

I N K P E N
CHURCH & VILLAGE

by

G. A. J. Goodhart

ST. MICHAEL
THE ARCHANGEL



PROTECT US

PREFACE

FOR more than seven centuries the Church of Saint Michael and All Angels has stood among the hills and woods of West Berkshire, the meeting place of the Christian congregation of Inkpen and a sign of the Christian faith to any who may pass this way, or pause to look inside. Its history and the history of the village are closely woven together. Appropriately, therefore, Commander Goodhart has given us a book from which we can learn a little more about both, and something of the close relationship which exists between them.

Just over a century ago the building underwent a major change in its appearance. Yet it survives as substantially the old parish church. In a century of great change the village has survived, more or less unspoilt. The surrounding countryside remains a place of pilgrimage for those in search of scenic beauty or of fresh air and vigorous exercise. One may feel that God has dealt favourably with Inkpen.

I hope that this book will inspire and encourage many of our own generation to value this church and its environment, to preserve, renew and to use them responsibly, and so to hand them on to future generations.

In the Preface to an earlier version of this book Father R. H. Foster wrote, 'May St Michael and all the Angels watch over his holy shrine, for the church slowly but surely brings us back to reality away from the flippancy and passing show of our present age'. May they, indeed! And may generations of Inkpen people and of visitors find in this place a sense of the presence of God, who meets us wherever we may be, and especially in the Church of His Son, Jesus Christ.

March 1994

*C. C. S. Neill
Rector*

ADDITIONAL PREFACE

A beautiful, peaceful church.

Beautiful, set in the midst of glorious countryside.

AS present Rector (sadly C. C. S. Neill died in August 1996) it gives me great pleasure to write an Additional Preface for another edition of Tony Goodhart's book.

The above comments from the current Visitors Book in St Michael's testify that this is a very special country church, set in an active and caring community. Indeed, in a village such as Inkpen, church and community are very dependent one upon the other. Hence it is a tribute to the success of this relationship that St Michael's is not only open daily from dawn to dusk, but is also very well cared for with beautiful floral decorations. It is clear that the people of Inkpen value their parish church, and that this is much appreciated is obvious from the many compliments paid by the steady stream of visitors to St Michael's.

In providing visitors with a history of 'Inkpen – Church and Village' it is to be hoped that the secret of Inkpen's success as a community may be disseminated further afield, at a time when many villages in England seem to be struggling for their very survival. Long may St Michael continue to protect and guard his church and people of Inkpen, especially at the start of this new Millennium!

September 2001

*J. F. Ramsbottom
Rector*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS survey of Inkpen's church and village has been prepared by a member of the congregation of Saint Michael's Church. The church section of it is largely taken from the previous booklet, written in 1945 by the then Rector, Father Francis Driscoll, while the village section is partly inspired by Mrs Martin's book, *Inkpen Yesterday*, extracts from which are gratefully acknowledged. Inevitably, in this brief booklet, much has had to be omitted. Additional information about Inkpen and its characters may be found in Mrs Martin's delightful book.

G. A. J. G.

INKPEN AND ITS CHURCH

MANY people may wonder how the parish of Inkpen came to have its name. In the translation of the 1086 Domesday Book (from the original Latin) the village is called Hinge Pene. It might just as well have become Hingepin. However Inkpen it is and there are various theories about the name, the more romantic being that a local Saxon chief named Inga built a stockade (or pen) near what is now the church and that gradually the name Inkpen evolved from Inga's pen.

It is recorded in the Domesday Book that Hinge Pene consisted of two manors, areas of land, granted by King Alfred to two thanes or freemen and that the population and assets consisted of 10 villagers and 15 smallholders with 7 ploughs, 20 slaves and a mill, covering a total area of 5 hides. One hide was about 120 acres. The total value was assessed at £14. The number of ploughs and the mill, worth 12 shillings, were important because these were taxed. There was no church at the time of the Domesday Book.

The manors became known as Eastcourt and Westcourt and at a later stage there was also an estate called Haslewick. There is now no trace of the manor of Eastcourt, though it is believed to have covered the present Post Office Road and Common areas. Haslewick, however, in the Upper Green area, formerly Haslewick Green and including what is now the Kirby estate, is recalled by the group of houses of that name.

The manor of Westcourt is still represented by the fine 18th-century house at Lower Green near the church. The manor is said to have been given by King Hardicanute for services rendered to the Crown to a certain Roger whose descendant, Sir Roger de Ingpen, was a Knight Templar at the time of the

Crusades. He is believed to have been the founder of the church building in 1220, at about the same time as Salisbury Cathedral was being built.

The two tomb covers in the sanctuary are thought to be those of two Knights Templar, one the effigy of Sir Roger and the other, an anchor, clearly indicating a seafarer, perhaps the captain of one of the vessels transporting the Crusaders. Sir Roger's effigy shows a knight in chain-mail with surcoat reaching to the knees, grasping the hilt of his sword as if prepared to draw. On his left arm he carries a large three-cornered shield, but its device is unfortunately completely obliterated.

The Church of Saint Michael is a relatively plain building of flint and stone with the characteristic high-pitched roof of the 13th century. As you enter, you may notice the Early English doorway with its small consecration cross on the left jamb. Over the centuries, despite some reconstruction in the early 18th century, when the Brickenden family were providing a succession of rectors, the church had become sadly in need of major repair, but it was not until 1896, when the Reverend Henry Butler became Rector, that serious restoration work was undertaken.

Before the restoration, the church consisted of nave and chancel without division and under one continuous roof, with low western belfry carried on four massive oak piers and containing three bells. During the restoration, the north wall was dismantled and the present north aisle added. The three small Early English lancets in the new north wall had previously been in the old wall, now replaced by three fine arches. These lancets are interesting. There was little or no building stone in Berkshire when they were originally installed, and the 'stone' work of these windows is, in fact, chalk or 'clunch', which was extensively used, when the carriage of building stone from any distance presented problems.

The roof timbers and the oak piers supporting the belfry were in an advanced state of decay and had to be entirely renewed. The east wall, owing to subsidence, was falling away and had to be demolished down to the string course above the altar and rebuilt. In the course of this rebuilding, the splays of an Early English window were uncovered and, in place of a later Carolean east window, the present window of three lights in the Early English style was substituted. The rubble outer walls which had been plastered were stripped and coated over with the present ashlar work of Ham Hill stone.

When the plaster inside was removed, traces of medieval paintings were revealed but they were too decayed for any attempt at restoration to be contemplated. The architect, Mr C. C. Rolfe of Oxford, made provision for future wall decoration of the same type on either side of the chancel, along the south wall and in the spandrels of the new arches. These were subsequently admirably executed in 1910 by Miss Ethel King Martin, whose paintings of the Annunciation (south chancel wall), the First Christmas (north chancel wall), Saints Raphael and Uriel, angels of healing and light (spandrels of nave arches) and the Ascension, near the door in the south wall, add much to the beauty of the church within.

The church is dedicated to Saint Michael, Prince of the Heavenly Host, and the angels in the chancel, the paintings in the spandrels of the arches, the reredos and the carving on the front of the high altar remind us of that angelic ministry set out in the collect for Michaelmas Day.

The fine carved altar and the reredos are one great picture depicting the Church at worship on earth and in heaven. The centre altar panel shows Christ, God Incarnate, come to earth. Next to Him is Mary, kneeling. She holds a lily, the artistic symbol of her purity, and the Latin text on the altar is hers, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'. The altar also shows our patron,

armed not with a sword but with the Cross of Christ. He is overcoming Satan, in the form of a dragon, as described in Revelation 12. In addition, the altar front shows the four Evangelists, Matthew and Mark to the north, Luke and John to the south. They wear mitres and three carry pastoral staffs. Luke, the doctor, carries a branch from the tree of life, 'which is for the healing of the nations' (Revelation 22).

The reredos depicts the worship of heaven described in Revelation 4. The four beasts of the centre panel are the symbols of the Evangelists: man, Matthew; lion, Mark; bull, Luke and eagle, John. (These are repeated on the arms of the Cross on the rood-screen.) Christ is shown as the Lamb of God surrounded by the four beasts (Revelation 5). On the left of the reredos we again find our patron slaying the dragon, while on the right are the angels 'casting down their golden crowns'.

The Latin text is from Revelation 7, verse 12: 'Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen.'

Some years before his death, the Reverend John Butler, father of the Reverend Henry, had ordered the felling of two mature oak trees on the Kirby estate for future use in the church and the great rood-screen was carved from the timber of these trees, the work being carried out by Harry Hems of Exeter. The screen bears a large foliated cross with the symbols of the four evangelists on its arms, as on the reredos. A realistic figure of the crucified Christ is nailed to the cross. On His right hand stands the figure of the Blessed Virgin and on his left the beloved disciple. The statues are just under life size, as also are those of the angels on the purlins of the centre bays. The rood-screen was the gift of Miss Caroline Butler, sister of the rector.

There are various memorial tablets at the west end of the church to members of the Brickenden and Butler families. The

west wall, which remained untouched during the restoration, has a large window of Perpendicular style with fragments of ancient stained glass in the upper lights.

The Arts-and-Crafts influenced window with flying rere-arches in the south wall was originally plain, but was fitted with stained glass on the 50th anniversary of the restoration.

The belfry formerly contained three ancient bells of different dates. The founder of the oldest (1590) was John Wallis, that of the next (1659) William Purdue and that of the third (1734) Thomas Dicker. The latter was a Reading clockmaker and this bell is believed to be the only example of his work in the county. It was actually cast in the churchyard. In 1988, after many years of silence, the bells were retuned and rehung and a fourth was added. This bell bears the inscription 'O sing unto the Lord a new song. The congregation of St. Michael's named me Hilary, 1988'. This inscription is a tribute to the great efforts of Mr Hilary Bell, of the village, in getting the peals going again. In the year 2000 the final two bells, both cast by Taylors of Loughborough, were added. The first of these 'Barbara' was given by Hugh Humphrey in memory of his wife. It bears the inscription 'In loving memory of Barbara Humphrey 1919-1996 I have been named Barbara: Blessed are the peacemakers'. The second, which is the treble bell, was raised by public subscription in the village and is the Millennium Bell. It bears the inscription 'Given by the people of Inkpen in the year of our Lord 2000 I was named Michael: Joy to the world'. The six bells, although fixed for stationary chiming, are in fact rung using traditional English methods. They are tuned in the major key with the Tenor Bell in A.

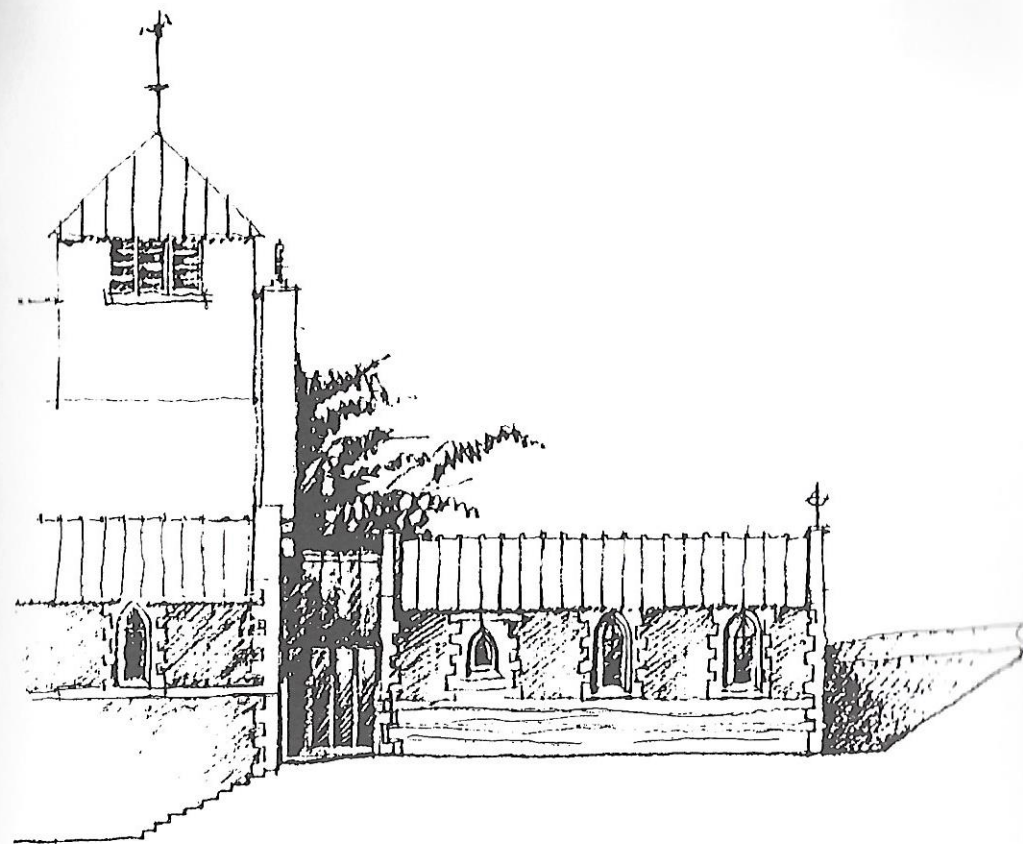
The War Memorial on the inside wall to the east of the entrance records the names of 26 men who gave their lives in the Great War. It is an indication of how different was the Second World War that the names of just three Inkpen men are

recorded. One of them Brigadier John Fass who was killed aged 33 in Normandy in 1944 is commemorated in a memorial window on the north wall.

The baptismal font at the west end of the church is the original 13th-century one. The modern cover in oak and mahogany was a gift from two anonymous parishioners. The base was made by Alec McCurdy of Cold Ash and the sculpture on top 'In Praise of Water' by Ron Lane, a craftsman of the New Forest. It is well worth examination and is described in detail on a nearby plaque. When the font cover was dedicated by the Rector, the Reverend Gordon Allison, in September 1972, Mr Lane himself gave an inspiring address.

In 1990, after several years of discussion, it was finally decided that a church room should be built, adjacent to the west end of the church. In order to finance it, major fund-raising activities were set in motion. The room was completed in 1993 and has since been in frequent use. As may be seen from the sketch, the room, designed by Douglas Norwood, who lives in Inkpen, has been built in keeping externally with the style of the church. It will gradually come to look as if it has almost always been there. The work was carried out by the Marlborough building firm of Amor and Ellis and was supervised throughout by Newbury architect Jane Whitehead.

A feature seen on approaching the church is the oak lych-gate with its coffin rest and hipped roof covered with hand-made tiles. The gate was made by the Inkpen saw-mill firm of James Edwards and Sons and was erected in 1935 in memory of the Reverend Henry Dobree Butler (Dobree was his grandmother's maiden name), in the early years of whose incumbency the church had been so thoughtfully restored. The paving below the gate is of Ham Hill stone and has two inscriptions which read 'A M D G Remember O Lord the soul of Thy servant



ARCHITECT'S DRAWING OF
THE NEW CHURCH ROOM

Henry Dobree Butler who faithfully served Thee in this place, 1895–1933' and 'To the glory of God. Erected by his parishioners and friends in the Rural Deanery of Newbury'. There is a brass plaque also on the south upright.

On the exterior of the church, a pre-Reformation 'scratch' sundial may be noticed at the south-eastern angle of the building with, close to it, a later dial dated 1649.

Early in his incumbency, the Reverend Henry came to the conclusion that the church was too far away from his parishioners in the Common area and, in order to solve their problem, he had a small 'chapel of ease' built there at his own expense. It was named the Chapel of Saint Gabriel and services were regularly held in it until the early '70s. As, initially, this chapel was unheated, it was bitterly cold in winter and became somewhat irreverently known as the 'tin tabernacle'. After the parish of Inkpen became part of the United Benefice, the chapel was no longer needed and it was sold.

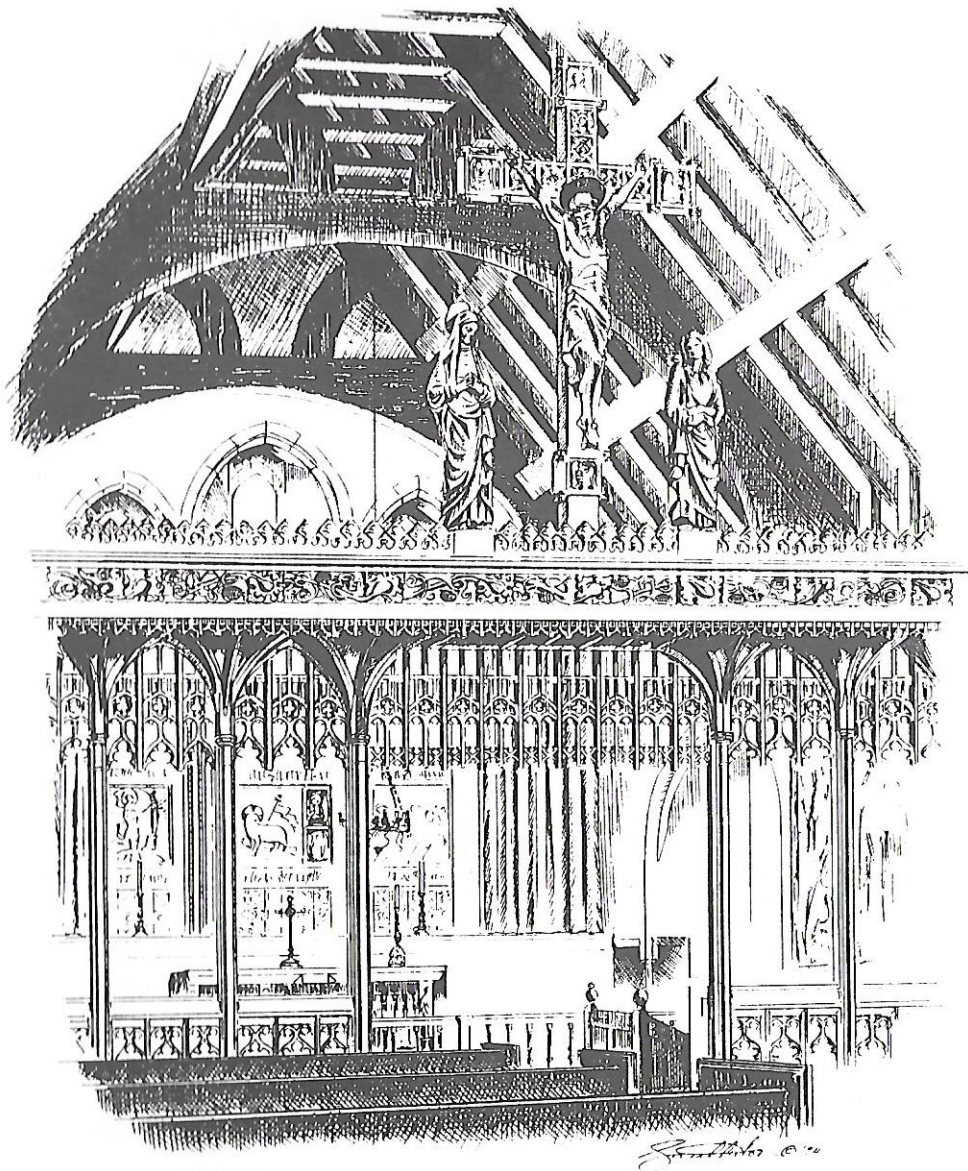
The Reverend Henry is still remembered in the village as a man devoting his times and energy to his parishioners – they found him very helpful and understanding in all sorts of ways. He used to ride round the village on an old bicycle always wearing a black cassock and broad-brimmed clerical hat. He instituted the annual flower show along the lime avenue leading to his rectory and was active in all village activities such as the school and the cricket and football clubs. An Inkpen resident who died recently at the age of 91, having lived in the village all his life, used to recall that, when he was a boy of eight, Mr Butler paid him the princely sum of sixpence a week for leading the donkey which pulled the rectory lawnmower driven by his father.

The church's entrance porch is a memorial to the Reverend John Butler, Rector from 1838 to 1895, the father of Henry, and was added at the time of the 1896–7 restoration. It is of

Ham Hill stone and includes, on the outside eastern wall, a carving in low relief of 'The Entombment' from a painting by Taddeo Gaddi (1300 to 1366). The figures represent the Virgin Mary, Saint John, Saint Joseph, Nicodemus and Mary Magdalene. It may be seen that the sarcophagus into which the body is being laid is too short to contain it, so that the saying 'He had not where to lay His head' is literally illustrated. The carvings on the roof timbers of the porch are also worthy of note.

Since restoration, many beautiful and valuable gifts have been made to the church, which also possesses a remarkably fine collection of church plate for so small a place. Unfortunately, in recent times, it has been felt necessary for the more valuable gifts to be stored elsewhere for their safety. Among the more recent memorial and other gifts may be mentioned stained-glass windows, a new organ, new lighting, wardens' staves, the library, church furniture and furnishings, the low relief sculpture backing the Lady altar and many others. While the donors of these gifts are listed in the church records, it would be invidious and, indeed, impracticable to list them all individually in this short booklet.

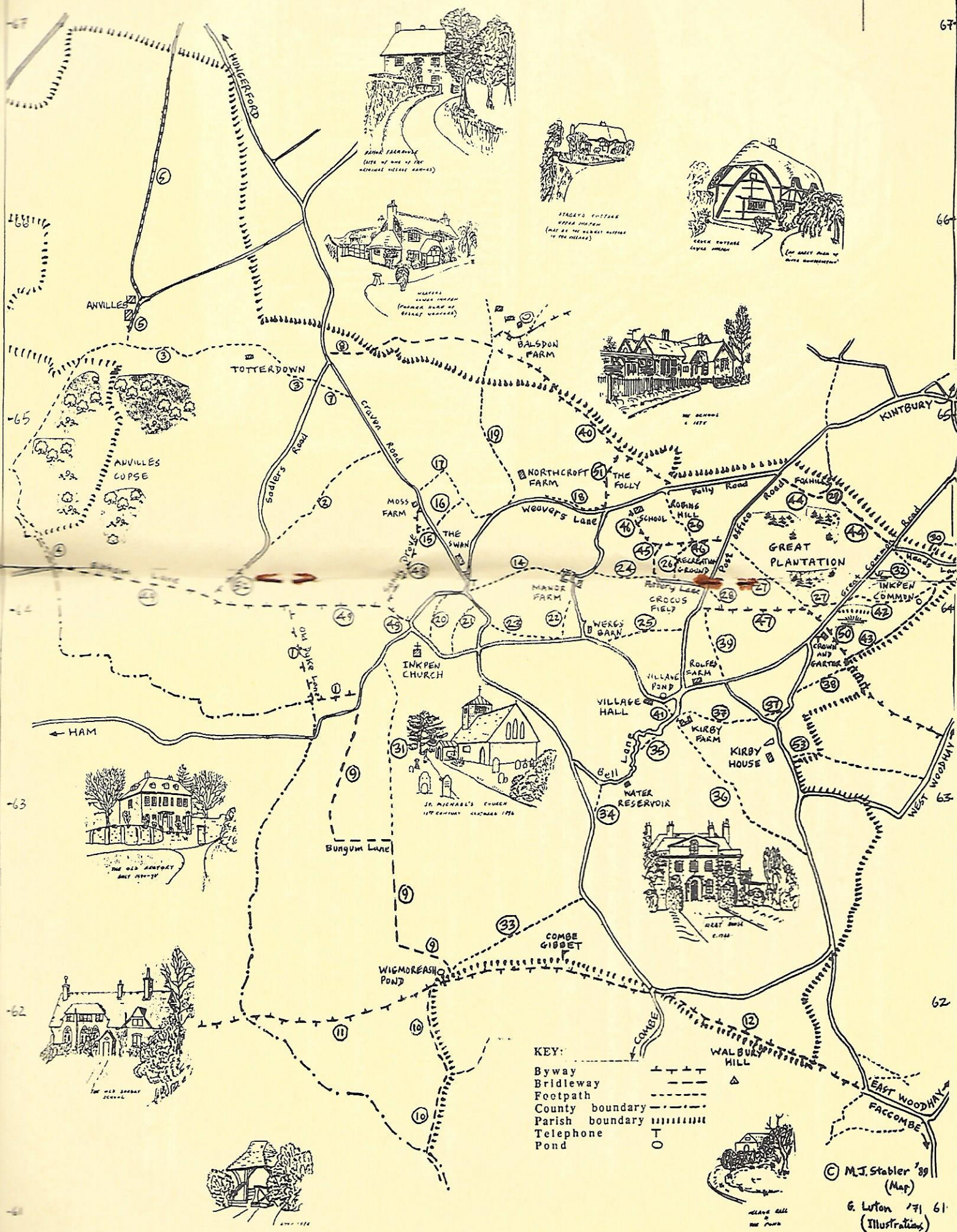
Not only do the church registers go back to 1633, but they also include a very interesting inventory dated 1552 (shown on page 11) giving a list of the ornaments of the church and of the ministers thereof at the time. These were the ornaments left to be used after certain others of pre-Reformation days had been removed. These have long since disappeared but, by the unanimous vote of the parochial church council a great many years ago, it was decided to replace them and, with a few exceptions, this has now been done. The hanging pyx, of Italian workmanship, over the Lady altar is one of these. It may be noted from the 1552 inventory that the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament was then the custom.



ROOD SCREEN AND CHANCEL

INKPEN: RIGHTS of WAY

SCALE Approximately 1:25,000 1 mile - 2.5 inches



© M.J. Stabler '39 (Map)
G. Luton '71 '61 (Illustrations)

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THE INVENTORY OF 1552 (spelling modernised)

A chalice with paten, parcel gilt, weighing 14 ounces.
Two corporals, with cases, the one of green velvet embroidered with gold, the other of yellow silk.
A canopy and pyx of latten covered with yellow cloth.
A pax of brass.
An oil vat of pewter. Two cruets of lead. A censer of brass.
A holy water pot of brass.
Two altar cloths of diaper. Three ditto of lockeram.
Four towels of lockeram.
A cope of red and green satin embroidered with flowers of gold.
A vestment of red and green damask embroidered with flowers of gold with alb and amice of lockeram.
Another vestment (old) of satin of Bridges (Bruges), white and red, with alb and amice of lockeram.
A surplice of lockeram.
Three altar cloths of red and yellow lockeram, stained.
A Lent cloth of lockeram.
A cloth to hang before the tablement (reredos) at the high altar, of Dornixe (Tournai) (a kind of rich brocade interwoven with gold thread).
Two streamers ... (long banners).
Four old banners of painted lockeram (a fine linen, hand woven).
Two candlesticks of brass. A cross of latten.
Three bells hanging in the steeple, weighing about 30cwt.
A corpse bell and a sacring bell.

All the said things to be retained, and be in use.

Richard Patye and John Wyther, Churchwardens.
August 4th, 1552.

Space for graves in the main churchyard has long been exhausted and a new graveyard just up the hill from the church was brought into use in 1942 on the last of the glebe land. Ashes from cremations may still be laid in the original churchyard. No attempt can be made to list the names of all the departed buried here but two headstones are of some historical interest. One, on the right just inside the lych-gate and erected by parishioners, records the death of two farm workers killed by lightning while sheltering under a tree on Kirby farmland in 1873; and the other, below the church, is of Amos Black and his wife Mary. Amos was at the time (1925) the senior member of the gypsy families living on the Common in Heads Lane. It is recorded that his coffin draped with a pall was carried by relatives and friends as pallbearers all the way from his home on the Common to the church, a distance of a good two miles. This is believed to have been the last time that a pall-draped coffin was hand-carried from the deceased's home to the church.

A list of past rectors of Saint Michael's is hung on one of the bell-tower piers. On this it may be read that it was in 1573 that the first Brickenden was rector and that Brickendens were rectors almost continuously from 1618 to 1779, followed by Robert, John and Henry Butler who between them covered nearly 150 years.

The original rectory, standing above the church, was built in William and Mary style by the Reverend Colwall Brickenden in 1695 and is a large house of great charm. Its gardens are often said to have been laid out by Le Nôtre, the great French landscape gardener of Versailles fame, though it seems more probable that a pupil or an admirer of Le Nôtre's work was responsible.

After the death of the Reverend Henry in 1933, the rectory was no longer used as such and passed into private hands in

1939 being known as the Old Rectory. It has recently been renamed as Inkpen House. Succeeding rectors lived first in Church Farm House just below the church and then in a new rectory built on donated land near the post office. Both these dwellings are now also in private hands.

In 1979 Inkpen became one of the five parishes of a United Benefice, the others being Enborne, Hampstead Marshall, West Woodhay and Combe. The Rector of the Benefice lives in a new rectory beside Enborne church. She is assisted by a curate living in the relatively new rectory of West Woodhay.

And now Inkpen itself. A stratum of sand and sea-washed pebbles runs roughly east-west through the village, indicating that at one time the area was on the sea shore. This was millions of years ago and is thus mainly of geological interest, although for many years sand and gravel were commercially extracted on the Common.

In a sandbank near Totterdown, a fine late 19th-century house on the western edge of the village, a perfect example of an early beaker, the tallest yet found in the British Isles, was unearthed some years ago and, with it, a bowl of unique design standing on four feet, the only one of its kind found on any British site. They are believed to date from about 2,000 B.C. They and other relics of Inkpen may be seen in Newbury Museum.

There is, in fact, no village of Inkpen as such; it is a scattered community of about 850 people spread over more than 3,000 acres living in groups of houses at Lower Green, with its carefully tended little triangle and the Church, extending along Craven Road towards Hungerford; at Upper Green with its duck pond and the Village Hall and on the Common with its nature reserve. Post Office (though the village no longer has a post office) and Folly Roads are also well populated and include the Memorial Playing Fields, the village school and the former

saw-mills, now an industrial area and housing estate; near the school there is a growing settlement at Robins Hill.

Inkpen now has a fine, modern and well-equipped Primary School with four schoolrooms, four teachers (including a head teacher) and 65 pupils. It was only in 1870 that the Education Act made schooling compulsory, although it was not until 1875 that the school building was completed and teaching started with just forty pupils.

Beforehand, there had been a church school near the Church provided by the Rector and another, run by the Misses Johnson of Hollymount (now Windrush) adjacent to the original Methodist Chapel, a few hundred yards down the bridle-way leading to the Common from the old Olive Branch inn. Earlier still, at the beginning of the 19th century, the only schooling available to the villagers' children was the Sunday School in a barn at Upper Green, run by the then Rector's many sisters living at Kirby House.

Inkpen now has two inns or public houses, the Crown and Garter on the Common and the Swan in Lower Green. Both of these are known far outside the village as purveyors of good food as well as drink. Before the last war, there were also the Olive Branch at the junction of Post Office and Folly Roads and the Craven Arms in Craven Road. It is understood that, a great many years earlier, there were also 'pubs' near the post office and in Upper Green at the beginning of Bell Lane, so called because of its many high-banked and hedged bends necessitating the almost continuous ringing of a bell when moving along it.

Although mainly agricultural, the village was home to a wide variety of activities. A hundred years ago (according to *Kelly's Directory* of 1895) these included 14 farmers and 2 cow keepers, 4 shopkeepers, 4 publicans, 3 horse and cattle dealers,



LADY CHAPEL ALTAR-PIECE

2 carpenters, 2 beer retailers, 2 postwomen, a blacksmith, a potter, a cooper, a bricklayer, a shoemaker, a chimneysweep, a carrier, a basketmaker, a pondmaker – and – a higgler!*

While agriculture is still the principal activity of the village, mechanisation has meant that numbers employed in it have fallen drastically and, although several craftsmen live in Inkpen, only a few of them practise their trade within the parish boundary. Nowadays, with computers, mobile telephones, E-mail, the internet and so on, quite a few villagers work from home in a variety of 'high-tech' industries.

Rope-making used to be practised in the wood opposite the school and remains of the ropewalk may still be seen. Silk and

*Higgler (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*): A carrier or itinerant dealer who buys up poultry and dairy produce and supplies in exchange petty commodities from the shops in town.

wool were formerly woven in Weavers Lane, where basket-making was also active, the latter continuing until the Second World War. Pottery-making was a major activity in the Pottery Lane and Craven Road areas using the local yellow clay; at one time there were no less than eight potteries, the last one only ceasing production in 1930.

Until the 1930s there was a bakery on the Common opposite the Crown & Garter public house together with Ward's grocery shop, where clients were rewarded with the delicious smell and taste of freshly baked cottage loaves.

A sawmill started activities in the middle of the nineteenth century and James Edwards began his working life there as a young carpenter. He advanced quickly and took over the firm in about 1870, giving it his name, to which he was later proud to add 'and Sons Ltd'. To begin with, only six men were employed, but in its heyday as many as sixty men were working there. The firm became widely renowned for its high-class carpentry.

After the Second World War, however, times were changing (metal and then plastics were taking the place of wood) and, after the death of all three of James Edwards's sons, the sawmill and the land became – after lengthy and at times heated discussion in the village and further afield – an industrial area with small factories and offices. Parts of the land have also been developed into housing estates.

The original mill mentioned in the Domesday Book fell into disuse many hundreds of years ago when the millponds silted up, although remains of the ponds may still be seen at Northcroft Farm. Much later, a mere 200 or so years ago, a new mill was set up to process the village's corn. This involved damming two small streams between the Common and Post Office Road on the northern boundary of the parish to form the mill pond. The

mill, which sometimes had to wait for the pond to refill after millings, ceased activities when the Kennet and Avon Canal came through Kintbury, providing continuous water to drive a new flour mill as and when required. Although the undershot water-wheel and the mill have long since disappeared, the millpond and the miller's house, New Mill, are still to be seen. This delightful house and its grounds have been owned and lived in since 1903 by generations of the Goodhart family, members of which have been closely connected with Church and village activities throughout the whole of the 20th century.

To the west of the Church an ancient drove leads up to the Downs and, just below Combe Hill, there is believed to have been a dwelling of the Knights Hospitallers; indeed, traces of foundations have been unearthed when ploughing in the area which is known in local parlance as Bunjum, a free corruption of the French 'Bons Hommes', Good Men.

The Wansdyke, a huge earthwork stretching from the foot of the Downs to the River Severn begins near Banjum and, passing over the hill to the north, goes through Savernake Forest across the Marlborough Downs to Walton-in-Gordano on the Severn. It is thought to have been constructed by the original inhabitants of the Downland – the round-headed men – as a line of defence against Belgae, the long-headed men.

Another and quite well-known feature of Inkpen is its Crocus Field. This field lies behind Pottery Lane and in spring is a mass of purple crocuses – tens of thousands of them! It is believed that they stem from corms brought back from the Middle East by the Knights Templar – perhaps Sir Roger de Ingpen himself – during the Crusades. The field has been declared as SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and has been bought by the Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) so that it may remain undisturbed in perpetuity.

BBOWT has also purchased Inkpen Common, another SSSI on which certain rare flowers are to be found. Although it is now a privately owned nature reserve, BBOWT has assured the population of Inkpen that they will have free access to it. A group of local residents, the Friends of Inkpen Common, meets once a month to help BBOWT maintain the reserve and to keep the footpaths clear.

Under the Inclosure Act of 1810 what is now known as Inkpen Common was allotted for the benefit of the poor of the village as the Poor's Allotment, the income from it to be applied to the assistance of the poor. In those days, the income was small and the poor were many. The main income came from grazing rights and the letting of the sand and gravel pits for commercial extraction.

In 1931 the Charity Commissioners agreed that the income from the Common, the Baster Charity and the Butler Bequest (see below) should be combined to form a new Poor's Allotment to distribute fuel and bread to the poorer residents of the village. This custom was however discontinued some years ago when it was recognised that, with very varied methods of heating – and of eating – it would be more helpful to the beneficiaries to receive gifts of money to spend as they wished. These gifts are distributed each year at Christmastide by the Trustees, who go to considerable lengths to locate worthy recipients, some of whom are living alone and so quietly that they are not easy to find.

The Baster Charity. By his will in 1820 John Baster gave government stock to the Rector and churchwardens on trust to distribute the dividends thereof among the poor of the parish at Christmas.

The Butler Bequest. By her will in 1832 Harriet Butler gave government stock to the Rector and churchwardens upon trust

to expend the dividends thereof in bread and to distribute the same to the deserving poor on the morning of the first Sunday after Christmas Day.

One of Inkpen's main landmarks is the Gibbet on top of a neolithic long barrow at the summit of Combe Hill. The gibbet was originally erected in the reign of Charles II for the purpose of hanging George Broomham of Inkpen and Dorothy Newman of Combe, convicted of murdering Martha, Broomham's wife and Robert, his young son. The original gibbet rotted away, its replacement was struck by lightning and the third was blown down by an autumn gale. The fourth, made at Inkpen's sawmills, was put up in 1950 but was so badly vandalised despite heavy iron strengthening that it had to be replaced and the present, fifth gibbet was erected by the owner of the land on which the gibbet stands.

In the summer of 1948, a group of Oxford undergraduates including John Schlesinger, whose parents lived between Inkpen and Kintbury, decided that the gibbet story was worthy of a film. In a race against time, because they were due back in their Oxford colleges in October, they wrote the script and produced the film 'Black Legend' with many Inkpen residents playing leading parts – all of them complete amateurs. The film was a great local success and is reshown in the village every so often. It is interesting to note that John Schlesinger went on to become one of the country's best-known film producers.

Close by, to the east of the gibbet, is the huge neolithic earthwork known as Walbury Camp, in which Inkpen's long-forgotten ancestors are believed to have lived, to protect themselves from the wild beasts and bandits of the time lurking in the forests of the plain below. Running the whole length of the Downs and passing beside the gibbet and through Walbury Camp may be traced one of the prehistoric roads or ridgeways.

It is now known as the Wayfarers' Walk, stretching from Emsworth in Hampshire to Inkpen, a distance of 76 miles.

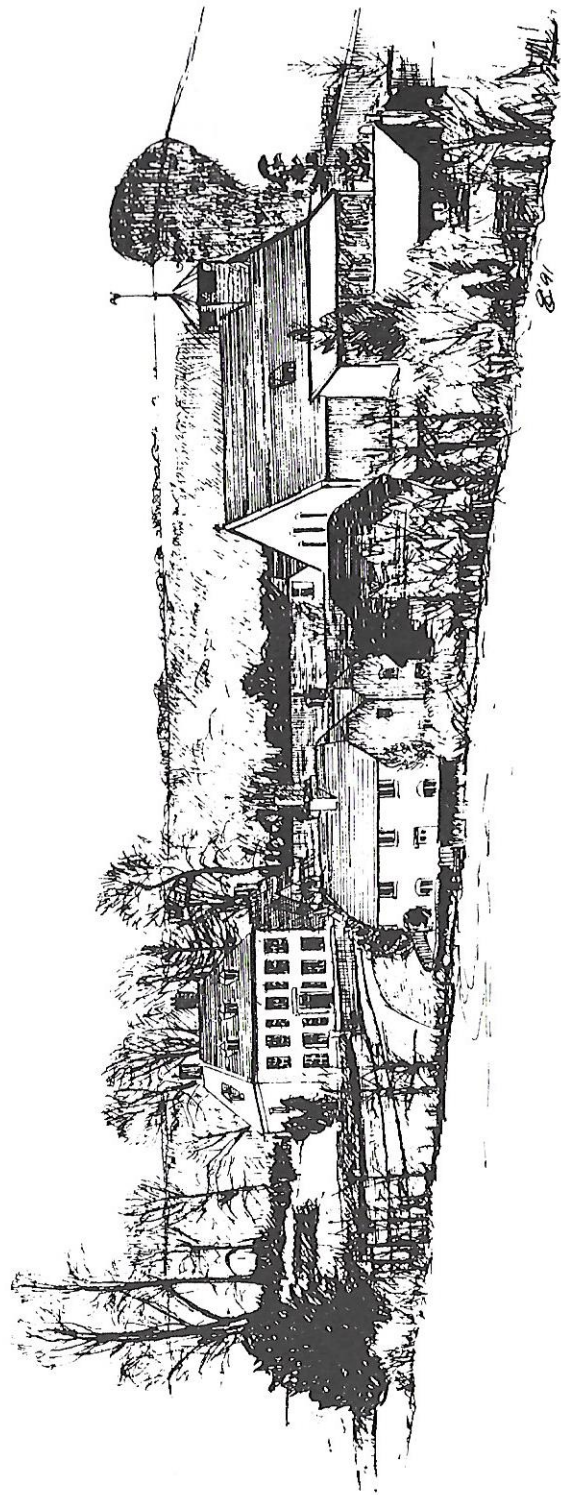
The hill on which the Camp was built is known as Walbury Hill and, with a height of just under 1,000 feet above sea level, is the highest pure chalk hill in the country and perhaps in the world. From it magnificent views may be had ranging over nine counties: on very clear days it is even possible to catch glimpses of the Cotswolds, the Welsh hills and the Isle of Wight.

Walbury Hill is also known as Inkpen Beacon and it is said that a huge bonfire was lit on it in 1588 as part of a sequence of beacons warning London of the impending attack by the Spanish Armada. Rather later, in 1992, another great bonfire was lit as part of the chain of fires honouring the fortieth anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne.

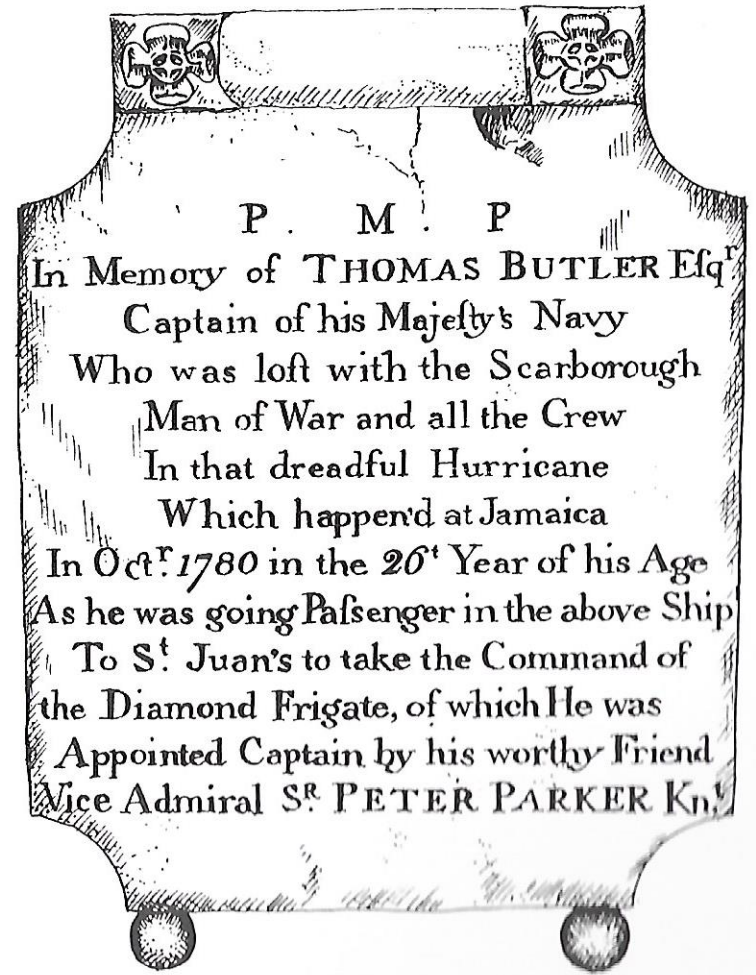
The largest house in Inkpen, Kirby House, originates from Elizabethan times but has been rebuilt and extended by a succession of owners, including the Brickenden family from the 17th century until 1760, and Admiral Franklin for about 10 years. In 1771, the house and land were purchased from the Haslewick Estate by James Kirkby (or Kirby) – hence the house's name – who held it until 1790, when it was bought by Joseph Butler of Wantage (he had nine daughters and several sons) and it remained in the Butler family until 1898. Since then the house has had several owners, including the Clementi Smith family during and after the Great War, who were very active in their support of the Church. They were followed by Lord Malise Graham during the Second World War years and then by John Astor, succeeded in 1987 by his son Richard, the present owner. This most attractive house is a fine example of early Georgian architecture; it has beautifully laid out gardens with magnificent views towards Combe Hill and Walbury Camp.

Village life would not be complete without its clubs, committees and the like, and Inkpen is certainly not backward in this respect. It has its Parish Council and Parochial Church Council, School Governors, Trustees of the Poor's Allotment, Village Hall Committee, Memorial Playing Fields Trustees, Cricket and Football Clubs, '92 Club (which more or less took over from the Women's Institute which had been active – very much so during the War years – from 1929 to 1990), Rights of Way Committee, Friends of Inkpen Common, Copper Fund and probably others, which have inadvertently been overlooked. The Scouts and Brownies are not at present active, although the Inkpen Patrol was well known in the neighbourhood.

All these Councils, Committees, Trusts etcetera are manned by volunteer members of the village community who give their services and time towards the maintenance, enjoyment and improvement of life and living conditions in Inkpen. We are proud of our village and are very grateful to all those who go to such effort to keep it such a delightfully peaceful and beautiful part of the country.



THE OLD RECTORY (INKPEN HOUSE)
AND THE CHURCH



INSCRIPTION ON THE BUTLER MEMORIAL TABLET
NORTH-WEST CORNER OF THE CHURCH

APPENDIX ONE

The All-Weather Playing Surface

In 2001 after two years of intensive fund raising and generous support an All Weather Playing Surface was built on the Inkpen Memorial Playing Fields. This magnificent facility is equipped with two tennis courts, a netball court and a mini soccer pitch all with floodlights for year-round use. While the facility will be used by the existing Inkpen Exiles and Inkpen Football Clubs, it has also led directly to the formation of Inkpen Tennis, Netball and Veterans Football Clubs.

APPENDIX TWO

Village Design Appraisal

Like villages all over the country, Inkpen is subject to pressures for development particularly of housing which would change its character altogether. To deal with these pressures on the initiative of the Parish Council, a Village Appraisal Steering Group comprising interested villagers and led by the nominated Parish Councillor was set up in 2001. It will appraise the village resources and facilities and draw up a Design Statement which will then be used as a reference point for all further development. In this way it is hoped that any changes in the structure and composition of the village will pay full regard to the nature of the village community – one of the features that makes Inkpen such a pleasant place in which to live.