side of the Slade, and almost opposite Plot 4 in the Enclosure Award, was Plot 3, comprising 5 acres in **Peat Moor**. This was described as common or waste land and was given over for use by the poor, so that they could cut and carry away peat, furze and any other useful vegetation.⁴

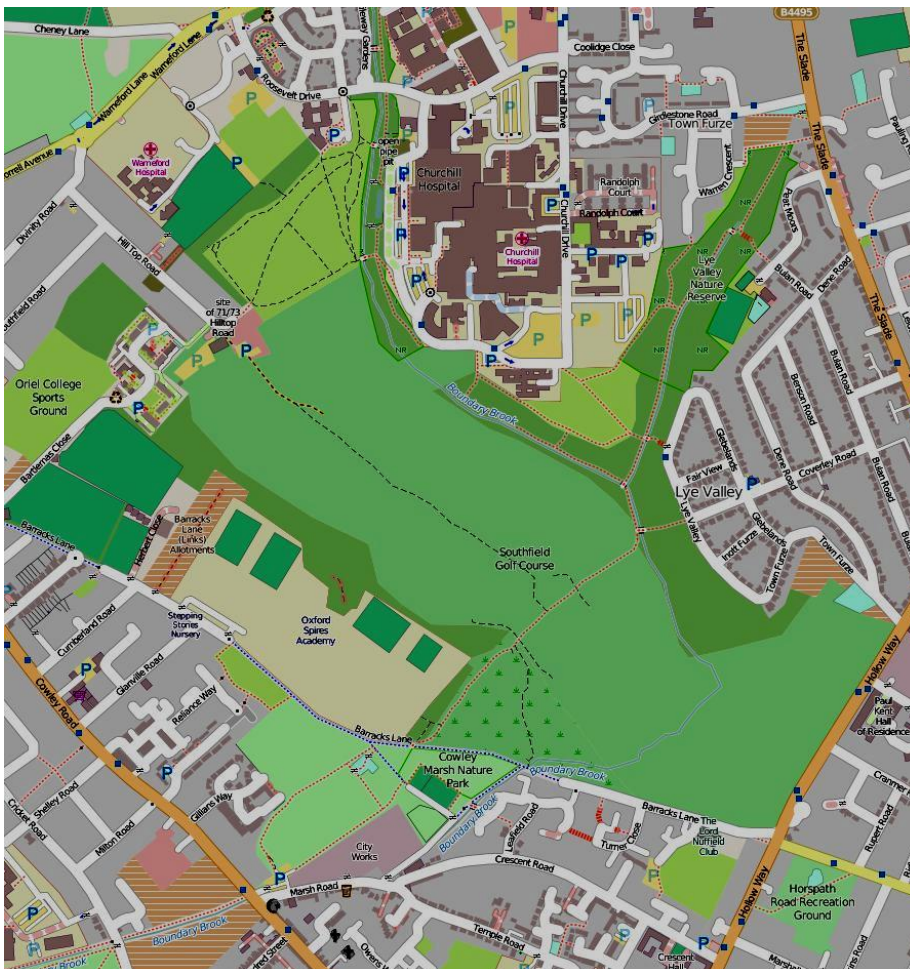
The field names **Town Furze**, **Inott Furze** and **Demesne Furze** include a direct reference to the type of vegetation that possibly grew on them: yellow flowering gorse. Field says that furze derives from the Old English *fyr*s or *fyr*sen and that there are other field names that refer to this plant under the synonyms gorse or whin.⁵ Peat Moor, Town Furze, Inott Furze and Demesne Furze are all commemorated in local street names which are close to the locations of the original fields. Demesne Furze is the most recent, appearing amongst the newer housing on the edge of the Warnford site, and what would have been Town Furze, Inott Furze and Demesne Furze are now covered by NHS and University buildings. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find a meaning for 'inott'.

1. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).
2. G.A. Coppock and B.M. Hill, *Headington Quarry and Shotover* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 72.
3. Margaret Gelling, *Place-Names in the Landscape* (Phoenix Press, 1984), 122-23.
4. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802.
5. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 85.

Southfield Farm

By the 18th century, there were three great fields left in Headington: **Brockholes** field, **South Field** and **Quarry Field**.

The land occupied by South Field was to the southwest of Old Road, running down what is now Divinity Road, towards the site of the Hospital St. Bartholomew and Cowley. The eastern boundary was probably along Boundary Brook. The Enclosure Award contains many references to the distribution of plots of land in South Field: 'Unto the said Henry Mayne Whorwood as Lord of the Manor of Headington aforesaid, One Plot of Land or Ground numbered 12 containing one acre and one rood situate in South Field . . .'; and to Elizabeth Bostall: 'One Plot of Land or Ground numbered 14 containing three acres, one rood and thirty perches situate in South Field.'¹



In 1813, 10 acres of South Field were sold as a site for the Oxford Lunatic Asylum. It was renamed as the Warneford Lunatic Asylum when it opened in 1826. Much of the land in South Field remained with the Whorwood family, and was leased as one farm (called Southfield Farm), but we do not know precisely when this occurred. As late as 1912 a 17th-century barn on the farm was still in existence, and was photographed by Henry Taunt.

An article in *The Times*, dated 1st April 1839, gives a description of the property which has suffered from a supposed arson attack. The farmer was a Mr. Thomas Burrows.

On Sunday night a fire broke out at Headington, Oxfordshire, on the farm of Mr Burrows, which destroyed a double barn containing 20 quarters of corn in sacks, a new waggon, a winnowing machine, and other farming implements, besides two straw ricks. The fire is supposed to have been the act of an incendiary.²

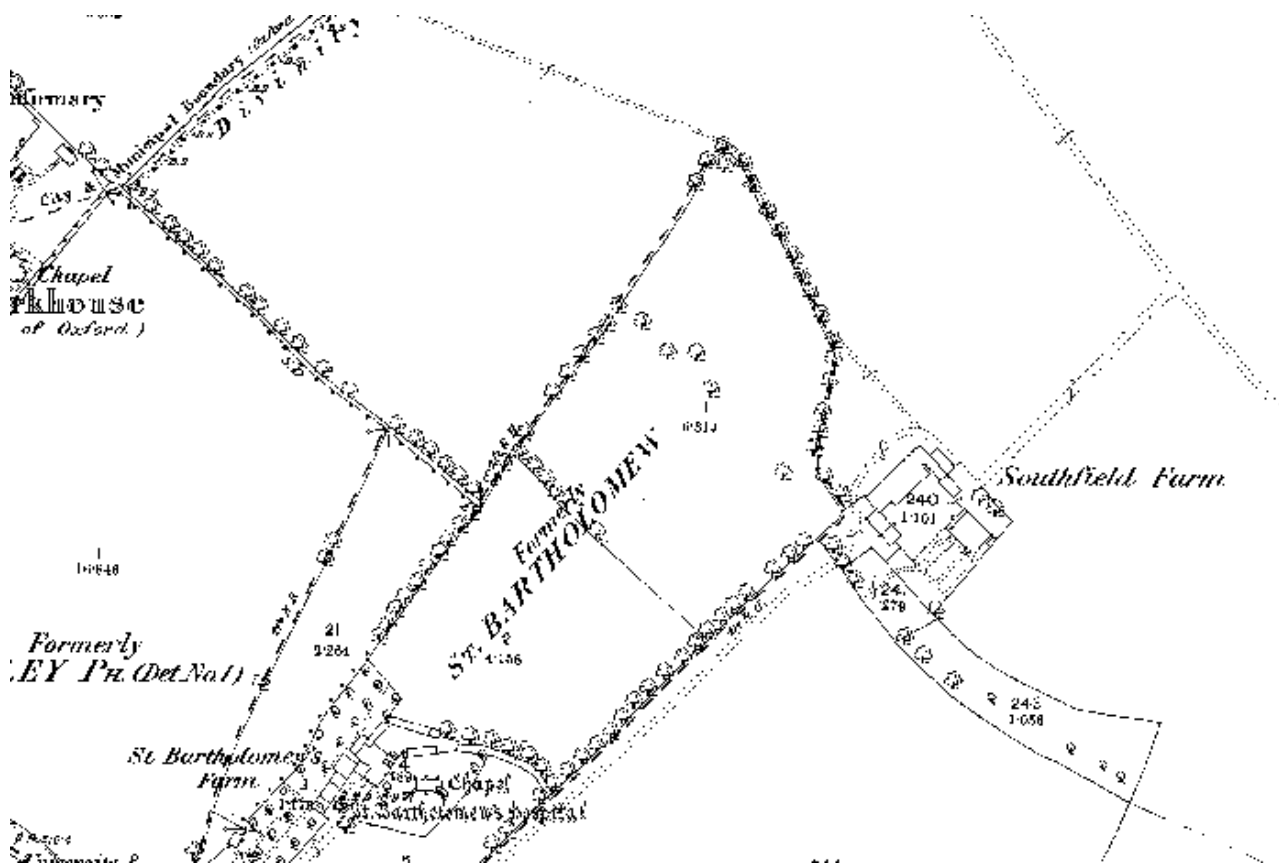
By the time of the 1851 census, the farm was being run by Thomas's son, William Burrows, and it contained 340 acres and was worked by eighteen men. By 1873, the tenure of the Burrows family had ended and the following notice appeared in Jackson's Oxford Journal for 12th April of that year. This notice makes specific reference to particular pieces of land which have old field names. We can see by the field names that the farm was mixed, containing both crops and livestock. There are references too to springs/streams and moors and an orchard.

And in the Matter of a Farm, commonly called 'The Southfield Farm' situate in the parish of Headington, now in the occupation of Thomas Edmund Miller, containing in the whole two hundred and two acres and two roods (or thereabouts) and consisting of a Dwelling House and Garden, and divers Closes and Premises, commonly known as 'Seed Croll', 'Asylum Furlong', 'Wheat Piece', 'Divinity Walk', 'Furlong Over Bridge, with two Cottages and Gardens, Moors and Sheep Walk, Lower Furlong, Upper Furlong, Croll near Cowley Marsh, Middle Cross, Grass and Orchard.'³

Divinity Walk was the path that went from the top of South Field down towards Bartlemas Chapel, close to the Cowley Workhouse. It marked the western boundary of Southfield Farm and also the western boundary of the ecclesiastical parish of Quarry.

The farmhouse was roughly where the golf course club house is today and the land stretched out to cover the present day golf course, down towards Cowley Marsh, and east towards Boundary Brook.

It is not easy to give an exact location for these parcels of land, although the topography of the farmland would suggest that crops were grown at the top and bottom of the farm where the land is flatter, and maybe sheep were kept on the hillside.



Ordnance Survey map of Oxfordshire, 1887.

We can also look at possible origins of the names of these fields. **Seed Croll** is made up of two Old English words; 'seed' being *soed*, and 'croll' being a contraction of 'crow well'/'crowell' from the Old English *craue* 'crow' and *well* (a) spring/stream.⁴ On the Langdon (Corpus) map, Section 8, he has marked Southe Felde and Little Crowell and Greate Crowell (near Bartlemas).⁵

John Field in his *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* gives many examples of 'seed' used as the first element of a field name in different parts of the country. However, the most likely meaning in this instance is 'an area of sown grass', as in Seed Acre, Seed Close, and Great Seed Field.⁶

Asylum Furlong may be a reference to a piece of land that was near the asylum building.

Wheat Piece refers to land cultivated with wheat; 'piece' derived from the Middle English word *pece*, meaning allotment or portion of land.⁷

Sheepwalk was an unfenced sheep pasture.⁸

Moors is from the Old English word *mōr* meaning barren waste land, marshy land⁹ and 'orchard', is from the Old English *ort-gæard* meaning a fruit garden (although Field says that originally the meaning was more general).¹⁰

The farm continued to decline, until by 1883 it was reduced to 194 acres. On the 28th July 1883 there is an advertisement for both the farm and a newly built house 'Southfield House'.¹¹ In 1891 Divinity Road, Bartlemas Road, Southfield Road and Warneford Road were built on Southfield Farm land and in the 1920s the rest of the land was sold. The golf

course and Warneford Meadow now occupy part of this land.¹² The Warneford Hospital bought land from Southfield Farm in 1918. The Golf Course was opened on October 19th, 1923, and it was called Oxford University Golf Links.

The remains of the farmyard and farmhouse were eventually sold to Lincoln College in 1946, and Lincoln College sold the land in 1971 to Ideal Homes Ltd. on a 99-year lease. The farm buildings were subsequently demolished to build Southfield Park Flats, which eventually passed into the possession of Oxford City Council in 1975.¹³ Oxford Spires Academy also now stands on what was once part of Southfield Farm land.

1. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).
2. Stephanie Jenkins, Headington Community website. "Headington History: Articles in the Press; History in press cuttings, *Arson at Southfield Farm, 1839.*" Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.
3. *The London Gazette*, April 11, 1873.
4. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 195-6.
5. Thomas Langdon, Map of the estates of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Map No. 17, November, 1605, reproduction, Oxfordshire History Centre.
6. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 195.
7. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 272.
8. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 200.
9. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 272.
10. Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 272.
- 11.. Headington Community website. "*Arson at Southfield Farm, 1839.*" <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.
12. Headington Community website. "*Arson at Southfield Farm, 1839.*" <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.
13. Graeme Salmon, *Beyond Magdalen Bridge: The Growth of East Oxford* (Oxford: East Oxford Archaeology and History Project, 2010), 56.

Blackthorn Meer

The 1802 Inclosure Award contains this description of a road in northeast Headington, close to where the Eastern Bypass intersects separates Headington from Barton today:

'Also one other public Carriage Road and Driftway of the like breadth of forty feet numbered VI likewise branching out of the said new Turnpike Road in a North Eastward direction and leading from thence in the present track along a certain Meer called **Blackthorn Meer** to the village of Barton in the County of Oxford the same being set out as the public Road leading from the said new Turnpike Road to Barton aforesaid.¹

Blackthorn Meer is commemorated today in Blackthorn Close, at the top of Barton Road, which is approximately where Blackthorn Meer was at the time of the Enclosure Award.



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The Name and Location

It seems evident that 'Meer' in this name comes from *(ge)maere* meaning 'boundary' or 'land by a boundary',² and there are several indications of this on the Enclosure Map and Award. The plots on either side of Road VI (present-day Barton Road) are all described as either being situated in Barton Field or Between Towns Field. Indeed, the use of 'Between Towns' in that field name indicates that there is a boundary between two towns, and in this case that boundary lies between Headington and Barton.

Because Blackthorn Meer is mentioned only in relation to the route of Road No. VI, and is not referred to in any of the plots adjoining the Road, it is possible that it refers not to a specific physical field, but to the territory through which Road No. VI runs (or the boundary along which it runs). The fact that Blackthorns were used as impermeable hedging (see below) also make them good material to mark boundaries. However, it was tradition in the Cowley area to rent out strips of land on the edges of fields (*mears*) for pasture or even arable use, with appointed 'hillsmen' administering and maintaining these areas,³ and it is also possible that Blackthorn Meer was used in a similar manner.

The Importance of the Blackthorn in the British Economy and Culture

The virtues of the Blackthorn tree, and the variety of uses to which it has been put have led to it forming an important part of the English rural economy since prehistoric times.

This native species of *Prunus spinosa* is the ancestor of modern-day cultivated plums, and was extensively used in hedging. John Field says that 'Trees marking boundaries had to be firm rooted, long-lived and conspicuous: oak, ash, yew, and thorns were much favoured.'⁴ Blackthorn is often found on scrub land, in woods and in hedgerows, and is especially useful as it forms a dense thicket by sending up suckers. For this reason -- and because of its thorns -- it was especially useful as a hedge proof against cattle. Indeed, it is used to this day. The National Hedgelayng Society instructs: 'For Livestock use prickly plants, hawthorn (quicks) and blackthorn, as animals are deterred by them.'⁵

The hard wood of the Blackthorn also polishes up well and was used for tool handles and canes, and the straight stems were traditionally made into walking sticks and clubs, like the Irish shillelagh. It also makes good firewood, as it burns slowly and produces little smoke. Its leaves were used to adulterate tea in France in the Middle Ages, and the sap was used for making inks for manuscript production.

The profuse white flowers borne on black stems in April led to the Blackthorn being considered a symbol of life because the flowers appeared while the stems were still bare. The blue fruit of the Blackthorn is the sloe, derived from the OE *slāh*,⁶ and sloes have traditionally been used to make sloe gin. This fruit of the Blackthorn also formed part of the diet of prehistoric man. It is known that sloes were buried in straw-lined pits for several months to ripen and make them sweeter, and a pit full of sloe stones was found at a Neolithic lake village in Glastonbury, as well as in the stomach of Otzi, the 5,300 year old mummy discovered in the Alps in 1991.

Given the historic importance of the Blackthorn to our economy and culture, it is not surprising to see it commemorated in the names of fields and other locations.

1. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).

2. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, (Newton Abbott: David and Charles, 1972), 136.

3. "Cowley," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 88.

4. John Field, *A History of English Field-Names* (Longman, 1993), 64.

5. National Hedgelayng Society website. "Publications: *Planting a Hedge*". Accessed 14 February, 2014. www.hedgelayng.org.uk/.

6. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 207.

Peasmoor Piece and Plowman's Copse



One piece of land on the outskirts of Headington remains much as it was several hundred years ago, and has never been cultivated or built on.

Peasmoor Piece is a long thin field on the Northway estate, running east and southeast from Marsh Lane on the west, to Copse Lane to the south of it. There have been variations in the spelling of the name (on the 1830 Ordnance Survey map it was Peasmoor Piece and on the 1919 map it was Peasmore Piece). For a time in the late 20th century, local maps of Oxford labelled it Pensfield Piece, but this appears to have been a misprint or misinterpretation as we can find no other instances of that name being used, and it is today, once again Peasmoor Piece.



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Peasmoor is not an unusual name, and the ancient village of Peasmore exists in West Berkshire, just north of Newbury, as well as the villages of Peasenhall in Suffolk and Peasmarsh in Sussex.

The first element of the name Peasmoor could stem from the Old English *piſe* meaning 'peas'. However, while it is possible that this was a strip of land where peas were grown, a more likely origin of 'peas' in this field name is that the name refers to a wild plant that resembles the pea, for example the Marsh Trefoil (*Lotus pendunculatus*), Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), or another member of the Fabaceae (pea) family, which grew abundantly in this area. ¹

The origin of 'moor', the second element in this field name is more difficult to trace. It could stem from *mere* meaning 'pond' or 'lake', and signify a lake or marsh where peas (or pea-like plants) grew. Margaret Gelling points out that in the Chilterns, 'more' and 'moor' often indicate earlier '*mere*': pools formed where there are patches of clay overlying a layer of chalk.² Alternatively, the 'moor' in Peasmoor could stem from the Old English *mōr*, meaning a 'wasteland on account of water; hence, a *fen, bog, pool, pond.*'³ There is still a good sized natural pond in Peasmoor Piece, and other areas of standing water after heavy rains. As it is situated on a slight slope, part of the way up Headington hill, natural drainage from further up the slope probably helps to maintain the pond.

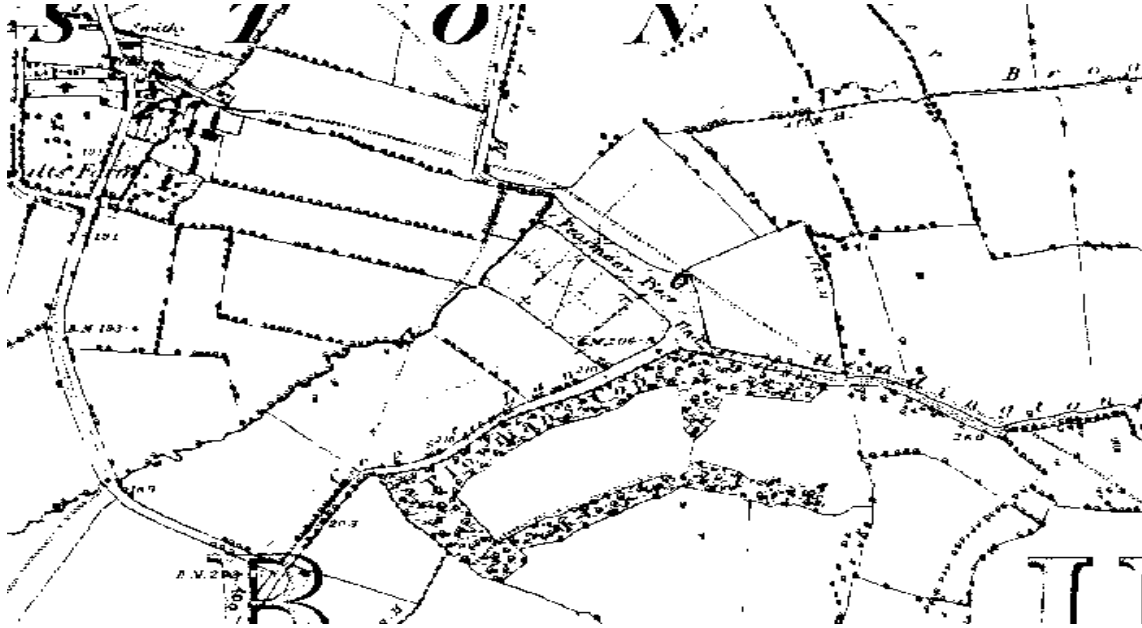
'Piece' comes from the Middle English *pece*, meaning 'allotment or portion of land.'⁴



Today Peasmoor Piece provides a welcome strip of greenery and a wildlife corridor in a modern housing estate, but it originally connected at the southern end to a slightly bent rectangular area enclosed all round by a narrow strip of woodland called **Plowman's Copse**.

One end of the woodland boundary was eventually cut down and for many years it retained an elongated 'C' shape. On the map accompanying the 1836 sale of land in Headington (it can be seen at the very top of the map in the section on Badgers, below), the field enclosed by Plowman's Copse appears as **Bushy Close**. The name Plowman's Copse does not appear, so it is possible that either Bushy Close was the original name of the field, or that the inner field was called Bushy Close but the narrow strip of woodland forming its boundary was called Plowman's Copse.

'Plowman' almost certainly describes a ploughman, historically the most important of agricultural workers. It is derived from the Old English *ploh* (a plough), and *mann* ('an adult male', and also 'a skilled man'). Plowman is a common occupational surname, and is recorded as early as the 13th century in Philip Plowman of Essex (1225) and John le Plouman of Lincoln (1275),⁵ and of course was immortalised in the 14th century



Ordnance Survey Map of Oxfordshire, 1887

allegorical poem, *Piers Plowman* by William Langland. The 'Plowman' in Plowman's Copse is therefore likely to be the name of a man who owned the field, or it might refer to local ploughmen who were allowed to take wood from the copse.

'Copse' is a 16th century contraction of the word *coppice*, meaning 'a small wood grown for purposes of periodic cutting', or 'a thicket of small trees or shrubs',⁶ and it is possible that this little coppice was used to provide a steady supply of wood to the owner of the field whose name was Plowman, or perhaps to the working ploughmen of that area.

The outline of Plowman's Copse can still be traced in the streets to the south of Peasmoor Piece (see street map above): Copse Lane (named in 1935 to commemorate this copse) forms the top part of what was Plowman's Copse, and if you draw a line along the length of Copse Lane, from Ambleside Drive in the east to Headley Way in the west, then down Headley Way to Conniston Avenue, and then the length of Conniston Avenue until it meets Ambleside Drive, you will have traced the exact outline of Plowman's Copse. In the 1930s, Ordnance Survey maps still showed remnants of the copse that remained, but today there is nothing left of it except its ghostly imprint on the map of the modern housing estate.

Plowman Tower, a high-rise 1950s block of flats (and the first of Oxford's tower blocks) is situated nearby. Unfortunately, it was not named to commemorate Plowman's Copse, but to honour instead Harry Plowman, CBE, MA, Town Clerk of Oxford 1940–1965,⁷ although perhaps also with a nod to the old field of the same name just up the road.

1. Eilert Ekwall. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), 360.

2. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire: Pt.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 459.
3. Joseph Bosworth, *A Compendious Anglo-Saxon and English Dictionary* (London: Gibbings and Company Limited, 1901), 168.
4. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 272.
5. The Internet Surname Database. "Plowman". Accessed February 2, 2014. www.surnamedb.com/Surname/Plowman .
- 6 'Coppice' appears to be a late 14th century word meaning 'a small thicket of trees grown for cutting, and stems from the Old French *copeiz*, *coupeiz* meaning 'a cut-over forest,' from Vulgar Latin *colpaticium* meaning 'having been cut'.
See: Online Etymology Dictionary. "*Coppice* (n.)." Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.etymonline.com/>) and Field: *English Field-Names: A Dictionary*, 268.
7. Stephanie Jenkins, Headington Community website. "Headington History: Focus on Northway; *Plowman Tower*". Accessed February 13, 2014. <http://www.headington.org.uk/>.

Other names of interest

Harry Bears Bottom



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Harry Bears/Bear's Bottom was an area of land that was situated roughly where the junction of Windmill Road¹, the Slade and Old Road is today, and It was on the right-hand side approach to **Titup Hall**.² There are no modern references to it in local place names, but in the Enclosure Award it appears as a directional marker for other roads: Windmill Road and the **Slade** are described as 'leading from **High Cross Bush**³ to past Harry Bears Bottom as far as Wood Farm.⁴ The Enclosure Award also includes Harry Bears

Bottom, referring to a plot of land belonging to the Rev. John Wills as 'six acres one rood and three perches situate in Harry Bears Bottom'. . . .⁵

The meaning of the name probably arises from its location at the bottom of Shotover Hill. Field gives the definition of the Old English word *botom* as land at the foot of a hill or land in a valley.⁶ There is also a link to a legend in which a local man, Harry Bear, was said to have shot arrows carrying messages over Shotover Hill to his friend Lears Hill, who lived in Wheatley. A version of the legend of the arrows flying over the hill is recorded in this poem:

Harry Beare Legend

(A translation of a Latin Poem written by the Bachelor of Lenten exercises 1741)

On we go to Augusta's Hill
Where stands the stately palace
When once a party of peasants was having an archery match a little way off.
The place is said to owe its name to the occurrence.
While many ply their strength in equal contest
And send their futile shafts quivering from their unwarlike hands,
From the hands of one of them the bolt let fly from stoutly bended bow
This right across the summit of the hill.⁷

1. A windmill stood near northeast side of the crossroads of Windmill Road and Old Road. The mill was offered for sale in 1823 and was reported as being recently rebuilt on the most modern lines.

See: "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 158.

2. Until the late 18th century, the road from Oxford to London went up Headington Hill, turned right into Cheney Lane and proceeded along Old Road and then up across Shotover. Titup Hall was an inn at the foot of Shotover, where it was said that extra horses were kept to help the coaches climb the hill.

'Titup' is from a word meaning 'to canter', and the land in this area was flat enough to allow the horses to gather speed for a bit before they climbed the hill to Shotover. The Crown and Thistle pub (closed as of 2013) stands near to the site of Titup Hall.

See: G.A. Coppock and B.M. Hill, *Headington Quarry and Shotover: A History Compiled on Behalf of Quarry Women's Institute* (Oxford University Press, 1933, reprinted 1983), 17.

3. High Cross Bush was situated at the present junction of the London Road, Old High Street and Windmill Road, in the centre of what is now the shopping area of Headington. According to *The Victoria County History*, this is a reference to a large wayside stone cross that was mentioned in 1498 in a description of the lands of Katharine Rede. The name survived into the 19th century.

See: "Headington," in *A History of the County of Oxford: Vol. 5: Bullingdon hundred*, ed. Mary D. Lobel (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 158.

4. Wood Farm was on the Slade, on the corner of the present Wood Farm Road.

5. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR 126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).

6. John Field, *English Field-Names: A Dictionary* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1982), 267.

7. G.A. Coppock and B.M. Hill, *Headington Quarry and Shotover*, 50.

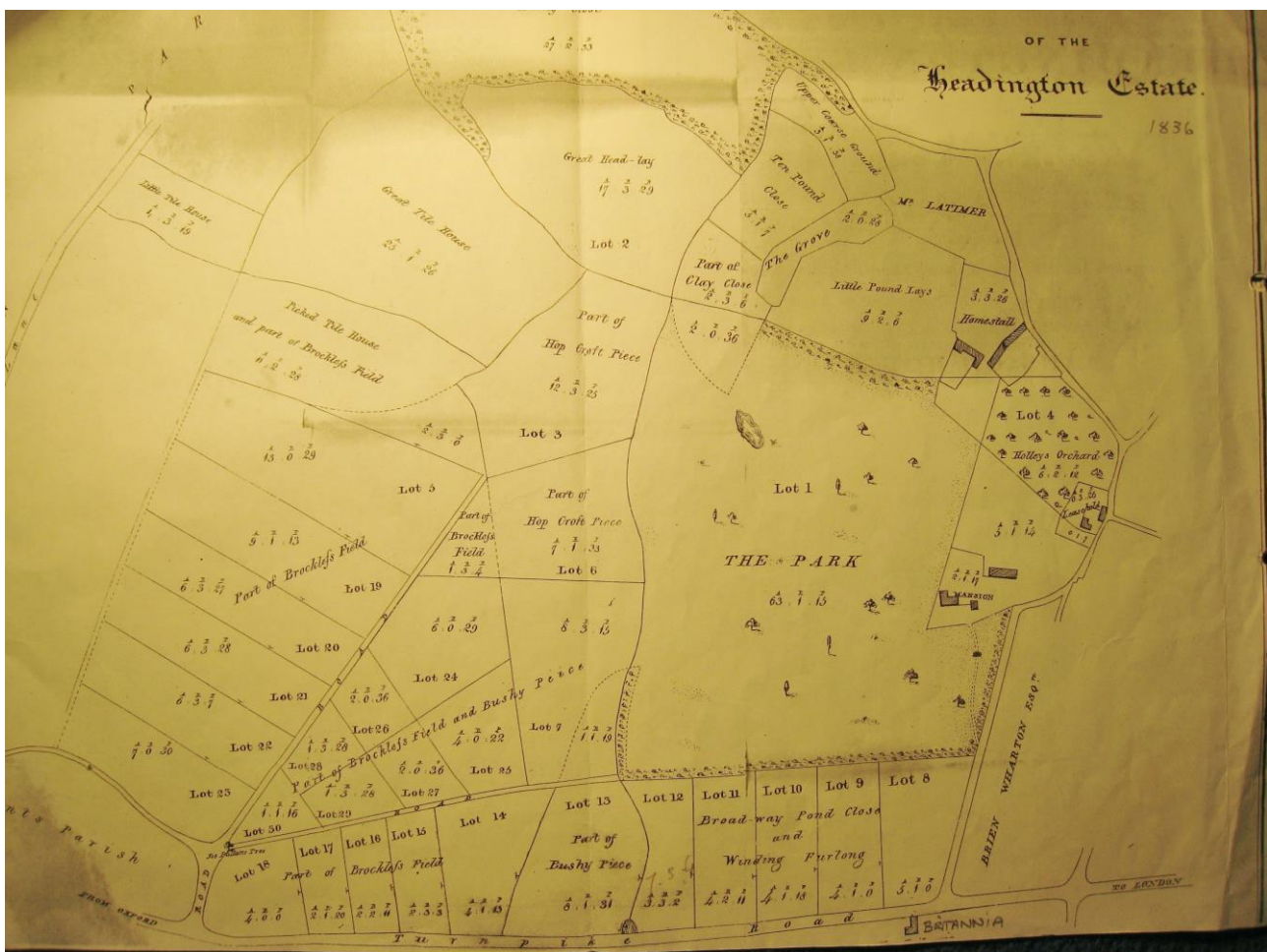
Some animal names

Badgers

The ancient field called **Brockall** or **Brockholes** was retained in the form of **Brockalls**, **Brockalles** and **Brockless** up until the late 19th century, although the area covered by this field became much reduced.

Langdon's 1605 Corpus Christi map shows the holdings of the college in Headington and lists 'Brockall Felde' and 'Brockalles Felde'.¹ The 1804 map attached to the 1802 Enclosure award² lists part of the area down near the present Marston Ferry Road as Brockholes Field, and a very large area from the present Marston Ferry Road all the way up to what is now Osler Road on the East and approaching Marston on the North as Pound, Brockholes and Clay Fields.

On 3 August 1836, a good-sized parcel of land from the Headington Estate went on sale.³ A map attached to the sale particulars (see detail below) shows 'part of Brockless Field' in roughly the same area, covering the western half of the land between the present-day Marston Ferry and Osler roads to the west and east respectively, and the London Road to the south (and at the bottom right of the map one can just see The Britannia pub, which is still there today).



It is evident that in the thirty-four years between the Enclosure Award and this sale, that the land in this area was split up into many smaller fields. The name Brockall/Brockalles/Brockholes/Brockless almost certainly stems from the Old English

brocc (badger), which was a borrowing from the Celtic (as well as the Old Irish *brocc* and the Welsh *broch*). It is possible that the root word derives from the Danish *brok*, which also means 'badger'. Until the mid-18th century, European badgers were variously known in Britain as 'brock', 'pate', 'grey' and 'bawson', and 'brock' still persists in some areas.

As badger setts are almost always located near trees, and as this open, hilltop area would have been somewhat wooded, one can imagine the area being riddled with 'holes' leading to the dens of these social mammals, whose interlocking tunnels with nest chambers are passed on from generation to generation and are often centuries old.

The badger is actually an ancient resident of Britain, having migrated here from Southeast Asia about three million years ago when Britain was joined to the European land mass. They lived in woods along with the fox, the bear and the wolf, and were a familiar sight in Anglo-Saxon Britain. From the Bronze Age onwards they were hunted for their meat, leather and fat, and so were an important part of the local economy -- indeed, it is estimated that there are nearly 150 place-names that incorporate *broc* (badger).

Sheep

In the centre of Headington, covering the area now occupied by Old High Street and Waitrose on the west, The London Road on the south, and including what is now Bury Knowle on the east, was a largish field called variously **Sheepcot** or **Sheepcut Furlong** (see illustration above in section on Bury Knowle).

The word 'cot' denotes a pen for cattle, and is derived from the Old English *cot* or *cut(t)* and appears in Middle English as signifying a small animal house or protective covering or sheath, and in the context of a field almost certainly refers to small enclosures in which sheep were kept.^{4,5} A furlong was the main division of a common field, and while it originally meant 'the length of a furrow', the word came to be applied to the block of strips in a field which were all of the same length.⁶

Wild birds

In an area just south of the point where the modern Dunstan Road meets Saxon Way, and close to where the present-day Headington Cemetery lies, was a field called **Hengrove** or **Hen Grove Common**. It is mentioned in the 1802 Inclosure Award in reference to a plot of land owned by Mary Jones, which was located in 'Hengrove Common'.⁷

The element 'hen' in this field name probably derives from the Old English *henn*. Although the modern 'hen' comes from this word, *henn* was also used for wild birds (such as moorhens, waterhens and partridges), and this meaning is more likely here.⁸ The element 'grove' derives from the Old English *grāf* meaning a small grove of trees or thicket.⁹

1. Thomas Langdon, Map of the estates of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Map No. 17, November, 1605, reproduction, Oxfordshire History Centre.

2. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802 (Map 1804); PAR126/16/H/2, Oxfordshire History Centre. Also a copy of the map made in 1848; QS/D/A/VOLF/map (enclosure).

3. Map attached to the catalogue of the 'Sale of The Headington Estate, August 3rd, 1836. At the Angel Inn, Oxford. Mallam, 1836. Oxfordshire History Centre, SC. 35.

4. J.O. Halliwell, *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, Vol. 1. (London: John Russell Smith,

1852), 272.

5. John Field, *English Field Names: A Dictionary* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989), 268.

6. John Field, *A History of English Field Names* (London: Longman, 1993), 14.

7. Headington Inclosure Award, 1802.

8. Eilert Ekwall. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 4th edn. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974), 235.

9. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 202.

Conclusion

The story of Headington mirrors the development of Oxford itself; from the Iron Age through Roman and Medieval occupations, and the changes brought about by the 19th century Enclosures, to the modern suburb that Headington has become today. Discovering how the land was used and the landscape was moulded to the needs of the people of Oxford gives us an insight into the evolution of the city, and helps us to understand the challenges facing people who settled here.

The names of the fields that formed the fabric of the land is one of the keys we can use to unlock the story of Oxford: they tell us about the industries that thrived here, the character of the land, the pastimes of the people who owned and worked these fields, and the flora and fauna that populated them. The fact that many modern streets retain the names of the fields on which they were built, and that some of the original fields still exist, is a testimony to the importance of these ancient pieces of land to the people who owned, farmed, or walked through them. It is our legacy, and the authors hope that their brief description of a small number of fields in Headington will interest people and encourage them to learn more about this fascinating aspect of Oxford's history.