



Ascott
-under-
Wychwood

A potted history
and
things you might
like to know



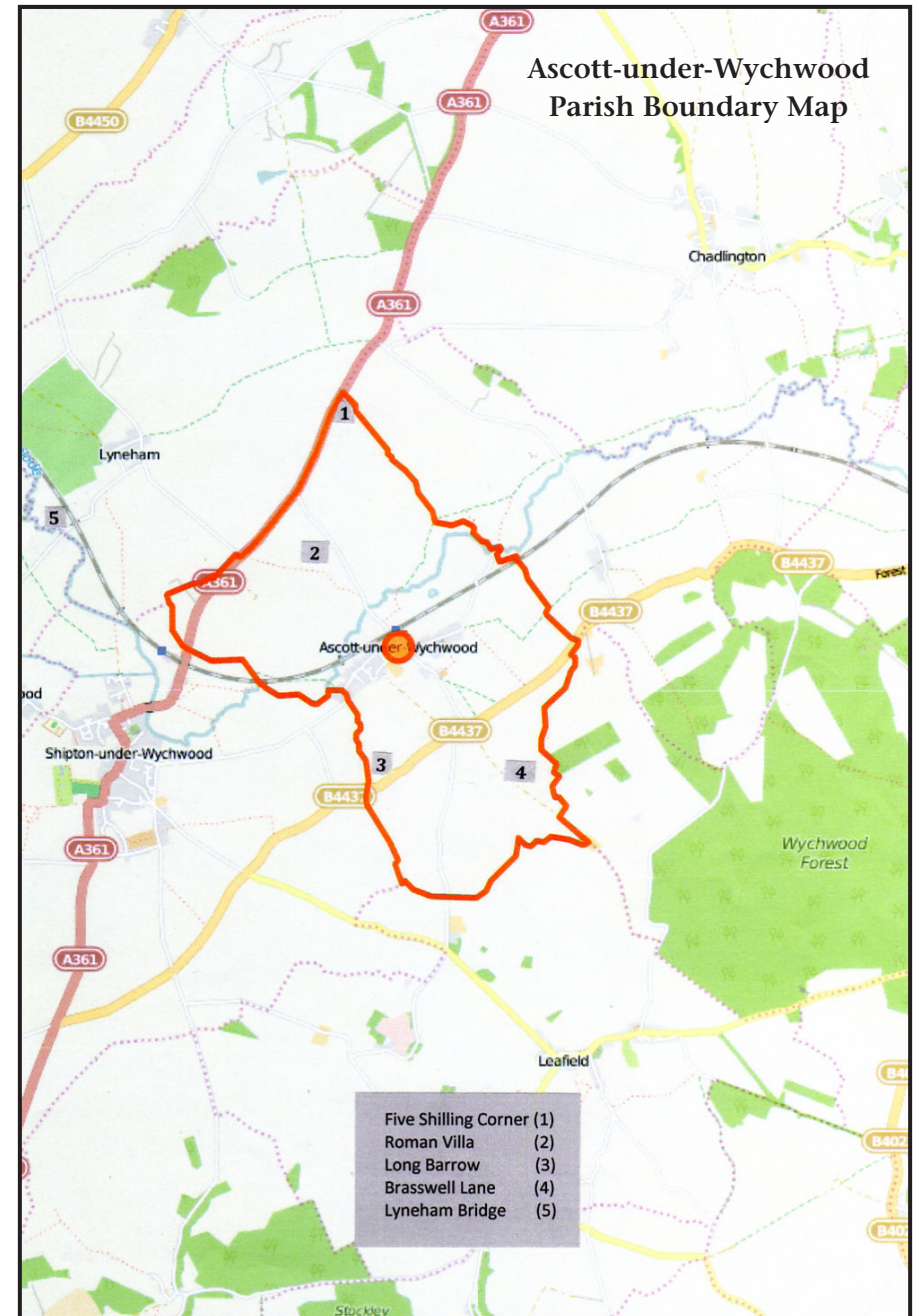
Ascott-under-Wychwood

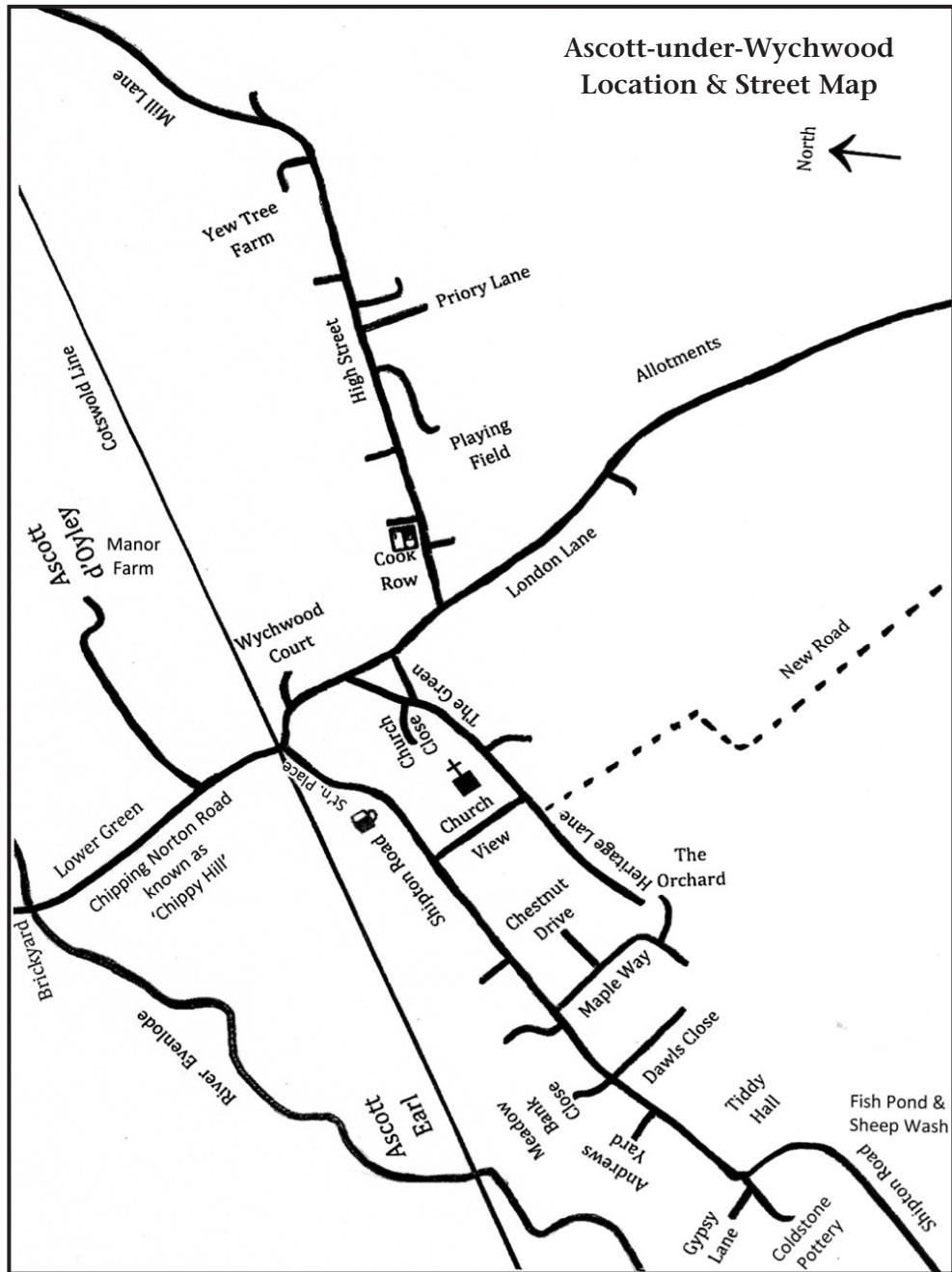
The name Ascott is derived from the Saxon *Est-cotta* meaning East Homestead, the mother settlement being Shipton (the Saxon Sheep-tun) to the south-west. Wychwood (*Hwicce wuda*) refers to the pre-Norman ancient royal forest, home of the Anglo Saxon Hwicce people, who lived in the area from some time in the 6th century until the assimilation of the Old English peoples into the wider Middle English society.

Ascott is first recorded in the Domesday Book, 1086, when the Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood covered much of what is now West Oxfordshire. During the medieval period the settlement encompassed two distinct areas, Ascott Earl to the west and Ascott d'Oyley to the east. Today, earthworks of two motte and bailey castles are still visible: at Ascott Earl a turf mound marks the castle site while at Ascott d'Oyley, Manor Farm house now stands within the bailey of the castle.

Stone Age long barrows and an Iron Age camp nearby show that people have lived in the neighbourhood for thousands of years. The recorded population of Ascott in 1085-86 was 78, in 2016 it is approximately 560.

Ascott-under-Wychwood lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Nestled in the Evenlode valley, village amenities include a church, community shop, public house, playing field with sports pavilion, village hall, allotments, railway station, a visiting post office and mobile library van.





High Street looking west

Photograph courtesy Hamish Fenton

River Evenlode The river rises in the Cotswold Hills near Moreton-in-Marsh, finishing as a tributary of the Thames approximately one mile down river from Cassington.

Ascott Long Barrow The Neolithic Cotswold Severn long barrow (grid ref. SR299176) was used as a burial chamber for three to five generations from 3,700 BC. It was excavated 1965–69 (Don Benson) when finds included the bones of twenty-one individuals, fragments of flint and stone tools and the tip of a leaf-shaped arrowhead embedded in a vertebra. There was evidence of earlier Mesolithic activity beneath the barrow.

Iron Age Settlement Pottery found in Ascott Earl is indicative of an Iron Age settlement (800BC–43AD) on a gravel terrace, continuing into the Roman era.

Roman Settlement There was a Roman Villa (43AD–410AD) to the west of 'Chippy Hill', currently College Farm land, where tesserae (mosaic cubes), coins and plaster have been found.

Ascott Earl Ascott Earl motte and bailey castle (a scheduled ancient monument), named after the de Clare family, Earls of Gloucester, lies on a former Iron Age fortification and was most likely built of timber. The site dates from the early 12th century, probably slightly earlier than Ascott d'Oyley castle. Only earth mounds remain to mark the site.



Ascott Earl castle site looking south-east

Photo courtesy Hamish Fenton

Ascott d'Oyley The motte and bailey castle at Ascott d'Oyley (a scheduled ancient monument) was built without a licence by Roger d'Oyley c.1129–50, on land originally held by the d'Oyleys from William the Conqueror. It was demolished c.1175 by order of Henry II. Soil was carefully piled around the stone keep built on the site to form a motte, traces of which still remain, visible as a treed mound behind Manor Farm house which stands within the castle bailey. The site was excavated 1946–47 (E.M.Jope) and surveyed 1999 (C.J.Bond).



Ascott d'Oyley castle site at Manor Farm looking south-west Photo courtesy Hamish Fenton

The Pound The word 'pound' is of Saxon origin which by Norman times when the manorial system with its huge open fields was in use, was a walled enclosure for the containment of straying animals. An essential part of village life, Ascott's pound is mentioned in records dating back to 1587.

Ascott pound, owned by the village, is now home to the stones of the Ascott Neolithic Cotswold Severn Long Barrow which were relocated from their original site (grid ref. SR299176). Situated in the middle of the village next to the churchyard, the pound, with its wooden seat, provides a space for relaxation and perhaps quiet contemplation of life, past, present and future.

Fish Pond The fish pond may have supplied fish to Ascott Earl castle, but more likely was constructed in the Middle Ages by the owners of Langley Estate (see Location and Street Map).



Ascott pound adjoining the churchyard

Holy Trinity Church A 12th-century Norman church situated mid-way between the two Norman motte and bailey castles to the west and east. At the rear of the church are five wooden pews, possibly the oldest in Oxfordshire: a notice stipulates 'seats numbers 1 and 2 and 15 to 30 to be reserved for the use of the poorer inhabitants of this parish'.

The tower has a ring of six bells, all of which bear inscriptions – five were cast in 1744 by Henry Bagley III at a temporary foundry in Witney, and the treble cast in 1905 by Mears and Stainbank at the Whitechapel bell foundry. There is also a Sanctus bell which was cast in 1797 by Thomas Mears.

The series of depressions near the priest's door is said to have been made by parishioners sharpening their arrowheads after the service. Two gargoyles keep guard over the north door to prevent the devil entering the church (possibly dating from 1857-1859). The clock was donated by Cornbury Park in 1920.

The tapestry, completed in 1995, celebrates village landscape and livelihoods both past and present.

A survey of the churchyard monument inscriptions, carried out in 2009, can be found in the church. The catalogue contains only those graves identifiable from the inscriptions on their headstones. Further information on burials is available from Oxfordshire Record Office, St Luke's Church, Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2HT.



Holy Trinity Church

Ascott Great Bridge On the site of a very early bridge first recorded in 1279 (Ascott d'Oyley, at the foot of 'Chippy Hill'). The present bridge is mid-19th century.

Ascott Village Charity Established 1480 – see back page.

Gypsy Lane Bridge Formerly the site of a ford at Ascott Earl, listed in a survey in 1591. The present bridge is mid-19th century.



Manor Farm dovecote and granary

Ascott Manor Manor Farm is mainly sixteenth and seventeenth century, but still retaining some medieval buttresses. A number of the original mullioned windows have survived. The farm buildings include a 17th-century barn with a dovecote in the gable end and a brick and half-timber granary standing on staddle stones.

Lower Green The small parcel of land known as Lower Green was given to the Ascott Poor's Estate Charity in 1819 by Lord Churchill to provide an income for the eight most 'industrious poor families in Ascott Parish' (see Location and Street Map).

Sheep Wash Originally, sheep were washed in a running stream several days before shearing by men and women often standing waist-high in cold water for many hours. This was necessary to provide clean wool for spinning. Ascott sheep wash (on the left of Shipton Road as you leave the village) probably dates from the mid-19th century, when sheep washes were constructed all over the country to meet the increasing

demand for high quality fleeces for the wool trade and make life easier for the sheep washers. Running water was obtained from the fish pond nearby.

Ascott School In 1833 Ascott had a National School room (now The Old School House, 9 The Green) built by Lord Churchill. Architect C.C. Rolfe designed a new school in 1871 which was constructed in 1873 on the corner of London Lane and The Green. The school was enlarged in 1879 by the addition of an infants' classroom and closed in 1984.

Forge Garage (The Green) occupies the former blacksmith's workshop which dates back to at least the 16th century.

The Brickyard North-west of and adjacent to 'Chippy Hill' river bridge, known as Brickhill, produced bricks c.1860.

Railway Station and Signal Box The Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, now the Cotswold Line, was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in August 1845 and opened on 4 June 1853, when the section from Wolvercote Junction (near Oxford) to Evesham was completed and with that, Ascott-under-Wychwood station. The signal box was built in 1883 by the Great Western Railway company, in order for the line to comply with the then established signalling standards. The last of the wooden waiting rooms, built in 1855, was demolished in 1969. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Ascott station was used for the unloading of bombs.

The Ascott Martyrs On 21 May 1873 sixteen Ascott women were sent to prison for the part they played in supporting striking members of the newly formed Agricultural Workers' Union. Farm labourers working for Mr Hambidge of Crown Farm (13 The Green) had joined the Union and gone on strike in an attempt to secure a wage rise. Within the rules of the Union they were allowed to strike, but were not allowed to

prevent other workers from taking their place. On 12 May 1873 a group of about forty women from the village took it upon themselves to picket on behalf of the striking menfolk, preventing labourers from Ramsden working on the farm.

The women were arrested and taken to Chipping Norton where the 'ringleaders' were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, seven of them for ten days and nine of them for seven days. A mob of two thousand people gathered in Chipping Norton and a violent protest ensued. In the early hours of the following morning the women and two infants were bundled into a large wagon and transferred to Oxford Gaol resulting in further protestations.

All were eventually pardoned after Queen Victoria heard of the incident, whereupon she gave each of them a red flannel petticoat and five shillings. Not to be out-done, the Agricultural Workers Union gave each of the women enough blue silk to make one dress and five pounds from money donated by the public. The women's actions may have led to the change in the law, resulting in the right to peaceful picketing, a lasting legacy to the British nation. The farm labourers did not secure a wage rise.

A project researching the events is underway.

The last surviving Ascott Martyr,
Mrs Fanny Rathband
(née Honeybone) c1925



Ascott Parish Council Established in 1894, replacing court leets which exercised certain judicial rights delegated by the Crown. Court leets were held annually in the Churchill Arms to arrange parish affairs.

Ascott Morris Dances Until about 1874 there was an annual fair at Whitsuntide in Wychwood Forest, followed by a week of activities, during which the Ascott Morris men danced in the local villages. With the end of the fair, their songs and dances began to be forgotten until Reginald Tiddy collected, recorded and taught them to the village.

Stony Stratford Morris side have a number of Ascott Morris dances which they sometimes perform on their village green. Every two years the Oxford University Morris Men exercise the right set out in a document that stipulates 'This Hall shall at all times be lent free of charge for any purpose connected with Morris dancing' by visiting Tiddy Hall to dance the Ascott Morris dances.

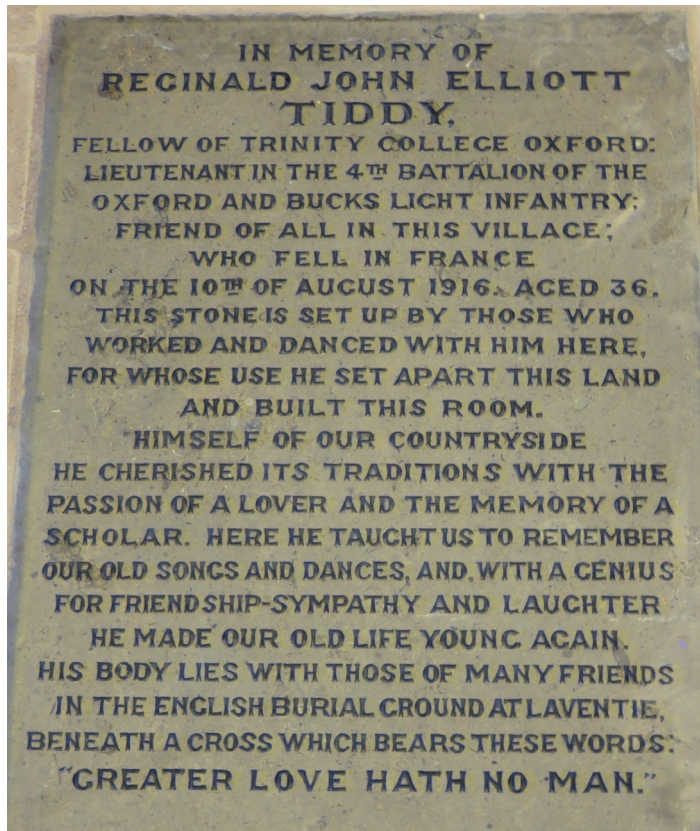
Reginald Tiddy Reginald John Elliot Tiddy was born in Margate on 19 March 1880, moving to Ascott in 1909. He was a fellow of Trinity and University Colleges, Oxford and had a great love of English folk dance and song. During his time in Ascott he was very active on behalf of working class people, trying to improve their conditions. He was a founder member of the Oxford branch of the English Folk and Dance Society, a passionate collector of mummings plays, a keen researcher of folklore and the inspiration for the revival of folk and Morris dancing in Ascott. He was close friends with William Kimber, Cecil Sharp and George Butterworth.

He purchased some land and at his own expense, in 1912 built the original Tiddy Hall, incorporating a sprung floor for dancing.

Despite being a pacifist, he was determined to 'do his bit' for his country and along with many of his group of young dancers, volunteered for military service in 1914. Resisting



Reginald Tiddy and the memorial to him in Tiddy Hall



the suggestion that he should transfer to the greater safety of the Intelligence Corps, in 1915 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in the 2nd/4th Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. On 10 August 1916, during the battle of the Somme, at Laventie northern France, he was killed in action, age 36, by a stray shell, while searching for wounded men. Ralf Honeybone, his batman and friend from Ascott was present at his death. Many of Ascott's Morris dancers also lost their lives during the war. Reginald Tiddy's grave is in Laventie Military Cemetary, La Gorgue Nord, France.

Tiddy Hall Built in 1912 by Reginald Tiddy and originally called the Reading Room, re-named Tiddy Hall in 1927. The hall became a natural venue for recreational activities and helped to break down social barriers. In 1913 it was one of the first centres running classes for the Workers Education Association. In 1915 Margaret Macmillan school clinics were held in the hall, providing free medical treatment for children, adults paying a small charge. It was also used extensively for folk singing, country and Morris dancing and by many other village clubs and organisations. During the Second World War the Pioneer Corps was billeted in Tiddy Hall – the soldiers were



The original Tiddy Hall

required to load coal lorries at Ascott station.

The new hall, opened in 1994, continues to be used in the spirit for which the original hall was intended. Tiddy Hall was awarded a blue plaque in recognition of Reginald Tiddy's outstanding contribution to the collection of folk plays and the legacy he left to the village. The plaque was unveiled on 8 September 2012 as part of the Tiddy Hall centenary celebrations.

1920 War Memorial The war memorial at the east entrance to the churchyard was erected in memory of the 13 villagers who lost their lives during the Great War, 1914–18. A second brass plaque was added later to include the names of those who died in the Second World War.

Memorial Playing Field The field (off High Street) was purchased in 1948 for use as a public recreation ground, in memory of those who died in the Second World War, funded by subscriptions from villagers and a donation from the Village Charity. The current pavilion was opened in July 1999 and new play equipment installed in 2014.

1948 War Memorial On the gate-pillar at the entrance to the playing field is a memorial to those who lost their lives in the Second World War, 1939 to 1945.

Coldstone Pottery Established by Chris Harries, pottery was made here from 1953 to 1969 (now The Old Pottery, Coldstone House, 50 Shipton Road). Coldstone pottery was characterised by crossed-wheatear and 'matchstick' decoration.

Coldstone Angling Club Founded on 7 July 1971, named after Coldstone House, the club has fishing rights on the river Evenlode from Lyneham river bridge to the footbridge just beyond Ascott Mill (west to east respectively). Fish types are mixed coarse – the record competition weight for the club's stretch of water stands at 82lbs (2006).

On 4 June 1994 the fishing club lake – Manor Farm Lake (grid ref. SP30431917) – was officially opened after almost three years of fundraising. The creation of the one and a quarter acre lake was a joint venture in conjunction with the landowner. The pegs are sponsored by local tradespeople, businesses and individuals. The lake is fished in season from 16 June to 14 March.

Ascott Martyrs' Memorial Bench & Tree The Martyrs' memorial bench and tree on the village green commemorate the women of Ascott who were imprisoned in 1873 for supporting their striking agricultural menfolk, by picketing replacement workers. The chestnut tree was planted and an octagonal wooden seat sited to commemorate the centenary of the Ascott Martyrs in 1973. The existing Martyrs' memorial bench replaced the original bench in 2000 to commemorate the millennium.

The Ascott Grapevine The village magazine, first issued in January 1994. Currently published four times a year it is delivered free to all households, financed by donations, advertisers and the parish council.

Churchyard Gates The iron gates at the east entrance to the churchyard were erected by the parish council in 2002 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The original oak gates, brought from London and erected in 1920 as a memorial to those who died in the Great War, can now be seen hanging at Crown House, 11 The Green.

Ascott Village Shop A multi-award-winning community shop opened in 2003, acquired as a bare shell in a new housing development (Cook Row). Villagers raised funds in a hectic six months to take the enterprise from bare brick to fully stocked shelves. Willing volunteers plastered the walls, installed all the services, laid flooring and obtained shelving, chillers

and freezers etc. The delightful result is a tribute to all those involved, in the past and at present.

Ascott Village Shop is owned by the community and run by the community for the benefit of the community. To this end, it is possible to buy shares at £10 each, giving the shareholder the right to vote at the shop's annual meeting and eligibility to be an elected member of the shop committee.

Flood On the night of 20/21 July 2007, 42 properties were hit by a devastating flood. Extensive flood alleviation work has since been carried out to greatly reduce the risk of future serious flooding.

Interesting snippets

Listed Buildings Ascott is home to 23 listed buildings which include three tombs and two memorials in the churchyard, one river bridge and two scheduled monuments.

Ascott Mill, probably on the site of the mill mentioned in the Domesday book (1086) has been restored and much of the machinery retained in the Mill House (at the end of Mill Lane).

Ten slaves were recorded in the Domesday book as living in Ascott-under-Wychwood.

Old oak tree, possibly the oldest tree in the Wychwoods and Evenlode Valley. This magnificent oak has a girth of 7 metres (23ft) which means it is over 500 years old. It stands in a field adjacent to the Oxfordshire Way, between Ascott and Pudlicote, to the east of Ascott Manor Farm riverbridge (see front cover).

The Chaundy family, established in Ascott during the 12th century, first recorded in 1316, had direct descendents in the village until 1965. The five original church bells bear inscriptions identifying the maker and the two churchwardens of the time (1744), one of which was John Chaundy.

The Swan Inn (4 Shipton Road) almost certainly pre-dates its earliest documentary record of 1790.

The Workhouse occupied the area between the churchyard (east entrance) and the blacksmiths. Formerly Church House, it was given to the Ascott charities in the 17th century and later known as the House of Industry. After the building of Chipping Norton Workhouse c.1838, the House of Industry was converted back into cottages which were demolished before 1900.

The Charlbury to Burford road (B4437) was a toll road from 1800 to sometime after 1860.

Corner House & Churchill Arms Corner House (1 High Street) was formerly the Churchill Arms hostel where coaches travelling between Worcester and London stopped to change horses. When the railway came in the 1850s a new Churchill Arms was built near the level crossing (1 Wychwood Court), closing in 1989.

Long House, formerly Long House Farm and farmyard (9, 11 & 13 High Street), farmed by the Townsend family from 1764 to the beginning of the 20th century, had a granary at the west end, hence the high door.

Ascott Earl House (on the corner of Shipton Road and Gypsy Lane) purchased by Lord Sanderson in 1911, was converted into a May Home in 1914 in memory of his sister, providing rest and recuperation for poor women and girls in need of help until 1922.

Baseball Team In the 1920s, early 30s and just after the Second World War, Ascott had a very good baseball team which toured the county.

Ladies cricket Ascott had its own team in the late 1930s.

Evacuees With the outbreak of the Second World War, Ascott saw an influx of evacuees – parents with babies and about fifty school children.

Five Shilling Corner The village owns a small piece of land adjacent to the A361 on the north-east tip of the parish, known as Five Shilling Corner. Originally a quarry, it was used for some years as the village dump.

Second World War bombs Bombs unloaded from Ascott station were stacked every few yards along the Burford to Charlbury (B4437) and Shipton to Chipping Norton (A361) roads. The Germans dropped bombs on Ascott (most likely intended for Leafield radio station and nearby airfields), but luckily nobody was killed.

The village green used to extend north, beyond the railway line to the east of the road.

Church View, previously known as The Row, was once owned by the Poor's Estate and Lower Green Charity. The front doors used to be at what is now the rear of the properties.

Old street names Formerly, Shipton Road was Lower Street, Gypsy Lane was Meadow Lane and High Street was Upper Street.

Vicarage pond The pond in the vicarage grounds (The Old Vicarage, 20 London Lane), supplied by spring water, was the source of piped water to the village until 1966.

Baptist Chapel There was a Baptist chapel in Ascott from 1816 until 1994, adjacent to the west side of The Swan Inn garden.

In days gone by the village had its own wheelwright, blacksmith, undertaker, midwife, shoemaker, cobbler, vicar and sexton, schoolmaster, several quarries and farms, a second allotment, two shops, a post-office and a doctor's surgery.

There used to be an annual wheelbarrow race and donkey derby, and a visiting fair which set up in the middle of the village in September.



Photo courtesy Fred Russell, 1958

Winston The village donkey bought by a small syndicate in the 1960s to run in the annual donkey derbys. He never won a race ...
'Chippy Hill' was lined by elm trees until they were killed by Dutch elm disease c.1973.

Standpipes At one time these provided the only source of piped water for most households. Four remain: one opposite The Swan Inn, against the wall of the village pound; a second on the corner of Church View and Heritage Lane; a third on High Street verge between the playing field and number 14; and the fourth on the south-west corner of The Old Post Office (17 London Lane).

Geology A detailed study can be found in *The Ascott Grapevine*, Issue 83, Autumn 2014, pages 69–72 (available on Ascott community website).

Useful Information

DEFIBRILLATOR The village has a defibrillator which is located outside the front door of The Swan Inn. To obtain the access code, dial 999.

Ascott community website
www.ascott-under-wychwood.org.uk

Ascott Village Shop 01993 831240
www.ascottvillageshop.co.uk

Tiddy Hall Ingrid Ridley 01993 830612
www.tiddyhall.co.uk

Sports pavilion contact the Parish Council

Allotments contact the Parish Council

Holy Trinity church 01608 676572
rector@thechasebenefice.org.uk

The Ascott Grapevine 01993 831023
wendypearse@btinternet.com

Village historian Wendy Pearse 01993 831023
wendypearse@btinternet.com

Library van 01865 810240
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/mobile-libraries

Post office Every Friday 2.00 to 4.00pm in Tiddy Hall

Bus timetable information can be found on the village website and on the bus stop notice boards.

Train timetable information is available on the station noticeboard.

Governance The village falls under the jurisdiction of: Ascott-under-Wychwood Parish Council (Clerk) 01608 641045
baytreecottage@hotmail.co.uk

West Oxfordshire District Council 01993 861000
www.westoxon.gov.uk

Oxfordshire County Council 01865 792422
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Thames Valley Police non-emergency local police contact, phone 101

NHS Oxfordshire Clinical Care Group 01865 336800
www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk

Annual events Tiddy Hall anniversary dance, acoustic music festival, Church fundraiser, Ascott Village Charity run, Fishing Club race night, village pantomime, Christmas carols on the village green, Ascott Pre-school fete.

Clubs/groups Coldstone Angling Club, Ascott Songsters, Wychwood Folk Club, Ascott Football Club, Wychwoods Day Centre, Wychwoods Local History Society, Wychwood Project, Cotswold Line Promotion Group (CLPG), Ascott Walkers, Wychwood Investors Club.

Future publication *Victoria County History Volume XIX* Preliminary work on the Wychwood Forest area of West Oxfordshire began in 2013, for a volume to be completed over the next few years. The volume as a whole will look at the great royal Forest of Wychwood and at the places in and around it, including Ascott-under-Wychwood which is available to read online at <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/oxfordshire/work-in-progress/ascott-under-wychwood>

Compiled by Elaine Byles

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Cover photographs: *Oak tree* courtesy Stuart Fox

Signal box courtesy Martin Loader, 1983

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The original Ascott Charity was established in 1480 by Thomas and Agnes Robins who placed two cottages and the adjoining land in trust, the rent from which was to help the poor of the parish. The village charity known as The Poor's Estate and Lower Green Charity was established on 20 March 1894 for the relief of poverty in the village and to provide financial assistance for young people towards their education.

The Charity grew larger over the centuries and by 1934 consisted of 16 cottages, one dwelling house with blacksmith's shop, five enclosures of land and an orchard. On 8 June 1934, most of the land, the dwelling house and the cottages were sold by auction, the proceeds being placed in an Education Trust. Later some of the money went towards the purchase of the Memorial Playing Field and other good causes.

A new village charity was registered on 30 April 2003 to help raise money to buy and equip Ascott Village Shop.

The administration of the old charities was taken over by the new charity in 2007, now collectively known as Ascott Village Charity. Ascott Village Charity has three sources of funds: the Poor's Estate and the Lower Green Fund; the General Fund and the Flood Relief Fund, from which it can make grants that fall within its remit for hardship, educational/vocational studies and environmental projects. The Charity still owns a small parcel of land, known as Lower Green, which lies to the north of the railway line, east of the road and south of the river.

Ascott Village Charity is funding this publication