

Pickwick – Conservation Area Appraisal



Produced by Pickwick Association



At its meeting on 12 October 2022 Wiltshire Council's Northern Area Planning Committee acknowledged and commended this document as a material consideration

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Front Cover picture - The Roundhouse, Pickwick. Back Cover picture - The Hare and Hounds in the 1890's

Pickwick Conservation Area Appraisal

Contents

Pickwick – Conservation Area Appraisal :	
Title Page	1
Copyright acknowledgements	2
Contents	3
Introduction by Thomas Brakspear	4
The Pickwick Association and the Pickwick Conservation Area Appraisal	10
Executive Summary	11
Part 1 – Background to this Review	12
Background	12
The Review	12
Planning Policy Context	14
Purpose and scope of this document	15
Corsham’s Neighbourhood Plan	16
Part 2 – Corsham - its setting and history	17
Geology	17
Location and Setting	18
Pickwick in Maps	20
Archaeology	21
Historic Development	22
Saxon and Norman; Medieval; post-Medieval	22
Modern	26
Part 3 – Pickwick – the Conservation Area in its context	32
Settlement Pattern – where people live	32
The Changing Face of Pickwick	33
The Conservation Area	35
The Conservation Area in relation to Corsham and the Corsham Conservation Area	36
Part 4 - Pickwick – its architecture, buildings and open spaces	37
Architectural and historic qualities of buildings	37
Overview	37
The architectural aspects of Pickwick buildings	38
Contribution made by non-designated heritage assets	40
Key views, vistas and panoramas	41
The Stone Walls	43
Land Use within the Conservation Area	45
Greenery and Planting	46
Arboricultural Report on the Beechfield Estate	47
The Beechfield Nature Area	48
Degree of loss of architectural and/or historic elements	49
Summary	50
Part 5 – the Conservation Area – What’s so special?	51
Key Features	51
Character Areas and their buildings	52
The focal area—Bath Road/A4	52
Pickwick Manor and its environs	54
The Hare and Hounds	55
Pickwick Manor	56
Beechfield	58
Conclusion	60
Appendix 1 - Management Plan	61
Suggestions as to the management of the Conservation Area	61
Potential for Development	61
Vulnerable buildings, buildings at risk, listed & unlisted buildings	62
New Buildings; Corsham Design Guide; Open Views;	62
Managed Open Space; Stone Walls	62
Preservation and enhancement strategy	63
Threats to Conservation Areas	64
Traffic management and street furniture	65
Hare and Hounds carpark	65
Appendix 2 - Notes About a selection of Pickwick Buildings	66
Appendix 3 - Extract from Heritage section of Corsham Neighbourhood Plan	72

What makes Pickwick special and provides a sense of place?

How could this specialness be enhanced/retained in the future ?



To the passing public the remarkable thing about Pickwick is the survival, almost unaltered, of what I will term Pickwick Street – that length of the A4 between the gate into the Hare and Hounds at the west end and the gateway into Lancefield Place at the east (see map). This is the only part of the entire length of the A4 when one has the impression of passing through a traditional Cotswold village – one is not, of course, as there is no established church or proper manor house.

Pickwick Street appears to have been built as a response to the increasing importance of the Turnpike road that ran through the centre of it. Development seems to have slowed between 1751 – 1803 when the Turnpike was moved north to pass through Middlewick. From 1803 until the arrival of the railway in Corsham in 1841, most of the development in Pickwick seems to have been the building or alteration of larger houses around the outskirts – doubtless this was because easy access to Bath and London via a reliable, fast coach service was much valued by the increasingly numerous and prosperous middle classes. These larger houses have large gardens and the trees and screening plants in them provide a pleasant leafy environment at both ends of Pickwick Street. These

houses rarely address the A4 directly but they, with their gardens, provide an essential and characterful setting to Pickwick Street.



From 1840 until 1940 development more or less ceased as the railway became the focal point in Corsham for development. Pickwick became an estate “village” – first acquired by the Poynders of Hartham Park and latterly by the Goldneys of Beechfield House. The Poynders (who adopted the 1751 – 1803 Turnpike route as their coach drive) left their mark in Pickwick with one or two new buildings and quite a few porch additions to the old buildings.



This house is thought to have been built by the Poynders to accommodate their Chaplain who took services at their (still standing) private chapel - Hartham Chapel.



Poynder porch added to older house

steep pitch (NOT usually 45 degrees – 52 degrees is more typical) this material requires in order to keep the rain out. Stone tiles would, with a little thatch, have been ubiquitous for roofs all along the A4 Bath road from Calne to the centre of Bath until about 1790 when Welsh Slate began to be imported along the Avon to Bath. Very little slate reached Corsham until the canal arrived at Lacock in 1810 where upon slate and clay pan tiles flowed in, stifling the indigenous stone tile industry so that when the railway arrived it was, in the Corsham area, probably already dead. The imported materials were, in every sense, more practical – stone tiles are very heavy, labour intensive to dress and lay, snow can blow through them and they have to be laid at a steep pitch. But they were, in the 17th and 18th century, cheap because they could be dug out of the ground. Now they are expensive, but they do provide a sense of place.

Here it is interesting to note that one of the first families to demonstrate their appreciation of the character of stone tiles were the Poynders of Hartham Park. They had made their fortune as London developers (and latterly as Pickwick quarry owners). In both Lower and Upper Pickwick (where they built their model farm) they went to the trouble of cladding both their new buildings and their alterations to old buildings with stone tiles so that they would harmonise with the buildings already there. This was in the second half of the nineteenth century - a period when practically all new building and alterations in Corsham were clad in clay or slate in spite of what one



Interwar artificial stone tiling at Hudswell

Since 1940 two factors have conspired to preserve Pickwick Street. The first is that the increasingly busy road has been a deterrent to development pressure – the noisy location is not very desirable. The second is the introduction of Listed Building legislation by Central Government – without that one can be fairly sure that the Local Authorities would have swept away the Hare and Hounds (just as they attempted to demolish the listed Osborne House in Corsham because it was “in the way”). Instead, Pickwick has the characterful phenomenon of articulated lorries swinging onto the wrong side of Pickwick Road as they wind their way to Leafield Trading Estate from Pickwick Street via Pickwick Road to Valley Road. Of such things a sense of place is made – rather than just an anonymous roundabout.

Looking at Pickwick Street in detail, perhaps the most obvious characteristic is that practically every roof is stone tiled at the

suspects must have been a glut of unwanted second-hand tiles (old photos reveal that Bath changed from a stone tile clad city to a clay and slate clad city in this period).

Now stone tiles are so sought after and expensive that it is not always reasonable to demand their use for new buildings. There are very good (and plenty of very bad) imitations which are surely preferable to slate (which is, and usually looks, alien and foreign to Corsham) and to clay. Corsham actually possesses a proud inheritance of pioneering and very good early imitation stone tiles (in and around Hudswell) on buildings erected by the MoD between the wars. Like many successful artificial materials, they are not well known because most on-lookers are deceived by them.

Many officials (planners, conservation officers, architects) consider such deceit immoral and unsupportable – often they have been trained to think so. I think that is simplistic – many of the buildings people love play such tricks – see the artificial stone quoins on Corsham High Street.



Above - Artificial stone quoins in Corsham



Slight eaves 'bell cast'

The danger with imitation tiles is that if they are badly detailed or a poor imitation they can look very disappointing. Whether roofs are of real or imitation stone tiles traditional details should be adopted. So pitched valleys should be swept, not cut.

Eaves and verges should project generously (200 and 150 mm respectively). The lowest courses of tiles should lie at a shallower pitch to achieve a slight bellcast. When old roofs are re-laid they are normally raised a couple of inches by modern battens and counter battens. Care should be taken to maintain the slight 'dish' or bellcast at the eaves by, for instance, installing an extra timber plate for the eaves course to sit on. Extra care should be taken at dormer windows and abutments under gable copes where thin battens and secret gutters respectively may be required. Eaves' gutters and down pipes



Swept stone tile valley, above; cut stone tile valley, below



'facia boards should not be used for fixing gutters'



only arrived after the railways but they are usually a practical and sensible addition. They should be placed and coloured discreetly. Grey (e.g. BS colour 4800 10 A 11) or off white (e.g. BS colour 4800 10 B 15), as used by Corsham estate) are both good. Black is bad, a black down pipe against a stone wall obtrudes. Facia boards should not be used for fixing gutters. Steel drive in brackets are available.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Pickwick Street is the depth of the average house. This was set by the length of available timber beams for spanning the rooms. Five metres was a maximum internal span and the roof ridge was set at the centre of this span. Humble houses might have an extra room at the back covered with a cat slide roof but it is the 4 ½ to 5 ½ metre external house depth that is characteristic in Pickwick Street. The average modern house is wider and looks alien.

Another distinctive characteristic of Pickwick are the plethora of freestone details to the buildings – gable copes, door cases,



Chimney stump—at far end



Missing window mullions above and below. There would have been two mullions per window in the building shown below (evidenced by the window head joints).



Rebuilt chimney stump (at left) but no shaft



door hoods, window cases, quoin stones, plinth courses and chimneys. Usually these are moulded and every effort should be made to follow the original mouldings when carrying out repairs or when restoring missing features such as window mullions (these latter have disappeared from houses in Pickwick and Middlewick – their restoration would be welcome). These details are a natural consequence of the excellent freestone that Pickwick is built on. Some of the later house fronts are entirely of freestone ashlar.

Tall freestone chimneys were a characteristic of Pickwick but a glance at old postcards indicates their tendency to reduce or disappear. This is understandable but aesthetically regrettable. Today chimneys are somewhat redundant and even if in use they tend to serve closed appliances such as wood burners which don't require a tall stack. Being built of 76mm thick freestone, exposed to all weathers and to flu gases, old chim-



Another rebuilt stump without shaft (on gable at right)

neys often become fragile and need to be rebuilt in new stone. The temptation to make the chimney safe by removing the stack and leaving the stump is often too much.

Occasionally only the upper stack is removed initially and later the lower stack is rebuilt but the vanished upper stack (probably through ignorance, rather than in an attempt to save money) is not.

The walls of all the houses in Pickwick Street are of some form of local stone jointed and pointed with lime mortar. Some have unfortunately been disfigured with cement rich pointing which not only looks bad but actually can promote the decay of the adjoining stone work. Where the stone consists of totally randomly laid rubble it would normally have been lime



Cement rich pointing c 1978. The south end of the Hare and Hounds was previously roughcast.



Cement rich ribbon pointing in Pickwick Street

rough cast and lime washed (as part of the Hare and Hounds still is) or at least flush pointed and lime washed. Old lime roughcast is important, special and well beyond the ability of most builders or plasterers to replicate. The temptation to remove it to make the building “tidy” should be resisted.

Mermaid Cottage in Middlewick owes its name to the beautiful old mermaid cast into its roughcast east gable wall by the roughcaster – alas, old roughcast and mermaid were stripped off circa 1999 in a destructive but probably well meaning attempt at maintenance. The wall is now smooth rendered – not a traditional finish for a cottage wall in Corsham.

A similar fate befell Westwood Manor a couple of decades earlier. The National Trust then sacked the architects who



Smooth modern render at Mermaid Cottage

were responsible for this.

Limewash has many benefits where a colour (or white) is to be applied. Unlike modern paints it usually looks better as it ages, it is cheap, easy to apply (especially if one of the premixed thicker grades are used), it allows the building to breath and it acts as a protective sacrificial layer to what it covers. There is today a reluctance to limewash free stone but an elevation usually looks better if it is all (except for painted wood work) lime washed – the builders did not intend the free stone details to read differently from the walls. It is clear that most of Pickwick was regularly ochre limewashed by the landlords prior to the war. Some people (Harold Brakspear, the architect/archaeologist, being one) take a delight in scraping off the limewash, hacking out the flush pointing and repointing with a recessed joint so that all the individual stones can be clearly seen. This is entirely counter to the builder’s original intention that the wall should present as flat and homogenous a face as possible.



Recessed pointing at Pickwick Manor 1920

The fenestration of the houses, whilst unremarkable, is still an important element of the character of the buildings that make Pickwick so special. Traditional stone mullioned windows with leaded lights and iron casements (usually by now replaced with softwood casements and glazing bars) continued



Mullioned window—iron casement replaced by new softwood

throughout the 18th century and ran concurrently with the more expensive and larger timber vertically sliding sash windows of which the earliest dated (1711) examples were at the back of Pickwick Manor (sashes since restored).



Early sash window at Pickwick Manor (stonework 1711, sashes restored 1921

If leaded lights are in place the associated iron work and casements should be painted lead grey (BS 4800 10 A 11) not black or white. Without wishing to be prescriptive it is probably best if wooden windows are painted off white – as they generally are. All old windows incorporate a drip at the top or the bottom (sometimes formed by the roof eaves) which should be maintained. It is a credit to Pickwickians that there are few double glazed or plastic windows that have crept into public view. The virtues of secondary glazing are clearly understood by the occupants of this noisy environment.

The other important characteristic of Pickwick Street is how

the buildings relate to the street – this is varied and is a reflection of how the buildings were erected by different people at different times on different sites in an unplanned way. Some are set back behind low or high stone front garden walls, some are actually on the street with no front area at all. Although the development as a whole is unplanned, it is clear that within each site every effort was made to present a planned and considered elevation to public view. Coach houses/stables/garages were not generally required for the humbler houses – for the grander houses they were generally hidden away from view on Pickwick Street.

Lastly it should be added that modern technological bric-à-bac does detract from the characteristics that make Pickwick special. Technology is obviously required but it should be handled discretely or, if possible, placed out of public sight altogether. This applies to phone and electric cables and their poles, satellite dishes and TV aerials and their cables, streetlights and signs, rain covers to chimneys, horizontal boiler flue outlets, gas inlets and gas or water meter boxes. It is some comfort that most of these are to some extent ephemeral. Though only on the approach to Pickwick, the substation between Cross Keys and Hartham Lane is a prime candidate for some careful planting to act as a screen.



Sub station on the A4 - a candidate for screening?

Finally, I should like to offer apologies to any who are offended by the inclusion of their building amongst the photographs.



Thomas Brakspear, Architectural and Historic Buildings Consultant and lifelong Pickwickian

The Pickwick Association and the Pickwick Conservation Area Appraisal



Pickwick from a postcard dated 1907

The Pickwick Association is a voluntary group of local residents dedicated to protecting the character of this Wiltshire village by raising and maintaining awareness of its history and architecture.

Established in 1989 *“to promote and carry out any activities to the benefit of the community of Pickwick”*, the association is open to all residents aged over 18. Since it was formed 30 years ago, the association has worked hard to protect the village as far as possible from urbanisation, insensitive development and road traffic.

But its most important role in protecting Pickwick has never been greater as the village faces unprecedented development which would change its character forever.

We were encouraged by the recent adoption of the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan which now forms part of the Development Plan for Wiltshire. The Neighbourhood Plan has established general planning policies for the development and use of land in the district.

There are legal requirements under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for local authorities to review from time to time conservation areas under their jurisdiction and to formulate and publish proposals for their preservation and enhancement.

Against that background, The Pickwick Association has drafted this document to better understand the attributes which make the Pickwick Conservation Area worthy of designation and to understand, cherish and, where possible, enhance that Area with the desire that it (endorsed as it must be by the local community) be adopted by Wiltshire Council as a supplementary planning tool.

The purpose of a conservation area is to protect and enhance areas of special architectural or historic interest and place additional development control on new works, as well as seeking to minimise the loss of the existing built and natural environment.

Conservation Area designation introduces control over the demolition of unlisted property in the area and affords protection to trees. It requires the Council to assess whether new development will enhance the character and appearance of the Area. The administration of Conservation Areas requires local authorities to undertake occasional appraisals, which involve a character appraisal and boundary review.

An appraisal of a designated conservation area is the proper vehicle for understanding the area’s significance holistically, drawing out what elements make that area special. Any management proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area can only meaningfully be informed by understanding the positive features to preserve or enhance – alongside identifying the risks or opportunities in altering the area’s character or appearance.

Executive Summary



The Corsham Neighbourhood Plan was adopted following a referendum in November 2019.

The Plan reinforces Corsham Town Council's aim to preserve and enhance the heritage aspects of Corsham and includes specific references to Pickwick providing that

"Good design for Corsham means Establishing (a) Gateway into the town at Pickwick".

The Corsham Neighbourhood Plan is supported, inter alia, by The Corsham Design Guide and *"contains the vision, objectives and policies identified by the community and that are at the heart of future sustainable development in Corsham."*

It adds:- *The Corsham Design Guide provides necessary detail and best practice for individual Character Areas and is the vehicle for the Neighbourhood Plan policies to be effectively implemented on the ground."*

Against that background, we have produced this Appraisal of the Pickwick Conservation Area to fill the gap left by the Local Authority, Wiltshire Council, with the aim that it may be adopted by the Authority as a supplementary planning tool.

The Conservation Area is a distinct section of the village of Pickwick. Pickwick has been subsumed by the adjacent town of Corsham and is part and parcel of the area subject to the Neighbourhood Plan. As Pickwick, within its countryside setting, and Corsham developed quite separately we believe it important to identify the particular history of Pickwick itself and to examine in detail all those key features within the Conservation Area that make it worthy of special consideration.

We describe how Corsham has expanded, particularly in recent years, and show the geographical relationship between Pickwick and Corsham and the Corsham Conservation Area.

In Part 4 we describe the land use, the architecture, buildings and open spaces within the Conservation Area and conclude

that Pickwick comprises a unique collection of largely untouched 17th and 18th century buildings framed by traditional stone walls, foliage and trees. We concur with the Neighbourhood Plan that the idea of a 'Pickwick Gateway' to Corsham at the Hare and Hounds is appropriate – we believe it could and should be enhanced.

In Part 5 of the document we identify the key features of the Pickwick Conservation Area and suggest three 'character' areas, each of which we describe in some detail. We believe that the Pickwick Conservation Area has been well maintained but that its principal downside is the volume of traffic which passes through and the consequent adverse effects on air quality, noise and – ultimately – the structure of the adjacent buildings. We have concerns over the lack of consideration by the various authorities when installing road furniture, new lighting and pavement surfaces. But overall we are satisfied that Pickwick Conservation Area is appropriately designated but consideration should be given to it being extended.

In considering the management of the Conservation Area we have, at Appendix 1, suggested a possible way forward. Also annexed to this document is a short paper outlining the attributes of a selection of a number of particular buildings within Pickwick (Appendix 2) and an extract from the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 3). This Appraisal is supported by a separate publication 'A detailed description of all listed buildings in Pickwick' in which we have scheduled each listed building together with its location, its formal description and an illustration. That publication may be found on our website - www.pickwickassociation.org.uk.

Part 1: Background to this Review



Background

Pickwick is a small village on the A4 in Wiltshire between Chippenham and Bath. It is immediately adjacent to the town of Corsham. The central part of the village contains much of the original settlement, the earliest part of which dates from the 13th century. That central area is the major element of the Pickwick Conservation Area which was originally designated in 1973 and reviewed in 1992 and late 2005.

Local Authorities are required to review all Conservation Areas from time to time. Given the scant information available in support of either the 1992 or the 2005 review, the extent of local development (both in terms of built form and infrastructure) and the intervening period, we have felt it necessary to undertake a comprehensive background study on the history and development of Pickwick as a whole in order to set the Pickwick Conservation Area in its proper context.

The review

Wiltshire has over 225 conservation areas. Public opinion is typically in favour of protecting the familiar and valued local scene. Historic England notes that:-

Conservation area designation introduces some additional controls over the way owners can alter or develop their properties. However, owners of residential properties generally consider these controls to be beneficial because they also sustain, and/or enhance, the value of property within it.

A conservation area is described in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”.

Conservation areas are designated by the local authority and designation is the recognition of an area’s special qualities, which the council intends to safeguard as an important part of the district’s heritage. It is the accumulation of an area’s positive architectural or historic attributes, rather than the quality of its individual buildings, which makes it worthy of conservation area status. The attributes might include: the landscape setting of the area; the grouping of traditional buildings and the resultant spaces and sense of enclosure; the scale, design, type and materials of the buildings; historic boundaries; public realm; landmarks, views and vistas; the present and former pattern of activities or land uses and historic associations.

Conservation area designation allows for strengthened planning controls, gives protection to trees, and provides control over the demolition of unlisted buildings.

Designated conservation areas are defined areas of “architectural quality or historic interest”¹: understanding what makes them special, alongside an active management plan (once an area is so designated), is key to their ongoing success. An appraisal of a conservation area is “the vehicle for understanding both the significance of an area and the effect of those impacts bearing negatively on its significance. [An appraisal] will form part of the local authority’s Historic Environment Record and will be part of the evidence base for the local plan and a material consideration in planning decisions”.²

¹ 2018 National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 127

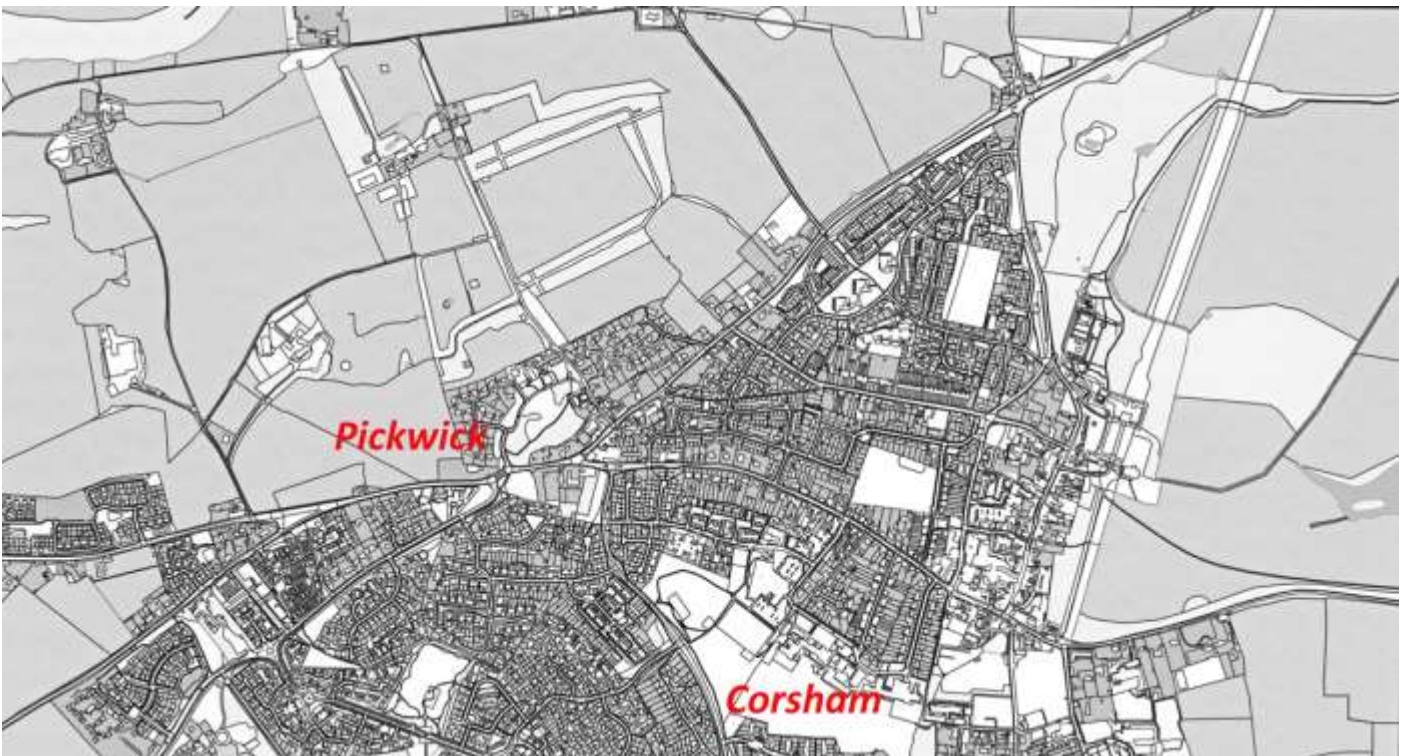
² Conservation area appraisal, designation and management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (second edition; 2019)

The town of Corsham has expanded right up to Pickwick's 'back doors' since the World War II. Much of the central area of the town, including the house and open fields of Corsham Court are within the Corsham conservation area which was last reviewed—and extended—in 1999.

- set out the context of Pickwick vis-a-vis the town of Corsham (Part 3);
- examine in some detail the contents of the Pickwick Conservation Area (Part 4); and
- suggest a number of character areas within the Pickwick Conservation Area (Part 5).

The quite separate Pickwick Conservation Area has not been systematically reviewed since 1992. In this paper :

- we rehearse the history and setting of Pickwick (Part 2);



The built area of Corsham has now extended up to Pickwick



The Pickwick Conservation Area, hatched blue, as designated by Wiltshire Council

Planning policy context

The Wiltshire Council is required by legislation to periodically review their existing conservation areas. An appraisal of each area is therefore required in order to identify the particular attributes that make each conservation area special. Guidance is provided to councils by Historic England in its publication *Historic England 2019 Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management Second edition, Historic England Advice Note 1* published in February 2019. By way of background the following extract from that publication is of importance:-

The advice in this document emphasises that evidence required to inform decisions affecting a conservation area, including both its designation and management, should be proportionate to the importance of the asset. It also follows the government's recommended approach to conserving and enhancing heritage assets, as set out in the NPPF. It gives particular attention to identifying opportunities where conservation can help to deliver wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits and where there may be opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place. These approaches conform with the statutory duty of local planning authorities with regards to conservation areas, and in particular with the requirement to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

The contribution that historic areas make to our quality of life is widely recognised: around 10,000 conservation areas have been designated. They are a link to the past that can give us a sense of continuity and stability and they have the reassurance of the familiar which can provide a point of reference in a rapidly changing world. The way building traditions and settlement patterns are superimposed and



The northern flank wall of no. 18 Pickwick features a delightful decorated window frame and a blocked-up window

survive over time will be unique to the townscape of each area. This local distinctiveness can provide a catalyst for regeneration and inspire well designed new development which brings economic and social benefits valued by both local planning authorities and local communities.

Change is inevitable, and often beneficial, and this advice sets out ways to manage change in a way that conserves and enhances the character and appearance of historic areas. Conservation areas can contribute to sustainable development in all its three dimensions as outlined in the NPPF. However, 512 conservation areas were recorded as 'at risk' by local planning authorities in Historic England's national survey in 2017 through pressure for inappropriate new development, vacancy, decay or damage (the gathering of local authority information on conservation areas at risk has provided information on over 80% of conservation areas in England).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), first published in 2012³, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied by local planning authorities. The NPPF provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans (for housing and other development) should be produced; the NPPF also includes the context [Section 16; paragraph 184ff] for the protection and enhancement of the historic environment – including protecting the 'specialness' of a place which has been recognised through designation as a conservation area.

At local planning authority level, The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted on 20 January 2015⁴) provides the overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire (for the period up to 2026), supported by a range of other published detail planning guidance⁵. The Core Strategy recognises [Core Policy 57] that "good design helps to provide a sense of place, creates or reinforces local distinctiveness, and promotes community cohesiveness and social wellbeing".

The Strategy also emphasises that, in order to ensure the character of Wiltshire's settlements are not harmed, development must be informed by a thorough understanding of the locality, maintain a strong sense of place, draw on local context and be complementary to the locality. To this end, any development proposals seeking approval must have regard to adopted supplementary guidance on design – including Corsham Neighbourhood Plan.

Further, to demonstrate any development proposal will be sympathetic to (and conserve) historic buildings, Wiltshire Council's Core Policy 58 [ensuring the conservation of the historic environment] requires that designated heritage assets and their settings [including conservation areas] will be conserved and (where appropriate) enhanced, specifically being mindful of the individual and distinctive character and appearance of Wiltshire's historic villages. There is a strong presumption that development will have the form, scale, design and use materials which are complementary to and in the historic context.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

⁴ <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-core-strategy>

⁵ <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy>

Designation of a conservation area or indeed of a listed building does not preclude the possibility of new development or adaptation to reflect modern living aspirations. However, such alterations “will only be acceptable where they are consistent with the conservation of a heritage asset’s significance. Consequently, it is expected that development will be of the highest standard to maintain and enhance the quality of the area or building and be sensitive to its character and appearance”.

While it was anticipated that additional planning guidance on heritage would be developed by Wiltshire Council to aid in the application of Core Policy 58 – including establishing a new local heritage list in line with Historic England’s Local Heritage Listing (Advice Note 7)⁶ – this has yet to be published. So although this appraisal of Pickwick conservation area does not constitute the development of a formal local list of non-designated heritage assets, it does seek to celebrate the breadth of the totality of the historic environment of Pickwick and reinforce that sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment as part of the wider range of designation and protection.

Purpose and scope of this document

Conservation area appraisals and management plans are seen as the first steps in a dynamic process, the aim of which is to seek the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of conservation areas in the context of their setting and to provide a basis for making decisions about their future scope and management.

This background paper aims to:

- ◆ identify those elements both within the conservation area and the wider setting of Pickwick as a whole which contribute to the character of the area including historic associations;
- ◆ identify elements which detract from the character; and
- ◆ propose measures to maintain or improve the positive character, local distinctiveness and sense of place of the conservation area.

We have tried to take all reasonable steps to carry out a thorough appraisal of the conservation area and its setting. There are a small number of areas of private land which we have not entered. This appraisal is nonetheless comprehensive and representative of the area.



The A4 near its junction with Pickwick Road



The arch through the Stables at Beechfield

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/>

Corsham's Neighbourhood Plan

The Corsham Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' (adopted) following a referendum in November 2019.

Neighbourhood Plans are planning powers which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. They form part of the development plan for the local area and they have the same weight as the Core Strategy and its associated documents.

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan cannot be in conflict with the Core Strategy it can amend or add to policy where a local variation is needed. It can also allocate additional land for development.

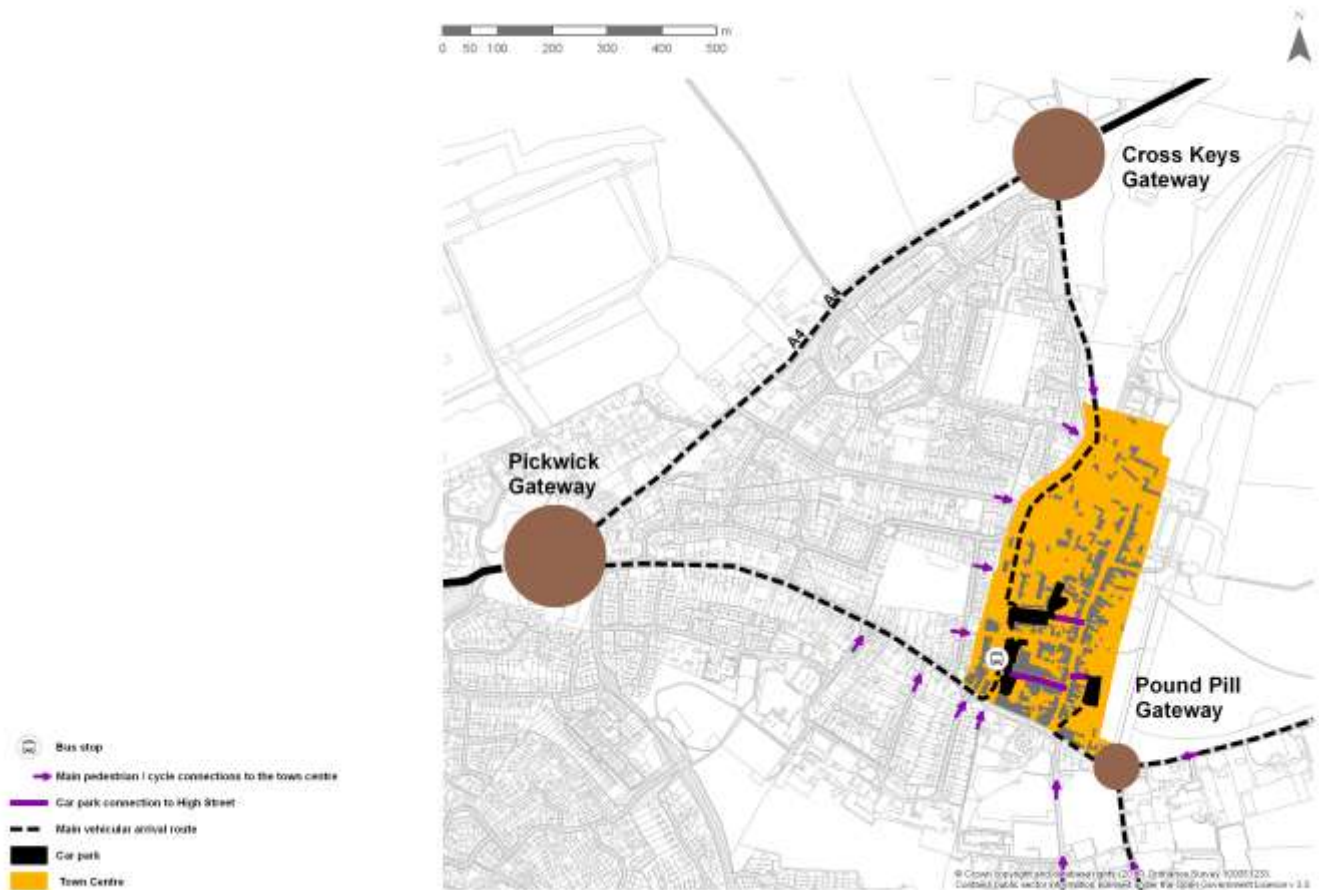
An extract from the Plan is at Appendix 2.

The Plan reinforces the Council's aim to preserve and enhance the heritage aspects of Corsham and acknowledges that:-

"Historic England would ideally like all conservation areas to have a Conservation Area Appraisal or a Conservation Management Plan. These documents have not been produced by the Local Authority to date, however, this Neighbourhood Plan is committed to supporting the Local Authority in the preparation of such documents in the future. In the meantime, the Corsham Design Guide provides a comprehensive basis for the protection and enhancement of both the natural and the built historic environments."

It goes on to say *"Good design for Corsham means Establishing (a) Gateway into the town at Pickwick".*

The diagram below, copied from the Plan, illustrates the 'gateway concept' - which falls within the Conservation Area. This paper has been drafted in the spirit of the above.



Part 2: Pickwick – its setting and history

Geology⁷

Geologically, Pickwick lies within the Great Oolite which is overlain by younger rocks of the Forest Marble Formation. Regionally, these strata are gently inclined in a generally south-easterly direction. The Corsham Fault follows the line of the Bradford Road, slips beneath the Hare and Hounds pub and thereafter follows the southern boundary of Pickwick⁸.

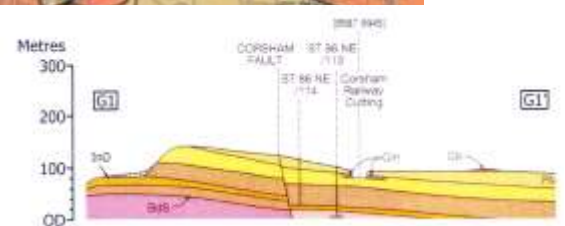
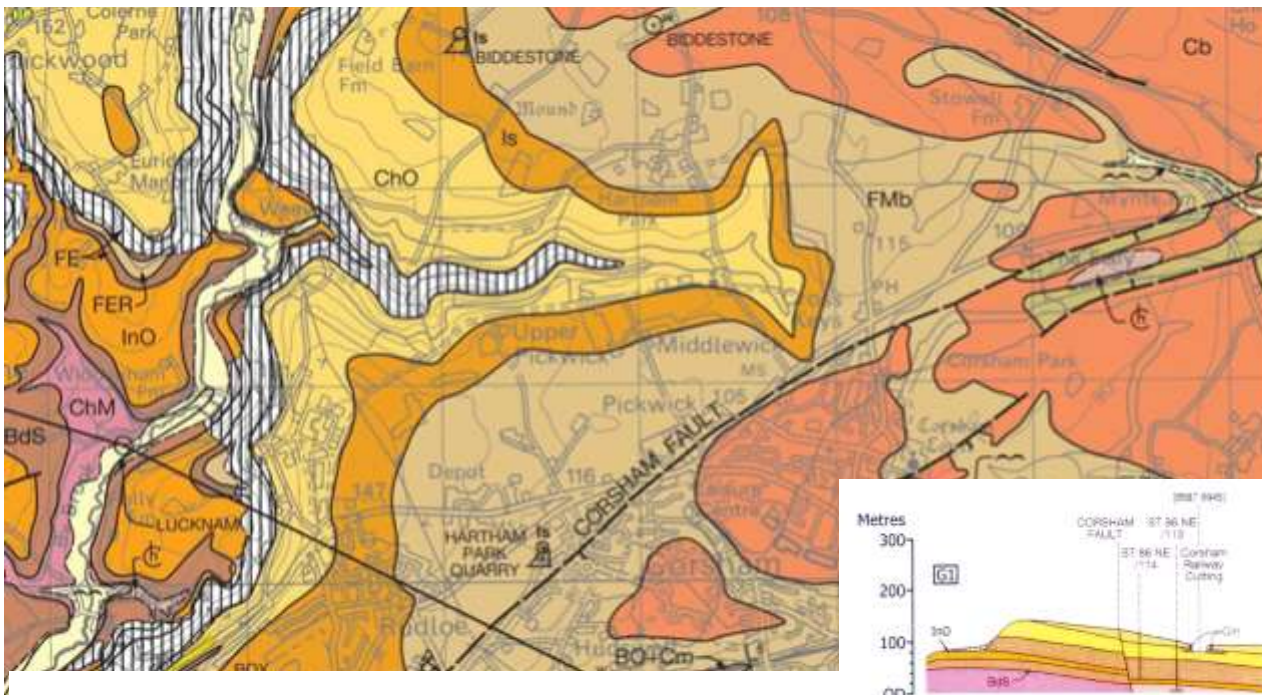
Great Oolite - Bath Stone - has been mined extensively in the area since Roman times. From the 18th century it has been sourced mostly by underground mining. In Pickwick underground extraction is licensed for a significant area from its western approaches as far north as Pickwick Lodge Farm. And as far east as the very boundary of the Conservation Area. The British Geological Survey advises that *“The best freestones in the Chalfield Oolite are found in the upper part of the Combe Down Oolite Member and within the Bath Oolite Member”*. That is to say that Pickwick stone is amongst the best.

Wiltshire Council policies are to safeguard the resource.

The actual mining is presently carried out by Hartham Park Bath Stone Limited. Whilst the entrance to their quarry lies outside the Pickwick boundary, their present workings extend beneath the western extremity of the village and incorporate centuries old workings which can be identified at ground level by the airshaft which can be seen in the field immediately east of Guyers Lane.



Below - British Geological survey map showing Corsham Fault



GENERALIZED VERTICAL SECTIONS

Scale 1:2500 (1 cm to 25 m)
Thicknesses are given in metres



⁸GWP Consultants for Pickwick Association, July 2017

⁷ See also 'Strategic Stone Study—a building stone atlas of Wiltshire' https://www.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/buildingStones/StrategicStoneStudy/EH_atlases.html



Nos. 41 to 45 Pickwick

Location and setting

Pickwick (edged red in the plan, right) comprises a number of separate elements. The linear section of the village (formerly known as 'Lower Pickwick') sits astride and north of the Bath Road three miles west of Chippenham and eight miles east of Bath. Beyond and to the north sit the hamlets of Middlewick and Upper Pickwick.

Since the major housing boom immediately post-war, the open space south of Pickwick on the A4 has been replaced by new homes and Pickwick and the adjacent town of Corsham are now physically joined.

(Lower) Pickwick retains its character by virtue of its Georgian architecture fronting the length of the village core along the main road. The land to the north of the A4 – largely formerly part of the Beechfield Estate - remains undisturbed save where modern houses have been built on what had become brownfield elements of Beechfield.

Middlewick and Upper Pickwick remain much as they were in the 18th century.

The Pickwick Conservation Area itself is situated in Lower Pickwick and occupies the village core either side of the A4. It includes the residue of the Beechfield Estate.



Pickwick, outlined in red



The three elements of Pickwick; Conservation Area edged black



Nos. 25 to 31 Pickwick

The settlement of Pickwick alongside the A4 is small with individually designed mostly 17th or 18th century buildings lining either side of the through road. The eastern approach (from Chippenham) is characterised first by the open fields of the Corsham Estate, then (via the Cross Keys Gateway identified in the Neighbourhood Plan) by a group of 19th or early 20th century dwellings; the western approach (from Bath) enters Pickwick via the open fields south of Guyers House bounded by a typical dry stone wall (now partially demolished as a precursor to potential development) and the 18th century Guyers Cottages on the northern side of the A4 and the listed Catholic Church to the south. It proceeds via the Pickwick Gateway past the parkland of Beechfield on the one side and Pickwick Manor on the other.

Pickwick is highly distinctive, quite separate from Corsham and an early village settlement. It has some 48 listed buildings, a notable number for such a small settlement, with Pickwick Manor being Grade II*. The historic core of Pickwick is of a singular, distinguished appearance due to its Georgian aspect: it was a notable Quaker settlement⁷ and has an unusual number of buildings with datestones of the time i.e. 1708, 1730, 1739 and 1745. The Quaker settlers established their own Meeting House, Boarding School and burial ground which have given Pickwick its distinctive variety of historic buildings, notable character and unusual ground plans.

The landscape setting surrounding Pickwick is of significance both in relation to the structure of land holdings from at least the 17th century and to the major changes to its infrastructure apparent following World War II. Their aesthetic qualities provide an attractive rural backdrop to the built form.

Middlewick and Upper Pickwick form an integral part of the community being linked to the principal settlement by foot-path or country lane. Almost every building there is listed.

A more detailed look at some of Pickwick's more important buildings is at Appendix 1.



No. 3 Middlewick



Hillsgreen Lodge at Upper Pickwick

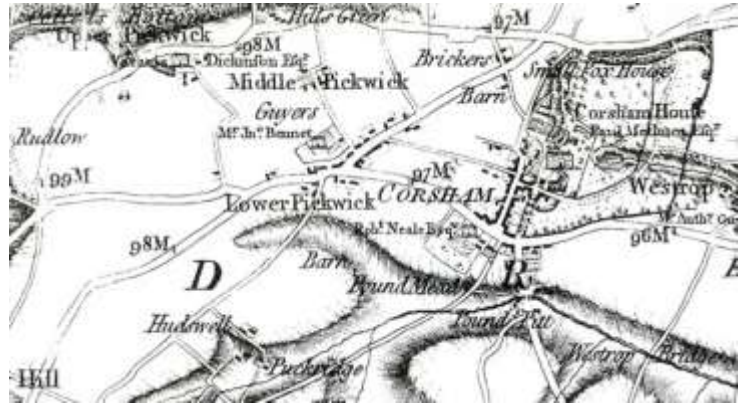
⁷ *The Quakers in Pickwick, A Documentary Study by P Martin, L Purdy and D Treasure, Wiltshire Buildings Record, September 2019*

Pickwick in maps

The three elements of Pickwick have been consistently shown as Lower, Upper and Middle Pickwick since the earliest maps were produced. See, for example the Andrews and Drury map of 1773 and the slightly later Archibald Robertson map of 1792. Robinson's map is particularly interesting since it is but a small section of one of the many plates produced to illustrate Part II of his publication 'A Topographical Survey of the Great Road from London to Bath and Bristol'.

Even as late as 1955, the Ordnance Survey map of Wiltshire still referred to 'Upper Pickwick', 'Middle Pickwick' and 'Lower Pickwick'. By 2019, the terms 'Middle' and 'Lower' had been dropped in relation to Pickwick.

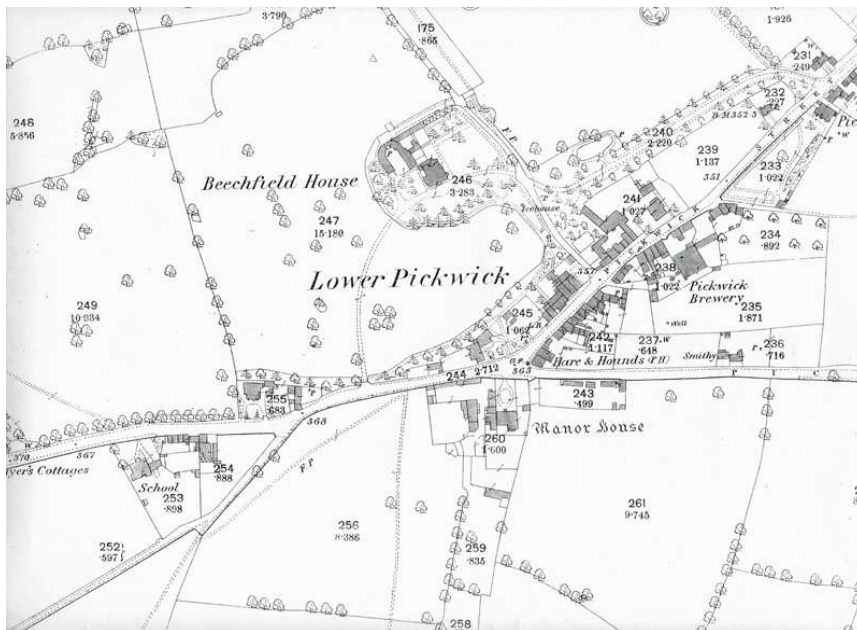
A number of other maps have been reproduced in Part 3 to illustrate the infill between Pickwick and Corsham.



Andrews & Drury 1773



Archibald Robertson 1792



Ordnance Survey 1886



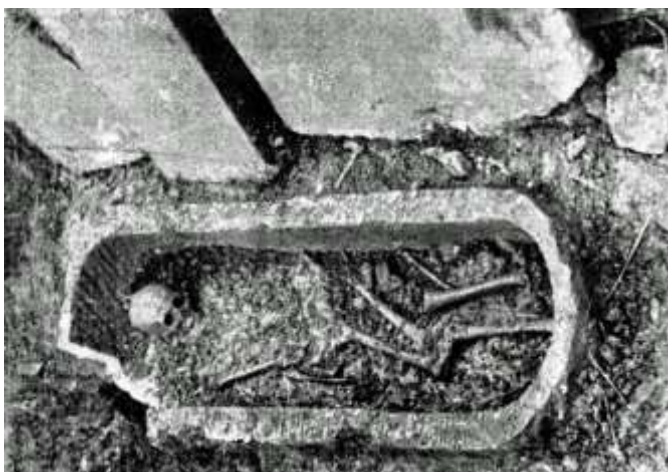
Ordnance Survey 2019

Archaeology^{8,9}

No significant prehistoric, Roman or Saxon settlement remains have been discovered in the wider area around Pickwick: there are no records of archaeological significance - <https://services.wiltshire.gov.uk/HistoryEnvRecord/Home/Index>.

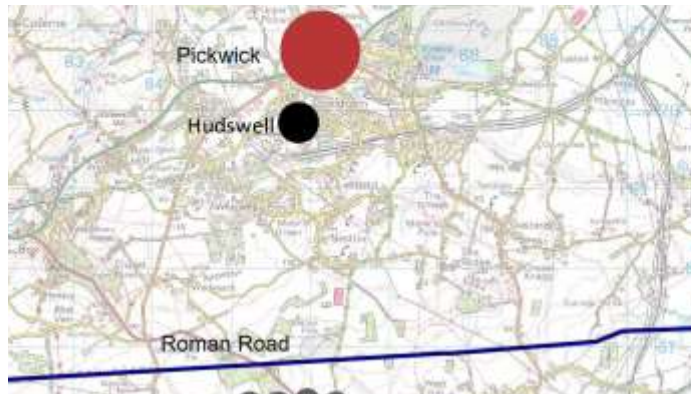
In the Roman period one of the great military roads, that from London to Silchester, by extension went to Bath by a route to the south of Lacock and Corsham via Chapel Knapp and Neston.

In spite of its proximity to the Roman road to Bath, no definite evidence is known of a Roman settlement in the Corsham area though in 1942 at Hudswell in an area called Black Acre, a quarter of a mile north/east of Pockeridge Farm, a stone coffin complete with a heavy stone lid – provisionally identified as Roman - was found during building work within War Department land. See map opposite. Inside was the skeleton of a young woman 16-20 years old. Other Roman items were previously found in the Hudswell area, such as a rubbish pit, a bronze coin of Julian II [AD 355-363], stone tiles, 2nd-3rd century pottery sherds and an Iron Age posthole. The discovery was written up by Colonel A H Burn in the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* No. CLXXX Vol. L of June 1944. The coffin is reported as being located in the low cellar under the Music Room of Corsham Court (pers. Comm. Julian Carosi).



The Hudswell coffin

In Box the remains have been excavated of a Roman villa¹⁰ that major rebuilding in the late 3rd or early 4th century transformed into the largest villa in the Bath area and with one of the richest collections of mosaic floors of any building in Roman Britain.



Pickwick in relation to the Roman Road

In post-Roman times, the stretch of Roman road in this area was apparently disused and a ditch was dug along its course which from that time has borne the name of Wansditch or Wansdyke, 'Ditch of Woden'. It has not been established whether this earthwork was erected by native Britons to ward off the Saxons or as a later boundary between the Saxon kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex.

There have been remarkably few archaeological investigations in the Pickwick area – despite some significant redevelopments - although a few tantalising discoveries have been made. For instance, Wessex Archaeology discovered a small pit containing prehistoric pottery [possibly early Neolithic] whilst trenching in the field north of the Bath Road opposite St Patrick's Church in April 2016⁸ and some Roman tiles were found in the garden of a local house off Middlewick Lane¹¹.

Historic development⁹

In terms of its general location, when John Leland visited in 1541, he described 'Cosham' as 'a good uplandish toun'. In 1927, Sir Harold Brakspear wrote¹² "..... the parish of Corsham is situated on the southernmost edge of the great oolitic range of the Cotswolds, its height above the river valleys rendering the site suitable for human habitation from earliest times".

There is very little known about the early history of Pickwick and no detailed studies have been made, for instance, there is no Victoria County History covering the area. Relatively little is known about the form and development of its buildings before the Georgian period and only two properties have Historic Building Reports written by Wiltshire Buildings Record¹³.

⁸ Fairhead, S., *Land to the north of Bath Road, Corsham: Archaeological Evaluation.*, 2016, Wessex Archaeology

⁹ Much of the following history and details of buildings is taken from 'A History of Pickwick and its buildings' by John Maloney (unpublished 2019)

¹⁰ Corney, M & the KOBRA Trust, *The Roman Villa at Box: the Study of the Extensive Romano-British Structures Buried Below the Village of Box*, Hobnob Press, August 2012

¹¹ Pers comm. Jane Browning

¹² 'Corsham' by Harold Brakspear, FSA, *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 43 (1927, pps 511-539)

¹³ M Parrott, *Notes from a visit to Mead Cottage, 15 Pickwick, Corsham, Wiltshire Buildings Report Record*, 6th March 2014 and P Slocombe, *12 Pickwick Corsham—Historic Buildings Report*, Wiltshire Buildings Record

Saxon & Norman

The name 'Pickwick' derives from "Pic" - Anglo-Saxon meaning a peak or pointed hill - and "wic" meaning a village. Nearby Corsham was referred in the Domesday Book as *Cosseham*, thought to be derived from *Cosa's hām*, "ham" being Old English for homestead, or village, and "Cosa" being a personal name. Corsham is recorded as Coseham in 1001 and as Cosseha in 1086. The meaning is likely to have been the settlement of Cosa or Cossa. However, the history of the settlement begins before the Norman period. The area belonged to the Saxon kings in the 8th and 9th centuries. It is reported that King Aethelred (978-1017) stayed at his house in Corsham. William of Malmesbury wrote that the king 'had his Country Palace at Corsham and kept his Court there'. The Corsham area retained a strong royal connection under the Normans; it is recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 "The king holds Cosseham. Earl Tosti held it in the time of King Edward" [the Confessor, the last Saxon King]. It was apparently quite a large settlement with two mills and two churches. Being in the vicinity, Pickwick will have been within Corsham's sphere of influence.

There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Number: 1011307, just behind Hartham House [less than a mile north of Pickwick]. The Schedule identifies a large mound as a 'motte castle' (i.e. not a prehistoric tumulus as older histories propose but a Norman earthwork).

Medieval

The crown retained possession of Corsham and in 1285 a charter granted a market there every week which would have supported the town's prosperity and development. From the latter part of the 14th century the Manor of Corsham formed part of the dowry of several Queens of England. In deeds of this period and afterwards it is often called 'Corsham Regus' (Royal Corsham) or 'Corsham Reginae' (Queen's Corsham).

Pickwick was one of the tithings of Corsham Manor within which a number of substantial houses had started to be built by the 13th century. In Pickwick, three such houses are known: Pickwick Farm (now called Pickwick Manor), Leyceters (demolished 1794 and replaced by Beechfield House) and Snellings (now incorporated in Guyers House). A settlement is recorded at Hillsgreen in 1523.

Post-Medieval

At least by the end of the 17th century, smaller scale residential development had begun on either side of the main road. This development continued into the 18th century and today the core of Pickwick village retains many of those early buildings, with the Manor, Beechfield and Guyers on the periphery.

Pickwick's position on the London to Bath coaching route – being the convenient last stop to change horses before the descent into Bath - led if not to the establishment, then certainly to the enhancement of the coaching inn, the Hare and Hounds. Inevitably, the adjacent property at No. 42 was the ostlers' premises and around the corner in what is now known as Pickwick Road was a *Smithy* [1884 OS map].

Existing 'roads' being in poor condition, in the period 1751 to

1758 in Wiltshire alone sixteen new turnpike trusts were set up for the maintenance and regulation of main routes. The new turnpike road was developed piecemeal and in 1743 the Chippenham Trust built a section from Chippenham to Pickwick, avoiding Corsham, and advertised it as the new Bath Road. A tollhouse and gate were built at the entrance to the village but this route still went via Chapel Plaister and Kingsdown into Bath. A more direct route was proposed from



'The Mail Coach' from a print attributed to Henry Alken (1785-1851)

Pickwick, cutting right through Hartham Park and down Box Hill. A new trust was formed to promote the road named *Bricker's Barn Trust*. The route from Chippenham to Bath was altered after 1751 such that it followed a more northerly route (via Hill Green etc - see map below left) through Upper Pickwick and that would have changed the frequency of passing trade through Pickwick. However, the road was once again diverted in 1803 from Cross Keys through Pickwick.



Cross Keys from Archibald Robinson's book of 1792: it was here that the coaching route was modified between 1751 and 1803 to avoid Pickwick.

The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette of 1819 lists gates in the Corsham area and records the Pickwick Gate and Side Gate. As a result of recent research it is known that the Roundhouse in Pickwick [right], just west of the Hare and Hounds, which projects out into the existing Bath Road, features on the Corsham tithe award dated 1839 as a turnpike house occupied by Ezekiel Evans¹⁴. (See also Appendix 1 for more information about the Roundhouse)

Early maps featuring Pickwick apparently accord it at least equal significance with Corsham to travellers on the Bath Road - or perhaps greater in the case of the first survey of the roads of England and Wales in John Ogilvy's *Britannia*, 1675, on the strip map of the road from London to Bath and Wells [next page]. Emanuel Bowen's *AN IMPROVED MAP OF WILTSHIRE*, 1780, [below] also shows Pickwick and Corsham as being equally significant but apparently with their locations reversed!

After Charles Dickens's first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was published in 1837 and became a literary sensation, the name 'Pickwick' became famous world-wide. At some time in the latter part of the 18th century or the early part of the 19th century a baby boy was found on a doorstep in Pickwick and was given two names, Moses, after the Old Testament prophet found in the bulrushes, and secondly, Pickwick, after the village where he was found. Moses Pickwick later became landlord of the 'Hare & Hounds' and a coach proprietor. It is probable that Dickens saw the name of 'Pickwick' on coaches belonging to Eleazer and Moses Pickwick, and chose the surname for his lead character in 'Pickwick Papers', which also

satirised the social life in Bath.

Through all vicissitudes, the famous old coaching inn the Hare and Hounds remained and is Grade II listed.

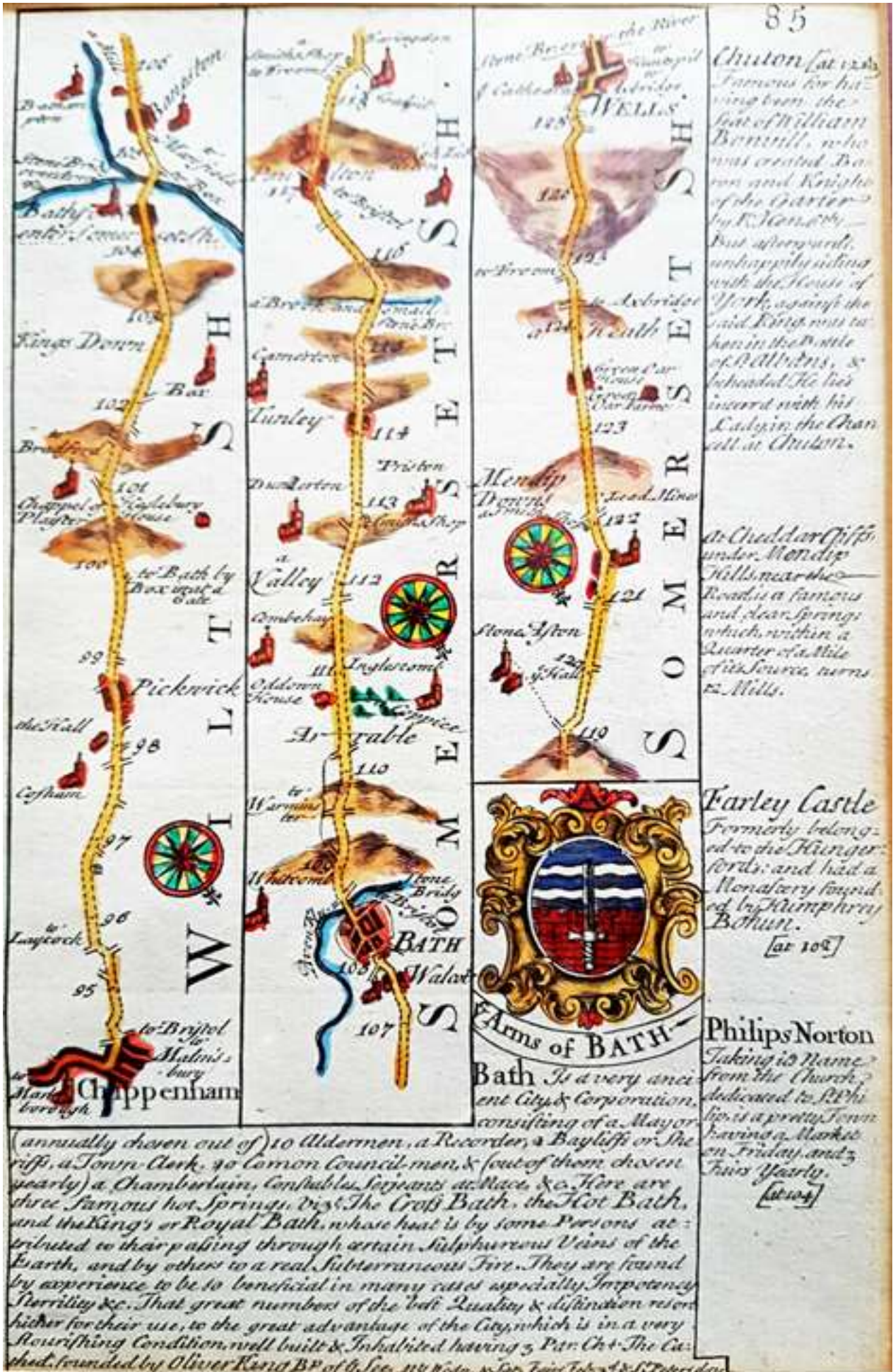


The Roundhouse



Emanuel Bowen's AN IMPROVED MAP OF WILTSHIRE, 1780

¹⁴ *The Round House, Pickwick, Corsham ~ A Historic Buildings Study, Report No. B15985* P Martin, L Purdy & D Treasure, Wiltshire Buildings Record, August 2019



The Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers, acquired a burial ground at Pickwick in 1659. By the early 18th century they had become an important part of the community, establishing a school and meeting house¹⁵.

From the mid-19th century Pickwick was owned by the Poynder family, who had established themselves at Hartham and owned land covering not only Pickwick but Biddestone as well. The history of the area has many family threads that are woven into the fabric of Pickwick life, going back centuries; families such as the Mitchells, Hulberts and Goldneys. These families can be found in the area in the 17th century and later.

The Mitchell family, who were Quakers, were involved in many aspects of local life over several generations. Another example was the Goldney family. Records show this Quaker family being part of Pickwick life in the mid-19th century, living at Beechfield House. However, in 1918 Frederick Goldney bought the Pickwick estate from the Dickson-Poynder family, who were not Quakers. This estate remained in their possession until all the buildings were sold in 1948.

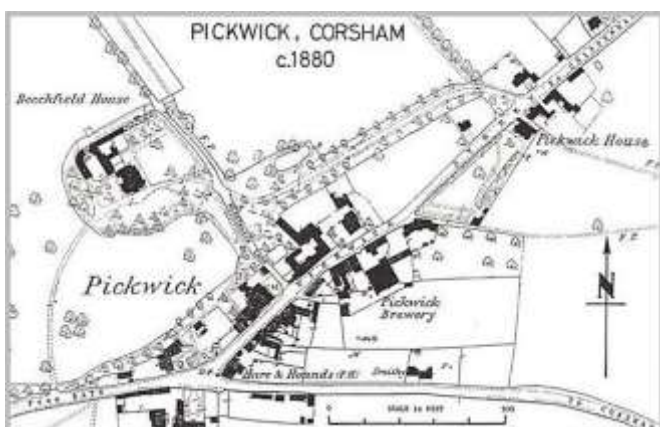
The Spread Eagle (later the Two Pigs and just recently converted into a private dwelling) is another inn, near to the Hare and Hounds. Its external appearance is considered to be early 19th century but it may be earlier having been 're-fronted'. In 1837 the Wiltshire Independent announced:

"To be sold by auction ... Lot 2. A MESSUAGE or PUBLIC HOUSE called "The Spread Eagle" situate at PICKWICK, at the side of the Turnpike-road from London to Bath, with all necessary and convenient attached and detached Offices, in the occupation of Mr. Wm. Rawlings. This lot is most desirably situate for business, more particularly during the progress of the works of the Great Western Railway".

At the end of the 19th century – when Pickwick did not have a mortuary – corpses were laid out on the bar of the pub until they could be transferred to Corsham mortuary. Until vaccination against smallpox became mandatory in England in 1853, dealing with the virus was problematic, hence the erection/designation of small pox houses one of which was in the Cross Keys hamlet on the London to Bath road just to the east of Pickwick.

In his novel Death and Mr Pickwick (2015), Stephen Jarvis writes ~

One learns next that the folk of Pickwick lived by the larger town of Corsham, but were not of Corsham.



Some distinguished their background by whether they were of Upper Pickwick, Middle Pickwick or Lower Pickwick. Amongst the village's population in the early nineteenth century were quarrymen and labourers. There was also a Jacobean manor, as well as two public houses, a few feet apart. From estimated figures of alcohol consumed, the Pickwickians – whether Upper, Middle or Lower – drank the produce of the local Pickwick Brewery as if St. Boniface himself had blessed it.

Another local family, with even deeper roots than the Goldneys or Mitchells was the Hulbert family. Their most successful role in the life of the community was establishing in 1804 a brewery next to 12 Pickwick. In 1841 the business and the copyhold was put up for sale. However, the Hulbert's retained ownership of the business until the 1860s.



The Spread Eagle; later The Two Pigs; now a private house
Sir John Dickson-Poynder bought the freehold of the brewery in the 1850s when he purchased the Hartham Estate.

In 1865 Thomas Hulbert went into the brewery business with Henry Padbury Manning and in 1870, local man Isaac Belcher, bought the business. In 1875 he formed a partnership with Samuel Hale Smith. Twelve years later the partnership was dissolved. In 1909 the premises were leased by the Dickson-Poynder Estate to Wilkins Bros & Hudson Ltd, originally of Bradford-on-Avon. Having acquired the lease, the new brewery owners set about modernising the place and in 1910 advertised the old plant for sale. The business in Pickwick closed in the 1920s and there ended over 100 years of the Pickwick Brewery. No. 12 Pickwick was connected to the brewery from about 1871 to the 1920s and was known as The Malthouse.

¹⁵ *The Quakers in Pickwick, A Documentary Study by P Martin, L Purdy and D Treasure, Wiltshire Buildings Record, September 2019 and DM Butler, the Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain, Friends Historical Society, 1999*

Pickwick District School was built in 1848 for up to 165 children on land gifted in 1846 by Lord Methuen and his tenants, Sir Gabriel Goldney and Arthur Knapp (*ref. History of the diocese of Clifton, Canon Harding, 1999*). The school is depicted on the 1903 stained glass window in the south wall of St Andrew's Church, Chippenham which is a memorial to Sir Gabriel Goldney, Bart., who was the Member of Parliament for Chippenham from 1865-85. A fall in the local population after the Great War prompted the closure of the school in 1922 and the sale of the building in 1928 as there were other established schools in Corsham to provide for Pickwick children. The old schoolhouse was used for a while as a glove factory during the 1930s, and later became a gas mask factory for a short while during WWII. It was purchased and converted into St. Patrick's Catholic Church and opened in 1945. It is Grade II Listed.



Pickwick District School—now St. Patrick's

Therefore, during the course of the 19th century Pickwick had undoubtedly become a significant settlement and was quite widely known.

Modern

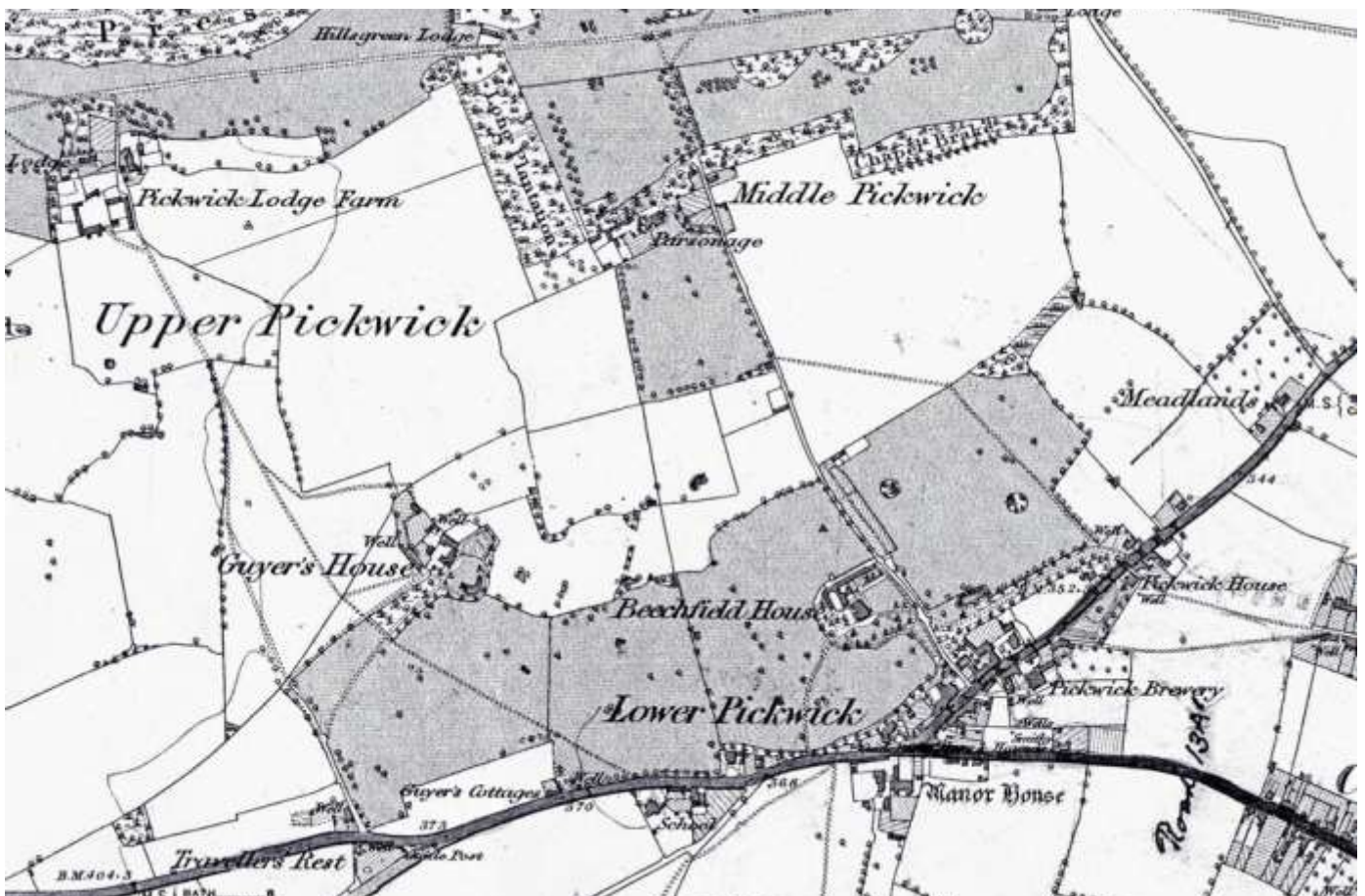
The various parts of Pickwick have long been an entity - Upper, Middle Pickwick [now Middlewick] and Lower - as shown on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map below where the stretch of the road to Bath through Pickwick is named *Pickwick Street*. In modern times it even had a shop, Pickwick Stores, No. 34. There are other buildings along the Bath Road with ironwork fittings for signs which suggest there may have been other commercial premises e.g. No. 27. In living memory the Pickwick core area was referred to as the ochre village, most buildings being of a similar limewash colour to the present



The village shop at No. 34 Pickwick as it was in 1948

Hare and Hounds and some buildings in Church Street, Corsham.

Ordnance Survey 1884



“On descending along the declivity of a steep hill, as we approach Box, we command prospects of a rich and well-cultivated valley, through which a rivulet flows: the high ground on the left becomes more lofty and in its face appear many quarries of beautiful white free-stone of the same quality with that generally known of the name Bath-stone.”

Thus wrote Archibald Robinson in 1792 when he observed the open quarries from the old coach road. But it was underground that the great expansion took place. Underground extraction of Bath stone - so prolific in this area that it is also known as Corsham stone - began in the Hartham Park quarry shortly after 1811, being formed from a combination of three originally separate quarries. The Bath Stone Firms began quarrying stone from Pickwick Quarry in 1899.

The Beechfield estate had been requisitioned for military use during the war. In 1946 the site was made available to the Bath Academy of Art (the BAA) which had been bombed out of its premises in Bath. The BAA occupied the site until 1984, after which it fell into disrepair until it was sold for development in the early 1990’s.

By the 1930s, the vast labyrinth of interconnecting tunnels and existing infrastructure created by the quarrying were considered an ideal setting to support the UK’s rearmament towards anticipated hostilities and, from 1935 on, huge areas underground were requisitioned by the War Office. Tunnels in and around Corsham were adapted by the Royal Engineers as part of the Central Ammunition Depot; others opened (in 1943) as the South West Signals Centre (one of three signal centres at the time); while a third section was brought into industrial production by the Bristol Aeroplane Company for manufacturing aircraft engines. A quarry near to Rudloe Manor (in the adjacent settlement) came into operation under the RAF as No 10 Group Fighter Command Centre.

Pickwick Quarry had also been requisitioned for the War-effort and by 1939 had become a Royal Navy ammunition store. By 1942 (after bombing raids elsewhere in the country), the stores were extended and officially opened as the Royal Navy Storage Depot, named RNSD Copenacre¹⁶. Following the end of conflict, the Fleet Arms storage was moved, but with the stable environment underground, Copenacre became home to storage of the expanding range of naval electronic equipment, including underwater SONAR equipment.

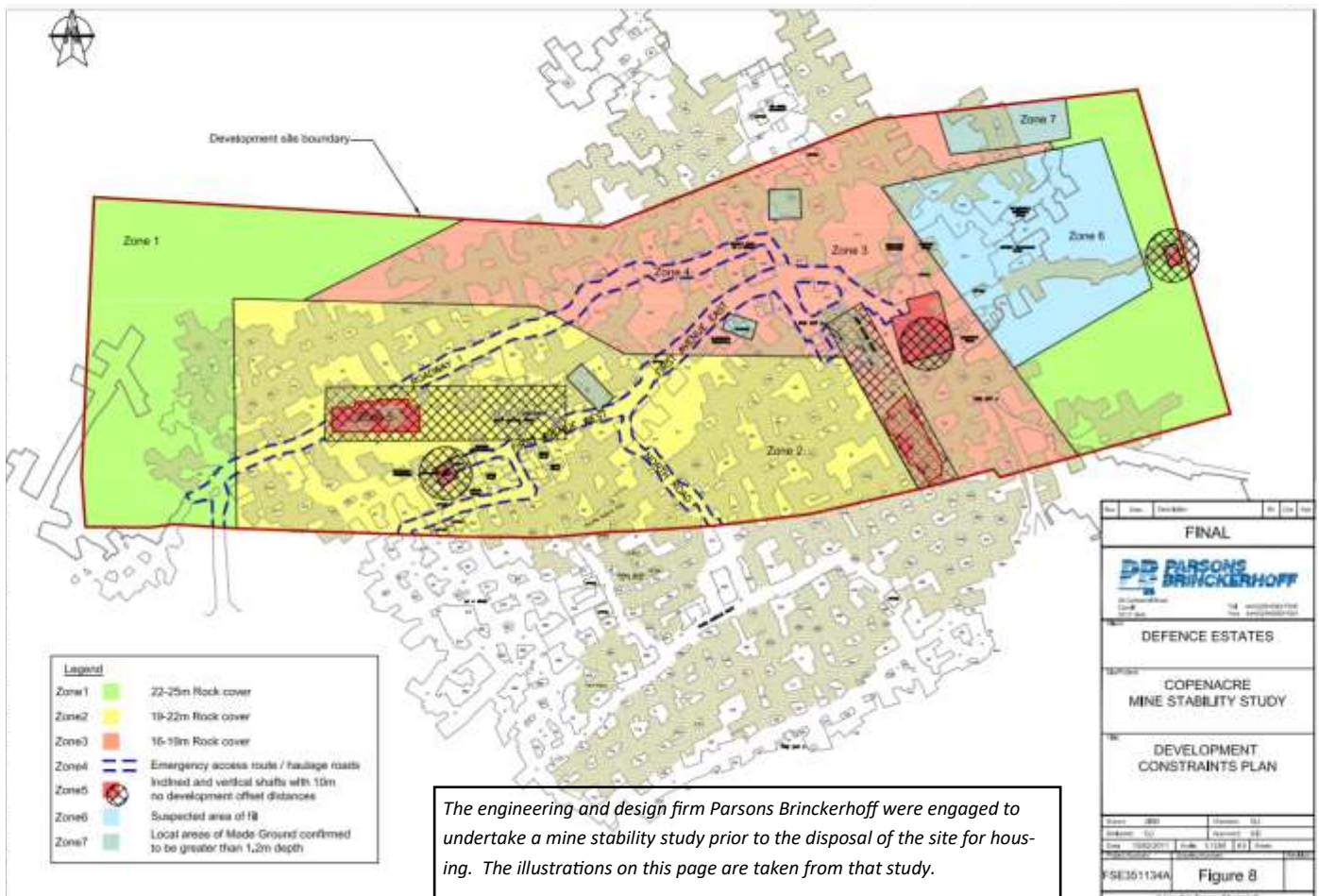
¹⁶See <http://corsham.thehumanjourney.net/maps.htm> alongside the November 2008 report commissioned by English Heritage and Oxford Archaeology from Joint Support Unity (JSU), *Corsham : A characterisation study of the quarries, their 20th century defence uses and related above-ground infrastructure*



Bath Academy of Art at Beechfield

Below—right: the view from the Stables . left Bronze casting, at the Stables





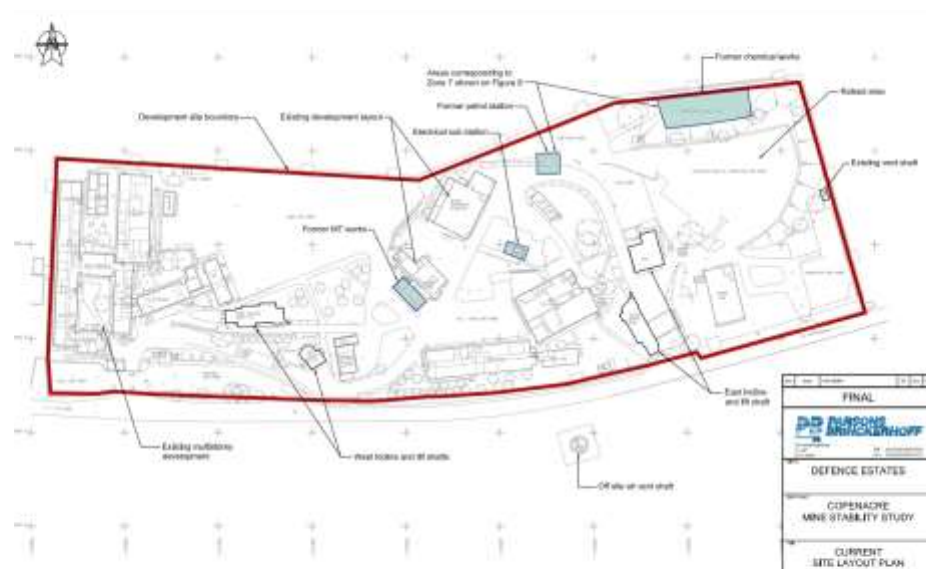
The Cold War saw a further expansion of the navy's occupation of the site with an extension in 1954; and in 1969, Royal Navy Stores and Transport headquarter staff were transferred from London as part of the Government's dispersal policy for staff. This resulted in RNSD Copenacre becoming a self-contained unit dedicated to the storage, testing and issue of the entire range of naval electronic gear. With a staff of 1,700, RNSD Copenacre became the largest employer in North Wiltshire.

In the early 1970s following two small fires underground, a review was undertaken into ongoing storage at Copenacre and it was announced in January 1972 that the site was to close with stores to move to above-ground facilities in Worcestershire; following a public enquiry, Copenacre was granted a reprieve. The Stores closure was announced for a second time in July 1991 (coinciding with a reduction in the surface and submarine fleets) such that by 1995, the test facilities had been moved to RNSD Exeter and the access shafts to the underground storage bricked up.

The MoD continued to have a presence on the site as offices for the Defence Communications Service Agency until those offices were closed in 2008 with staff moving to the Basil Hill Barracks site also in Corsham. At the end of 2011, that site, (along with underground operations for data storage) had been significantly redeveloped and

now known as MoD Corsham, a new tri-Service communication centre.

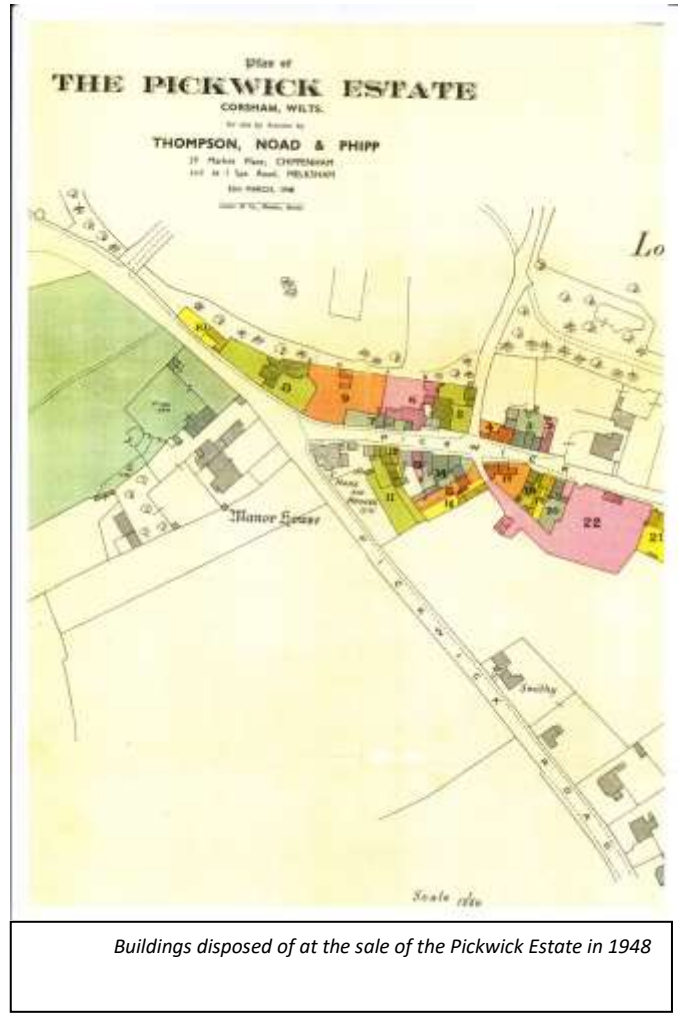
The former Copenacre site closed to the MoD in 2010 (although the underground workings (and former storage) now form part of the Johnson quarry group freehold); the above ground office building was demolished in support of a planning application (2012) for up to 100 dwellings alongside a nursing home, hotel and office space; by 2019, a development of just over 50 domestic dwelling had been completed, although the former use of the site is still visible in the two (locally heritage significant) concrete entrance blocks for the traveller to the underground workings.



In 1948 the Pickwick Estate - see below - being 24 properties comprising 'Accommodation, Pasture Lands & Buildings Walled Garden etc' in the Pickwick core area was sold at auction by the representatives of Sir Frederick Hastings Goldney, 3rd Baronet of Beechfield and Bradenstoke Priory. In the sales brochure it was described as 'Pickwick Estate comprising the greater part of the Delightful, Old World Cotswold Style Village of Pickwick'. See right.

Some buildings have had a complicated history: it was only in the early 1960's a Masonic Lodge was established in Pickwick within Nos. 41-41a (formerly known as *Norway House*). Prior to being purchased by Corsham Freemasons Lodge the building had been, variously, converted by the late Sir Frederick Goldney, Bart, to form a billiards room for Beechfield House (and was referred to in the Pickwick Estate sale brochure, 25th March 1948 as The Old Malthouse); a (Quaker?) school and a malthouse/brewery making beer for the two nearby public houses, The Hare & Hounds and The Spread Eagle (latterly, The Two Pigs)¹⁷.

¹⁷ P Martin & D Treasure, *The Masons in Corsham—a brief Documentary Study of Sources, Wiltshire Buildings Record, October 2019*



Buildings disposed of at the sale of the Pickwick Estate in 1948



Since then Pickwick has continued to thrive, for instance, Moonraker canoes were built and supplied in kit form in the 1960s by Lancefield & Jenkins, in conjunction with Brown's Woodworking on the site of the previous Pickwick Brewery and became very well known. Also, between 1956 and 1990, Robin Eden ran a successful antique business at No. 23 and was followed by his son, Matthew. In 2009 No. 23 was bought by a London antiques dealer, Geoffrey Harley, whose clients included the royal family, well known show business celebrities, stars of film and stage and major English and American dealers.



The Corsham Dairy was started in 1928¹⁸ by the Batley family at Priory Farm, on the corner of what is now Bath Road and Priory Street. The Batley's had farmed at Sheldon Manor before moving to Pockridge and subsequently opening the dairy in Pickwick.

The 1881 census shows the family still residing at the Duke of Cumberland public house in Priory Street. At this time John Batley's family numbered ten, the parents and eight children. Two more children were to follow, James in 1885 and Edith the following year. It was James who, having married in 1909, opened a dairy shop at the corner of High Street and Priory Street in about 1910. In 1928 James changed course to run the dairy at Priory Farm. 'Batley's Skilling' was the old milking parlour. 'Priory Farm House', separated by a yard and 'Snips' (formerly the hairdressers), was the farmhouse. The dairy eventually ceased trading but the family continued to run a B&B at the Old Parsonage, the new family home in Pickwick village, just along from the Farm.

In the mid-1990s the site was sold and has been developed into an attractive mixture of old and new housing.



the old Corsham dairy



Left—the Dairy site redeveloped

Below left—Priory Farm House and the Old Parsonage to the right

Below right—the date stone and entrance to Priory Farm House



¹⁸ Corsham Civic Society—<https://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk/the-batley-family/>

Pickwick Motor and Engineering Works on the Bath Road has been a going concern since the 1920s and, although under different ownership, is still in existence today.

Originally operated by a Mr. W Sperring, the garage provided vehicle maintenance and fuel services into the 21st century. Son Hugh took over the business when his father died, living in the bungalow next door. When he, too, passed on, the premises changed hands with the sale of petrol discontinued and motor sales commenced. An old MG which formerly occupied pride of place in the showroom window was sold on (to be reconditioned as one of the very few 1935 MG SA Charlesworth tourers in existence).

Situated just at the entrance to the Conservation Area coming from Chippenham, the site has always been a jumble of buildings, cars and advertising. But it remains one of the few commercial premises in Pickwick and on that account it is a welcome addition to the village.



L. to r Mr Hemmings (assistant to Mr W Sperring); Harry Batley; and W Sperring



Pickwick Motor Works

In the 1960s Pickwick even provided purpose-built accommodation in the 'Park Lane Motel', later renamed 'The Stagecoach Motel', established on the A4 on a site next to St. Patrick's Catholic Church! It was sold in 1990 and, eventually, the small Chestnut Grange housing estate was built on the site.

In 1989 the Pickwick Association was formed to promote and carry out activities for the benefit of the community in Pickwick and has since been active in a variety of capacities, including considering local planning applications.



The Stagecoach Motel

Due in part to the presence of the Ministry of Defence since World War II, the Corsham area has become a significant national digital hub including the splendid setting of historic Hartam Park, with the grounds providing a well-established centre for digital and other businesses, including the Corsham Institute (part of the Digital Corsham initiative).

Pickwick is well-served for transportation being on a major route of the road system – the A4 – and near to Chippenham railway station on the Great Western Main Line serving Swindon, Reading and London Paddington to the east and Bath Spa and Bristol the west. National Express has stops in the core area and there are local buses to Chippenham and Bath.



Beechfield House and The Stables

Settlement Pattern - where people live

The most significant changes to the settlement pattern - where people actually live in Pickwick - have occurred since the end of World War II during which Corsham became a major manufacturing centre for war-related equipment. Most of this took place in underground caverns gouged out by decades of mining for Bath stone. Manufacturing required more labour than was locally available so both men and materials were brought in. Many of the men were Irish—hence the establishment of St. Patrick’s Catholic Church in 1945. Their temporary accommodation turned permanent after 1946 – and in doing so, the space between Pickwick and Corsham became entirely residential.

These changes can be traced through the maps on the following pages.

Within Pickwick itself, there was little change. There was limited housing infill, and no residential development north of the Bath Road at all until the land occupied by the Beechfield Estate was released following the departure of the Bath Academy of Art.

The Beechfield Estate was sold on with the restriction that the then brownfield site could only be developed on a unit for unit basis—a principle faithfully adopted for land in the Conservation Area for many years. This left much needed open space, particularly in what subsequently became Woodlands and Academy Drive

Pickwick now comprises:-

- ◆ The historic core along the Bath Road;
- ◆ The residue of the Beechfield Estate – Academy Drive, Woodlands and the Beechfield Nature Area;
- ◆ The Pickwick Gateway centred on Pickwick Manor and the Hare and Hounds;
- ◆ Upper Pickwick, Guyers House and Pickwick Lodge Farm ; and
- ◆ Middlewick – Hillsgreen Lodge, Middlewick House, Mermaid Cottage and Nos. 3 and 4 Middlewick Lane

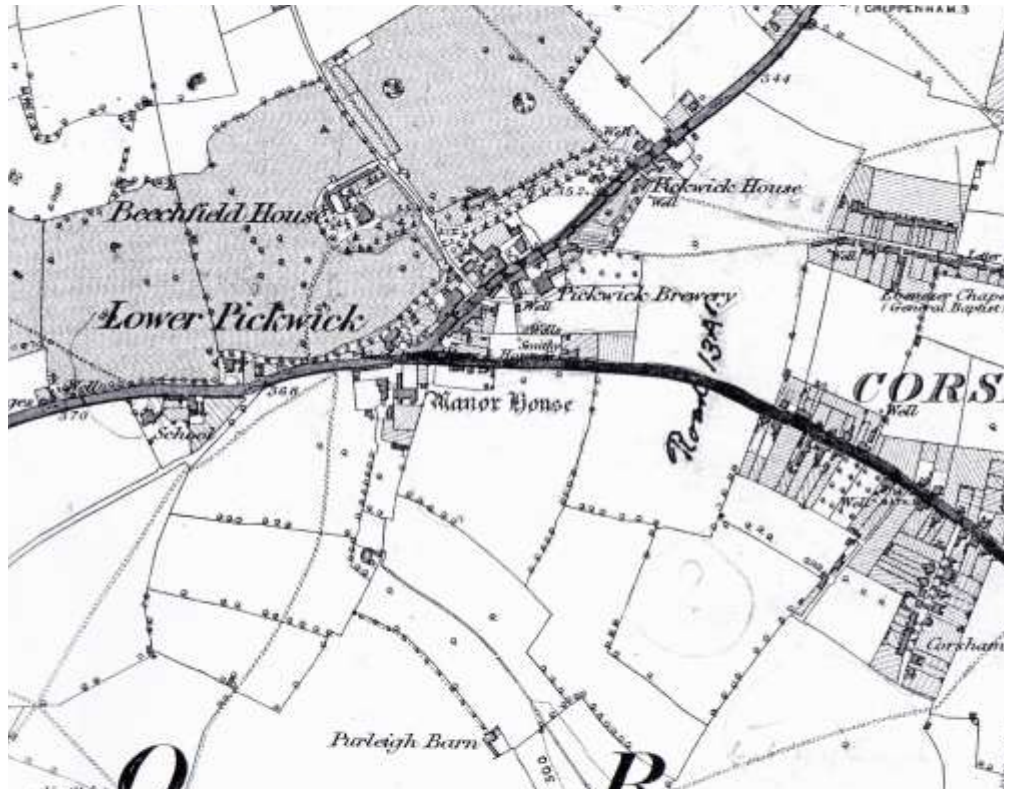
The first three of these components form the existing Conservation Area.

The Changing Face of Pickwick

Now abutted to the south by Corsham, Pickwick was quite a separate settlement until the Second World War.

At the time the 1886 map was drawn, open fields extended between the smithy (now the Co-op filling station) and Oliver Road.

Priory Street had yet to be extended to the A4, finishing at Number 69. From there the footpath to Number 8 Pickwick (Fig Tree Cottage) was the way to get into Pickwick



The footpath from the then end of Priory Street still emerges at Fig Tree Cottage on to what was then called 'Pickwick Street'. The footpath is colloquially known as 'Slug Alley', previously it was called 'the Drung' and, before that 'the Thrung'.

1886

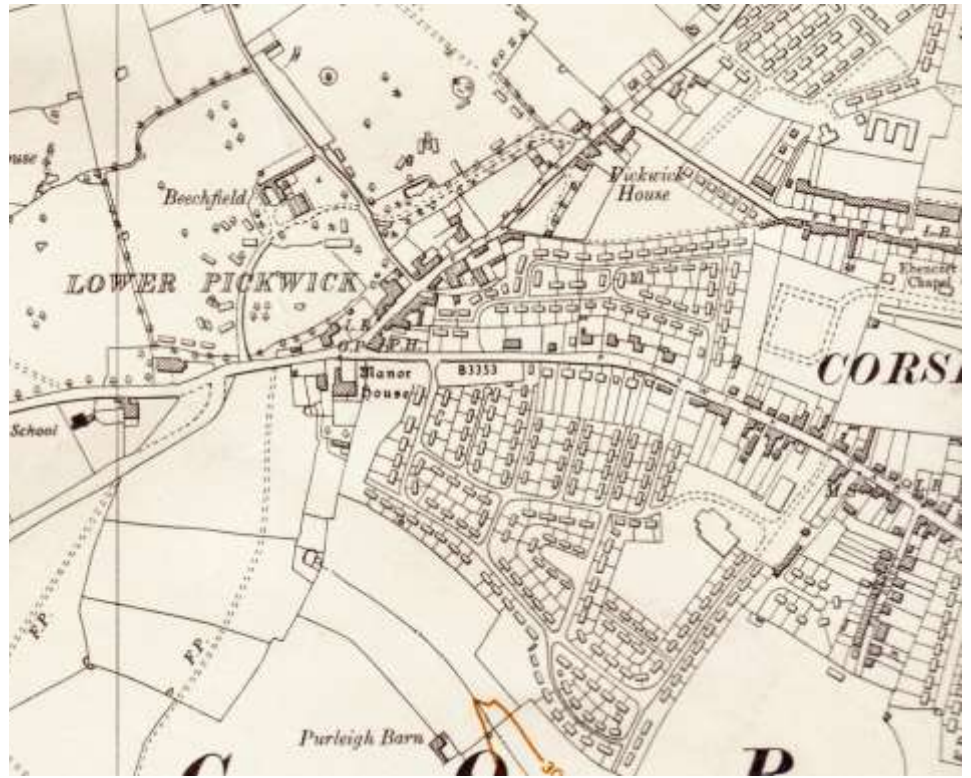
By 1921 Priory Street had been extended to the A4 in place of the original footpath and new houses had been built along Pickwick Road.



1921

By 1955, the infill was virtually complete, though Dickens Road still did not actually extend to Pickwick Road.

New housing had been built to replace the prefabs which had appeared on the site to accommodate the excess labour force needed to man Corsham's war effort.



1955

Between 1955 and now there has been massive development directly south and south-west of Pickwick. To the north the modern housing of Woodlands and Academy Drive has replaced the old military and Academy buildings—though, as noted on page 24, only on a one-for-one basis on what had become a derelict brownfield site.



2020

The Conservation Area

The existing Conservation Area only includes a rather small part of (Lower) Pickwick. It comprises solely the historic section of the Bath Road, Academy Drive and its associated parkland and nature reserve and a small section of the

Woodlands development. It does not extend to Guyers House, Upper Pickwick or Middlewick.

Its formal description was drafted in 1992 and updated by the Council's Design and Estates Team in October 2005 as follows:-

CONSERVATION AREA DESCRIPTION :

PICKWICK (Designated 15th September 1992)

October 2005

Pickwick, situated at the western end of the town of Corsham, consists mainly of cottages and the manor, dating chiefly from the 17th Century. No. 51 Bath Road is late Georgian and within its boundaries is a garden house known as the Round House.

Pickwick has developed in a linear fashion along the busy main A4, [Bath Road]. The street picture today presents an open form of mainly 2 storey development linked with dry stone walls, incorporating some large gardens with many attractive mature trees.

The fabric is substantially stone with some tiled roofs, but the architecture varies from simple random rubble built Cotswold cottages to the more formal Georgian dwellings in Bath stone.

Pickwick was a staging post on the London coach route, and immortalised by Dickens in his 'Pickwick Papers'. Whilst Pickwick now appears as a western extension of Corsham, it developed as a separate village, and would have been perceived as such until the largely post war development occurred to link them.

Whilst the village may have developed in a linear fashion along the A4, there is a focal group where Middlewick Lane joins the Bath Road. The existing Conservation Area boundary encompasses the central group, the dairy to the east, Middlewick Lane, (essentially Beechfield House and grounds) to the north and No. 51 Bath Road to the west. Beyond this the tendency is for small groups of cottages along with individual houses in large gardens, with stone walls fronting the road.

Pickwick was first designated a Conservation Area in 1973. It included the group of buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest to the north and south of the A4 from and including No.51 Bath Road to the west and including the junction of Priory Street to the east. The subsequent boundary changes in September 1992 encompassed most of the previous Pickwick Conservation Area and extended the area to include the grounds of Beechfield House, and the Roman Catholic Church.



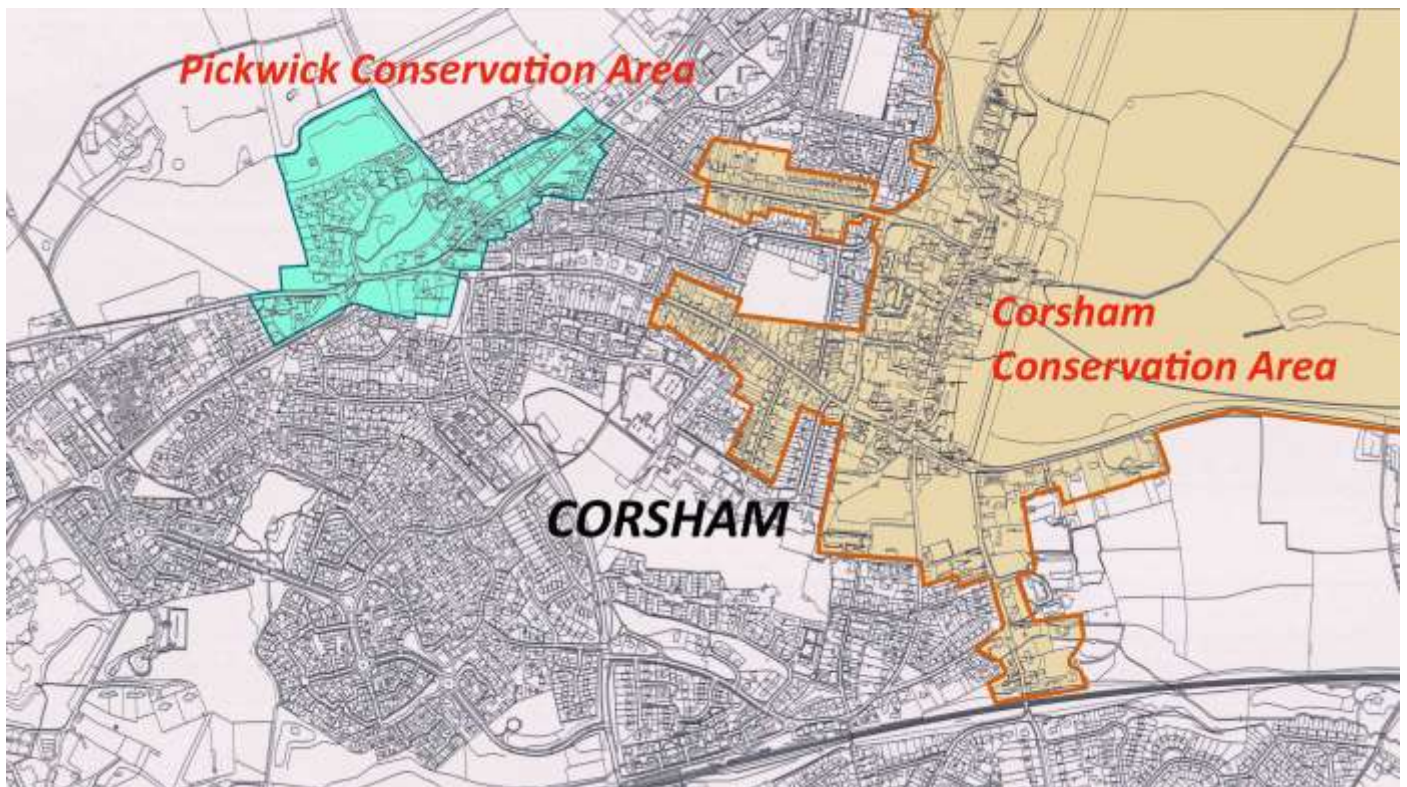
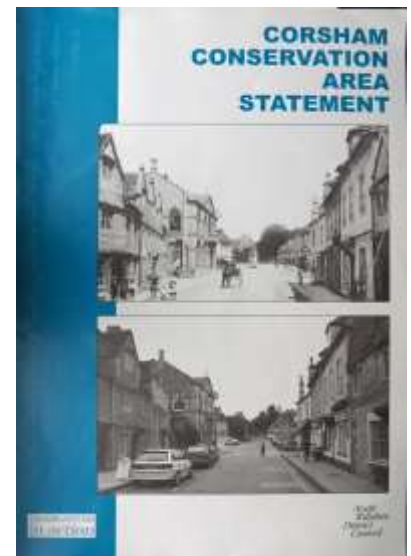
The Conservation Area—edged brown

The Conservation Area in relation to Corsham and the Corsham Conservation Area

The Pickwick Conservation Area occupies the north-western section of Corsham. It is separated from Corsham itself and the Corsham Conservation Area largely by post-war housing.

The Corsham Conservation Area was last reviewed in September 1998 by the then North Wiltshire District Council. A number of areas were added the largest of which ran from Newlands Road then along either side of Pickwick Road as far as Oliver Road.

There is easy access from the Pickwick Conservation Area into Corsham both on foot or by vehicle along Pickwick Road. Both are well used since there are now no retail facilities in Pickwick itself other than the Co-op petrol station (which occupies the site of the former smithy).



As regards the position of the Pickwick Conservation Area within Pickwick village, it can be seen from the plan to the right that the Conservation Area sits at the south east corner of the wider settlement. The rest of the area largely comprises open farmland and the hamlets of Middlewick and Upper Pickwick.



Part 4: Pickwick – its architecture, buildings and open spaces



The Masonic Hall with its fine painted glass window and clock extends behind Bellwood Cottage (left) No. 45 Pickwick.

Architectural and historical qualities of buildings

Overview

While there are some buildings possibly of late 17th century date – e.g. Nos. 17, 19, 30 and 32—and, as in the case of Pickwick Manor, have parts considered to be much earlier, i.e. 14th century, the majority of buildings in the core area of Pickwick, based on their external appearance, look to be of early-mid 18th century date. However, it must be pointed out that the external appearances in some instances are certainly the result of re-facing/new frontages during the Georgian period.

Georgian architecture is the name covering the set of architectural styles current between 1714 and 1830, covering the reigns of George I - George IV. The Georgian style is highly variable, but marked by symmetry and proportion based on the classical architecture of Greece and Rome. Ornament is also normally in the classical tradition, but typically restrained, and sometimes almost completely absent on the exterior. The period brought the vocabulary of classical architecture to smaller and more modest buildings than had been the case before, becoming the new norm for almost all new middle-class homes and public buildings by the end of the period. From the last quarter of the 18th century, the middle classes had begun to grow in power and confidence and land was no longer the only source of wealth: due to the Industrial Revolution, it was now possible to make fortunes from manufacturing and trading goods and there were all sorts of new manufacturing, professional and clerical roles that identified an aspiring middle class, even in the countryside.

With Georgian architecture, characterized by its proportion and balance, simple mathematical ratios were used to determine the height of a window in relation to its width or the shape of a room as a double cube. Regularity, as with ashlar stonework, was strongly approved, and the lack of symmetry, where Georgian additions were added to earlier structures,

elements of which remained visible, was regarded by purists as a flaw and typical of vernacular 'adaption'.



Main entrance to Beechfield House featuring a decorated semi-circular fanlight typical of fine houses of the period



No. 40 Pickwick featuring an elaborate stone hood porch

¹⁶ This section incorporates 'A History of Pickwick and its buildings' by John Maloney (2019, unpublished)

The architectural aspects of Pickwick buildings



Irregular frontages along Bath Road

Regularity of house frontages along a street was also a desirable feature of Georgian town planning, but that is not the case in Pickwick. Indeed, most of the frontages are distinctly irregular in respect of appearance and their spatial layout as compared to, for instance, Corsham (i.e. the so called Flemish Weavers houses at the north end of the High Street, buildings in Church Street etc). Another notable feature is the concentration in a small village of early-mid 18th century datestones: 1708 (No. 45), 1730 (No.24), 1739 (Nos. 8-10) and 1745 (No. 37 Middlewick Lane) [below].



The '1745' datestone at no. 37, Pickwick, in Middlewick Lane

Most of the buildings are constructed of ragstone rubble - although a few have ashlar facing (e.g. No. 18) - and stone roofing slates. Most roofs are quite steeply sloped and some have dormer windows and paired chimneys: No. 12 has an M-roof consisting of two adjacent pitched roofs allowing a deeper breadth of building - at least two rooms deep - these valley roofs having been first used in the previous Baroque period. There are examples of more sophisticated mansard and parapet roofs (e.g. No. 23 has both, with dormers). Some of the buildings have cellars (e.g. Nos. 12 and 22).



No 22 Pickwick

Two storey buildings predominate although No. 22 has three stories.

Quoins at the corners of buildings are a feature of most buildings as are multi-paned sliding sash windows, often in a 6-light over 6-light pattern (e.g. Nos. 12-18, 23 etc.) and 6-paned casement windows. Sash windows are a 'polite' development ('polite' architecture is, broadly, the opposite of vernacular - less dependent on local tradition and more influenced by national or international architectural fashions; that is not to say that polite buildings cannot be locally distinctive).

Many stone window frames have decorative moulded insets and, commonly, there are window drip moulds and, also, string courses along the length of frontages, mostly plain or, exceptionally - as at Nos. 12 and 14 - moulded. There are even small oval-shaped windows (Nos. 18 and 32) and a blind oval window (the Hare & Hounds, No. 48 ~ very similar to that of No.18). Also, a few buildings feature 'blind windows' or 'false windows' (e.g. No. 18 and, in particular, No. 16 at the side and back) which may appear to have been blocked up but actually mimic windows in order to maintain symmetry and balance on the facade of a building. Sometimes it can be difficult to discern between blocked up and false windows.



Blind oval window at the Hare and Hounds

There are 6-panelled painted front doors (some including a two-pane glazed fanlight - e.g. Nos 12, 14 and 23, the latter has a splendid moulded architrave with pediment) and with a variety of hooded canopies often carried on carved brackets, such features being typical of the Georgian period. Common interior features are 'inglenook' fireplaces, some of which appear quite large relative to the rooms in which they are situated.

In tandem with the irregularity of the appearance of the frontages (not just the frontages, whereas the frontages of Nos. 12 and 14 are identical, the backs could not be more different [below – middle], the ground plans of some of the buildings appear quite idiosyncratic. For instance, in a report by Wiltshire Buildings Record, it is speculated that Nos 12-18

were at an early stage linked by one original large plot, all occupied by weavers or other cloth workers. Nearby, Nos. 28 -32 are all set askew to the Bath Road and No. 24 (which includes what was No. 26) is set well back from the road but parallel to it.

Between No. 22 and No. 24 there is a former trackway, opposite Middlewick Lane. Similarly, Nos. 41, 41A, 43 and 45 have unusual ground plans and interactions. Also, some buildings appear to be awkward additions such as that to the left of No. 36 which cuts across an attic window of the main house and No. 25 which appears 'squashed in' beside No.27. The speculation about Nos. 12-18 and the highly irregular layout of Nos. 24 and 32-28, suggests the complications of land ownership and development in periods preceding that of the Georgian.

The juxtaposition of certain groups of buildings and their idiosyncratic ground plans gives them a 'community feel'. Quaker communities believed in communal living and remained tightly knit with strong internal support groups and, as 'dissenters', were independent by nature. Given the variety of the buildings of this period and the fact that Pickwick was a noted Quaker settlement at this time, it may be that the Quakers asserted their well known independence by selecting somewhat different styles of architecture perhaps from a buildings' pattern book.

The Pickwick Brewery buildings were late Georgian and a rather striking arched colonnade frontage survives facing the Bath Road [below].

In general, most of the Pickwick buildings, although having adopted some basic Georgian features, have an unsophisticated, somewhat homely appearance.



The colonnaded frontage of the former Pickwick Brewery

*Top – A variety of hooded canopies
Middle – Rear of No. 12 Pickwick
Bottom – Inglenook at No. 12*

Contribution made by non-designated heritage assets

There may be many features in a local planning authority's area that make a positive contribution to its local character and sense of place because of their heritage value. Although such heritage assets may not be nationally designated or even located within the boundaries of a conservation area, they may be offered some level of protection by the local planning authority identifying them on a formally adopted list of local heritage assets.¹⁹

In this context, No. 51 Bath Road is a prominent 19th century villa and is a signal structure defining the start of the western end of the Conservation Area.



51 Pickwick

Similarly, a former Pickwick Brewery building (see previous page) on the A4, with its impressive colonnade frontage which adds to the charm of this particular section of the main road, whilst the hedging along the verge of No. 6 Pickwick and the trees lining the other side of the road soften the hard landscaping of the building line.

Adjacent to Pickwick Manor sits the Manor Barn, long since converted to residential use. The barn was a typical tithe barn and was disposed of as part of the sale of Beechfield properties in 1948.



Manor Barn



Travellers Rest

At the same time, whilst not a building, Middlewick Lane itself (framed by its own gate pillars) draws the eye from the listed buildings on the main road to the upper reaches of the Lane and into Middlewick.



Middlewick lane - with its own gate pillars either side of the entrance



There are also a number of buildings outside the Conservation Area which contribute to the local heritage. These include Guyer's Cottages which lie alongside the A4. These undesignated assets (probably late 18th century in origin – they are first shown on a map of 1816) have historical and architectural value in their own right, and should be seen as part of the setting of the Conservation Area. They are prominent along the roadside approaching the Conservation Area, providing a hint of the historical character beyond its boundary²⁰.

They also include Travellers Rest which is said to have once been a pub and where vagabonds found in Corsham were required to stay at night²¹.

¹⁹<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/> ~ Paragraph 7, p7]

²⁰ Peter Cox's evidence to 2015 Planning Inquiry

²¹ Author's uncorroborated memory

Key views, vistas and panoramas



The linear aspect of the core area of the village does not lend itself well to key views or vistas. Nonetheless, there are unique views throughout the core area of a rare early 17th/18th century Wiltshire townscape. Notable, are the views of Georgian buildings lining the former 'Pickwick Street' [now the A4] with Pickwick End [No. 23 Bath Road] on the right and the Hare and Hounds to the left and the grandeur of Pickwick Manor ahead at a major roundabout.

From within the Conservation Area itself, and providing its setting, there are views over open countryside westwards from Beechfield and northwards opposite the Priory Street

junction. From within the Beechfield Trust property there are remarkable views of Beechfield House in its parkland setting. Also, there is the charming, rural aspect of Middlewick Lane leading to the fine countryside of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Immediately opposite No. 2 Pickwick is the only place within its core where the Conservation Area meets agricultural land. As such it presents a single opportunity to visually link the built form with Pickwick's open views. The retention of this element will be a challenge given development pressures.



Bath Road from the east

Despite the small footprint of the Conservation Area and the busy A4 road which bisects it, Pickwick hosts some remarkable pastoral scenes.

From the top right, we have Numbers 17 and 19 Pickwick to the east of the entrance to Woodlands. This entrance was once framed by the elegant pillars and the elaborate street lamps announcing the Drive to Beechfield House. To the left of the picture is a group of protected trees, including a sequoia.



Within the parkland of Beechfield there are open views to Beechfield House itself - the Drive to Woodlands starting from its front door, crossing Middlewick Lane and emerging on the A4.

The parkland itself contains about 100 individual trees many of which are at the very least some decades old. All are covered by Tree Protection Orders. It's managed by the Beechfield Trustees.



The only view directly to open farmland from the A4 from the Conservation Area is that from opposite Number 2 Pickwick. As such this open space remains important to the integrity of the Conservation Area since it contributes to the area's character by reinforcing its historic open setting. We are aware that a planning application has been lodged to develop a Care Home on this site.



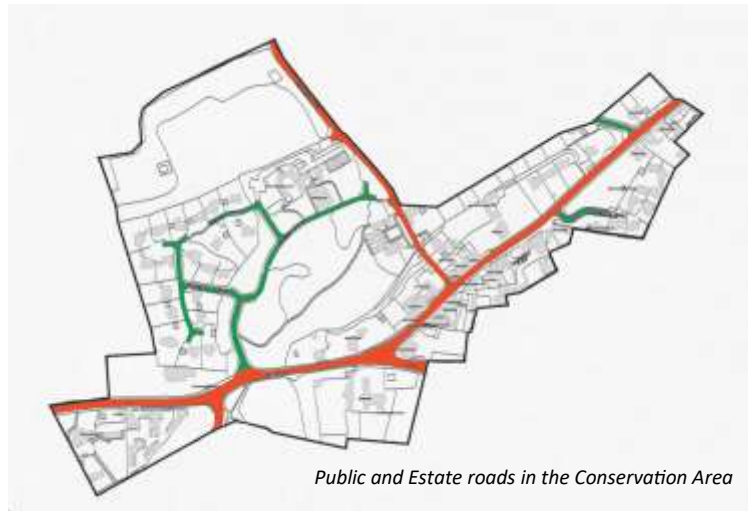
Numbers 25 to 33 Pickwick—the view only spoilt by the LED lamp by Number 33 and the different design sodium lamp by Number 25 (farthest).



The stone walls

Traditional stone walls line the greater part of the road system throughout Pickwick. They outline the majority of the southern and western boundaries of the Beechfield Estate and its northern extension, the Beechfield Nature Area. The Nature Area was originally part of the Beechfield Estate, became the Bath Academy of Art's sports ground and was taken over by the Town Council on completion of the Academy Drive development.

Much of the original wall around the northern and western boundaries has been allowed to fall into disrepair—only small segments remain in place, save for a section at the north-west of the site (see below).



Public and Estate roads in the Conservation Area



Stone walls within the Conservation Area coloured orange

We were encouraged by the statement in the Neighbourhood Plan that development should “Restore field boundaries around settlements where there is gapping or degradation wherever possible”. Now that the Nature Area is owned by the Council maybe they could consider restoration of the northern wall of the Nature Area should funds be found for such a worthwhile project.

Elsewhere, a number of the stone walls within the core of the Conservation Area are Grade II listed—the low wall fronting numbers 20 and 22 Pickwick and the wall and gate piers leading from Beechfield House to Middlewick Lane, for example.

The extensive stretches of traditional walling adds greatly to the quality of the built environment.



Wall to the north-west of the Nature Area—restoration should be considered for the sections which have fallen into disrepair

The walls within the Pickwick Conservation Area come in all shapes and sizes. Not all are particularly old.

The photograph, right, shows the wall between the listed Roundhouse and the 20-year-old 'new' wall surrounding the southern limit of the Beechfield Estate

A little further along the road the former railings in front of Vine Cottage (shown in the 1948 photograph) have been replaced by a 'new' wall behind which extensive planting has occurred. There are also railings at Nos. 12 and 14 Pickwick which may be Georgian or based on Georgian originals.



The wall from the Roundhouse to Beechfield



Vine cottage— now behind a wall



The 'new' Beechfield wall



The listed low boundary wall at 20 and 22 Pickwick

A number of the stone walls have gate or entrance pillars. As we have said above, those in Middlewick Lane which mark the former entrance to the Beechfield Estate are Grade II listed, whilst their rather more impressive cousins at the start of the lane are not.

Several recent developments - for instance at Beechfield and Dovecote Drive - are entered via new gate pillars.



Middlewick Lane gate pillar



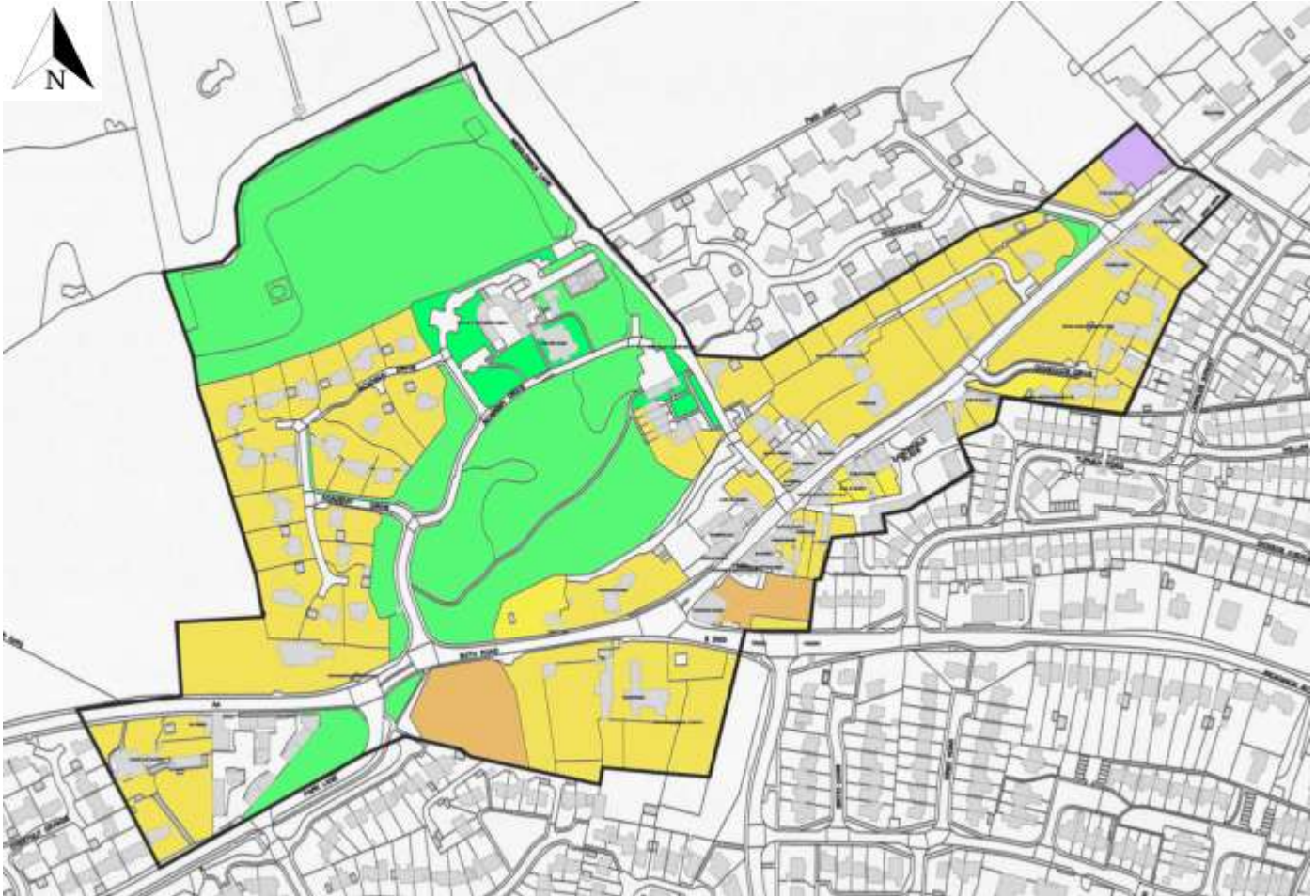
Beechfield Gate pillars and wall

Land use within the Conservation Area

Although the primary case for designation is the historic built environment, Pickwick has a number of important complementary features. In land use terms, the Conservation Area has a considerable amount of open parkland with its complement of significant trees.

The plan below shows how land within the Conservation Area is used.

Key: green—managed open space
yellow—private gardens
brown—private open space
purple—farmed land



The managed open space comprises the Beechfield Parkland (owned and managed by Beechfield Trustees), the Beechfield Nature Area (owned and managed by Corsham Town Council) and several roadside public amenity plots. Of the two sites marked private open space, the larger one is in the hands of an individual, whilst the smaller is the car park of the Hare and Hounds at the Pickwick Gateway.

The sole piece of farmed land is at the eastern limit of the Conservation Area and the only place within this section of the village from which there are open views of the countryside.



Greenery and Planting

Within the Conservation Area a substantial amount of land is devoted to greenery. Tree preservation orders are in force for the whole of the Beechfield Parkland, the back gardens of a number of properties in Woodlands (including the amenity plot owned by the Council at the junction with Bath Road)

At the junction of Woodlands there is a particularly impressive sequoia (matched by a similar one at No. 51 Pickwick)

We have not carried out an arboricultural survey of the full range of trees, but have access to the survey carried out by Beechfield Trustees for the trees within their estate. A summary of its findings follow.



Areas covered by tree preservation orders 
Areas of other trees, shrubs or hedging 

and the garden at Pickwick House. Those areas are shown in brown on the plan above. Marked green are other areas comprising trees, shrubs or hedging much of which faces onto the Bath Road, thereby softening the landscape and providing some little relief from the noise, vibration and pollution from passing traffic.

Coming from the west, the Conservation Area is met on the left first by substantial trees fronting the garden of 51 Pickwick (above right) then immediately by the trees of Beechfield (bottom right).

Beyond Beechfield, either side is faced by stone walls backed by hedges or trees until one reaches the Pickwick Gateway at the Hare and Hounds.

The A4 then passes through the historic built fabric where most premises open directly onto the street. From 23 Pickwick onwards, the northern side of the road is again tree-lined almost to its full extent. On the southern side there is intermittent hedging until the garden of Pickwick House where hedges and trees are abundant.



Trees fronting 51 (above) and Beechfield (below)



Arboricultural Report on the Beechfield Estate

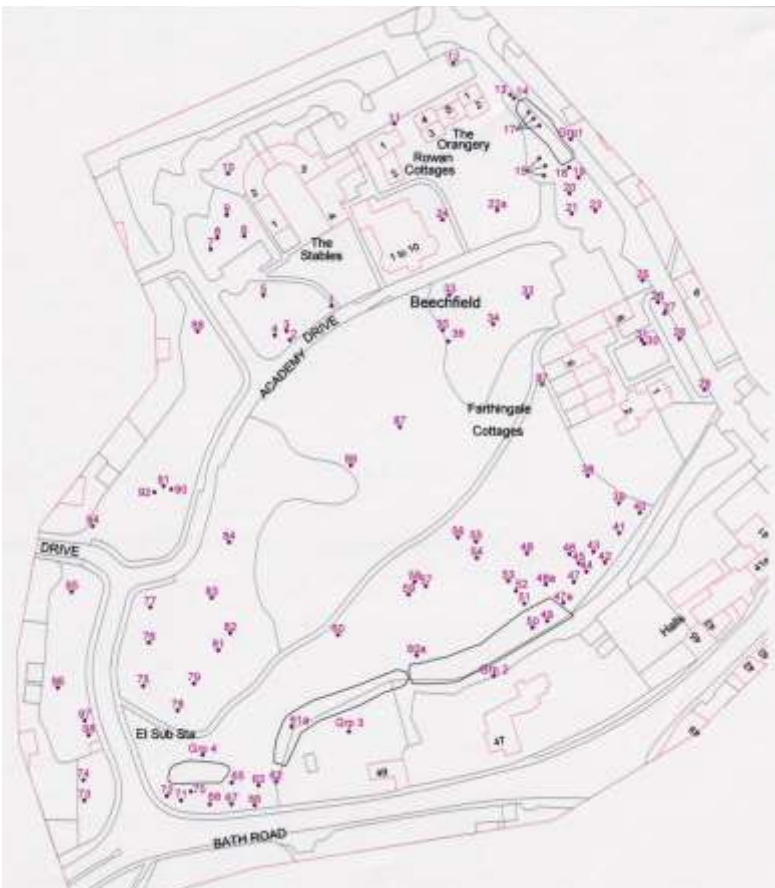
The Beechfield Estate is blessed with a great number and variety of trees. Some are several hundred years old; others quite recently planted. Management of the parkland is vested in the Beechfield Trustees.

To ensure the continuing health and condition of the trees and to advise on any tree works required, the Trustees commission regular arboricultural reviews. The aim is to maintain the parkland in the best possible condition whilst securing the safety of those who may use it.

An inventory of trees including their locations, species and condition at the time of survey is thus prepared and any recommended tree works undertaken.

Most of the mature 'specimen' trees are in the centre section of the parkland. As you enter Academy Drive, on the right hand side stand the great copper beech trees (trees 75, 77, 83 and 84) which would have lined Gabriel Goldney's carriage way to the Bath Road in the late 1880's.

Further towards Beechfield House are two signature trees—the holm oak and the huge cedar of Lebanon. Elsewhere there is a huge variety of trees—numbering about 100 in all.



Mature Beech trees at Beechfield



Holm Oak (foreground) and Cedar of Lebanon



Parkland at Beechfield

The Beechfield Nature Area²²

Beechfield Nature Area is situated along Middlewick Lane. The nature area was formerly part of the grounds of Beechfield House and the land – approximately two hectares in size - was transferred to the Council's ownership in 2002.

The Council's aim is to improve the amenity, recreational and nature conservation value of Beechfield, widening its appeal to the people of Corsham, while retaining its original character. In 2013, following advice from the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, a wildlife pond was constructed at the western end of the site. The pond is now inhabited by a wide range of plants and small creatures among which are dragonflies.

There is rarely a moment when something is not happening at Beechfield, given the range of birds, animals and insects attracted to what is officially described as an

“open and wooded limestone upland”.

Plants present include Bee Orchid, Meadow Cranesbill, Birds Foot Trefoil, Herb Robert, Meadow Vetching, Red Bartsia, Common Fleabane and Cowslips. The mature and young trees on the site include birch, sycamore, maple, ash, elm, poplar, cherry, oak and beech. And bird and animal lovers may well spot Partridges, Green Woodpeckers, Deer, Foxes, Rabbits, Bullfinches, Chiffchaffs, Goldcrests, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, Tawny Owls, Long Tailed Tits and multiple species of bats. (Bird and bat boxes were made and fitted to mature trees by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.)

Beechfield is for everyone to enjoy - and is within a Conservation Area - so camping, bonfires and barbecues are not permitted.

²² This section based on Corsham Town Council's description



Degree of loss of architectural and/or historic elements

There has, thankfully, been little loss of architectural or historic elements since the remnants of military occupation at Beechfield have been confined to history. The core of Pickwick remains a notable and unusually intact survival of a 17th/18th century Wiltshire village and surrounding landscape. Sadly, the Gabriel Goldney's pillars which marked the entrance to his driveway into Beechfield House from the Bath Road opposite Pickwick House have been removed. In their place is merely the roadway leading into the Woodlands Estate. But much remains virtually unchanged.

of the damaged pavement into Woodlands by tarmacadam rather than replacing the damaged setts.



Above 1934 - below the same view in 2019



Negative elements

A negative element in the Conservation Area is the fact that the main road, the A4, runs directly through and has become increasingly busy – and hence noisy and polluting on the one hand and splitting the village in half with speeding traffic. The village is littered with road signs and directions to new housing developments. Without regard to the requirements of the Conservation Area, the local authority has recently replaced some - but not all - of the existing sodium lampposts with LED lights. This has led to there being at least three different styles of lighting columns within a short stretch of road. A similar proliferation of styles can be seen when only one of the two central crossing lights outside Woodland was replaced. At the same time, the Council has resurfaced part

Summary

The high townscape value of Pickwick is both desirable in itself and beneficial to the wider setting of Corsham. Its maintenance and improvement is thus of considerable importance to both Pickwick as a village and Corsham as a town. Whilst its character is separate from the town, it adds to the town's own identity as an historic gateway. In itself, its setting is enhanced by both its eastern and western approaches past open fields along the Bath Road.

It might one day be sensible to extend the Conservation Area to the west and to the north so as to incorporate Travellers Rest, Guyers House, Upper Pickwick and Middlewick. These areas are seen as being traditionally an integral part of Pickwick and it remains important to ensure the continued protection of the landscape setting in this area.

Generally the quality of the built form is very high and there has been limited loss of historic features.

Pickwick has a significant number of heritage assets and needs to be carefully monitored and managed to ensure its special quality is maintained. This is particularly the case for new

buildings and extensions to historic buildings, which in general terms have been fairly successful to date.



No. 17 and No. 19 Pickwick



No. 27 squeezed in alongside No. 25

Part 5: Pickwick Conservation Area – what’s so special?

Key features

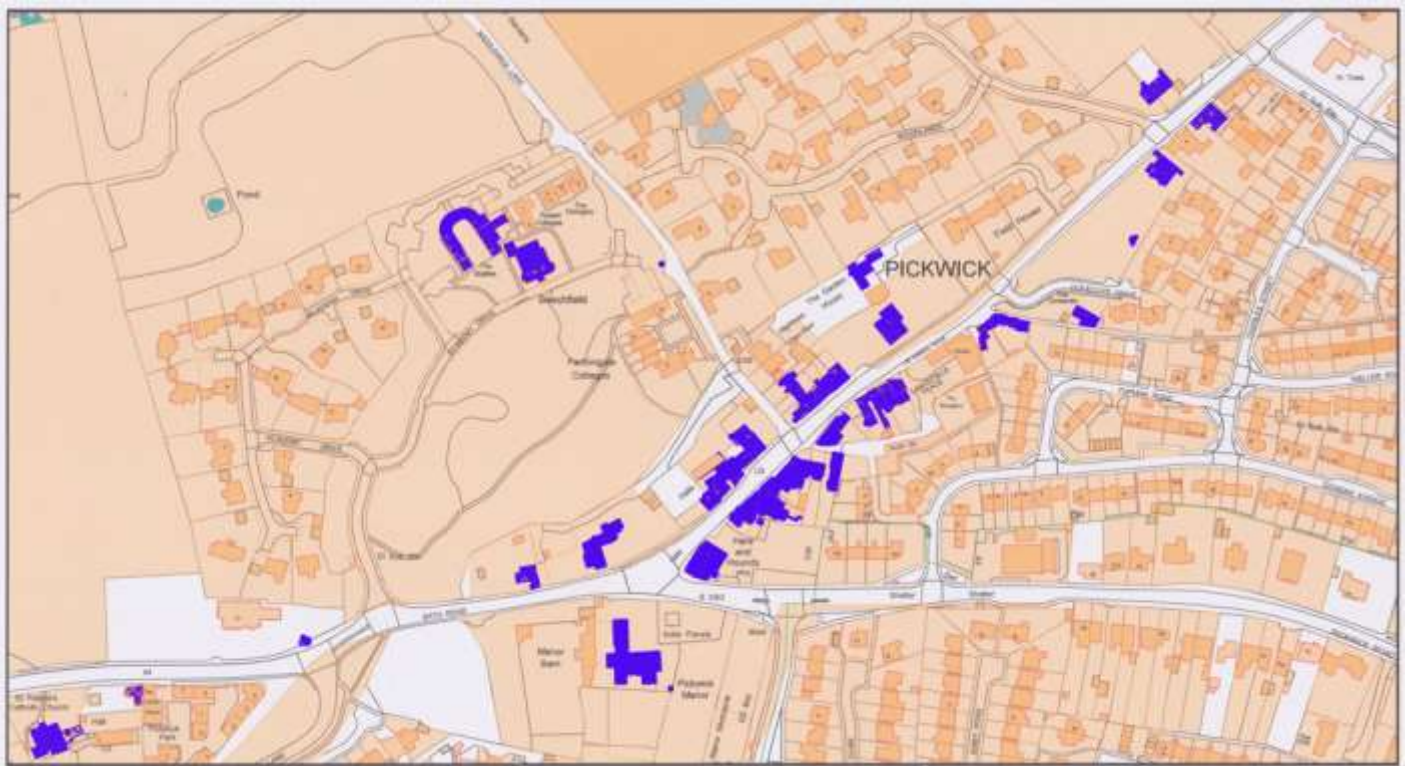
The Conservation Area includes a key block of some 17th and largely 18th century buildings, the great majority of which are Grade II listed.

Most either open directly on to the busy A4 road; a few have small front gardens or are linked by traditional stone walls or railings. Greenery and open space is often partly obscured behind stone walls but significant foliage overlooks much of the through road.

The parkland fronting Beechfield House retains a large number of mature trees, including two holm oaks, a cedar of Lebanon and a variety of other feature trees .

What makes Pickwick special is the combination of:-

- Buildings, including listed buildings, which have singular features and ground floor plans with many open to the street;
- The stone walls;
- Open spaces including the Beechfield Parkland and the wildlife area north of Beechfield.



Above: Plan showing listed buildings within the Pickwick Conservation Area Below: the Masonic Hall and Nos. 43 and 45 Pickwick



Character Areas and their buildings

Conservation areas are designated for their special character, but within the area there are zones which are varied but contribute to the whole. We think it's important to define these 'sub areas' and provide a clear understanding of the defining elements making up the character of a particular part of the conservation area. We think this may lead to a more useful and comprehensive document in development control terms.

This paper identifies a number of specific 'character areas' within the Conservation Area.

Whilst accepting that our groupings are somewhat notional, we consider that the Conservation Area includes three principal Character Areas:-

1. The focal area on the Bath Road/A4 around Middlewick Lane;
2. Pickwick Manor and its environs; and
3. Beechfield.

1 – The focal area: Bath Road/A4



The historic core on the Bath Road/A4, either side of the entrance to Middlewick Lane, is the crucial element in the Pickwick Conservation Area. Virtually every dwelling in this section is Grade II listed; and virtually every one of those was once owned as part of the Beechfield Estate (confusingly sometimes referred to as the 'Pickwick Estate').

Listed buildings jostle for attention on either side of the road through Pickwick. There are more than 20 Grade II listed dwellings at this location alone.



As local historian Pat Whalley noted²³:-

Sir Frederick Goldney died in 1940 aged 94. In 1948 Frederick's daughter Katherine Long Goldney and her brother Henry undertook to sell at auction a great deal of the Pickwick Village Estate as it stood at that time. Mostly tenanted, some were able to buy their properties, but others may have been transferred to a new landlord. The eventual sale included 26 houses or cottages, the Old Malthouse, Village Stores, the Old Brewery, and Manor House Barn. Believed to have been owned by the family since 1857, the auction realised a value of £17,460.

²³ <https://www.corshamcivicsociety.co.uk/the-goldney-family-and-beechfield-house/>

A detailed analysis of some of the more prominent of Pickwick's key listed buildings is at Appendix 1. The following is a brief description of but a few of those buildings in this character area :-

- ◆ No. 6 Pickwick – Pickwick House is a grand, probably early 19th century house with 8-paned sash windows throughout, a Roman Doric pedimented doorcase and spacious grounds;
- ◆ No. 12 Pickwick (below right) – is an early-mid 18th century Georgian middle class house with re-used 16th century timbers throughout, some of which bear markings to guard against evil;
- ◆ No. 23 Pickwick – Pickwick End (right) is a stylish mid-18th century classic Georgian gentleman's town house whose spacious gardens once formed part of the Quaker burial ground; and
- ◆ Nos. 41 and 41a and their associated buildings (now incorporating the 'Masonic Hall' form a group of particularly interesting buildings constructed in about 1760.



No. 23 Pickwick



No. 12 Pickwick



Aerial view showing from No. 20 Pickwick on the left, to No. 42 on the right

2 - Pickwick Manor and its environs



This location is identified in the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan as 'The Pickwick Gateway to the town'. As such it commands a particularly important position. It is the principal entrance to Corsham from the west.

Coming from Bath as one enters Pickwick, past the entrance to the Beechfield Estate with its huge beech trees and open ground, the A4 is lined on either side by stretches of substantial stone walls. The eye is then drawn to the Hare and Hounds as Pickwick Road branches off towards Corsham. Pickwick Manor (formerly Pickwick Farm) stands back from the main A4 road on the right and 'Greystones' (47 Pickwick) and 'Vine Cottage' (49 Pickwick) are to the left. Buildings on both sides of the road are shielded not only by the walls but also by

trees and shrubbery.

As a result, the Hare and Hounds is a clear and obvious landmark.

Its prominence is enhanced by the backing of a line of rather small trees further along Pickwick Road thus emphasising the open space - which is presently the pub's car park - between the rear of the public house and the trees beyond.

It seems to us to be important to retain and enhance both the junction itself (perhaps along the lines of recent improvements to the Cross Keys junction—though without the use of traffic lights) and the open space so as to preserve this crucial visual contribution to the principal Gateway to Corsham.



The Hare and Hounds

Quite apart from being a key landmark at the 'gateway to Corsham', The Hare and Hounds is itself a historic building in local terms. Originally built in the late 17th century (and having 18th century and subsequent additions) it is grade II listed. As a former coaching inn on the London to Bath coach road its fortunes ebbed and flowed as passing trade fluctuated.

Its former importance can be judged by the presence of a separate ostlers house next door and a nearby former

smithy (now the site of the Co-op petrol station). In recent times, in common with other public houses, it has found business challenging. In recent years the landlord has created a garden down the length of its property in Pickwick Road and reinstated the old well on the site. This has had the effect of softening the landscape and much improving the 'gateway' aspect of this spot.

More planting—perhaps with some specimen trees—would further enhance this location.



The Hare and Hounds garden



Hare and Hounds - above left 1926; below left in the 1890's; above 2019



Pickwick Manor

By far the most significant building within the Conservation Area is Pickwick Manor. Originally called Pickwick Farm, the building has 14th to 15th century origins and was rebuilt around 1664 with additions in 1711. It was restored and altered in 1920 by Sir Harold Brakspear for himself. Sir Harold Brakspear KCVO (10 March 1870 – 20 November 1934) was an English restoration architect and archaeologist.

He restored a number of ancient and notable buildings, including Bath Abbey and St. George's Chapel at Windsor.

Pickwick Manor itself sits behind a substantial stone wall facing the Hare and Hounds and overlooks the proposed Pickwick Gateway giving it a special sense of antiquity and presence.



Above - Pickwick Manor from the Hare and Hounds

Below - Aerial view of Pickwick Manor



In his 1927 'History of Corsham' Harold Brakspear wrote:-

PICKWICK FARM. This holding contained one virgate of land, the house of which has for many years been called the "Manor House," and contains some work of the fourteenth century. In the early days of Queen Elizabeth [I] it was in the hands of one, or the branches of, the Keynes family; they seem to have got into financial difficulties and surrendered the house in 1639 to William Wastfield. His family came to Corsham in the latter years of Queen Elizabeth and gradually acquired a considerable estate in the manor. The present house appears to have been built by the first William Wastfield, after the Restoration, and is on a more ambitious scale than most of the virgate houses (Plate VIII. 2). The second William built the dining room block in 1711. The property remained with the Wastfields until about 1774 when it was surrendered to Robert Neale, of Corsham, in whose family it remained until recent times, when after a series of short tenures it now belongs to Mrs. Harold Brakspear. There are remains of a square dove house in the garden, which was in existence in 1637.



Pickwick Manor from the garden

Of the other buildings within this character area:-

Vine Cottage – said to be early 18th century, but believed to be earlier;



Greystone Cottage - house, mid to later C18, coursed rubble with white lime pointing to east front, stone tiled roof, coped gables and end wall stacks. Two storeys and attic, 3-window range.



Vine Cottage - left 1948; right 2019



Greystone Cottage - left 1948; right 2019



The house was requisitioned by the military during World War II and a large number of workers' houses built in the grounds. Post war, the site was given over to the Bath Academy of Art (which had been bombed out of Bath). The BAA in turn constructed additional buildings on the site. The BAA used Beechfield for 'the main studios and workshops for Chief and Supporting Studies' (1972/73 Prospectus). The stables were the pottery centre and many of the then existing structures were used for studios or student accommodation.

The BAA occupied the site in 1946 and vacated in 1984, after which the site fell into disrepair until it was sold for development in the early 1990's.

The house was refurbished as flats; the number of new buildings permitted on site was restricted on the basis that each existing residence could only be replaced on a 'one-for-one' basis with a new house. This left the majority of original parkland open and the land to the north of the house available to the Town Council to develop as a nature reserve.

In terms of space and views the parkland within Beechfield is rather special. There is a mix of mature trees of various species – oaks, beeches, cedars – and new planting to maintain the site for future generations. The upkeep is the responsibility of the Beechfield Trust.



Above: Bath Academy of Arts - students at leisure

Below: Beechfield today



Beechfield - its modern houses at Academy Drive and managed parkland below



Conclusion

In this paper the location, setting and attributes of Pickwick and its Conservation Area has been reviewed in some detail.

It must be concluded that its designation fully meets the accepted criteria and remains appropriate. A high standard of upkeep as regards its listed buildings, its green spaces and use of traditional stone walls have been maintained.

Of concern is the volume of through traffic and the associated noise, pollution and general disruption caused by that traffic. For this reason it is important that traffic management measures take full account of the special status of the village.

The adoption of the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan and its designation of a 'Pickwick Gateway' to Corsham is to be welcomed.

The case for considering an extension of the Conservation Area, possibly to include Middlewick and Upper Pickwick, ought to be reviewed on another occasion - see page 50 and maps on page 18.

The Pickwick Association would like to thank the Town Council for its financial support and access to mapping provider, Mr. Paul Kefford for his invaluable advice in reviewing the document, the Wiltshire Council for the particularly useful guidance of Helen Garside and the use of its base maps and the British Geological Survey for its geological data.



Written for the Pickwick Association by Tony Clark and John Maloney with guidance from Helen Garside, Principal Conservation Officer, Wiltshire Council.

Reviewed by Paul Kefford with the support of Jill Channer MA FSA FRSA IHBC

The Pickwick Association acknowledges the generous logistic and financial support of the Corsham Town Council



Appendix 1: Management Plan

Suggestions as to the management of the Conservation Area

It is not the role of a third party such as the Pickwick Association to determine or otherwise the management of the Conservation Area. That is a role for the Council.

Having thoroughly reviewed the Conservation Area, however, we have formulated our views as to how this might be framed.

In that context, we have developed specific, though in some cases generic, ideas as to how this might be achieved for each of our proposed character areas. We also have some thoughts as to the management of the Conservation Area as a whole.

The Character Areas

Noting that under S. 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Local Planning Authorities have a duty *“from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”*, we suggest such proposals for each of the character areas.

1 - The focal area: Bath Road/A4

- ◆ Seek to ensure that development, uses and other changes that require planning permission do not harm the character, significance or setting of the Conservation Area, or the significance and setting of architectural features and other heritage assets that surround it;
- ◆ Protect the historic townscape setting and important views of heritage assets;
- ◆ Seek to ensure any highway works, including street lighting and pavement works, are managed to safeguard adjoining historic buildings and important features.

2 - Pickwick Manor and its environs

- ◆ Seek to ensure that development, uses and other changes that require planning permission do not harm the character, significance or setting of the Conservation Area, or the significance and setting of architectural features and other heritage assets that surround it;
- ◆ Seek to ensure that any highway works, including street lighting and pavement works, are managed to safeguard adjoining historic buildings and important features.
- ◆ Seek to ensure that any improvements to the Hare and Hounds roundabout and associated pavements do not harm the setting of the conservation area;
- ◆ Encourage the enhancement of the area as ‘Pickwick Gateway’ to Corsham.

3 - Beechfield

- ◆ Protect the sense of enclosure by resisting removal of traditional boundary walls or the introduction or widening of vehicular accesses;
- ◆ Seek to preserve and enhance the Beechfield parkland that contributes to the character of the Conservation Area;
- ◆ Encourage new development and alterations requiring planning permission to respect and enhance the historic character of the area through the retention, repair or use of finishes complimentary to existing development.

Potential for Development

Now that Pickwick village has been physically joined by post-war development to Corsham, other than very minor infill – which would probably only come from ‘garden’ development – there is little opportunity for further development. South of the Bath Road none at all save for the car park at the Hare and Hounds. Given the prominence of this location there is scope to enhance this car park area by additional boundary planting to heighten its position as the Pickwick gateway to Corsham.

North of the Bath Road a couple of houses have gardens large enough for an additional infill building, though separate road access to such a building would be problematic in terms of highway safety. The only possible development site is that opposite No. 2 Pickwick (see page 39) though we believe such development should be resisted since that location offers the only open view from the key central section of the Conservation Area towards open countryside.

Further north towards Middlewick and Upper Pickwick access is only by single track lanes which become private after a matter of a few hundred metres. Again, development here should be resisted since these comparatively ancient tracks form part and parcel of the setting and fabric of the Conservation Area.

There are existing development proposals nearby – resisted by both the Wiltshire and Corsham Councils and the residents of Pickwick – for housing development on the field between Academy Drive and Guyers Lane. This site is licenced for underground mineral extraction (Bath stone) until 2042 and the promoter of the development has yet to demonstrate that the noise and vibration requirements specified in the conditional planning approval granted by the Planning Inspectorate in 2015 can be met.

In the preceding page a preservation and enhancement strategy has been proposed for each of the Character Areas. The following paragraphs suggest certain specific safeguards which might be applied throughout the Conservation Area.

Vulnerable buildings, buildings at risk, listed and unlisted buildings

The upkeep of buildings within Pickwick is very largely exceptional. Virtually all listed buildings are privately owned dwellings – and, importantly, inhabited. Care needs to be taken to ensure that standards do not fall, but at the time of writing no buildings appear to be at risk. Similarly, the great majority (if not all) unlisted buildings are well cared-for and maintained.

It is important that the design, scale and materials used for alterations and extensions to all buildings and boundary walls within an enlarged Conservation Area should be subject to detailed expert consideration.

New Buildings

All new buildings within the Conservation Area should be designed to be compatible with the style, disposition and materials of the local area and should protect and enhance the Conservation Area, its character, ecology and social structure.

Corsham Design Guide

Produced in concert with the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan, the Corsham Design Guide gives specific design guidance for refurbishment, extensions and new development in Pickwick. We endorse this guidance.

Open views

In its setting, the Pickwick Conservation Area, having been hemmed in by urban development to the south, only has access outwards to open countryside views from Beechfield to the west and from opposite No. 2 Pickwick to the north. We are conscious that approved development west of Beechfield is presently required to allow for a buffer zone of at least 25m. It is important that, should this development take place, mitigation planting agreed should be strictly monitored.

We recommend that any new development permitted within the arc of viewing from either location should seek not to detract from these views.

Managed Open Space

There are two substantial areas of managed open space within the Conservation Area - the privately-owned Beechfield Parkland and the publicly-owned Beechfield Nature Area—and two smaller publicly-owned areas. Within the Beechfield Parkland and the smaller site at the Woodlands entrance, there are substantial trees. At the Beechfield Nature Area there is a large number of common native trees.

Beechfield Trustees carry out regular arboricultural checks on its trees for amenity and safety reasons and plant replacement specimen trees as older or unhealthy trees succumb. (We assume that the Town Council does the same in respect of the trees under its purview).

Every assistance should be given by the appropriate authority to assure the continued benefit these managed areas bring to the community.

We recommend that full arboricultural survey be made to log all principal important trees within the Conservation Area and to make recommendations for their continued management and protection.

Stone Walls

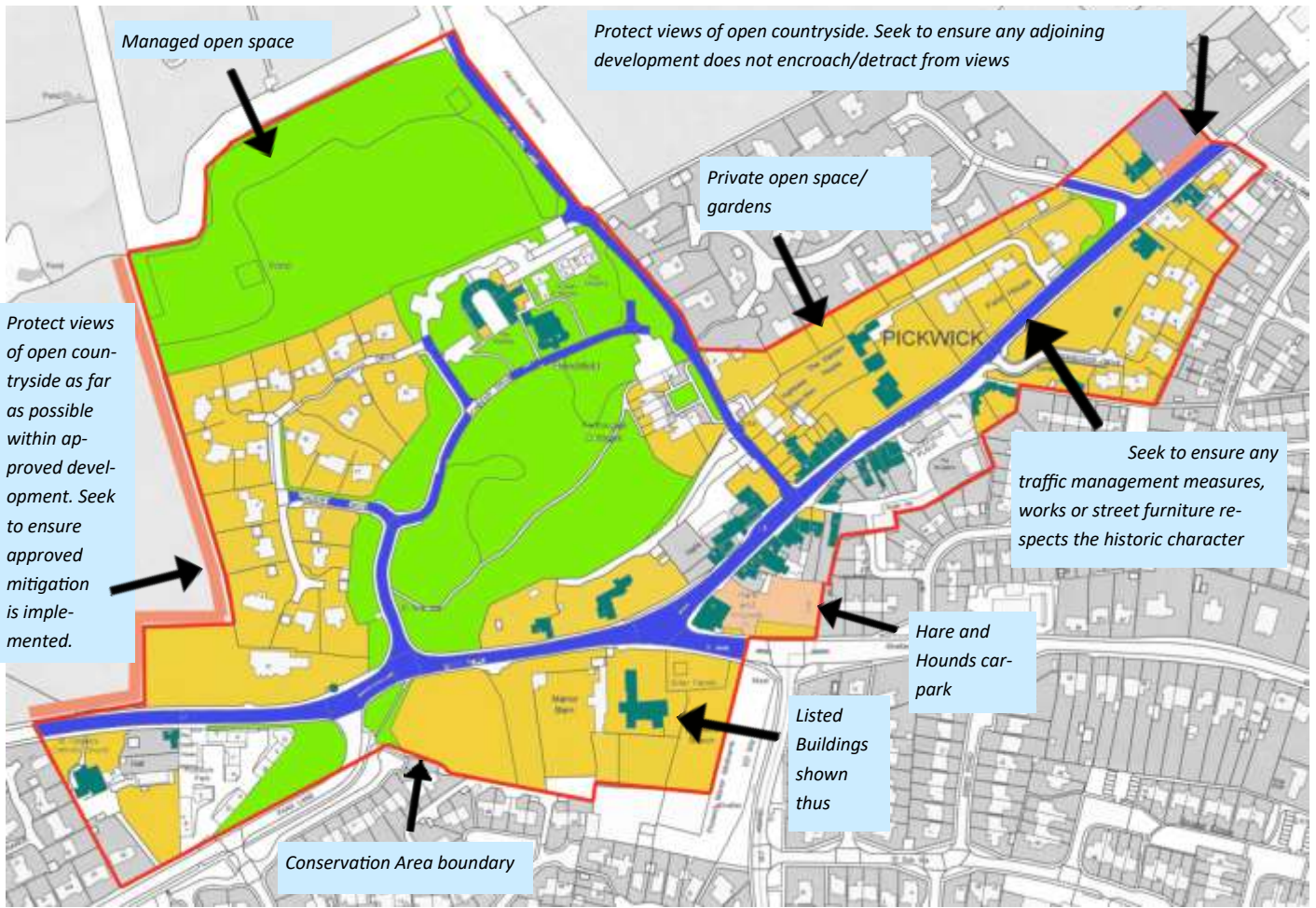
Given the prominence traditional stone walls have to marking the boundaries of dwellings, landholdings and roads it is important that they should be maintained. Most, save those skirting the Nature Area - where there is an extensive section of derelict stone wall - are in private hands.

Support and encouragement should be given to the Town Council regarding the maintenance and - where feasible - the restoration of walls in their ownership.



Note: the principal recommendations in this section are illustrated in the plan on the next page.

Preservation and Enhancement Strategy



The plan above illustrates some of the key aspects of the Pickwick Conservation Area. Our proposals are aimed at encouraging the appropriate management and enhancement of the Conservation Area as indicated on the previous page and opposite.



Seek to protect these views within the context of approved development and future proposals—top; from Beechfield to the west;



Bottom; view to the north from No. 2 Pickwick on the south side of the A4

Threats to Conservation Areas

For some years now, Historic England (and its predecessor body) has produced an annual report, *Heritage Counts*¹, which provides trends, insights and data about the heritage sector, highlighting changes and history in the making; alongside, Historic England maintains a *Heritage at Risk Register*² as well as The Heritage at Risk (HAR) programme to identify those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development.

In one of the first surveys of conservation areas at risk (in 2009), the top threats were assessed as: plastic windows and doors (83% of conservation areas affected); poorly maintained roads and pavements (60%); street clutter (45%); loss of front garden walls, fences and hedges (43%); unsightly satellite dishes (38%); the effects of traffic calming or traffic management (36%); alterations to the fronts, roofs and chimneys of buildings (34%); unsympathetic extensions (31%); impact of advertisements (23%); and neglected green spaces (18%). Ten years on, the 2019 Survey revealed one in seven conservation areas were considered to be at risk; and while the 2020 Survey saw a reduction in the number of conservation areas currently recorded on the Heritage at Risk Register (to 491, with nine areas removed for positive reasons), three were added to the register and the potential and real risks to conservation areas remain

While Pickwick is fortunate that many pressures which impact on other conservation areas in perhaps more urban settings do not pose such significant risks for Pickwick, though plastic windows and doors do of course remain a significant potential threat. More immediate detriment is however caused (as

curtilage of a dwelling house if it meets a number of criteria³, in a designated area (including a conservation area) central guidance makes clear that planning permission will always be required where an antenna is installed on a chimney, wall or roof top which faces onto (and can be seen from) a road. Further, any antenna mounted on a listed property is likely to have a detrimental effect on the character and special interest of the building and even if planning permission were not required for the antenna, listed building consent may well be. If telecommunications equipment, including antenna, is installed without the necessary consent, the planning authority may require the householder to remove or relocate it at the householder's expense – which is very often the case in Wiltshire.

Sadly, while the satellite dish has become a fixed feature of daily life and encroached on many street scenes (being described by one architectural critic as “spreading something like a fungus of space-facing mushrooms”) the cumulative effect of such dishes can have a deeply eroding sense of place within a conservation area. Further the associated wiring for the telecommunication receiving devices are often rather poorly installed (from an aesthetic viewpoint) cutting across facades and notable architectural features of buildings.

Householders should be encouraged to think of alternative siting for antenna than the front or side elevation of a property (as seen from the road) to have a less detrimental impact on the street scene on individual designated and non-designated heritage assets.



identified elsewhere in the report) in the poor maintenance of the roads and street scene, the proliferation of street clutter (including the positive zoo of design) and in unsightly satellite dishes as well as a spaghetti of overhead wires.

While planning permission is required for the installation, alteration, or replacement of a satellite antenna on or within the

¹<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>

²<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>

³Under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, a householder does not need permission (and on prop-

Traffic Management and Street Furniture

The volume and speed of traffic through Pickwick is the issue which impacts most significantly on the Conservation Area. This causes air and noise pollution and possible damage to structures alongside the road. There is no clear solution since a by-pass is unlikely to be forthcoming in the foreseeable future and diversion of traffic to the A420 is likely to be problematic.

It is also important that repairs to existing street furniture be promptly effected. One of the central bollards protecting the pedestrian refuge across the A4 at Woodlands, for example, remains unlit and unobservable at night despite its twin being replaced. At the same time, collisions have damaged road signs at the Academy Drive entrance and despite immediate safety work there remains no sign of replacement. Both incidents have been reported.

Along the length of the A4 there is a proliferation of signage which detracts from the ambiance of the Conservation Area. The Pickwick Association carried out a review of street signs along the A4 some years ago; this resulted in minimal improvements. The task should be repeated.

Whilst modern communications are welcomed by residents, it is clear that some of the rooftops display an unsightly network of wires, aerials and satellite dishes. There is a case to argue that this should be forbidden since these small elements have an eroding effect on a sense of place. We believe that this is a feature of life and that, as time goes by technology may resolve the problem. Pickwick must remain a living community.

To be welcomed is Wiltshire Council's programme of replacement street lights. It does appear, however, that more thought might have gone into whether newly replaced LED lights were of a design that either protects or enhances the Conservation Area. It is to be noted that the selective replacement of lights has resulted in three different designs now being used in a very short stretch of the A4.

Hence traffic management, road works and accompanying street furniture is likely to be fact of life for many years. So it is vital that these tasks are carried out in full respect of the historic character of Pickwick.

Hare and Hounds carpark

The car park at the public house was improved at the millennium by the creation of a garden along one side. This has vastly improved the aspect of the Pickwick Gateway to Corsham. We believe, however, that more needs to be done to better 'frame' the aspect of the 'gateway'.

This could be done by restricting infill development at this site and by planting more substantial trees at the southerly end of the car park.



Bollards at Woodlands—the far one not illuminated



Damaged street furniture at Academy Drive



Overhead wires and aerials



Three different design street lights in 100 yards

Appendix 2 – Notes about a selection of Pickwick Buildings

The Georgian buildings in the Pickwick area range from cottages and prosperous middle class houses and farm-houses to gentlemen's country houses/villas. Some, such as Pickwick Manor and No. 17, No. 23 and No. 49 (Vine Cottage), certainly have earlier 17th century elements.

Summaries of aspects of some of the more important buildings within Pickwick:-

Within the present Conservation Area:-

- ◆ **No. 6 (Pickwick House)** is a fully-fledged, grand, early 19th century house with a 3-bay west front with full height, canted bays each side of centre, moulded cornice and small centre pediment. There are 8-pane sash windows throughout and a central 6-panel door in a Roman Doric pedimented doorcase. It had quite spacious gardens and grounds including a garden house with a slate roof which was also early 19th century. It is single storey and semi-circular in plan and the front has a half-glazed door (9-pane glazed panel in upper section). Definitely part of the original grounds - some 80m to the SE - is a contemporary stable/dovecote probably altered in the mid-19th/20th century.



- ◆ **No. 12 Pickwick:** a great deal is known about this house¹ as it has been subject to a number of recent studies, in particular by Wiltshire Buildings Records. It is an early-mid 18th century Georgian middle class house – paired with No. 14 – with features of 'polite' architecture but with re-used 16th century timbers throughout, some of which have apotropaic markings [to guard against 'evil'], and demonstrating that external appearances can be deceptive when it comes to the actual dates of principal structural building features [that will undoubtedly be true of other buildings]. The earlier 'kitchen' block was probably originally a brewhouse/wash house or back kitchen, perhaps of late 17th century date: it features a timber mullion window and late 16th/early 17th century fittings, probably re-used. Also, there is what appears to be a wig cupboard: tenants, Dr. Daniel Ludlow MD and his wife Catherine, paid hair powder tax in 1796 and 1797. Amongst the benefits of detailed historical research is that it has provided details of owners and tenants throughout its history: in 1756 the owner was Edward Mitchell a clothier and a leading local Quaker and sometime elder of the Society. Also, in 1754 he was recorded as a bailiff of Corsham Court and in 1761 as coroner of Cors-ham. In his will of 1761 he was described as Edward Mitchell senior, gentleman. Mr. Ludlow was listed a physician in Cors-ham in 1793-8 and he was succeeded in 1800 by another medical man, William Saintsbury, surgeon. Therefore, just on the evidence of this one property, it is known that there were professional/middle class people living in Pickwick in the 18th century. Septimus Kinnear, the Warwickshire and England cricketer was born in No. 12 in May 1871.



¹ '12 Pickwick dendrochronology and apotropaic and other markings' by John Maloney, *Journal of the Corsham Civic Society* (Autumn 2018) which refers to earlier studies and also '12 Pickwick, Corsham—Historic Buildings Report by P.M. Slocombe (Wiltshire Building Record, 2019).

- ◆ **No. 15 (Mead Cottage)**² was originally a pair of cottages, considered to be early 18th century in origin and converted to picturesque estate cottages in 1858 for T.H.A. Poynder of Hartham Park. The building features stone mullion windows with iron lattice glazing, a projecting 2 storey gabled porch and a Tudor-arched doorway

² M Parrot, *Notes from a visit to Mead Cottage, 15 Pickwick, Corsham, Wiltshire Buildings Record*, 6th March 2014



- ◆ **Nos. 17 and 19 Pickwick:** No. 17 is considered to be late 17th century and No. 19 early 18th century but they could be earlier. Both have the appearance of 'workers/artisans' houses.



- ◆ **No. 23 (Pickwick End)**, is a stylish early 19th century classic Georgian gentleman's town house in the country, indicative of wealth and taste. Even so, the fine ashlar work of the front and roadside walls does not extend to the other two rubble stone main walls. It was surrounded by quite spacious garden and grounds on all but the roadside. In 1878 the grounds to the east were found to be 'full of human skulls and other [skeletal] remains' thought to be from a Quaker burial ground known to have been on the far east side of the property (beside what is now the turning for Woodlands). To the north and west, there was a barn (early 18th century) of rubble stone with stone tiled roof and coped gables. It has a projecting 2-storey south-west wing rendered with flush quoins, upper 12-pane window and fine decorated moulded doorcase with moulded cornice over (installed by Robin Eden in 1964). Running west from a south-west angle is a rubble stone coped garden wall with 2 ashlar gate piers, moulded caps and raised gate stops. There is also an open fronted stone tiled pyramid-roofed summerhouse.



- ◆ **Nos. 41, 41a and The Masonic Hall and Nos. 43 and 45:** these 18th century buildings are a particularly interesting group. The two houses are of one build c.1760, but No. 41a also includes one bay of a 3-bay house to the left, now a Masonic Hall which is later 18th century. The main range is ashlar fronted to the east with its south side to the road in coursed rubble, with a north gable with chimney stack and with a chimney stack on the rear wing between Nos. 41 and 41a. The east front has two hipped dormers. There is a range of three 12-pane sash windows in moulded architraves with a central door with architrave and a pediment on brackets. The Masonic Hall consists of 2 bays of a 3-bay late 18th century house (the third bay is part of No. 41a) with attached hall behind, possibly 18th century, altered in the early-mid 19th century. The building is ochre-washed rubble stone with a stone tiled roof, 2-storeys with a flush moulded 2-light window over a 6-panel door to the right of the former centre bay of house. There is a flush-panelled door in an architrave with a large open pedimented hood on brackets. The Masonic symbol is prominent under the pediment. The hall range runs west from the rear north-west angle and comprises rubble stone with stone tiles, one buttress, a moulded 19th century Gothic two-light window with pointed lights and circular-section mouldings.

The south wall of the hall features a large clock (by T Bullock who had a shop in Pickwick Road - see <https://pickwickassociation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Thos.-Bullock-longcase-clock-at-No.-12-Pickwick.pdf>) and fine painted glass window showing a river or lake with rushes and fishes and herons which can be seen from the Bath Road. The hall is said to have been a billiard room for Beechfield House. No. 45 has a datestone of 1708 with the initials IHA on a lintel above a blocked up doorway. No. 45 and the later rear wing (No. 43) are of rubble stone (No. 43 is squared rubble) with stone tiled roofs. No. 45 faces west (away from the Bath Road) and has 2 storeys with coped gables and end wall chimney stacks. There were two first floor former 2-light recessed mullion windows with hood moulds but the mullions have been removed. The whole group of these buildings is notable for the irregularity of their ground plans and the singular way that they interact, which is suggestive of a communal enterprise.³

³ P Martin & D Treasure, *The Masons in Corsham - a Brief Documentary Study of Sources*, *Wiltshire Buildings Record* Oct 2019

Below: Nos 41,41a, the Masonic Hall, Nos 43 and 45



- ◆ **Beechfield House** was erected on the site of a 17th century house called Leyceters which was demolished c.1794. The present house was built c.1794-9 for Rev. J.L. Willis. It was latterly owned by Sir G. Goldney M.P. (1814-1900) and Sir F.H. Goldney (1846-1920). It has a claim to being considered the height of sophisticated Georgian architecture in the area, with a central projecting ashlar enclosed porch with Doric pilasters. There is a broad central arch with large traceried fanlight over a 6-panel door and sidelights, with pilasters between.



Each end wall has full-height bow windows. There was a separate orangery and inverted U-shaped stable block, plus accommodation for staff. Gate piers and walls are ashlar and date to the later 19th century. The two ashlar corniced piers are inscribed 'Beech' and 'Field' with a serpentine ashlar wall each side. There is a two-storey north-west service wing with a cornice. In its grounds was an ice house (noted on the 1884 OS map); Other substantial houses may have had their own, perhaps No. 23, Middlewick House etc.

- ◆ **Hare and Hounds PH.** Famous coaching Inn, late 17th/early 18th century and c. 1900, constructed of rubble stone with stone tiled roofs, a coped west gable and sundial. The central door is set in a chamfered and stopped surround with a hood on brackets. To the left of it are two ground floor 2-light recessed moulded windows and on the first floor a pair of early 18th century 12-pane sash windows. There is a large 19th century south-east rear wing, in painted rubble, of 2-storeys with a slate roof. Charles Dickens chose the surname of a Bath coach proprietor, Moses Pickwick, for his lead character in 'Pickwick Papers' and Moses later became landlord of the 'Hare & Hounds'.



- ◆ **Pickwick Manor** is a particularly significant building – Sir Nicholas Pevsner described it as an "unusually impressive example of a late 17th century manor house" - with all its connotations for the significance of the village of Pickwick from earlier times. The house has 14th to 15th century origins but was mostly rebuilt c.1664 with additions in 1711. Until the 1880s it was marked on maps as the 'Pickwick Farm'. It was restored and altered in 1920 by Sir H. Brakspear as his residence.



- ◆ **St. Patrick's Church.** Pickwick District School was built in 1858 for up to 165 children on land gifted in 1846 by Lord Methuen and his tenants, Sir Gabriel Goldney and Arthur Knapp. The school is depicted on the 1903 stained glass window in the south wall of St. Andrew's Church, Chippenham which is a memorial to Sir Gabriel Goldney, Bart., who was the Member of Parliament for Chippenham from 1865-85. A fall in the local population after the Great War prompted the closure of the school in 1922 and the sale of the building in 1928 as there were other established schools in Corsham to provide for Pickwick children. The old schoolhouse was used for a while as a glove factory during the 1930s, and later became a gas mask factory for a short while during WWII. It was purchased and converted into St. Patrick's Catholic Church and opened in 1945. It is Grade II listed



- ◆ **The Roundhouse** ~ ⁴the origins of the Roundhouse, SE of No. 51 Pickwick at the roadside, have not been established but there are references to it having been a former tollbooth and sweetshop. The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette of 1819 lists gates in the Corsham area including the 'Pickwick Gate and Side Gate' but its precise location is not known. The Roundhouse may have been built for the Corsham Turnpike Trust and in 1840 a Toll House keeper in Pickwick was brought before the magistrates at Corsham for demanding 4½d for a metallic spring cart when the legal toll was 3d only. The Roundhouse is said to have been a sweetshop providing for children who attended the nearby Pickwick School [1858-1922]. It is a rather unusual small stone lodge set in a stone wall with a central stone chimney stack. It is in the form of a simple booth of two-storeys on a circular floor plan with a pyramidal stone tile roof and walls mainly of coursed rubble stone. It has square headed windows with casements, no porch but a pointed head doorway just back from the Bath Road. The windows once faced up and down the road but apparently have been blocked up.



⁴ P Martin, L Purdy & D Treasure, *The Round House, Pickwick, Corsham - a Historic Buildings Study*, Report No B15985, Aug 2019

- ◆ **Spread Eagle PH** - in more recent times the Two Pigs and now a private house - is of mid-18th century date and quite an imposing building being ashlar faced and taller than most other two-storey buildings.



Outside the present Conservation Area:-

- ◆ **Guyers House started** modestly as a farmhouse, one room thick built in c.1670 by a Mr. Snelling, who named it Snellings after himself. In c.1830 (by which time it had been renamed Guyers House), it was gentrified by attaching a completely new set of rooms with a smart Georgian facade to what had been the back of the house. At the same time another storey was added to the original house to make bedrooms for servants and the original front door was demoted to the tradesman's entrance. In late Victorian times a further extension was made and shortly after World War I the lively new owners created a ballroom by joining the house up with the barn. The front range is of 2-storeys with a projecting centre with a parapet. The central arched doorway has a Roman Doric columned porch. To the right is a 2-storey canted bay which was added in the late 19th century. The original building survives to the rear although its roof was altered in the 19th century. Attached at the east end is a wing, running north, of two parallel ranges, apparently a 17th century 'L'-plan house with paired barn ranges to the north. There is a stable block, coach house and walled kitchen garden. It is now a country house hotel and is surrounded by pleasant gardens. James Pycroft, chiefly known for writing *The Cricket Field*, one of the earliest books about cricket, published in 1851, was born at **Guyers House** in 1813. In an article he wrote for *London Society* in 1856 he wrote "I have as much as anyone alive the right to be called the founder of *The Lansdowne, the principal cricket club in the West of Englandhaving taken the name of the far-famed Lansdowne Club*"⁵



⁵ *Lansdown CC in Bath, founded 1825, alive and well today and approaching their bi-centenary*

- ◆ **Middlewick House** is a typical 18th century gentleman's country house (in 1884 it was called The Parsonage) at the centre of the Middle Pickwick hamlet: nearby buildings include Mermaid Cottage (within the grounds and probably 16th century) and Nos. 3 (Rose Cottage) and 4 Middlewick. Middlewick House has a later 18th century front range with earlier work in the west wing plus early and late 19th century additions. The front range is ashlar and of 2-storeys with a stone-tiled roof, end stack chimneys, moulded cornice and parapet and a 5-window range. There are 12-pane sash windows and a central 6-panel door in Roman Doric in a projecting porch. Wings are set back on each side of the main front range. The left range is later 19th century with a 20th century Hely-Hutchinson crest on the north end and the initials of T.H.A. Poynder of Hartham on the south end. It was the home of Camilla Shand (now Duchess of Cornwall) and Andrew Parker Bowles.



- ◆ **Pickwick Lodge Farmhouse** is considered to be of 17th century date. It was extended and altered in the later 19th century when most of its mullion windows were replaced. It is a typically prosperous farmer's house of the period with a barn (almost certainly 19th century and also listed Grade II) constructed of rubble stone with stone-tiled hipped roof and two projecting cart-entries with hipped roofs each side. The house appears to have been part of the Upper Pickwick hamlet, together with:



- ◆ **Hillsgreen Lodge** (site formerly known as Hills Green) appears to incorporate at least two former farmhouses/cottages which were in open countryside. The core was originally of 17th to early 18th century date.



53. The Heritage section of this Plan has an important role to play in establishing a positive framework for sustainable development. Corsham NP Area has a wealth of heritage assets, an attractive rural setting and a rich historic landscape. It has some excellent examples of re-use and refurbishment of historic buildings, monuments and green spaces. The Neighbourhood Plan offers a valuable opportunity to develop pro-active policies to help conserve and enhance the built and natural environment and to help ensure that the legacy of the past can continue to provide social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits for many more generations to come.

54. Our heritage shapes today’s environment, giving us a sense of continuity and place. The pattern of buildings, streets, hedgerows and fields have aggregated over centuries and is what makes our town distinctive. Respecting heritage is a fundamental part of the NP, ensuring the story of Corsham and its residents will be recorded into the future. Understanding the history of Corsham enables us to appropriately plan for its future growth in the knowledge of what has shaped it and makes it unique. This conservation of our heritage is an active process of maintenance and managing change.

55. Heritage is at the core of who we are and how we live. It conveys identity and purpose, providing the backdrop for everyday life. Including heritage in our Neighbourhood Plan can help protect those areas which we value locally and ensure that they remain in productive use where appropriate. This document will help to ensure that potential new development is properly integrated and doesn’t erode distinctiveness. It seeks to identify opportunities for improvement, encouraging innovation that is sensitive to our historic setting.

56. The DCLG Planning Practice Guidance (April 2014) sets out guidance on ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ (Reference ID: 18a-001-20140306). It states that neighbourhood plans need to include enough information about local heritage to guide decisions and put broader strategic heritage policies from the Local Plan into action at a neighbourhood scale. In accordance with guidance, the designated heritage assets within the plan area have been clearly identified so they can be appropriately taken into account. Due to the rich historic environment of Corsham, there are also a considerable number of non-designated heritage assets that have been identified and taken into account within the plan making process. The local historic environment record and local lists have also been consulted to establish the priorities for conservation and enhancement in the plan area. **It is acknowledged that Historic England would ideally like all conservation areas to have a Conservation Area Ap-**

praisal or a Conservation Management Plan. These documents have not been produced by the Local Authority to date, however, this Neighbourhood Plan is committed to supporting the Local Authority in the preparation of such documents in the future. In the meantime, the Corsham Design Guide provides a comprehensive basis for the protection and enhancement of both the natural and the built historic environments.

57. The neighbourhood planning process has stimulated the community to explore what gives the town and the surrounding villages and settlements a distinctive sense of place; to find new ways to present and celebrate Corsham’s heritage; and to reflect on what goes into making an attractive environment and high quality design of buildings and open space. A volunteer led Character Area Assessment project has encouraged local residents in each of the 22 designated ‘character areas’ to identify what they value (both old and new) about their area and its setting, and to pick out features and views they want to see protected or enhanced.

58. Work on developing the Heritage Evidence Base has empowered the local community to scrutinise the make-up of Corsham’s heritage, and to consider how best to conserve and enhance key aspects such as the historic settlement pattern, the five designated Conservation Areas and other important ‘clusters’ of heritage assets.

Policy CNP HE1—All new development within the Corsham Neighbourhood Plan Area must demonstrate good quality design. This means responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the existing built environment. Good design for Corsham means:

- a) Achieving high quality design that respects the scale, character and historic built fabric of existing and surrounding buildings;
- b) Respecting established building plot arrangements, widths and architectural rhythm of the street scene including front gardens, railings, walls and hedges;
- c) **Establishing ‘gateways’ into the town at;**
 - (i) Cross Keys,
 - (ii) Pickwick,**
 - (iii) Pound Pill,

to reinforce the identity of the historic centre and enhance the visitor awareness and experience;

d) Using good quality materials that complement the existing historic vernacular of Corsham whilst respecting the individual context of each proposal; and

e) Taking into account the key views identified in Figures 12 and 13 and ensuring that any development within these views respects the key features of the views.

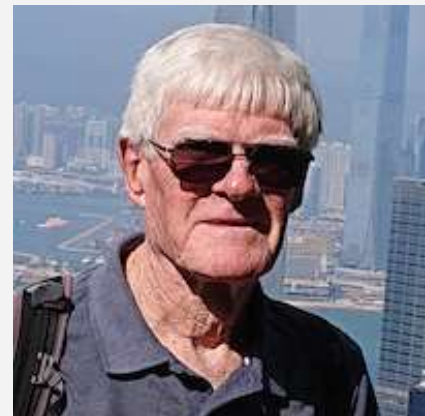


Research and text by:



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and



Tony Clark was born in Bristol but spent the greater part of his working life in Hong Kong where he served as Deputy Secretary for Economic Services responsible (at varying times) for agriculture and fisheries, conservation, and port and shipping matters. He has represented Hong Kong at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and at the International Maritime Organisation.

About the reviewers

Paul Kefford—A former Civil Servant, Paul held posts in both the Cabinet Office and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport where he was responsible for liaison with English Heritage, the Government’s advisors on the historic environment. In that capacity, Paul was policy lead responsible for the drafting and production of the Department’s planning policy guidance (PPG15) on the historic environment, inclusive of conservation areas.

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