WILDLIFE AND WATERWAYS OF HANNEY IN THE YEAR 2000

Hanney Gardening Club

Wildlife and Waterways of Hanney in the year 2000

Published by Hanney Gardening Club, 11 Brookside East Hanney, Oxfordshire
Produced by

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PREFACE

The Hanney Gardening Club celebrated the Millennium with an Open Gardens Weekend in July 2000. Nineteen gardens, and the School garden, attracted over 550 visitors. The event coincided with the Patronal Festival of St. James the Great Church in West Hanney, and the church was beautifully decorated with flowers.

Using the money raised from the Open Gardens Weekend, the Gardening Club decided to leave a more lasting memorial to the Millennium, by recording the flora and fauna in the Hanneys at the beginning of the 21st century. Of course, it is impossible to look at the flora and fauna without looking at the environment and habitats which surround us in the Hanneys.

Many people have contributed to this booklet. Special thanks go to Dudley Iles and Paul Sayers for their work and to Dudley for his illustrations of the Flora and Fauna and to Frank Poller for his account of the Waterways of Hanney. Thanks also to our other contributors Ann Fewins, Judith Hockaday, and Maggie Mellersh. The Tree List is a compilation with suggestions from Betty Jones, and from Ted Carter, and Jane Christie-Miller. Elinor Jury has provided the beautiful tree illustrations and Vic Lucey provided technical help with the Waterways. I would also like to thank Judith Hockaday, who acted as our editor, Paul Sayers for help with editing and for scanning and placing the illustrations, and Keith Diment for his technical help in publishing the booklet.

Finally, I found it a great pleasure to work with all the contributors and I enjoyed putting the book together.

Sue Smith
Chair, Hanney Gardening Club
November 2000

INTRODUCTION

Sue Smith

The main part of this booklet is concerned with the wildflowers, birds, butterflies and mammals of the Hanneys, but the waterways and trees have not been forgotten. We start by reflecting on the past. There is no doubt that the history of the people of Hanney and their changing occupations has had an impact on the environment and the habitats of the flora and fauna.

Harry Tollett, the oldest member of the Gardening Club, tells of working as a farm boy aged 14 at Manor Farm, West Hanney. When he was out cutting in the fields he used to pick up eggs he found on the ground and take them home to fry for breakfast. There were lots of lapwing eggs. There seemed to be a lot of birds around – pheasant, partridge, rooks, crows, and owls. Also a lot more stoats, weasels, grass snakes and some adders. He also remembers mushrooms in large numbers in the fields between West Hanney and Denchworth. "There were lots of crayfish in the brook down Tarrytown – we used to sell them to the gentleman at Darden House. We used to fish in Cowies' Pond (the old village pond which used to be at the bottom of "The Paddocks"), I could "tickle" the roach in there. The pond used to freeze in winter and we boys used to skate on it. Usually the horses and animals were watered there"

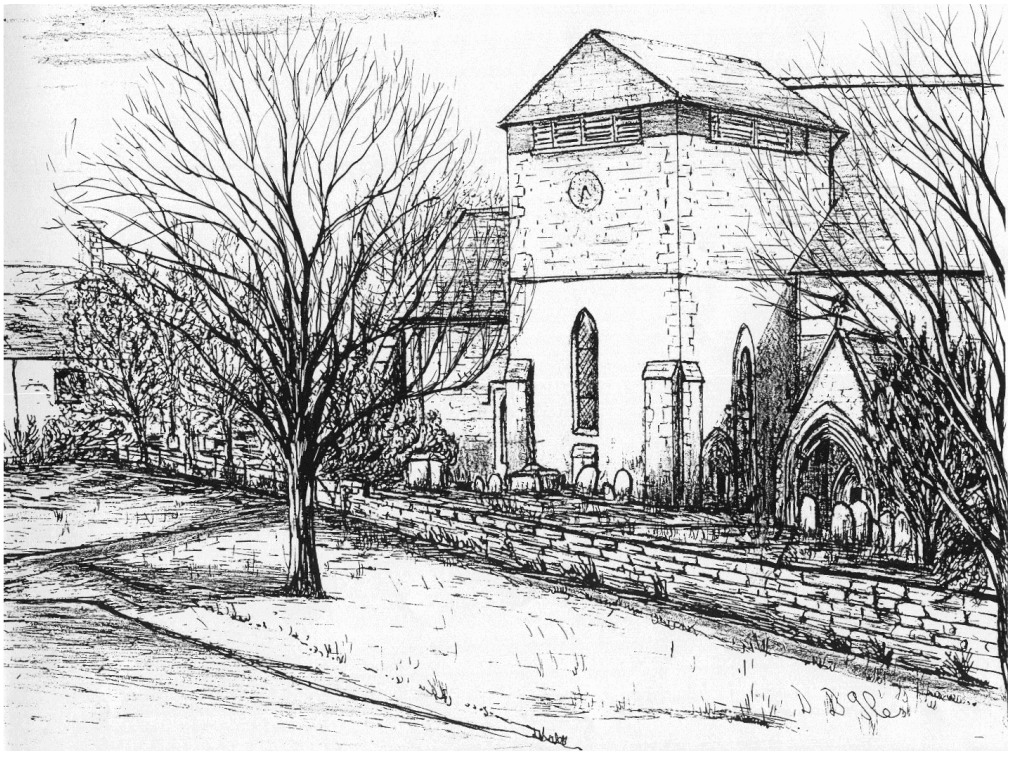
We end the booklet by looking forward to the next generation and the Hanney School Millennium Garden.

Lapwing

THE PAST

Ann Fewins

The origins of East and West Hanney, like many villages in the Vale of the White Horse, go back long before written records began. The area around the villages reveals traces of settlement from the late Iron Age and Roman periods. By the late Saxon period this northern corner of Wessex was recorded in Saxon charters. One dated 968 A.D describes the gift of land to Abingdon Abbey by King Edgar. The boundaries within it almost entirely correspond to the present parish boundaries of East Hanney. Although no similar charter exists for West Hanney the Church of St. James the Great is thought to be of Saxon origins and to have been an early minster church from which priests were sent out to other settlements.



The Domesday Survey of 1086, by which time the villages were part of Berkshire, records that the land was held by Norman overlords and by Abingdon Abbey and also by the priest, Turold. The Norman owners went on to give the land to the religious communities they were endowing. The various manors therefore were mainly managed from afar with regular

manor courts being held to review or endorse landholdings. Day to day village life was organised by the small yeoman farmers who held the land.

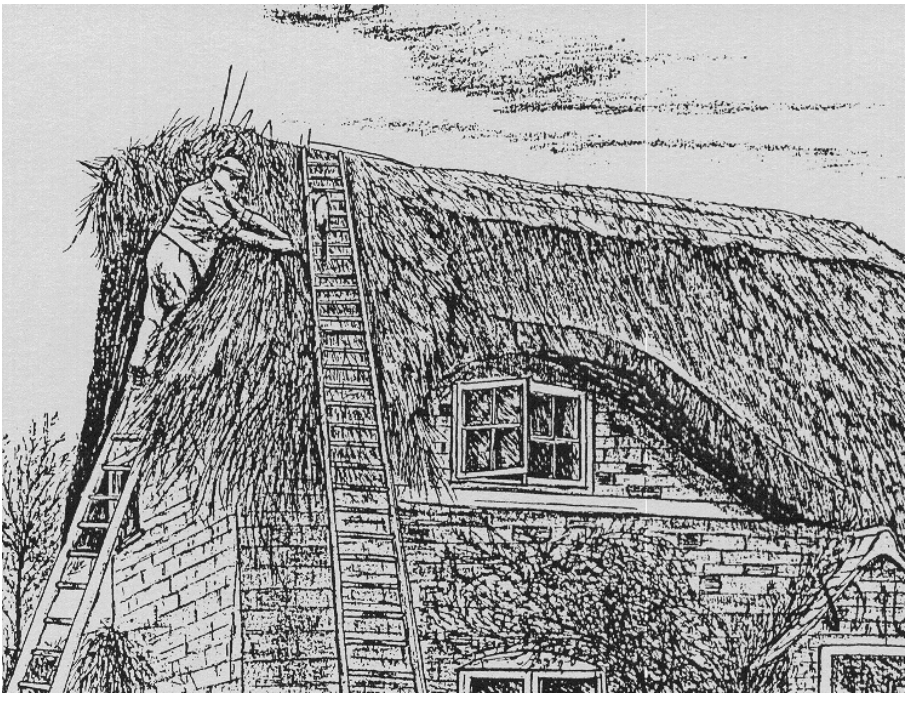
West Hanney was always the "senior partner", the township of East Hanney and the tithings of North Denchworth and Philberds being part of that ecclesiastical parish. North Denchworth and the settlement of Philberds have more or less disappeared but North Denchworth was at one time the residence of the Fettiplace family and Philberds had its own "free chapple" first recorded in 1260. The site of the chapel is uncertain but it is likely to be near Poughley farm where in 1732 the farmer was allowed to "clear Chapple Close of stones and plough it in". The Manor of Philberds is a sort of "buffer state" between East and West Hanney comprising the land between the Letcombe Brook and the old green track or "Cow Lane". At an early stage this land was enclosed whereas East and West Hanney remained mainly cultivated in common in long strips in the furlongs which divided the large open fields until the enclosures of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the old enclosed land shows evidence of medieval ploughing "fossilised" when the arable fields were enclosed and used as pasture. The green lane to the north of the school was once a well-used roadway ditched on both sides and the headlands of the fields where the oxen used to turn the ploughs can be seen abutting it. In 1776 the trustees of the new turnpike (now the A338) sold the northern part of the lane to a local farmer.

The villages have always had a good deal of fertile arable land with much-prized meadowlands along the Letcombe and Childrey Brooks. The names of some of these meadows – Broad Dole, Butterwell, Pen End and Lossall are redolent of cattle knee deep in buttercups in a rural idyll, however this often belies the harsh reality of rural life. A Government Commission in the 1880s heard from a ploughboy whose day began at 5a.m. In all weathers he would often have to walk his horses to the far end of the parish to begin his long working day, which could not have changed much over the centuries. As agricultural fortunes plunged in the late nineteenth century, farmers turned to producing fruit, which could be sent to London and other cities on the newly created Great Western Railway from nearby Grove Road Station. Walking around the villages you will still see some of the remaining orchards and some of the walnut trees, which were also a feature of the area.

The villages themselves follow the better-drained higher land, the "ey" in Hanney indicating the origin of the present settlements as islands in the Vale. There must have been successions of houses built on the old farmhouse sites. Initially, easily available materials were used – timber,

thatch and wattle and daub made from mud and animal hair, but as life became more prosperous and building techniques advanced stone was used to make more solid foundations and brick and tile from local producers were introduced. The coming of the Wilts and North Berks Canal in 1810 brought more mass-produced bricks and slates to the area so gradually many differing buildings grew into the picture we see today.

The Hanneys were mainly villages of independent copyhold and tenant farmers and walking about it is easy to identify some of their old farms with modern "infilling" of their orchards and yards and conversion of their farm buildings. At present both of the villages appear to be growing in size but this has not always been the case. At the end of both Snuggs Lane and Ebbs Lane in East Hanney there is evidence of medieval land shrinkage. The villages appear to have been badly affected by the Black Death in the 1340s and in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries many of the "picturesque" cottages were lost as villagers moved out to the towns in search of work.



Until relatively recently the villages were fully self-sufficient sustaining many tradesmen, craftsmen, several shops, bakers and pubs. The last baker and the shops in both East and West Hanney closed in 1988 and a community shop run by volunteers and housing the Post Office was created in their place. The village craftsmen – carpenters, leather workers,

blacksmiths and wheelwrights have today been replaced by many other "homeworkers" but their work is usually of a less manual nature.

Water has always played an important part in the community economy as evidenced in the separate section on village waterways. In walking around the village it is worth noticing the causeways which keep you out of the wet. East and West Hanney used to be regularly cut off from each other in wet weather until very recently. The Letcombe Brook has been the site of several mills, the two remaining being Dandridge's Mill and West's Mill (Lower Mill) lower downstream. The present Dandridge's Mill was built as a silk mill in the early nineteenth century and church records show the death of a child in its machinery in the 1830s. West's Mill was badly burnt out by a fire in 1906, the Wantage Fire Brigade were unable to get here quickly enough to save it.

As you walk around the villages there are several buildings worth noting. A special stop should be made at the church in West Hanney dedicated to St James the Great to admire the magnificent Norman inner doorway and the lovely font with its delicately incised carving. The brasses in front of the altar are especially fine showing clearly some of the grander folk who used to live in the area.

To some it was a healthy place to live – notice the plaque on the wall at the back of the church to Elizabeth Bowles who died at the age of 124. On her marriage her husband brought her home to Hanney in a cart drawn by a team of twelve snow-white oxen. Outside the church the graveyard rises up on either side showing the centuries of burials of unknown Hanney residents. Ahead lies one of the village causeways. To the west of the graveyard is Prior's Court, a fine Jacobean farmhouse which belonged for six centuries to New College, Oxford where our village records can still be found. Across the road behind the high brick wall is the elegant William and Mary façade of West Hanney House, formerly Rectory Farm and once belonging to the Diocese of Salisbury. Across the causeway to the east is the old Vicarage with its Georgian brick frontage and tucked away behind it is Church Farm. On the east of the churchyard is The Old Post Office, now called The Dower House, a very fine close-timbered medieval building said to have belonged to the Yate family. The village green, enclosed upon and shrunken, used to stretch from the church to the far end of North Green. The old blacksmith's forge burnt out in another fire is now the site of a modern house. In the middle of the green is a stone cross, which was re-assembled in 1908 from all its constituent parts which had, over the years, been scattered about the village and used for other purposes.

East Hanney also has its share of handsome buildings including The Mulberries, one time home of James Robins Holmes, and Philberds Manor tucked away by the brook in a timeless setting. The former church of St James the Less was designed by the well-known Victorian architect, G.E Street and was closed for services in 1976.

Allotments in East and West Hanney

There is often confusion caused by the fact that West Hanney allotments are actually within the parish of East Hanney. This is because the Pusey family gave the area where they lie for the use of both villages in the 1830's. There is some evidence that before this arrangement was made the villagers already had "gardens" there.

It was a generous gesture although it may not have been entirely a charitable one. In 1867 a Government Commission commented: "the allotments are let by a nearby resident country gentleman at a high rent. The matter wants some revision, some having no need for these allotments, others, real paupers, cannot get a rood".

The area given for renting covered the land between the green lane next to the school round to West's Mill, along the brook then back up the existing footpath to the school. In the 1840's there were ninety allotments of different sizes upwards of 10 poles, the basic allotment today, (1 pole equals 30_sq. yds.). The largest allotment is today the site of the Village Hall car park and playground. Berkshire County Council bought the land from the Pusey Estate in 1920. Shortly afterwards, The Victory Hut was built by the village in memory of those who lost their lives in the 1914-18 War. This remained as a focus of village social life until the new Hanney War Memorial Hall was built in 1969.

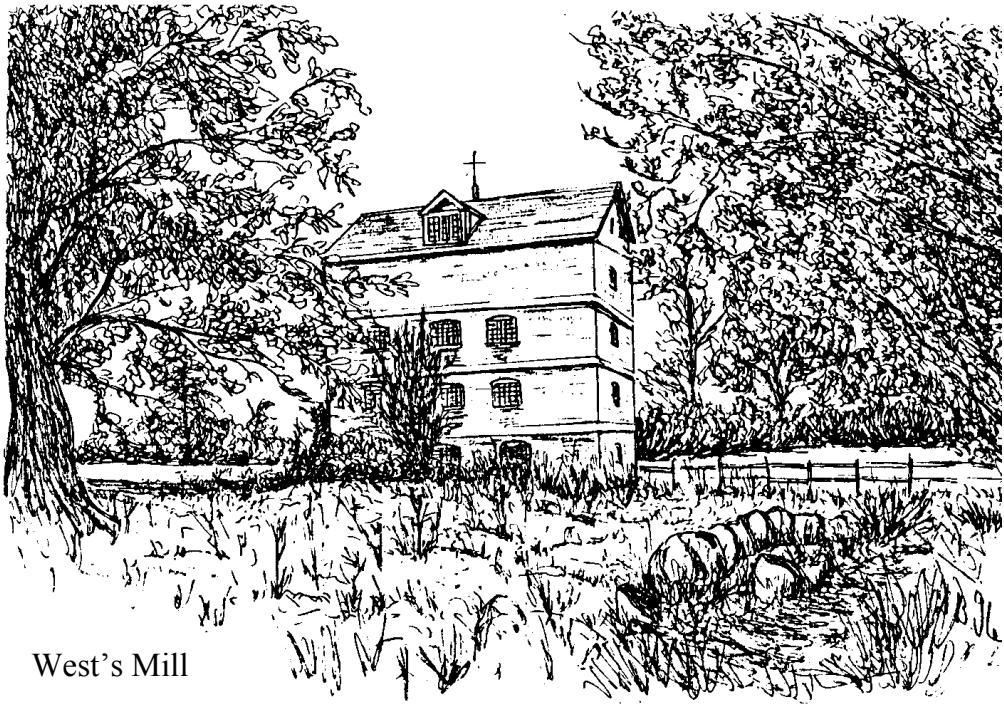
Families often rented several allotments together and ran them as a smallholding, sometimes having surplus products to sell. The plots were laid out with their numbers marked on them. Every year there was a Village Show and prizes were given. The allotments were an important way of supplementing the diet; often, work on them had to be done after a hard day's toil on the land.

The land was also prone to flooding –today it just gets very heavy! In 1915 allotment holders protested to the Parish Council that the land had flooded so much during the winter that the potatoes rotted and the green stuff was ruined. They were allowed 2/6d (12.5p) reparation on a half year's rent.

This would suggest that rents have hardly gone up since. The allotments in 1893 were said to be troubled with a weed known as "cats' tail" which was "impossible to destroy".

For further information
The Hanney History Group has published two books, which give background on the local history.

Frank Poller (1993) *Holmes of Hanney*
Hanney History Group (1994) *Late Victorian Hanney*



West's Mill

THE PLACE

Paul Sayers

Boundary

The present day boundary between the two parishes runs along Cow Lane, past the school and then follows the wide shelter belt to the east of the "set-aside" field and continues until it meets the Childrey Brook. However, we know from a Saxon boundary charter for East Hanney that the boundary was then the Letcombe Brook. The present parish of East Hanney has an area of approximately 880 hectares (2,200 acres) and that of West Hanney an area of approximately 530 hectares (1,300 acres).

Geology

Both the wildlife of an area and the character of its agriculture and other human activities are dictated by the underlying geology. In the case of the Hanneys, the geological map shows a drift of Pleistocene terrace deposits across most of the area with some alluvium, particularly beside the courses of the brooks. This is underlain by Kimmeridge clay. The net result is that most of the area is a heavy fertile alkaline clay with localised patches of lighter, more sandy, soils.

Climate

Another major factor influencing wildlife is the climate of the area. Oxfordshire is one of England's drier counties with an average of 650mm (25 inches) of rain, comparable to East Anglia. Most rainy days occur in the period October to January but rainfall is highest in July (due to summer thunderstorms). The spring months are the driest. Lying snow occurs, on average, 18 days a year with January and February being the snowiest months, however, in 20 of the last 70 years there has been no lying snow in January or February. Frosts occur on 40-60 days a year and have been known in all months. They are rare June to September but occur in May and October most years. Southwest winds are the most frequent in all seasons, especially in summer, with a notable period of Northeast winds in spring. Not surprisingly, May, June and July are the sunniest months with December being the least sunny. Fog occurs, on average, 12 days a year.

Population

A hundred and fifty years ago the 1851 Census recorded 591 people in East and 411 in West Hanney; contrast that with the 1999 figures of 766 and 491. More striking is the change in the number of households. In 1851

there were 140 households in East and 94 households in West Hanney, today the figure has doubled with 299 in East and 189 in West Hanney. In the nineteenth century there were on average 4.2 people in each household, today there are 2.5.

THE FLORA

TREES AND SHRUBS

Paul Sayers

The following list of the trees and shrubs recorded in East and West Hanney includes all those found growing "in the wild", mainly in hedgerows and woodland. It includes comprehensive records of all the hedgerows in West Hanney parish from a survey undertaken by members of the Hanney History Group between July 1994 and June 1996 and additional records by the author for East and West Hanney. Some species, which are not native or are not normally found growing "naturally" in the area, have been included where they are apparently growing wild. Species growing in gardens and amenity plantings have been excluded, as have obvious recent plantings in hedgerows and woodland.

The West Hanney hedgerow survey showed that the more recent hedges, planted after the enclosure of open fields during the nineteenth century, were relatively poor in species, consisting mainly of common hawthorn, blackthorn, English elm and elder. The older hedges found on the parish boundaries, alongside old tracks and dividing arable land from pastureland, contain a greater variety of species. In addition to the 4 species found in recent hedges others included dogwood, field maple, spindle, buckthorn and Midland hawthorn. The same appears to be the case in East Hanney.

Hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*
Midland hawthorn	*Crataegus laevigata*
Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*
Bullace	*Prunus domestica var insititia*
Cherry plum = Myrobalan	*Prunus cerasifera*
Crab apple	*Malus sylvestris*
Wild pear	*Pyrus communis*
Elder	*Sambucus nigra*
Dog rose	*Rosa canina*
Field maple	*Acer campestre*
Sycamore	*Acer pseudoplatanus*
Ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*
Pedunculate oak	*Quercus pedunculata*
Spindle	*Euonymus europaeus*

English elm	*Ulmus procera*
Wych elm	*Ulmus glabra*
Smooth-leaved elm	*Ulmus carpinifolia*
Dogwood	*Cornus sanguinea*
Buckthorn	*Rhamnus catharticus*
Privet	*Ligustrum vulgare*
White willow	*Salix alba*
Goat willow	*Salix caprea*
Crack willow	*Salix fragilis*
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*
Black poplar	*Populus nigra*
Hybrid poplar	*Populus x Canadensis*
White poplar	*Populus alba*
Walnut	*Juglans regia*
Whitebeam	*Sorbus aria*
Cherry	*Prunus avium*
Wayfaring tree	*Viburnum lantana*
Butcher's broom	*Ruscus aculeatus*

Dogwood

WILD FLOWERS AND GRASSES

Paul Sayers

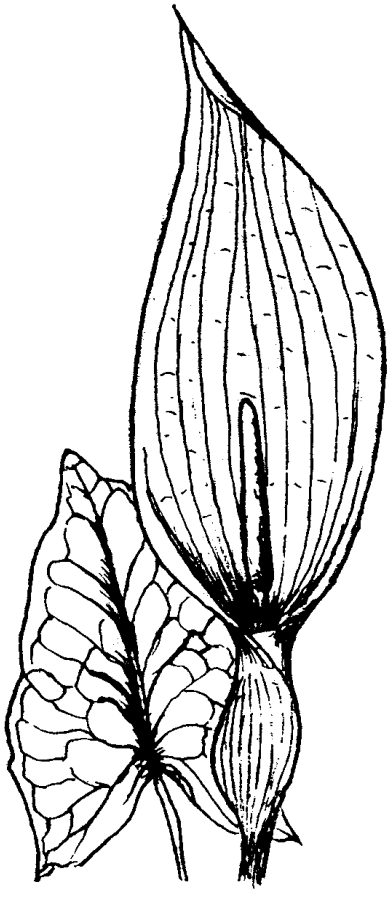
The following list of wild flowers and grasses of East and West Hanney was compiled in the year 2000. The plants are set out in family order, as they occur in most standard field guides. Because plants are often known by more than one common name, scientific names have been included. Non-native species are included where they are growing wild e.g. Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, asparagus and horseradish.

The main habitats to be found in the Hanneys, apart from arable crops, are various kinds of grassland. These include roadsides, pasture fields, "set-aside", the hay meadows of Weir Farm and the Community Woodland of Church Farm. No rarities occur but there are a few interesting plants including quaking grass, the semi-parasitic yellow rattle, bee orchid and butcher's broom.

Another main habitat is disturbed ground, found particularly in gardens, allotments and arable fields. This supports a wide range of wildflowers, commonly regarded as weeds.

Other habitats include hedge bottoms, ditches and streams and small patches of woodland.

No claim is made that the list is exhaustive. It is likely that numerous other plants have been missed.



Cuckoo pint

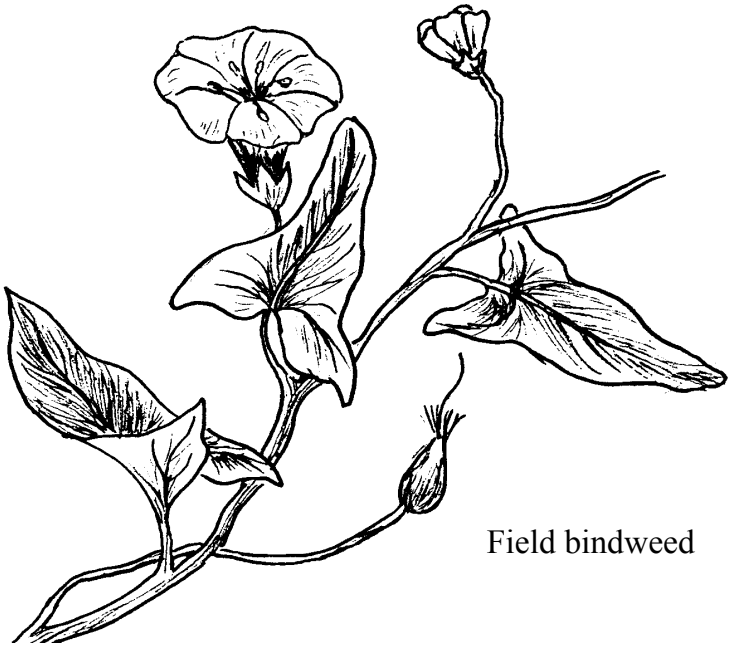
Dog rose

Wild flowers

Creeping buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
Meadow buttercup	*Ranunculus acris*
Lesser celandine	*Ranunculus ficaria*
Celery-leaved buttercup	*Ranunculus scleratus*
Marsh marigold	*Caltha palustris*
Traveller's joy/Old man's beard	*Clematis vitalba*
Common poppy	*Papaver rhoeas*
Greater celandine	*Chelidonium majus*
Common fumitory	*Fumaria officinalis*
Hedge mustard	*Sisymbrium officinale*
Hairy bitter cress	*Cardamine hirsute*
Cuckoo flower/Lady's smock	*Cardamine pratense*
Garlic mustard	*Alliaria petiolata*
Shepherd's purse	*Capsella bursa-pastoris*
Horse radish	*Armoracia rusticana*
Field penny-cress	*Thlapsi arvense*
Water cress	*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*
Himalayan/Indian balsam	*Impatiens glandulifera*
Common dog-violet	*Viola riviniana*
Wild pansy/heartsease	*Viola tricolor*
Soapwort	*Saponaria officinalis*
Corn cockle	*Agrostemma githago*
White campion	*Silene alba*

Red campion	*Silene dioica*
Common chickweed	*Stellaria media*
Lesser stitchwort	*Stellaria graminea*
Greater stitchwort	*Stellaria hostea*
Common mouse-ear	*Cerastium holosteoides*
Procumbent pearlwort	*Sagina procumbens*
Fat hen	*Chenopodium album*
Common mallow	*Malva sylvestris*
Musk mallow	*Malva moschata*
Tree mallow	*Lavatera arborea*
Herb Robert	*Geranium robertianum*
Hedgerow cranesbill	*Geranium pyrenaicum*
Cut-leaved cranesbill	*Geranium dissectum*
Meadow cranesbill	*Geranium pratense*
Yellow oxalis	*Oxalis corniculata*
Red clover	*Trifolium pratense*
White clover	*Trifolium repens*
Hop trefoil	*Trifolium campestre*
Tufted vetch	*Vicia cracca*
Bush vetch	*Trifolium sepium*
Meadow vetchling	*Lathyrus pratensis*
Black medick	*Medicago lupulina*
Spotted medick	*Medicago arabica*
Common bird’s foot trefoil	*Lotus corniculatus*
Bramble	*Rubus fruticosus*
Creeping cinquefoil	*Potentilla reptans*
Silverweed	*Potentilla anserine*
Agrimony	*Agrimonia eupatoria*
Salad burnet	*Poterium sanguisorba*
Meadowsweet	*Filipendula ulmaria*
Wood avens	*Geum urbanum*
Biting stonecrop	*Sedum acre*
White stonecrop	*Sedum album*
Spear-leaved willowherb	*Epilobium montanum*
Square-stalked willowherb	*Eupatorium tetragonum*
Hoary willowherb	*Eupatorium parviflorum*
Great willowherb	*Eupatorium hirsutum*
Stinging nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Pellitory of the wall	*Parietaria diffusa*
Hop	*Humulus lupulus*
White bryony	*Bryonia dioica*
Ivy	*Hedera helix*

Petty spurge	*Euphorbia peplus*
Cow parsley	*Anthriscus sylvestris*
Upright hedge parsley	*Torillus japonica*
Hemlock	*Conium maculatum*
Burnet-saxifrage	*Pimpinella saxifraga*
Ground elder	*Aegopodium podagraria*
Hogweed	*Heraclium sphondylium*
Giant hogweed	*Heraclium mantegazzianum*
Wild parsnip	*Pastinaca sativa*
Fool's water-cress	*Apium nodiflorum*
Wild carrot	*Daucus carota*
Broad-leaved dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*
Clustered dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*
Common sorrel	*Rumex acetosa*
Knotgrass	*Polygonum aviculare*
Redshank	*Polygonum persicaria*
Cowslip	*Primula veris*
Scarlet pimpernel	*Anagalis arvensis*



Field bindweed

Field bindweed	*Convolvulus arvensis*
Hedge bindweed	*Calystegia sepium*
Black nightshade	*Solanum nigrum*
Woody nightshade/bittersweet	*Solanum dulcamara*
Great mullein	*Verbascum thapsus*

Common figwort	*Scrophularia nodosa*
Water figwort	*Scrophularia aquatica*
Ivy-leaved toadflax	*Cymbalaria muralis*
Purple toadflax	*Linaria pupurea*
Germander speedwell	*Veronica chamaedris*
Common field speedwell	*Veronica persica*
Slender/round-leaved speedwell	*Veronica filiformis*
Brooklime	*Veronica beccabunga*
Red bartsia	*Odontites verna*
Yellow/hay rattle	*Rhinanthus minor*
Gypsy wort	*Lycopus europaeus*
Red dead-nettle	*Lamium purpureum*
White dead-nettle	*Lamium album*
Ground ivy	*Glechoma hederacea*
Hedge wound-wort	*Stachys sylvatica*
Black horehound	*Ballota nigra*
Self-heal	*Prunella vulgaris*
Water forget-me not	*Myosotis scorpioides*
Field forget-me-not	*Myosotis arvensis*
Viper's bugloss	*Echium vulgare*
Common comfrey	*Symphytum officinale*
Common broom-rape	*Orobanche minor*
Ribwort plantain	*Plantago lanceolata*
Greater plantain	*Plantago major*
Hoary plantain	*Plantago media*
Honeysuckle	*Lonicera periclymenum*
Red valerian	*Centranthus rubber*
Cleavers	*Gallium aparine*
Ladies bedstraw	*Gallium verum*
Hedge bedstraw	*Gallium mollugo*
Marsh bedstraw	*Gallium palustre*
Teasel	*Dipsacus fullonum*
Field scabious	*Knautia arvensis*
Common ragwort	*Common ragwort*
Hoary ragwort	*Senecio erucifolius*
Groundsel	*Senecio vulgaris*
Oxeye daisy	*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*
Feverfew	*Chrysanthemum parthenium*
Daisy	*Bellis perennis*
Coltsfoot	*Tussilago farfara*
Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*
Scentless mayweed	*Tripleurospermum maritimum*

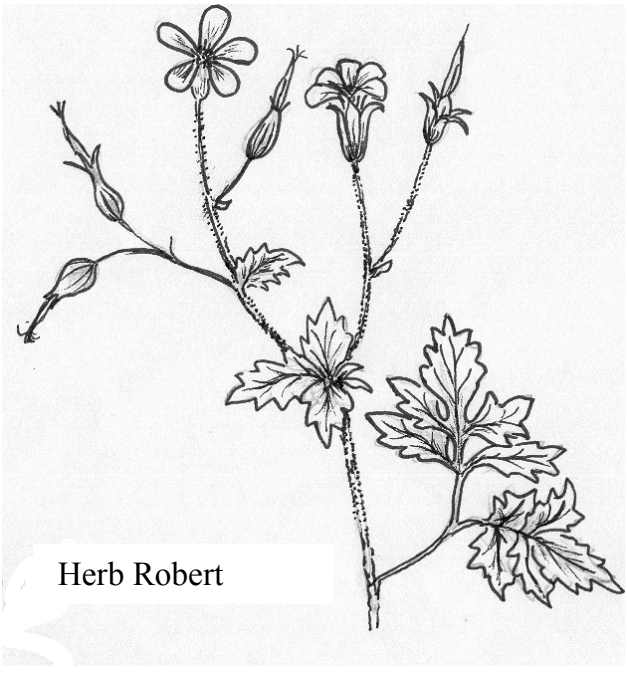
Pineapple weed	*Matricaria matricoides*
Chamomile	*Chamaemelum nobile*
Mugwort	*Artimesia vulgaris*
Spear thistle	*Cirsium vulgare*
Creeping thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Black knapweed	*Centaurea nigra*
Lesser burdock	*Arctium minus*
Greater burdock	*Arctium lappa*
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Goat's beard	*Tragopogon pratensis*
Wall lettuce	*Mycelis muralis*
Common cat's ear	*Hypochoeris radicata*
Rough hawkbit	*Leontodon hispidus*
Autumn hawkbit	*Leontodon autumnalis*
Nipplewort	*Lapsana communis*
Beaked hawksbeard	*Crepis vesicaria*
Smooth hawksbeard	*Crepis capillaries*
Bristly oxtongue	*Picris echioides*
Prickly sow-thistle	*Sonchus asper*
Smooth sow-thistle	*Sonchus oleraceus*
Lanceolate water plantain	*Alisma lanceolata*
Black bryony	*Tamus communis*
Asparagus	*Asparagus officinalis*
Yellow iris	*Iris pseudacorus*
Cuckoo pint/Lords and Ladies etc.	*Arum maculatum*
Branched bur-reed	*Sparganium erectum*
Reedmace	*Typha latifolia*
Bee orchid	*Ophrys apifera*
Common spotted orchid	*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
Common/lesser duckweed	*Lemna minor*

Grasses	**Gramineae**
Crested dogstail	*Cynosurus cristatus*
Soft brome	*Bromus mollis*
Sterile brome	*Bromus sterilis*
Cocksfoot	*Dactylis glomerata*
False oat grass	*Arrhenatherum elatius*
Golden oat grass	*Trisetum flavescens*
Wild oat	*Avena fatua*
Yorkshire fog	*Holcus lanatus*
Perennial rye grass	*Lolium perenne*

Couch grass	*Elymus repens*
Creeping bent	*Agrostis stolonifera*
Common bent	*Agrostis capillaries*
Annual meadow grass	*Poa annua*
Smooth stalked meadow grass	*Poa pratensis*
Rough stalked meadow grass	*Poa trivialis*
Wood false brome	*Brachypodium sylvaticum*
Meadow foxtail	*Alopecurus pratensis*
Black grass	*Alopecurus myosuroides*
Giant fescue	*Festuca gigantean*
Red fescue	*Festuca rubra*
Reed canary grass	*Phalaris arundinacea*
Common reed	*Phragmites australis*
Meadow barley	*Hordeum secalinum*
Wall barley	*Hordeum murinum*
Floating sweet-grass = flote grass	*Glyceria fluitans*
Sweet vernal grass	*Anthoxanthum odoratum*
Common quaking grass	*Briza media*
Timothy	Phleum pratense

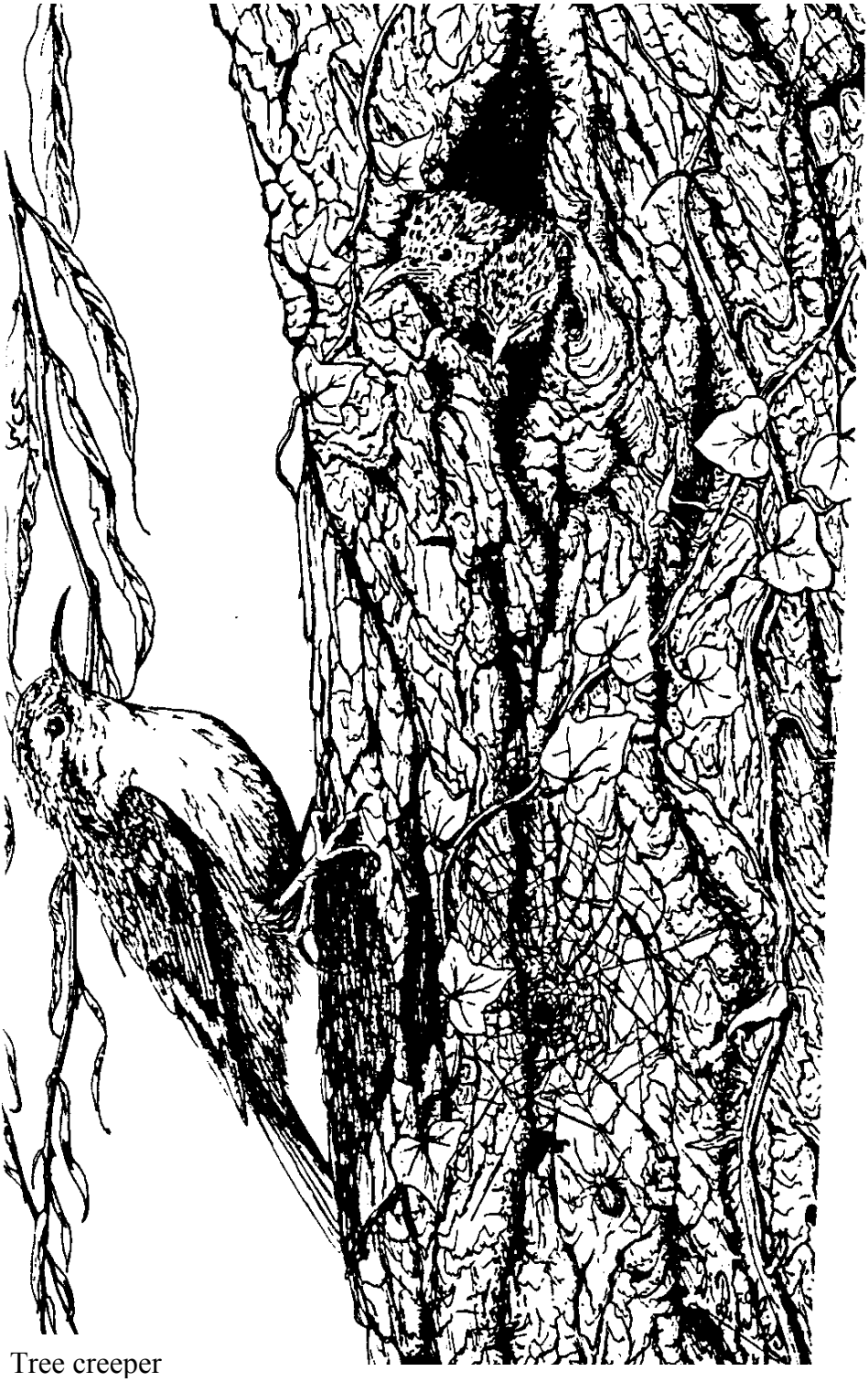
Other plants

Rusty-backed fern	*Asplenium ceterach*
Field horsetail	*Equisetum arvense*
Pendulous sedge	*Carex pendula*



Herb Robert

THE FAUNA

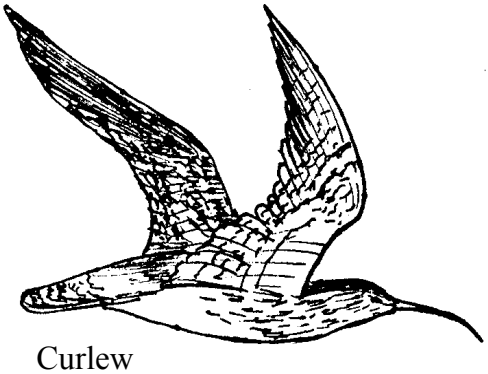


Tree creeper

BIRDS

Dudley Iles

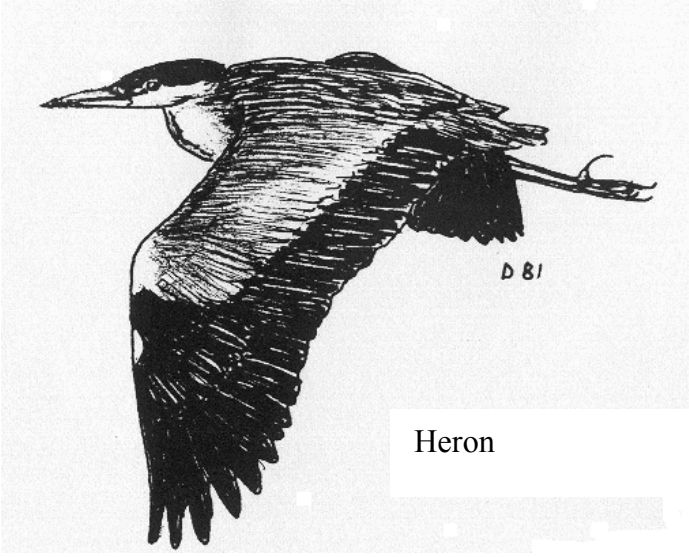
The bird life of Hanney is typical for "middle England" in the Third Millennium. None of the countryside around the Hanney villages is natural, having been altered and used by generations of human beings since the area was first colonised. Developing technology, changes in farming practices and an ever-increasing rural population, have been the reasons for a continually changing landscape. Once there were lowland marshes and extensive woodland, then coarse grassland, scrub and small ponds, later still orchards and arable farms. Today few of us use the land for our livelihood and our surroundings have become grassland for cattle and horses or extensive wheat fields with few hedges and the small ponds have been drained. There has been more chemical control of wayside plants and insects. In recent years "set aside" has encouraged wildflowers once more and maintained the populations of skylark and curlew. The Community Woodland scheme has brought another dimension to our landscape with changes in some bird populations, which always respond to changes of climate, habitat and human activity. Monitoring such changes is one of the fascinations of ornithology.



Curlew

The Hanneys lie at the eastern end of the Vale of the White Horse and boast several **streams**, which rise at the base of the Downs and flow northwards towards the Thames. The Downs form a natural flight line for migrating birds especially on clear days in autumn and winter when flocks of lapwing, skylark, finch and thrush can be seen following the higher hillsides towards the southwest to escape the more extreme weather. During these movements, and the reverse migration in spring, many birds follow the streams, such as the Letcombe and Childrey Brooks, where they find rest and food.

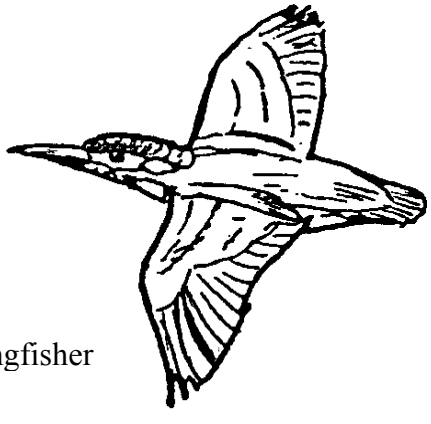
Although Letcombe Brook is a narrow shallow stream passing through typical Vale countryside, it is always worth checking in the migration seasons for casual avian visitors. Two or three green sandpipers from the forests of Northeast Europe have wintered several times along the stream



Heron

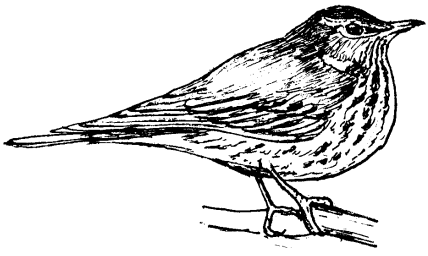
bank, showing off their distinct black and white plumage and characteristic call as they rise. Snipe are often present where floodwater occurs and in some severe winters single Jack snipe from northern Europe rise silently from one's feet. Once, at least, a secretive water rail patrolled the thicker vegetation close to Dandridge's Mill. But on typical walks in any season, pied and grey wagtails (with yellow under parts, not to be confused with the olive backed yellow wagtail), moorhens with their continually flicking white tail and the ever present "wild duck" and Canada goose are as much as one sees, especially in winter. Occasionally there are exotic wildfowl, New Zealand shelduck, Cape teal from South Africa, or crested pochard from southern Europe. But all these must have escaped from private collections, at least one of which exists in Hanney. Sometimes the wild mallard produce partially white or even melanistic (black) mutants, which become clear targets for roving foxes.

Most people in Hanney are aware that kingfishers inhabit the brook but few have been quick enough to pick up their brilliant turquoise blue as they flash past. Their high call often enables one to anticipate their coming. Sadly they sometimes crash into windows as they take short cuts across bends in the river or whilst visiting a garden fishpond. The grey heron sometimes referred to poetically as the "old grey gentleman" often visits fields and ponds near the brook during



Kingfisher

the winter. More often than not they are yearling birds rather than "old", a misconception no doubt associated with their rather human shape and size



Redwing

There are still some old thick **hedgerows** around the villages especially along Cow Lane and the surrounding fields; perhaps they have been allowed to survive to give pheasant cover and small birds take advantage of this. Hedges acquire an increasing variety of shrubs and trees during their existence, many of which produce edible fruits or seeds. During the autumn there is a sequence of maturing of fruit: first thistle and willow "down", later bramble, then hip and haw, teasel, crab apple and wild pear, pink fruits of wayfaring tree with bright orange seeds and soft red berries of guelder rose. During the halcyon days of Indian summer, "charms" of constantly chattering goldfinches, young and old, move through the thistles and teasels along the hedge sides. At the same time whitethroat, lesser whitethroat and blackcap, three of our commonest summer warblers, take advantage of the ripening blackberries and elderberries in addition to their normal diet of insects and spiders, in a bid to build up their energy reserves ready for their autumn migration to the south. Their purple droppings left on leaf and branch are evidence of this dietary change.

By the middle of October most warblers have left Britain to be replaced by flocks of thrushes largely of Scandinavian origin. Redwing, song thrush size but rufous on the flanks (not on the wing) announce their arrival on soft misty evenings, when their high pitched "seeep" calls are the commonest night sound. They are accompanied by the larger grey headed and rumped fieldfare, blackbirds and starlings. They linger along the hedge rows feeding on haws and fallen wild apples as well as visiting the grass fields where invertebrates add protein to their diet, before moving on, in some cases as far as north Africa, only to return in spring.

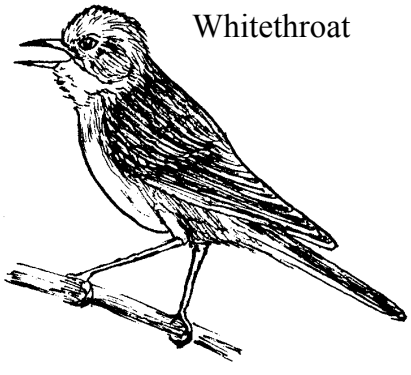
Fieldfare

Small flocks of chaffinches feed quietly amongst the dead leaves along the hedge sides in winter. *Coelebs,* the scientific specific name for the

Chaffinch means "unmarried" and refers to the orange breasted males often remaining in Scandinavia for the winter whilst the females and young birds move south into western Europe. Some of the Hanney flocks are all female suggesting their northern origin: they may include bramblings, a related species from northern Europe.

Besides northern thrushes and finches, goldcrests, the smallest bird in Europe, make the North Sea crossing to join Hanney's breeding population, which commonly feeds and nests in our garden evergreens. In the old days when winter shooting was more common, the goldcrest was known as the "woodcock's pilot" because its arrival into Britain coincided with that of the continental woodcock.

Careful watching along Cow Lane throughout the year but especially on sunny mornings in early summer may reveal sightings of familiar garden birds such as song-thrush, blue and great tits, family parties of long tailed tits and occasionally the pied great spotted woodpecker which have left the gardens to forage and wander far afield. There are always one or two little owls in the ivy covered dead elms whose presence is betrayed by scolding tits and chaffinches. Young sparrow-hawks begin their wanderings in late summer trying their hunting skills with swift low flights over the hedges perhaps capturing an unsuspecting linnet, leaving the corpse often decapitated, with the breast muscles eaten away.

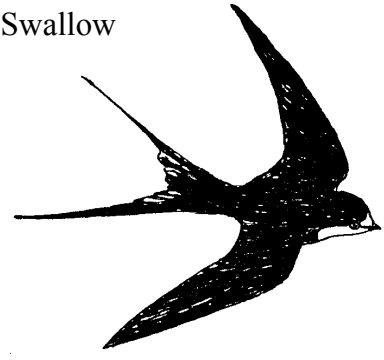

Whitethroat

In late spring nettle, hedge parsley, bramble and hawthorn provide ample cover for nesting warblers, thrushes and even the now uncommon bullfinch. Bird song is at its best in May and one senses the ghosts of past Hanney people who walked this way to Wantage, perhaps to market, enjoying the cacophony of bird song to cheer them on their way.

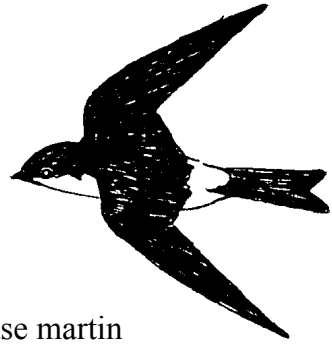
A recent addition to our countryside has been the planting of community and private **woodland** subsidised by national and local government. The extensive mixed broadleaf plantation to the south of Hanney (circa 1993) will gradually change the once grazing fields into mature woodland over the next 20-30 years. Each stage will attract its community of birds. At present the low cover and sapling trees provide food and cover to yellow-hammers and linnets. The name "linnet" comes from old English *linece* via Latin *linum* meaning flax, a popular food plant in the past, albeit now a

small part of the linnet's diet. Meadow pipits visit the woodland in autumn and rabbiting dogs often disturb coveys of French partridges. But it will be many years in the future before typical woodland communities make their appearance. One bird usually associated with mature trees has however already become a feature of Hanney avifauna in the years of the Community Woodland: the green woodpecker which likes to feed on the ground where its main preference is ants and larger ground insects, a habit less often observed in pied woodpeckers. Green woodpeckers are often flushed from between the small trees and their loud laughing call has become a feature of the Community Woodland in spring. Perhaps the most exciting bird which uses the young woodland is the short-eared owl. Periodically the rise in population of rodents in Scandinavia produces a similar response in these predators and change in the predator/prey balance may oblige these birds to wander south in autumn. Our open fields and Community Woodland may meet their needs. On such occasions two or three birds will winter with us quartering the territory in the gathering mists of evening.

Swallow



Beyond the woodland to the south of the villages and before the railway line is a modern **sewage works**. While not usually a place to recommend on a spring walk and difficult to look over, it is often the first place (usually about the first week in April) where the bird watcher can welcome the first returning swallows. A hundred or more swallows and later house martins (the ones with white rumps) and occasional brown sand martins, hawk for flies recently hatched from the gravel stones of the sprinkler beds. Yellow wagtails feed on the stones with resident pied and more unusual grey wagtails. In late summer noisy families of starlings descend to feed greedily on small invertebrates present amongst the stones. Starlings, house martins and perhaps swallows have declined as Hanney breeding birds in recent years.



House martin

St. James' **churchyard** is one of the few places in the villages which is relatively undisturbed. Despite cutting of the grass around the tombstones it has a high population of banded and garden snails,

vital for the survival of our song thrushes. An indication of their quiet presence is the collections of broken shells on selected apron stones. Since the banded snail has a variety of colour forms, the ratio of broken shell to those live ones which hide below the rank grasses makes an interesting study in predator selection. The tombstones provide vantage perches for the Robin and the spotted flycatcher. One pair of the former even uses a secret place beneath some tomb stones to rear its brood, using the newly turned soil prepared for bedding plants to find wire worms and other tiny insects. The old church itself has many nooks and crannies beneath the eaves where several pairs of swifts, sparrows and an occasional blue tit, and bats, are left largely undisturbed to rear their young. Even the porch provides sanctuary for a pair of swallows from year to year. And a pair of little owls nest beneath the eaves, the young and parents leaving behind regurgitated pellets of fur, bones and insect cases as evidence of their daily diet.

Swift

"Set aside" fields are another recent change in our countryside. The one between St James' School and West Hanney is a delight with its summer display of wild flowers. Later families of starlings collect here. The grey young birds sometimes become temporarily flightless when their feathers become soaked with morning dew. Goldfinches, linnets and greenfinches feed on their chosen annual seeds and members of our two rookeries, plus their smaller relation the jackdaw, search the grass and ploughed fields to find items to supplement their omnivorous diet. On quiet evenings, the field is often frequented by Hanney's local barn owl which probably still breeds within the villages. The other "set aside" fields and some of the moister grass fields to the south support 3 or 4 pairs of curlew. They were once commoner and together with redshank and lapwing bred in marshy land near Denchworth. Nowadays only 3 or 4 pairs of lapwing remain within the Hanney boundaries after a marked nation wide decline in the last 10 years. Skylarks are still well represented in the "set aside" fields but the British grey partridge is becoming hard to find.

The richest and most varied habitat in Hanney must be our **gardens**. Gardens are potentially good havens for those species which can adapt to our lives and whose natural habitat is threatened by the changes in our traditional countryside. Most use gardens when food is scarce elsewhere but a few species remain in the garden all year round. Hanney gardens

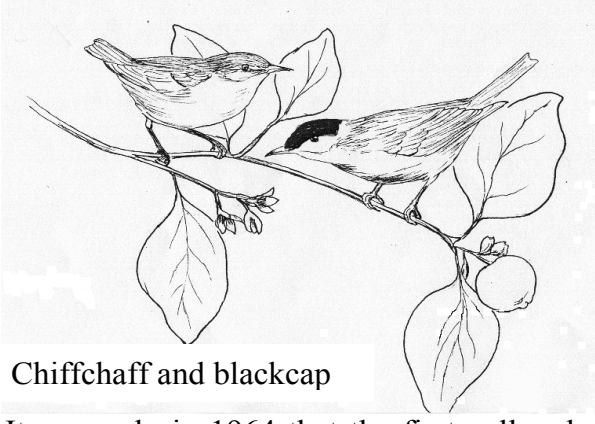
have the advantage of being close to the open rural environment and since most are of reasonable size can provide shrubs and hedges for protection from predators. The variety of trees and herbaceous plants, even though not all native, provide fruits, seeds and even pollen. Red hot pokers are constantly visited by tits and sparrows for pollen in summer. Lawns are an important food source for several species. Many species have learnt to take advantage of the food we provide especially in seasons when natural foods are scarce. The British Trust for Ornithology has been conducting garden surveys for several years and in spring 1996 published a list of "Top Ten" garden birds for the previous autumn based on observations by many participants over 13 weeks. The list included in order of abundance:

Blue tit
Chaffinch
Robin
Dunnock
Blackbird
Collared dove
Great tit
Greenfinch
House sparrow
Starling

Great tit

Bearing in mind local conditions this is perhaps a typical list for the Hanneys. All these species use our bird tables in their individual ways and other species have recently acquired the habit, notably long-tailed tits, great spotted woodpeckers and goldfinches. Blackcaps are occasionally seen in winter on the bird table often acting very aggressively. We believe that our own blackcaps winter in Africa and a small number replace them from north-eastern Europe in autumn.

We indirectly encourage other birds which do not take advantage of the food we provide. Wrens rarely partake, preferring to search crevasses in stone walls and old trees where their exploration looking for spiders and insects has resulted in their Latin name of *Troglodytes troglodytes*, cave dweller. Tree creepers like brown mice jerkily spiral up the trunks and branches of old trees, always upwards and never down, their thin curved bills constantly poking into cracks. Even in winter they survive on hibernating insects. Pied and sometimes the continental race white wagtail and yellow wagtail on passage, spend a short time chasing insects disturbed as they run across the grass. Wood pigeons and mistle thrushes feed on the black and green ivy berries. Ivy is an asset to breeding blackbirds, thrushes, Robins, spotted flycatchers and doves. All except the summer visiting flycatcher use its thick evergreen foliage for sleeping during long

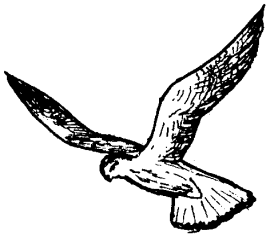


Chiffchaff and blackcap

winter nights. It was only in 1964 that the first collared dove's nest was found in Wantage after colonising much of Britain in the 1950s. Since then this gentle bird whose origins were in the Far East, has become an everyday feature of our gardens. The spread of the collared dove is an almost unique story in recent ornithology, even surpassing the spread of the Canada goose after its introduction in the 1930s.

Each year more unusual birds visit our gardens largely through the effect of population changes, weather or just chance. One year, two firecrests fed in a silver birch near our house. Most winters this tree attracts small parties of redpoll which love to feed on the tiny dry cones. Hobbies regularly fly over; their swift flight on sickle-shape wings allows them to make swallows and martins their specialist prey. One autumn, five wild swans flew high over the village. We can expect to see soaring buzzards which are steadily increasing, and even a red kite, recently introduced into the Chilterns, at any time of the year.

The Hanneys do not provide the best bird watching in Britain but because of our rural status and the mobility, seasonality, colour and song of the birds, they add to our delight and interest wherever we are. The Hanneys are no exception.



Kestrel

Birds which are resident and are known to breed

Little grebe	Frequent on the brook and ponds in winter. Breeds occasionally on the Mill pond
Mute swan	Occasionally on the Mill pond where it last bred in 1980s.
Canada goose	Common and increasing; at least 2 pairs breed by the Mill pond.
Mallard	A common breeding bird and year round resident.
Tufted duck	Frequently on the Mill pond and has bred there.
Sparrow-hawk	A frequent visitor to gardens and fields especially in autumn and winter. Known to breed near West Hanney.
Kestrel	Widespread. Has bred in the old bell tower of St. James the Less.
Hobby	A frequent visitor to the Hanneys from April to October. Breeds locally.
Red-legged partridge	Common resident in the Community Woodland and in arable fields.
Grey partridge	Rarer than the last species but a widespread resident.
Pheasant	Common and widespread breeding resident.
Moorhen	Common resident breeding on small ponds round the villages.
Coot	Infrequent resident, breeding on the Mill pond and on some smaller ponds in the district.
Lapwing	A declining breeding bird. Perhaps not more than 6 pairs now within the Hanney boundaries. Seen in flocks flying over Hanney on cold winter days.
Stock dove	Small numbers are resident and breed in holes in old trees around the village.
Wood pigeon	A common breeding resident.
Collared dove	Common especially in gardens.
Barn owl	Occasionally seen at dusk especially over the "set-aside" field. Has nested in West Hanney.
Little owl	Probably the commonest resident owl seen along old hedge rows with trees like Cow Lane and near Lower Mill. Regularly seen by The Green, West Hanney.
Tawny owl	Often heard hooting especially in January on still nights.
Kingfisher	One or two pairs are resident on the Letcombe Brook and seen occasionally by ponds, though seen less frequently in recent years.
Green woodpecker	Resident which has increased in recent years especially in the Community Woodland area.

Greater spotted	A common visitor to most gardens frequently feeding on nut woodpecker feeders. Resident throughout the year.
Skylark	Still a common resident. Often more frequent and in parties in the winter. Commonly seen flying west on cold clear winter days.
Pied wagtail	A fairly common resident often seen on lawns throughout the year.
Grey wagtail	Resident particularly along the Letcombe Brook where it breeds early in spring in old walls.
Wren	A common resident, particularly favours leafy gardens.
Dunnock	Common, a frequent visitor below bird tables.
Robin	Widespread and a common breeding bird.
Blackbird	A common resident with possibly additional birds from the north in winter.
Song thrush	A common resident, between 6 and 10 singing males in the spring, possibly on the decline.
Mistle thrush	A common resident often singing in bad weather in spring from the top of high trees.
Goldcrest	A common resident perhaps commoner in winter. Associated with evergreen trees.
Long-tailed tit	An increasingly common resident. Recently began visiting bird tables.
Marsh tit	A scarce resident usually found along hedgerows and in woodland.
Coal Tit	Fairly common, associated with evergreen trees.
Blue Tit	One of our most familiar birds.
Great Tit	Almost as common as the previous species.
Tree Creeper	Widespread usually solitary but often seen in mature gardens, woodlands and old orchards.
Magpie	Common resident.
Jackdaw	Common resident, nesting in old trees and houses wherever there is an available unused chimney.
Rook	Common resident. At least two rookeries in the village.
Carrion crow	Fairly common.
Starling	Slightly on the decline as a breeding bird but still a common visitor to the garden in winter when migrants from the continent arrive.
House sparrow	Widespread resident in Hanney gardens but less common than in the past.

Tree sparrow	Once a common garden bird but is hardly ever seen nowadays.
Chaffinch	Common and widespread resident.
Greenfinch	Appears to be increasing, regularly feeds on nut and sunflower feeders in winter.
Goldfinch	Although common there are fewer seen in the winter months. Has recently taken to bird feeders, particularly niger seed.
Linnet	Widespread throughout the year in open fields and hedgerows.
Redpoll	Occasional in autumn, feeding in small flocks usually in birch trees.
Bullfinch	Several resident pairs round the village, notably along Cow Lane.
Yellow hammer	A common resident around open fields and barns.
Reed Bunting	Occasionally seen in old hedges or by water. Has adapted to nesting in fields of oilseed rape.

Birds which are resident but not known to breed

Grey heron	Frequently seen along the brook and in wet fields.
Buzzard	Frequently seen soaring over the Hanneys throughout the year.
Black-headed gull	Common especially in winter, seen largely flying over the village in small parties.
Corn Bunting	Scarce though once a common resident. Usually seen in small winter flocks.

Winter visitors

Wigeon	Seen once on flood water north of Winter Lane.
Teal	Occasionally seen flying over Hanney in the winter.
Shoveler	Two birds by flood water East Hanney on one occasion.
Water rail	One in a ditch, Weir Farm, November 1993.
Jack snipe	A rare visitor along muddy streams in hard winters.
Common snipe	A frequent winter visitor around flood water and stream banks.
Green sandpiper	Two birds wintered along Letcombe Brook 1989/90.
Golden plover	Occasional flocks seen flying over in winter.
Common gull	Frequently seen with gull flocks in winter.
Lesser Black-backed gull	Mostly seen in fields and flying over Hanney in spring and autumn.
Herring gull	Often part of the gull flocks which forage in nearby fields in winter.

Short-eared owl	A frequent winter visitor in some years especially hunting over the fields south of the Hanneys.
Stonechat	Occasionally seen in winter sitting on dead hogweed stems.
Fieldfare	A common winter visitor feeding on berries in the hedge rows and in flocks in open fields.
Redwing	A common winter visitor arriving in early October, the flocks often moving on rather than staying all winter in Hanney.
Brambling	Occasionally seen in autumn in flocks of chaffinches.
Redpoll	Occasional in autumn, feeding in small flocks usually in birch trees.

Summer visitors

Curlew	Frequently seen from April to October in the rough fields. Perhaps 3-4 pairs breed around the villages.
Turtle dove	Once heard and seen in spring and may have nested in the hedges but has now almost disappeared.
Cuckoo	A fairly common migrant through the Hanneys from about mid April. A few stay through the summer.
Swift	A common summer visitor nesting in the church roof in particular. Arriving about 3 May and leaving during early August.
Sand martin	Occasionally seen with swallows on spring migration.
Swallow	A common summer visitor arriving about first week in April, the last ones passing south in first week of November. Breeding in many old buildings including the church porch.
House martin	Fairly common summer visitor though has possibly declined in the village in recent years. Often seen with swallows over the sewage works.
Sedge warbler	A passage migrant. Occasionally heard from the side of wet ditches in April.
Lesser whitethroat	A common but easily overlooked summer visitor, its high trill song often heard along Cow lane.
Common whitethroat	A widespread summer visitor associated with brambles and nettles.
Garden warbler	A rare visitor in April.
Blackcap	One of the commonest summer migrants in gardens and thickets. A few birds in winter which visit bird tables. Can be heard singing from mid March to September.

Chiffchaff	The earliest of our spring migrants, in song by mid March. Many move elsewhere leaving a small breeding population.
Willow warbler	Common in spring with a few remaining to breed.
Spotted flycatcher	Once a common summer visitor but has steadily declined in recent years. A late migrant arriving in mid May and associated with gardens.

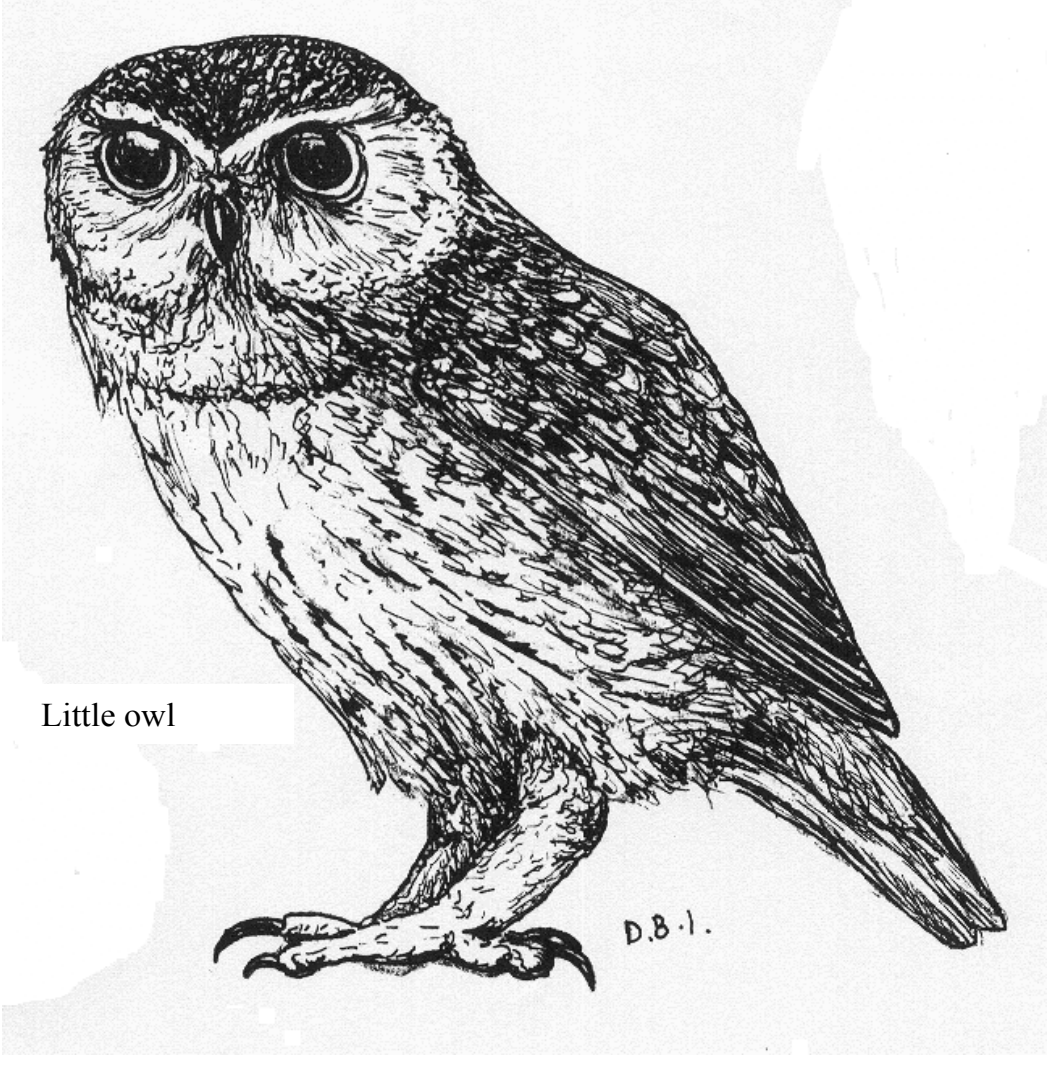
Migrant, usually only seen on passage in spring and/or autumn

Pochard	Occasionally on the Mill pond.
Redshank	A rare visitor in spring. Used to breed in wet fields near Denchworth.
Meadow pipit	Often disturbed from rough fields especially in the autumn. Apparently not a resident in Hanney.
Yellow wagtail	Seen occasionally from first week of April but on passage elsewhere. Seen sometimes in ones and twos on lawns during the autumn return migration.
Redstart	Once possibly bred in old Hanney willows but now only occasionally seen in spring.
Nightingale	Would have been a resident in some of the thickets around the village but now only occasional individual males sing for a few days in spring before passing on.
Wheatear	Occasionally seen in open fields in early spring.

Birds seen only occasionally or rarely

Manx shearwater	One found in a West Hanney garden after a storm 1983.
Bewick's/ whooper swan	Three flew high and to the west March 1990 possibly heading for Slimbridge from the Wash area.
Goshawk	Two, high over Hanney, August 1989.
Great skua	A young bird was found exhausted near Hanney 1985 and released after recovering.
Montagu's harrier	One sighting of a male, probably from the pair known to nest on the Downs.
Red kite	Sightings reported. Likely to be seen more commonly as the population expands from birds re-introduced to the Chilterns.
Water rail	One in a ditch, Weir Farm 26 November 1993.
Common sandpiper	One East Hanney 7 April 1976 and two by floodwater, Weir Farm April 2000.

Less spotted woodpecker	Once often seen in the village. Now seems to have been lost as a breeding bird.
Firecrest	Recorded at least once, two feeding in a silver birch February 1993.
Pied flycatcher	One East Hanney September 1987.
Siskin	One record from East Hanney, 21 February 1973

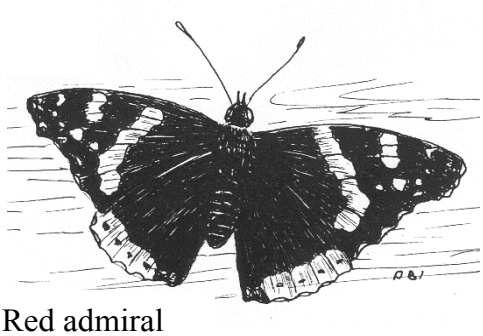


Little owl

HANNEY BUTTERFLIES

Dudley Iles

As part of the growing popularity of natural history, largely through environmental programmes on television, butterflies are taking their place alongside birds and botany in the interests of many members of our local community. It is not difficult to understand why. Their colour and movement make them easier than many other creatures to recognise and their beauty is easy to appreciate.



Red admiral

We are constantly being reminded of how, in days gone by, butterflies were very much commoner than today. We often remember peaks and low times in our experience of the past and we know that insects, as well as other animals, fluctuate in numbers according to temporary changes in the environment which affect their feeding and breeding. Beside these, there have been changes in our use of the rural landscape during the last fifty years, which have often led to a steady decline in many of our native butterflies. Some 75% of our butterfly species have specific habitat requirements in order to survive. For example the chalkhill blue and small copper need extensive patches of short chalk grassland, maintained by grazing animals. Ploughing of this habitat has resulted in a decline in the butterflies it supports.

But our concern is for the "Vale" countryside surrounding our villages. Here we have extensive arable fields, with some cattle grazing, and scattered copses of ash, sycamore, hazel and elm. Quiet, unused field corners support brambles, teasels and thistles, and our overgrown hedges have a mixed variety of trees and shrubs: hawthorn, field maple, wild rose and guelder rose, all important to our population of butterflies as food and shelter for caterpillars and the adult insects. In recent years, "set aside" has encouraged the return of many wild flowers, with resulting encouragement to some species of butterfly. In addition, the Community Woodland, which was planted with a variety of broad-leaved native trees some years ago, has attracted wayside butterflies. Marbled whites, once rare in the Hanneys, common blues, small heaths and meadow browns can often be seen flying

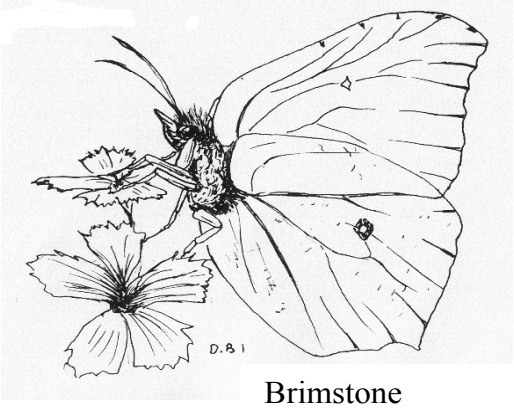
over the small patches of wild grasses and docks between and around the trees in late summer.

Garden butterflies

Our gardens are shared with many other animals beside ourselves; but butterflies are obviously attracted to the flower borders adding another dimension to our enjoyment of them. The visual effects of colour and movement make them easier than many other garden creatures to recognise and with a little effort, whilst relaxing in a deck chair near the flower bed, some of their interesting courtship and territorial behaviour can be studied.

Most gardens in Hanney can expect to be visited by ten species of butterfly, throughout much of the year, but with a little management and with butterflies in mind, another ten species are possible. The simplest and most acceptable form of management is to increase the numbers of nectar producing flowers from March to October. Many modern varieties have little nectar, or indeed scent, but experience often provides us with the best ones. Marigolds, Michaelmas daises, Aubretia and, of course, the butterfly bush Buddleia all encourage butterflies, whilst honeysuckle, and fuchsias attract moths as well.

Adult butterflies need nectar to maintain their breeding activities but caterpillars (larvae) are the developmental and growing stage in the life cycle and need protein and other nutrients provided by the leaves of plants specific to the requirements of the species. A nettle patch, especially in a shady situation, provides food for the caterpillars of the small tortoiseshell, red admiral, comma and peacock butterflies, whilst leaving a patch of lawn to grow with only an autumn cut encourages meadow brown and common blue. Some butterflies which have more unusual food requirements such as buckthorn and alder for brimstones, and cuckoo flower for the orange tip, may be less easy to provide for. Insecticides will reduce the number of butterflies by affecting the caterpillars or the adult insects and a perfect weed free garden may not be a haven for butterflies.



Brimstone

BUTTERFLIES THROUGH THE YEAR

Perhaps the best way to outline events in the lives of Hanney butterflies is to begin at the beginning of the year and broadly trace the pattern of their activities as the year unfurls.

Winter and Spring

Being invertebrates with little control over heat loss physiologically, butterflies face the problem of survival through our cool and wet winters. Sharp frosts from late autumn onwards can kill butterflies if they are exposed to them over several months. Those species which over-winter seek out sheltered places to reduce such exposure.

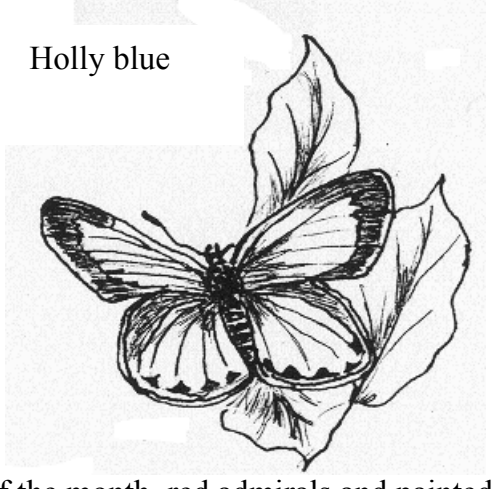
Some species arrest their development in the larval (caterpillar) stage of their life cycle. Marbled whites and meadow browns seek the lower stems of coarse grasses to pass the winter. The familiar cabbage white and small white remain inside the pupa (chrysalis) through the cold months, usually in nooks and crannies in walls, or under the eaves of buildings. The speckled wood, common in summer along our lanes and woodland edges, is our only butterfly which can winter in long grass as pupa or larva.

Comma

Some of our commonest garden and wayside butterflies, the small tortoiseshell, comma and peacock, pass the winter as adults, searching for frost free dark places where they hang in suspended animation until they are stimulated to take flight once more. They are often found in our houses having entered through an open window in autumn. They become active from the end of January on warm winter days and are seen fluttering against the window attracted by the light. Their bright rich colours have faded over the winter and their wings are battered and torn. The advantage of adult "hibernation" means an early emergence and possibly an early beginning to the laying of eggs but there is a risk of unpredictable weather and exposure to predators. The brimstone is in competition with these three to be the first spring butterfly. The sulphur yellow males emerge before the females and with determined and rapid flight invade our gardens. The lime green females follow later. Both have leaf shaped wings with raised veins and even the odd blotch on the underside. Such mimicry allows them to avoid being captured by sparrows when at rest, even in the trumpets of spring daffodils. Brimstones lay their

single eggs under leaves of the buckthorn in May or June. The tiny green caterpillars quickly grow and pupate and a new generation of perfect insects appears in July. After a brief decline in numbers when the wintering adults die the new bright butterflies emerge from their pupae. The rest of the year is spent visiting wayside flowers-they do not breed again until the following May.

As spring advances other butterflies emerge from their chrysalises. Orange tips are one of the first of these to be seen as they wing their way along the hedgerows; the later females lack the bright orange at the extreme of the fore wing which gives this delightful butterfly its common name. Though much less common in the Hanneys, holly blues also emerge on warm April days. These dark fringed pale blue butterflies can be seen in St. James' Churchyard often sunning themselves on leaves or flying in ones and twos close to ivy or holly bushes. Rarely do they visit flowers though gardens with lots of ivy attract them. After mating, the females lay their eggs on holly whilst those from this spring brood choose ivy on which to lay their eggs. The green caterpillars become chrysalises in time for winter.


Holly blue

May is often a quiet month for Hanney butterflies. Apart from the possibility of cold wet weather, many of our early butterflies have laid eggs and died and the new generations have yet to complete their development to reproductive adults. However towards the middle of the month, red admirals and painted ladies arrive from the continent. We are able to enjoy the beauty of both these butterflies because of their ability to cross the channel and spread across our countryside. Numbers depend on their success in breeding and surviving in the Mediterranean region where they spend the winter. During the rest of the year they seek out nettle patches and produce one or more generations of adults which die with the first frosts of late autumn. Unlike birds migrant butterflies are one way travellers. They migrate and die after laying eggs on suitable plants during their northerly wanderings. Whilst breeding may continue through the summer there appears little evidence that the remaining individuals ever return south in autumn. The red admiral (it is thought the name is a corruption of "admirable" rather than that the

white and red bands on their wings reminded country people of naval admirals' uniforms) is one of our most familiar garden butterflies.

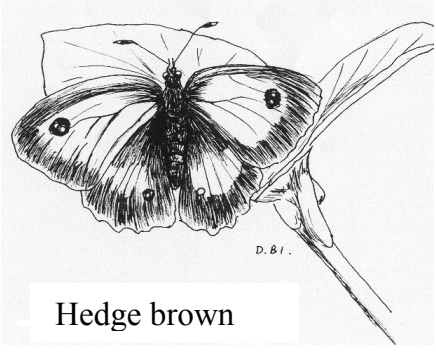
Another and less welcome arrival from the continent is the cabbage white, to supplement those that wintered as golden green chrysalises in our garden sheds and whose black and yellow caterpillars will plague the Brassica gardener through the summer. It is thought that the unpleasant smell given off by large white caterpillars protects them against birds. The closely related small white has similar habits but its caterpillar has no such protection and is readily eaten by sparrows, Robins and warblers. Instead it depends on lying close and still along the under mid rib of the cabbage leaves where its green colour enables it to be overlooked.

Summer

Perhaps because most of our "field" butterflies pass the winter as larvae and therefore need more time to complete their life cycle to adult butterflies, they are later than others to appear. It is often mid June before we see hedge browns, meadow browns, ringlets and speckled woods in the coarse grassy corners of the Community Woodland, along the hedge sides or over the "set-aside" fields. The larger meadow brown with its single white eye spot surrounded by a black rim, has been extremely common this year (2000). There were many hundreds in the hay meadows alongside the brook.

Around the Community Woodland and along the lane leading to the railway bridge towards Grove, and particularly where thistles and teasels grow, the dark brown ringlet with its string of "eyes" in the hind wing could be seen in good numbers, whilst Cow Lane and some of the thicker hedges to the south of the Hanneys provided average numbers of hedge browns and speckled woods. Like other butterflies the latter two species show simple territorial and sexual behaviour.

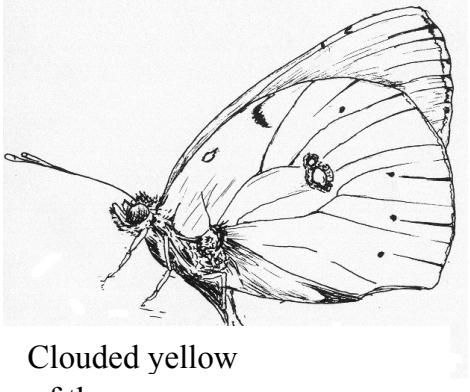
Hedge browns can be distinguished from meadow browns by their smaller size, more orange wings and two white spots, not one, on the fore-wing. An old country name for this butterfly is "gate keeper". The males set up territories along thick hedgerows where they frequently visit bramble flowers and thistles. In between feeding they select a favourite gate or fence where they rest with spread wings in the sun



Hedge brown

(most butterflies spread their wings flat as this allows the insect to absorb the sun's heat). The arrival of the larger and more colourful female or a rival male results in aerial displays. Equally the male of the dark brown and buff spotted speckled wood sets up territorial vigilance from a leaf in a glade where sunbeams reach to the ground. The approach of a rival sends the defending male to challenge the stranger by attempting to over top him. Thus they spiral ever upwards each attempting to be the highest. Usually the territory holder wins the competition and returns to his place in the sun while the rival continues on his way.

Hanney has few outstanding records of rare butterflies but in June 1983 and 2000 clouded yellow butterflies (made famous by a spy story from the war) invaded Britain. Hanney received its fair share of this yellow and black meadow butterfly from Europe. Favourable conditions on the continent had led to a population explosion leading to a brief northerly movement. From June to August it was possible to count up to 300 individuals in the flower meadows along Letcombe Brook in 1983 but less than 10 in 2000. It has been found that some of these migrants breed and may rear several broods through the summer, choosing leguminous plants such as clovers on which to lay their eggs but these populations die out in the last quarter of the year.



Clouded yellow

Autumn

September, and the Indian summer of October (when it happens) is a good time to see butterflies. Some, like the cabbage white, continue to produce further broods until the end of September. Adults are usually short lived and die soon after mating and egg laying. Other species linger on, resting in the sun with wings extended on stones or walls or feed on nectar from the last of the Buddleia and Michaelmas daisies. In September, commas, peacocks (with large false eyes on the wing), large and small whites, red admirals, small tortoiseshells and an occasional painted lady can be seen in numbers on Buddleia bushes. It is in autumn, when fallen apples become attractive, that some butterflies become drowsy with the fermented fruit.

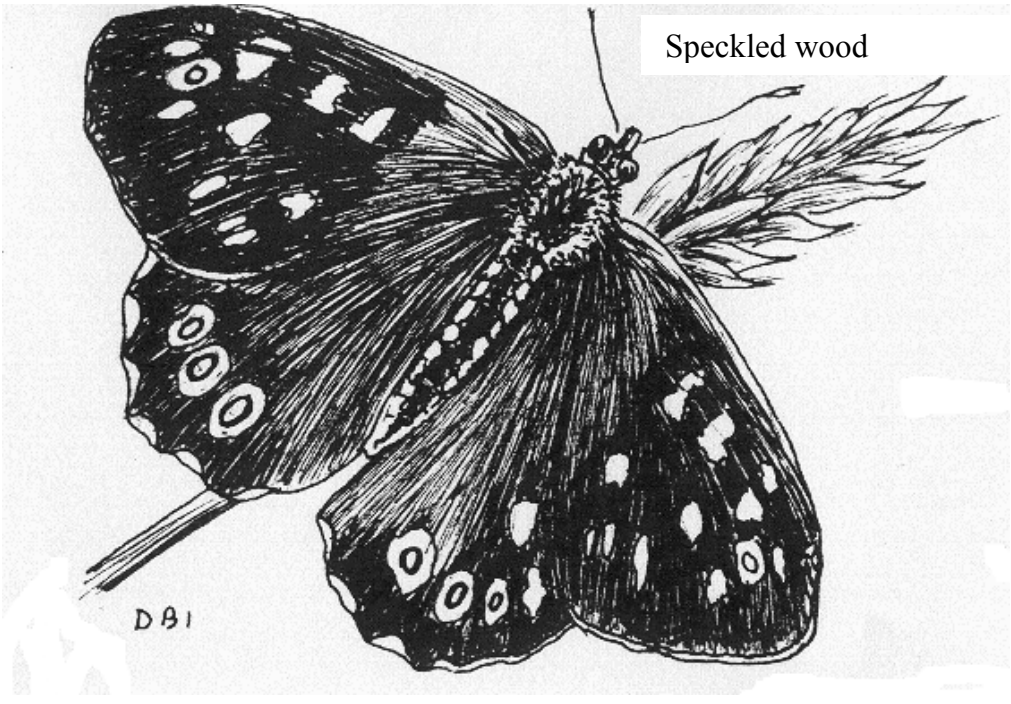
Bramble patches in the lanes continue to attract these same butterflies but also ringlets, and hedge browns and even the camouflaged green hairstreak easily overlooked among the vegetation. The last of the meadow flowers

attract common blues, small heaths, marbled white and meadow browns in diminishing numbers. By the end of October small tortoise shell, commas and peacocks seek out nooks and crannies for hibernation.

The first frost of autumn brings the end of the butterflies' year.

Small skipper	Fairly common in rough grass fields from July until August.
Large skipper	Sometimes identified along hedgerows bordering grass fields, emerging from pupal hibernation in mid June.
Clouded yellow	Occasional "invasions" from the continent usually in numbers in flowery fields.
Brimstone	A familiar garden and wayside butterfly in spring and early summer.
Large white	Common and widespread, a resident and immigrant butterfly passing the winter in a chrysalis.
Small white	Less common than the large white but similar distribution and behaviour.
Orange tip	Widespread and common in spring and early summer. Pupal hibernation.
Green hairstreak	Occasionally seen in the shrubby lanes in Hanney from May to July. Our only green butterfly.
Small copper	Occasionally seen over waste ground from early May to September.
Common blue	Widespread and fairly common from May to September often visiting gardens.
Holly blue	Local in distribution associated with ivy and holly. Occurs in Hanney churchyard from April to early June. There is a second brood from July to August. The caterpillar overwinters.
Red admiral	Widespread and common in gardens and elsewhere. Immigration from Europe in May. Particularly attracted to Buddleia.
Painted lady	Widespread and often common in favourable habitats. An immigrant from Europe continually from May onwards.
Small tortoiseshell	One of the best known and commonest butterflies. Found in gardens most years February to October.
Peacock	A common and widespread butterfly. Especially attracted to Buddleia and brambles. Adult hibernation through the winter.

Comma	Fairly common in gardens, likes to rest in the sun vertically on tree trunks. Hibernates as an adult through the winter.
Speckled wood	Fairly common but local; rarely visits gardens but favours wood edges and hedgerows. Larval hibernation; adults flying in May onwards.
Wall	Occasionally seen in Hanney gardens usually resting on stones.
Marbled white	Once rare but now commoner but localised in coarse grassland particularly along the Community Woodland margins. Sometimes seen in gardens.
Hedge brown.	Common along lanes and hedgerows from June to September, sometimes seen in gardens.
Meadow brown	Common in grass field from June to early October. Larval hibernation.
Small heath	Easily overlooked but not uncommon in coarse grassland from May to September.
Ringlet	Variable in numbers from year to year. Found on waste ground with thistles and brambles and along hedgerows from July to August.



Speckled wood

MAMMALS

Paul Sayers

Relatively few species of mammal occur in Britain, around 40, far fewer than in continental Europe, mainly because the English channel opened before many species could reach here after the last ice age. For comparison, there are about 600 birds on the official British list although many of these are only rare visitors. Man has been a major influence on our mammal fauna, causing the extinction of many larger species such as wolf, bear, beaver and boar but introducing, by accident or design, over a dozen species including some of our most serious pests including the rabbit, the rat and the grey squirrel.

Those birds which cannot cope with our winter conditions, particularly insect eating species such as warblers, swallows and martins, migrate to warmer climates. Mammals are unable to do this, so they cope with cold weather by reducing activity and staying at home in burrows and dens. Only a few species, bats and hedgehogs undertake true hibernation, going into a torpor and reducing their body temperature.

In general, mammals are much more difficult to study than birds because many species are shy, secretive and nocturnal. The mammalogist tends to rely more on signs, such as droppings and footprints and, for larger mammals such as fox, deer and badger, traces of hair caught on barbed wire. Another clue which species are present comes from the occasional body, perhaps "something the cat brought in", from road kills or from the pellets of regurgitated fur and bones produced by birds of prey. Discarded bottles and drinks cans may also contain the remains of some hapless small mammal, which has entered in pursuit of food or shelter and been unable to escape. A good time to look for mammal signs is after a fall of snow when footprints will give a good indication of which species are present. There may also be clues to behaviour, for example a fox following a rabbit or hunting for voles.

The following species are known to occur in East and West Hanney:

Hedgehog
The hedgehog is one of our most well-loved mammals and, while relatively rarely seen, except as a road casualty, it is widespread in the Hanneys. The most common evidence that a hedgehog is visiting a garden is droppings

left on the lawn. These are about half an inch in diameter and one to two inches long, black and often glistening with insect remains. During the winter hedgehogs hibernate, often under garden sheds or bonfires.

Mole

The mole is well adapted for its life underground with short black velvety fur, no external ears, small hidden eyes and large spade-like feet. Although seldom seen itself, prominent molehills, formed from soil excavated from its tunnel system, are a common and often unwelcome sight. Moles are particularly likely to invade gardens during the summer when the young are dispersing and seem to favour, in particular, the well watered lawn.

Common Shrew and Pygmy Shrew

These small creatures can be distinguished from mice by their very much more pointed snouts. The common shrew is 50-75mm (2-3inches) long in the head and body and weighs up to 14 gm (_ ounce). It has dark brown fur on its back with lighter flanks and underside. The pygmy shrew is only 35-50mm (1_ to 2 inches) long and with a weight of only 6 gm (_ounce) is one of our two smallest mammals (along with the harvest mouse). It can be distinguished from the common shrew by its lighter colouration and much longer tail.

Common shrew

Both species are present in the Hanneys and it is likely that both are abundant; however, it is the common shrew which is most often seen, albeit dead. Bodies are often to be found lying on a path or track where the animals have died, perhaps through disease or food shortage or, maybe, because after a year or so of life their teeth have worn out and they are unable to feed. Unlike other small mammals which, once dead, are quickly scavenged, shrews have a scent gland on each flank, which makes them distasteful to predators hence bodies are more often found.

Bats

Of the fifteen or so species of bats occurring in Britain only two are known definitely to occur in the Hanneys. The pipistrelle is a small bat only 35-45mm (1_-2 inches) long and with wingspan of up to 250mm (10 inches). It is common throughout Britain and frequently roosts in houses (and churches) and is probably the bat most often seen hawking for insects around lighted windows and security lights. Often the only sign of a roost is the presence underneath of small dry powdery droppings full of insect

fragments. The brown long-eared bat is slightly larger, 37-48 mm long with a wingspan of up to 285mm. It roosts in buildings and trees but prefers to forage in lightly wooded areas.

Other species which are known to occur nearby and which probably forage over the Hanneys are noctule, whiskered and Daubenton's bats.

Information provided by Dave Endecott, Oxfordshire Bat Group.

Rabbit

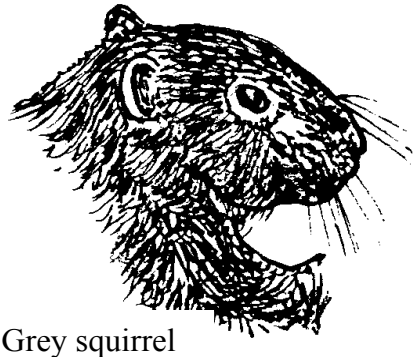
The rabbit is not a native British mammal having been introduced by the Normans as a source of fur and meat but, over the centuries, it has become a common sight in the British countryside. The rabbit is smaller than the brown hare, grey brown rather than red-brown in colour and without the black tips to the ears. It lives in large social groups in a system of burrows and, while mainly nocturnal, it is often active during daylight, particularly in the early morning and evening. Where it occurs in large numbers the rabbit can be a serious agricultural pest, especially when it grazes arable crops. Rabbits are often a problem in gardens in the Hanneys but can easily be excluded with rabbit-proof netting. In the 1950s rabbit numbers were decimated by the flea borne disease myxomatosis. Although outbreaks still frequently occur, rabbit populations have recovered with many individuals now being immune.

Brown Hare

Unlike the rabbit, the hare is largely solitary and lives entirely above ground. Whilst the rabbit evades predators by retreating to its burrow, the hare relies on its enormous speed. The young, known as leverets, are born fully furred with open eyes, unlike young rabbits which are born blind and naked. Hares occur throughout the Hanneys and they are often seen during daylight.

Grey Squirrel

Introduced from North America the grey squirrel has spread throughout mainland England and Wales. Because there is little woodland, its primary habitat, in the Hanneys it does not occur in large numbers but it is present in hedgerows and gardens. It will visit bird feeders and is often able to puzzle out how to overcome obstructions in order to reach them. It



Grey squirrel

has also been known to damage thatched roofs locally.

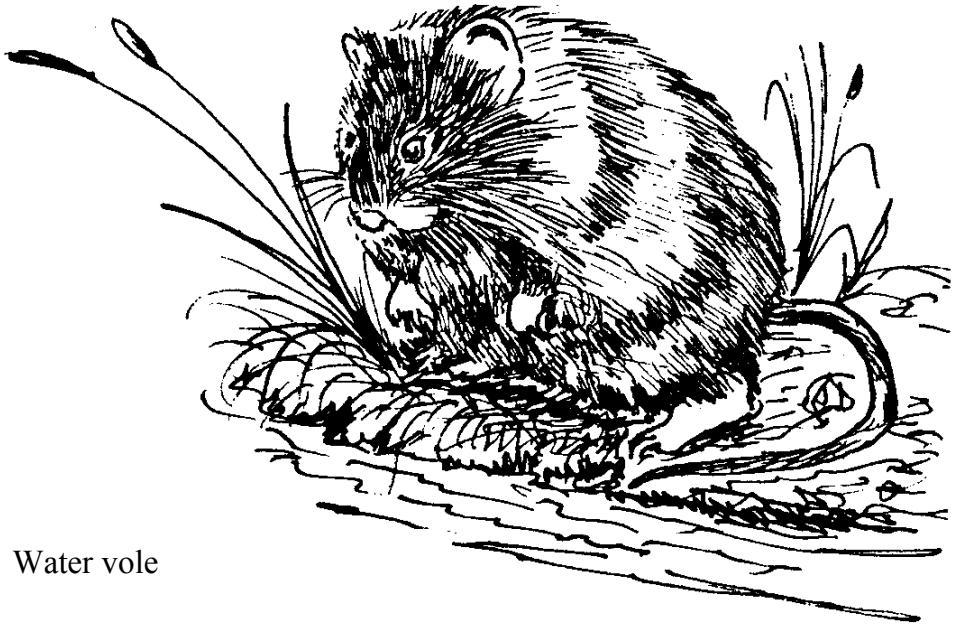
Voles

Voles are small rodents which, compared with mice, have a blunter nose, shaggier coat and shorter legs and tail. Three species are present.

The **short-tailed field vole** is greyish brown in colour with ears which only just protrude from its fur; it is larger than the bank vole but has a shorter tail. It lives in rough uncut un-grazed grassland such as in the Community Woodland, where it makes a system of runways at ground level. It tends to be more active in daytime than other small mammals, particularly in the winter months so it has to contend with diurnal predators like the kestrel and short-eared owl.

In contrast the smaller **bank vole** lives mostly in hedgerows, woodland and bramble thickets. It is red-brown in colour and has rather more prominent ears, and is an agile climber; although it is active both by day and night it is rarely seen.

As its name suggests, the **water vole** is to be found alongside water. Although called "Ratty" in "The Wind in the Willows" and similar to the common rat in size, it has darker fur, a shorter, rounder face and smaller eyes. The water vole burrows into stream banks and grazes waterside vegetation and grasses, often creating "lawns" around burrow entrances. Since the mid-1980s the British water vole population has declined

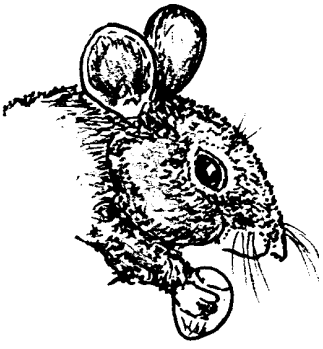


Water vole

drastically so we are fortunate that we still have water voles present in the Hanneys, for example they are occasionally to be seen in daytime between the iron bridge and Lower Mill.

Wood Mouse

The wood mouse or field mouse is found in hedges, woods and fields including the very middle of large arable fields and is also a common inhabitant of Hanney gardens. It regularly enters houses, and lives in the loft space, probably using shrubs and climbers on the wall. The amount of noise it can make as it moves around above the ceiling can suggest the presence of a much larger visitor. In fact it is only about 90mm (4 inches) long in the head and body, slightly larger than the house mouse. It can be distinguished from the latter by the yellow-brown fur on its back and grey-white underside, whereas the house mouse is grey-brown on the back with only a slightly lighter underside. Wood mice are noted for their food hoarding behaviour and it is common to find a pile of bird seed or other food covered by a few leaves or scraps of paper in a forgotten corner of the shed or garage.



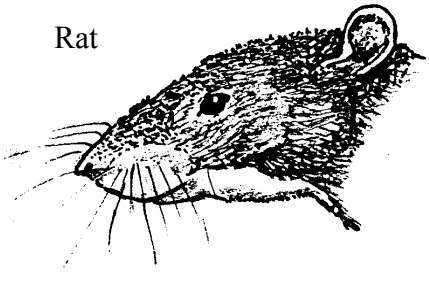
House Mouse

The house mouse is regarded as a non-native species although it has been present in Britain since the Iron Age. Whilst it is a domestic pest it is also capable of living outdoors in a variety of habitats. When it enters houses it will travel all over, using wall and floor cavities and pipe runs but is particularly to be found in rooms where food is present. In addition to the health hazard it presents and the unpleasant, lingering stale smell it leaves it can also cause problems by stripping electrical insulation.

Common Rat

Despite being a common and widespread species the common rat is a relative newcomer to Britain having arrived during the eighteenth century, replacing the black or ship rat which had been here since Roman times. The rat can be found in fields and hedgerows but is also common around farm buildings and houses where it is attracted by any

Rat



accessible food e.g. compost heaps and bird food.

Fox

Although the fox is seldom seen in and around the Hanneys it is certainly present and has bred within 200 metres of habitation. Fox presence is more often revealed by a strong musty smell, by footprints which are not dissimilar to those of a dog, by droppings and by hair caught on barbed wire. Although thought of as the archetypal predator, and a large part of the diet does consist of rabbits mice and voles, the fox will also feed on a wide range of invertebrates and on fruit such as blackberries and fallen apples.

Stoat and Weasel

The stoat and the weasel both have a long sinuous body carried on short legs, the stoat is much larger measuring 240-310mm (9-12_inches) and weighing up to 310 gm (11oz) compared to 165-230 mm(6_ -9 inches) and up to 140gm (5oz) for the weasel. However, in both species the male is much larger than the female so that a large male weasel is similar in size to a female stoat. Both are reddish brown in colour with a creamy white underside but the stoat has a black tip to the tail whereas the weasel does not. It is unusual to get a good view of either species as they are normally only glimpsed briefly as they dash across a road or gateway. Both species are present in the Hanneys and may come close to habitation, e.g. a weasel has been seen from the iron bridge in East Hanney.

The weasel hunts mainly small rodents but will also take birds and their eggs and young rabbits. Stoats also take small rodents and birds but are capable of tackling full sized rabbits, which are killed by a bite to the back of the neck.

Badger

Badgers are present in small numbers in both parishes and road kills occasionally occur, mainly on the A338. Badgers live in social groups of, normally, up to about ten individuals and each group has in its territory one or more setts as the tunnel systems are called. There are known to be at least 3 setts in the Hanneys. Whilst badgers will eat a wide variety of plant and animal food, the main item in their diet is earthworms.

Deer

Two species of deer are present, roe and muntjac. The larger roe is often to be seen in the quieter parts of both parishes either as solitary individuals or in small groups. Closer to the villages they are less likely to be seen

although up to four have been seen in the Community Woodland. Adult roe stand 60-70cm (2-2_ ft) at the shoulder and can weigh up to 28kg (60 lb), the males being larger than the females. In summer the coat is a rich reddish brown changing to a more grey-brown in winter. The adult males have short, up to 30cm (1ft), antlers from March to October.

The introduced muntjac deer is much smaller, only up to 50 cm (20 inches) at the shoulder and weighing up to 15 kg (33 lb) and again males are larger than females. The coat is also a red brown on the back in summer turning more grey in winter. Adult males have short, 10cm (3inch), antlers from August through till April or May. Muntjac are much more difficult to spot than roe as they are solitary and tend to skulk in the undergrowth for much of the time, however they have been seen in Hanney gardens.

Three other species may be present but have not been recorded:

Harvest Mouse
The harvest mouse is our smallest rodent weighing only 6 gm (_ ounce) when adult. In winter it lives among the bases of grass tussocks but in summer it makes a round nest, about the size of a tennis ball, of shredded leaves amongst the stems of grasses and cereals. The presence of such nests is a good way to confirm the presence of this species and they are most easily found when the grass has died back in winter.

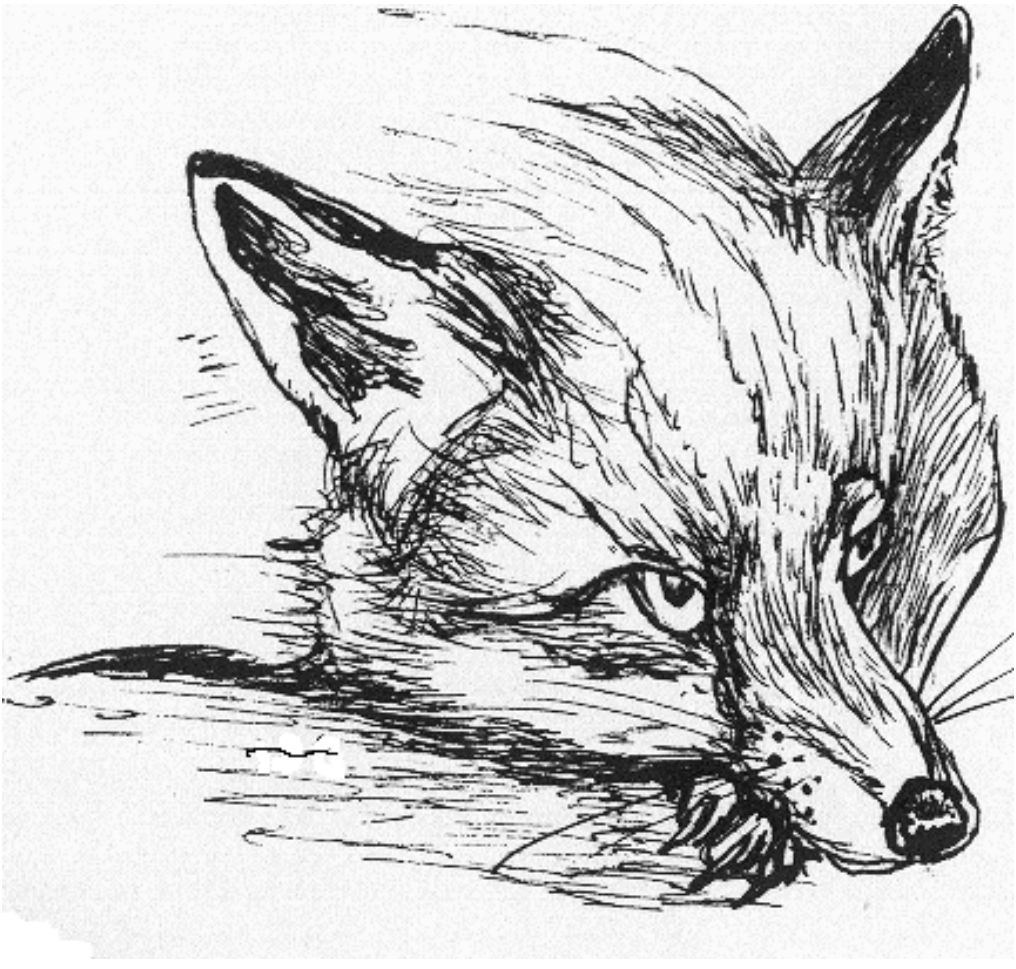
Water Shrew
The water shrew is mainly found on the banks of streams but it is also found in ponds and ditches. It is much larger than the common shrew with a head and body length of 70-97 mm (2_-3_ inches). The fur on the back is black in colour and the underside is silvery grey. A fringe of stiff hairs on the tail and feet probably help the water shrew to swim. It digs a burrow system on stream banks with an entrance above water level which is usually a tight fit so as to squeegee surplus water from the coat.

North American Mink
The North American mink was originally imported to Britain from 1929 and was bred on fur farms. However, as a result of escapes and releases it has become established in the wild throughout most of mainland Britain. It is similar in shape to the stoat but is rather larger with big males measuring around 400 mm (16 inches). Typically, mink are very dark brown, almost black, in colour with a white chin and throat; however, occasional individuals of other colours are seen, genetic throwbacks to their fur farm origins. Mink are usually found close to water but may be found some

distance away. Although mink may prey on a wide range of birds and mammals, including sometimes poultry and wildfowl, as mentioned above they are believed to be one factor in the decline of the water vole.

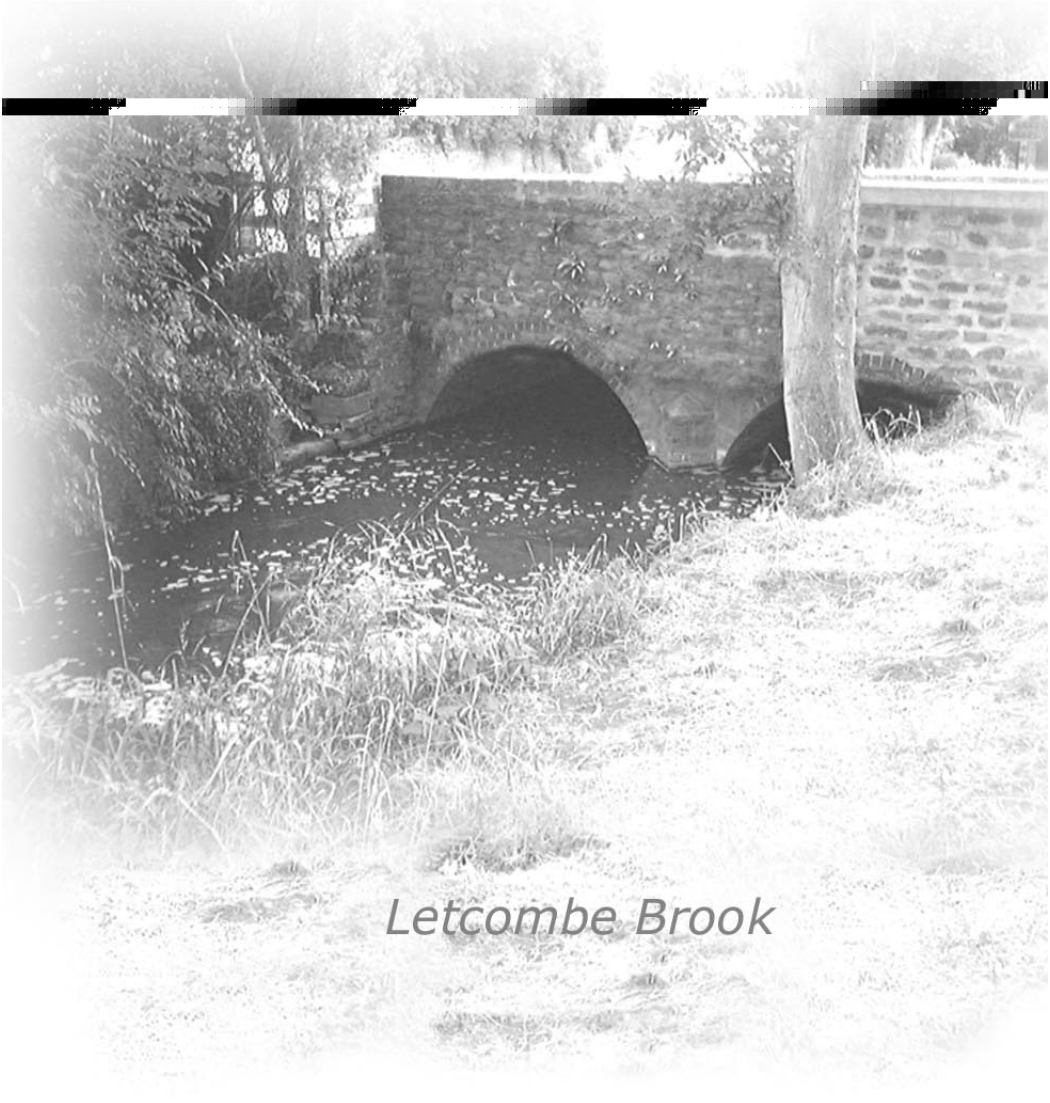
Further reading

Corbet G.B.and Harris, S. (eds) (1995) The Handbook of British Mammals, Blackwell



HANNEY WATERWAYS

Frank Poller

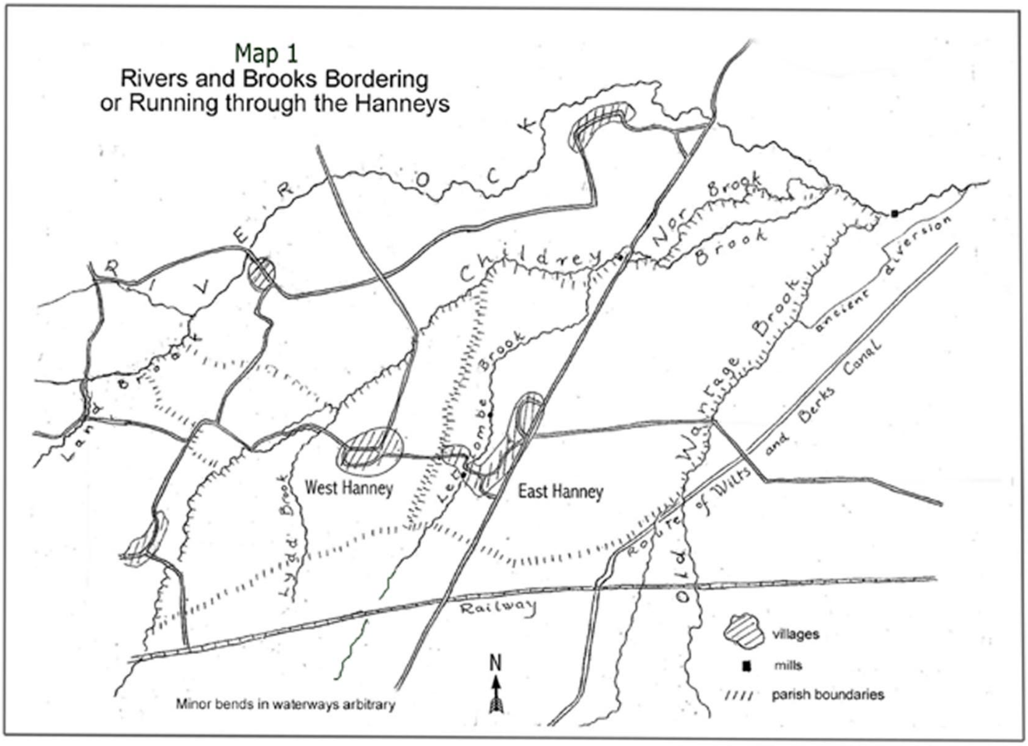


Beneath these roads old trackways lie.
Beneath the trackways lies the marsh.
The huddled hamlets of the Vale
Once knew the world as wet and harsh.

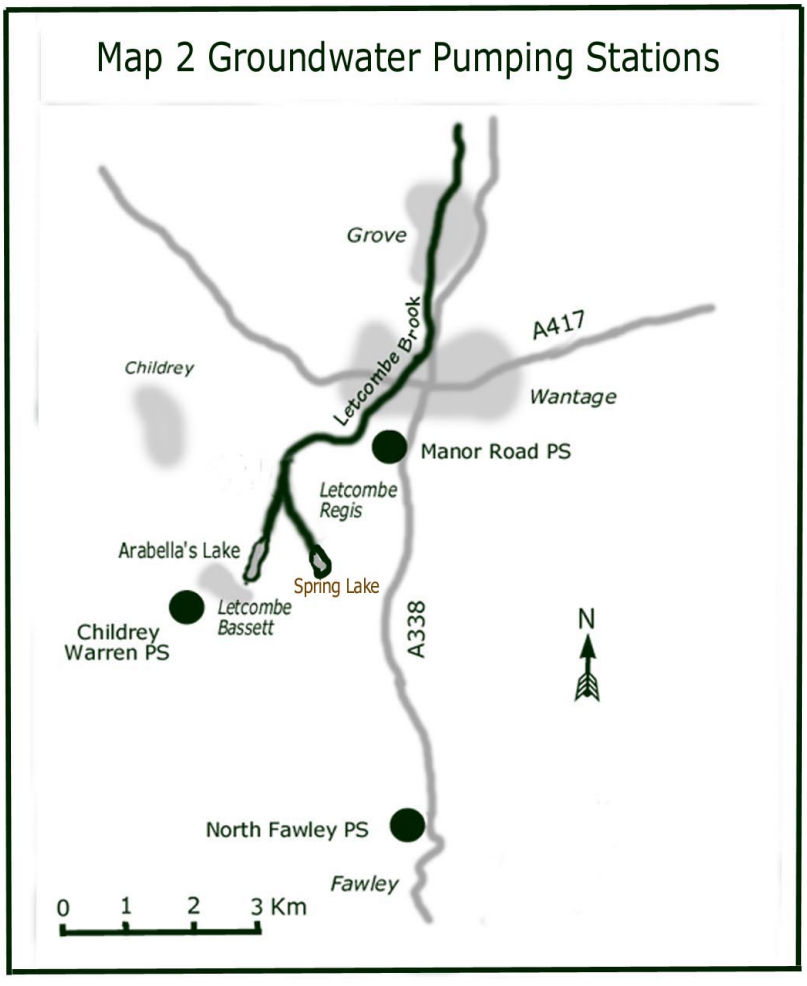
Brook levels past and present

The Letcombe and Childrey Brooks, Hanney's main waterways (see map 1), start as springs from the lower chalk and their mingled waters join the Ock. Across the Vale they are running only a few feet above the clay bed of the lake that formed at the end of the Ice Age. As R. L. Anderson[1], the Charney Bassett author put it, "the marsh remains only just under the skin of the land". Coombes on the downs are said to be signs that the rivers ran more fully in remote times. The Letcombe Brook has lost volume within the lifetime of older residents. One sign of this is the bathing place in use in the early 1900's opposite Snuggs Lane, once called Bath Lane, where boys swam and dived. It was also the site once for baptismal rites of the evangelical sect sometimes called “Dippers”, who still assemble in West Hanney annually, though other sites have been used. One was described by Eleanor Hayden[2] in Islands of the Vale published in 1908. "Down the main street runs a tiny, sparkling stream that expands at one spot into a pond where on hot summer afternoons the cows stand in the shade and whisk the flies from their flanks, and where on “Dip Sunday” converts to a particular sect in the village are immersed amid the unholy glee of youthful professors of opposition creeds".

Letcombe Brook was identified in the early 1990's as a “low flow river”. Thames Water has two pumping stations affecting the brook, one at Childrey Warren, one at Manor Road, Wantage (see map 2). According to an Environmental Agency Publication 35% of the water normally available to the brook was being abstracted in 1994. The Childrey Warren pumping station has been functioning since 1935, that at Manor Road since 1900. Since 1993/4 water has been piped to Arabella's Lake and Spring Lake (the brooks' twin, spring-fed sources) from North Fawley pumping station. As this has been considered successful in alleviating low flow in the brook, Thames Water has seen no need to reduce its licensed abstraction rate fixed at an average daily basis, taken over the year, from the Childrey Warren and Wantage pumping stations together as 7.7 megalitres.


Map 1
Rivers and Brooks Bordering
or Running through the Hanneys
RIVER OCK
Childrey
Nor Brook
Brook
Land Brook
West Hanney
East Hanney
Letcombe Brook
Lydd Brook
Wantage Brook
ancient diversion
Wilts and Berks Canal
Old Route of Wilts
Old
Railway
N
villages
mills
parish boundaries
Minor bends in waterways arbitrary

The Childrey and Letcombe Brooks respond quickly to heavy rainfall because they drop quickly, five metres per kilometre from source to Vale. Geographers term them "young" rivers (because near their source). Better post-war, grant-assisted, drainage has its effect too. More frequent heavy showers in recent years instead of steady rainfall have also increased the brooks' responsiveness. Alan Stoyel, owner of Venn Mill, was anxious about exceptionally low levels about five years ago prompting him to wonder if excessive borehole extraction was to blame. Reasonable flow



has been restored but he observes that variations in level no longer have the rhythmic seasonal predictability they had in the mid 1970's: high in winter, lower in summer. Levels in the Letcombe Brook are influenced by the hard surfaces of building development at Wantage and Grove and in the Childrey Brook by Challow housing causing a quick "run-off" after rain. Another cause of change in level of the Letcombe Brook is the sluice operation at Dandridge's Mill. "Pud" Farmer has controlled this for forty

years. You need to stand where he stands cranking the iron wheel that lifts the four foot, heavy sluice gate to realise the dramatic power of water as it pours both round the escape channel and through the mill.

Course changes

Letcombe and Childrey Brooks follow more or less their ancient courses, though 10th century Saxon charters reveal that Nor Brook was then the main course of the Childrey Brook. Another alteration is the filling in of the watercourse that ran from the Childrey Brook to the main road just south of Venn Mill. It used to function as a by-pass channel. This is the line of the parish boundary and most likely the original course of the brook at this point. Railings mark where it met the road. The water course still functions east of the road, carrying water that runs down the road from the Hanney direction. There came a time (date unknown) when the mill no longer needed the sluice-operated by-pass. Arrangements for handling surface water have been progressively improved at the back of the mill, the most recent being in the 1960's and in 1976 when Alan Stoyel purchased the mill. More conjectural but worth mentioning is his feeling that the Letcombe Brook once joined the Childrey Brook closer to the mill. Certainly its present "T junction" ending is curiously neat.

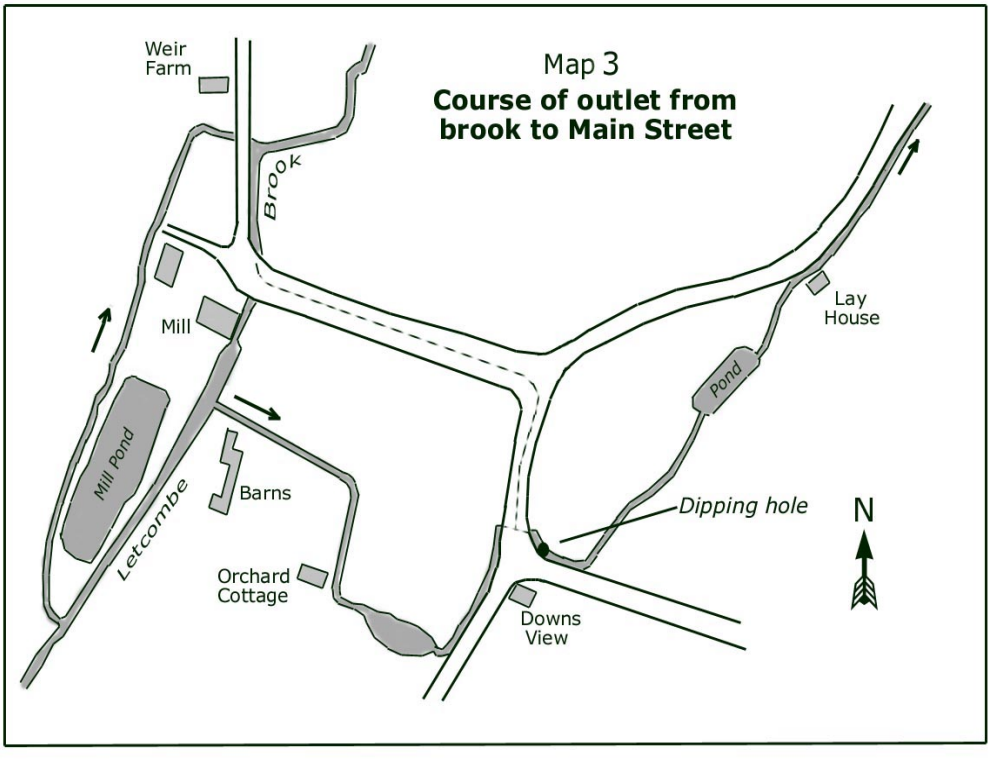
Part of the "old" Wantage Brook on the Eastern boundary of East Hanney was diverted in Saxon, possibly earlier times (see map 1)

Brook Names

Land Brook in the west (see map 1) means boundary brook. Lydd Brook means loud brook. It makes no noise now but perhaps it flowed more boisterously in earlier times. Childrey Brook means Cilla's stream, "ey" not always signifying island. Cilla is a personal Saxon name. Ock is from a pre-Saxon name for salmon. In medieval times Charney Manor supplied fish, among other foodstuff, to Abingdon Abbey. Letcombe Brook could mean ledge in the valley, but "Let" is considered obscure. It was once called Waneting broc in Saxon times, a name confusingly given also to the brook on East Hanney's eastern boundary but prefixed "ealdan" meaning old. Margaret Gelling[3], authority on English place names, suggests that the name was later given to what we now call Letcombe Brook because it was seen "to have a better claim". I don't know when it was first called Letcombe Brook. "Waneting" means waning so it wasn't, in Saxon times, a reliable flow.

Dipholes and Ditches

Until the mid-1930's the Letcombe Brook was the sole source of water for most dwellings in East Hanney apart from any collected rainwater. It was let out at two sources (called "law-holes" at the turn of the 19th century) on the upstream side of the two mills. The Dandridge Mill outlet still runs for much of the original course. The orchard it first enters once contained a series of parallel ditches running at right angles from the brook to a willow bed. To follow the erratic course of the waterway through Summertown see map 3. Though most of the water has recently been piped under the road in Summertown back towards the mill, some is sent on its historic course along the full length of Main Street. There was once a ditch on the opposite side too. The existing ditch is open in several places, the water running clearly and briskly. Along its length there were at least a dozen dipping holes precisely located for me by Doris Barrow. (Piped water first came from a borehole behind the school where chickens are now kept. Many will remember the tall "windmill" that pumped the water into the high tank from 1934. Mains supply, from a Childrey borehole, didn't arrive until about 1950). Doris remembered, too, someone pouring water from kettle to teapot when a fish dropped out of the spout! When Bob Nobes showed me the dipping hole opposite Downside he daily used as a boy he recalled the buckets of water often contained livestock.



Towards the end of Main Street the water was piped across to a ditch serving Five Ways and White Gates in the Oxford Road before turning alongside Manor Farm to join the outflow from the other sluice. The Lower Mill watercourse came down the back of Snuggs Lane dwellings and St James the Less and was piped under the Green. There were other dipping holes in this area located for me by Ted Carter who kindly walked me round the route the water ran. Of the three last stretches of the channel that returned the combined "law-hole" outflows to the brook (see map 4), two were dry when I looked recently and water in the last was but the "back-flow" from the brook. (It has been conjectured that a mill stood at the junction of the brook and diverted "law-hole" water. At the southern end of the brook where it enters East Hanney is an overgrown area some call The Wilderness. This almost certainly was a mill site). In more recent times it is likely that water at the northern end of the village has been led more and more to the main road and down towards Venn Mill.

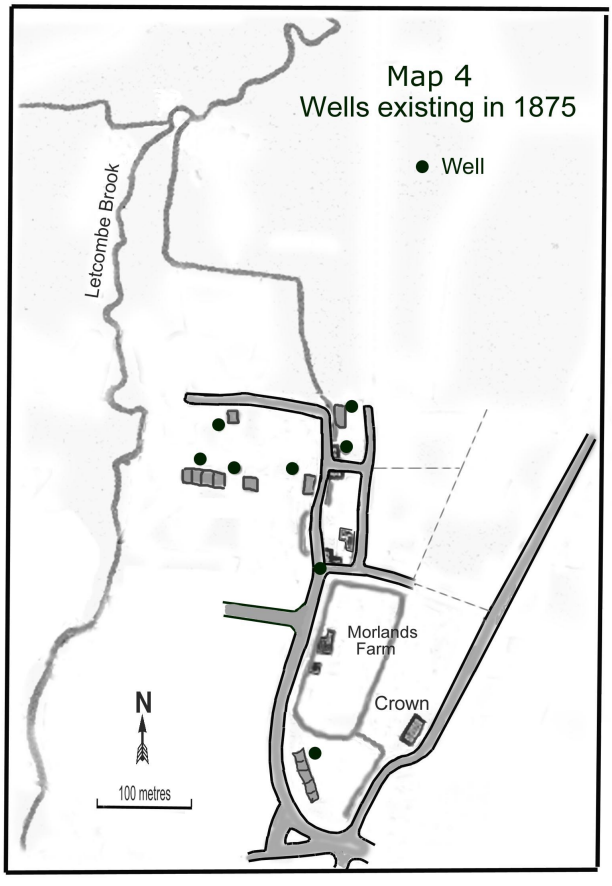
The maintenance of the ditches that carried East Hanney's water was a regular concern. Roadmen attended to hedges and verges and roadside ditches, Violet Gillett remembers her "Grampy", William Tarry, setting off on his daily labour with his bottle of cold tea. Ralph Lamble, whose stretch was from the Green to Gallows Bridge, was one of the last of these valued workmen. Before their time a number of Parish Council minutes refer to blocked law-holes and the unsatisfactory state of ditches. Requests to the Wantage R. D. C. for action were rarely of use, the onus always put by it on the landowners whose property lay adjacent to the ditches.

J. R. Holmes had a fierce dispute in 1915 over his right to keep the water flowing efficiently as he saw it alongside North End Cottage, one of his properties. When the surveyor and his men came to remove the concrete base that the R. D. C. considered an obstruction, they found Holmes standing on guard in his ditch. In his own words. "I forbade any trespass . . . . when one man got in I told him to get out and as he did not . . . . I suited the action to the words and put him out. He got in again and I bundled him out a second time". The men departed and only after having consulted with the police did Holmes succumb.

Donald McDougall, an evacuee billeted in East Hanney, having fallen in a Main Street ditch was told by Mr. Lyford of Tamarisk Cottage where the boy lived, that this meant that he would never leave Hanney. Similar tales were told in other villages. Donald McDougall now lives in Australia! His privately printed memoirs contain some lively descriptions of his diphole fishing experiences.

Wells

West Hanney hasn't within living memory had any domestic dependence on brook water running via ditches. Villagers there used wells supplemented,



no doubt, by whatever rainwater would be collected from rooftops. A distribution map of existing wells (two intriguingly quite close together at Aldworths) would make an interesting project. A weir removed from the Ock close to the back of Lyford Manor farmhouse resulted in the well in the front courtyard that supplied water for house and dairy drying up completely so brooks and wells can have a direct connection. The weir had to be rebuilt. Carleen Roseff's well at the end of Halls Lane may have depended directly on the brook too but most wells were presumably supplied by water at the clay bed level.

Though West Hanney seemed better supplied than East Hanney for wells within living memory, map 4 shows an interesting generous provision in existence in 1875 in East Hanney. Water being so near the surface, well

digging would have been a simple matter. Doris Barrow remembers watching her father digging a well on his allotment.

Floods

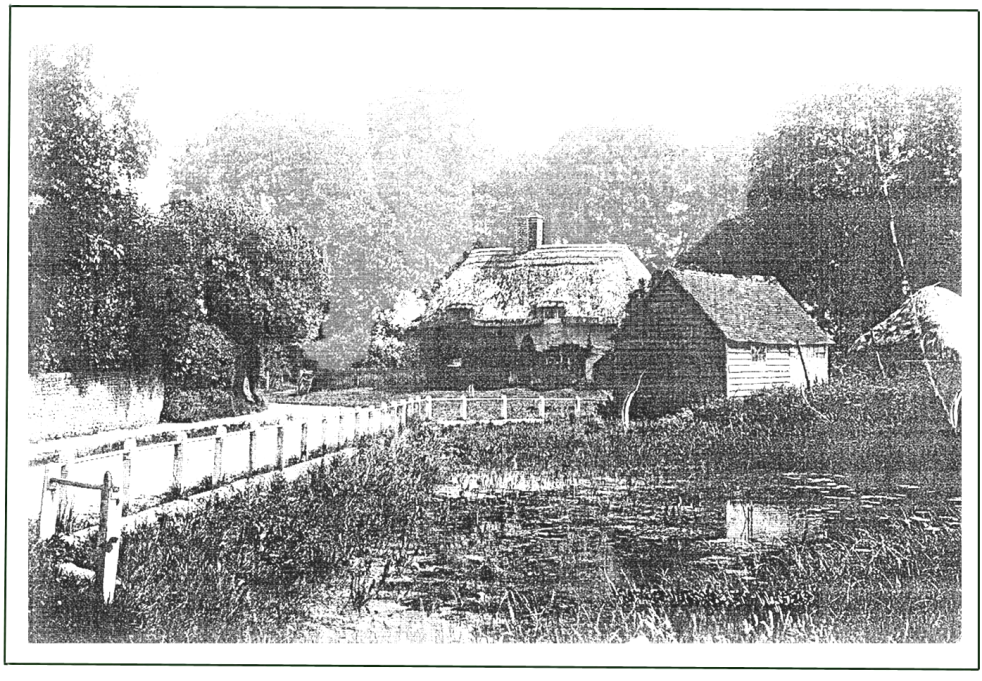
Childrey Brook's use was for drainage, not domestic supply from law-holes. The main likely historic drainage line was past the end of The Meads northwards. Another ditch runs down Winter Lane to Gallows Bridge and some water drains westwards to the brook though the fall is negligible. The basic drainage problem is the lengthy gradual descent northwards. Recently Thames Conservancy altered the height of Gallows Bridge as it had been holding up the water. Flooding at the back of The Plough has diminished but flooding remains a problem in some areas. The holding up of water lower down on the Thames also has its effects on tributary levels. Nigel Eady observes that earlier floods used to "hang about more". West Hanney's Parish Council minutes in the 1960's and 70's show its Main Street as prone to flooding as East Hanney's Main Street, the problem in West Hanney more desperate through the threat of cess-pit contamination, though East Hanney wasn't free from this hazard. A soil survey of the eastern part of the Vale carried out by the University of Reading[4] in 1934 points out that "Drainage is very variable in the Vale, small alterations in level having a magnified importance".

Allotments used to flood occasionally, allotment holders being financially compensated. Flooding at the crossroads end of East Hanney has always caused problems. Work on the latest scheme to alleviate the problem is to start later this year. Flooding can be beneficial, however. Robert Hodgson informed me that fields at the end of Landmead Track used to be flooded deliberately to provide for an extra crop. The Letcombe Brook used to be dammed in order to flood Weir Farm's fields and an old outflow at Venn Mill was piped under the road for flooding the fields.

Ponds

Apart from a pond at Botney Meadows Farm that may once have been fed from Childrey Brook, West Hanney's ponds were independent of the Brook as far as I am aware. Doris Barrow can recall seven ponds in West Hanney. The only ones that usually get mentioned are one at North Green and Headings Pond. The latter was named after William Heading, a nineteenth century farmer. The name plate on the electricity sub-station on the site of Headings pond shows "Eading" and the post card reproduction bore the name "Eddins" both of which are corruptions. This large pond was situated opposite Aldworths where the Denchworth path begins. Doris Barrow remembers Farmer Dormer's big horses being washed there at noon every

Saturday and a time when she and her cousin went fishing with string tied to sticks and pins for hooks and an Oxo tin of worms. Unfortunately the tin drifted away and her playmate fell in trying to reach it. There are others I am told who fell in at various times. Postcard pictures of the pond look picturesque but the water became foul and it was filled and grassed over in the early 1970's. It had been used as a rubbish disposal site since the late 1950's. Its use as a stand-by in case of fires was deemed redundant as early as 1950 as high pressure hydrants were available. After a further protracted



Heading's Pond, Late 1920's (postcard reproduction)

period of disturbance owing to drainage and other problems when it was once more used as a convenient dumping ground, it was finally cleared and seeded again prior to tree planting in 1976.

A sharp bend beyond Botney Meadows Farm, known as Sheepdip and Sheepwash Bend, may have held a pond but more likely an enlargement of the brook. Its use for sheep dipping is beyond living memory.

Ponds along East Hanney's Main Street were brook fed. Lay House's pond is marked "Fish Pond" on an 1834 estate map, a reminder of the reputed medieval fish ponds on the opposite side of Main Street, an area fed more conveniently from the brook. There was a large pond by the mission chapel

and another pond at Lower Manor. Clive Spinage tells me that when he was a boy one end of the L-shaped pond by the chapel, like the corner of a moat, was called "The Ovens", a name of unknown origin. The pond at Manor Farm on the Green has a story connected to it that Cromwell's horses were watered there! Ashfield Lane's one or two ponds were formed, I am told, to impound potential flood water temporarily which supports William Davies's observation that the filling of the chapel pond caused flooding in Main Street. Of all these ponds only that alongside Lay House behind the "Lakeside" property remains. The fine large ornamental "lake" at Orchard Cottage, Summertown is a modern creation.

Environmental Agency

The Environmental Agency is a national body that has, since 1995, been responsible for the maintenance and improvement of rivers. Their "Middle Thames Fact File" gives an assessment of what they call "General Quality" of the water in rivers. Childrey Brook is given B (good) for its whole length; Letcombe Brook a B from its source to Wantage, A (very good) through Wantage and C (fairly good) from Wantage to its meeting with Childrey Brook. Thames Water is allowed to discharge from the Wantage Sewage Works a maximum of 18750 cubic metres of sewage effluent a day into the brook. There are seasonal variations but the average flow is about 7000 cubic metres a day. There are two daily discharges: 8 am and 7 pm. These discharges are not the cause of the decline in water quality downstream from Wantage, according to Thames Water. The consent they have from the Environmental Agency to discharge at a given flow and quality is calculated to ensure water quality doesn't decline downstream. They point out that the Environmental Agency's monitoring programme has produced no failed samples in the last twelve months.

Amenity Value

There is no public path along the Childrey Brook within the parishes but two exist along parts of the Letcombe Brook. One is the cared for, much-appreciated path from the iron foot-bridge down to Lower Mill not far from which a new seat has been thoughtfully placed. This path continues its close company with the brook alongside Philberd's Manor wall. The other, longer, much less used path, runs south alongside the brook from Weir Farm to The Wilderness which it skirts before rejoining the brook just before the bridge that has been called Hunters Bridge.

One special amenity, dependant on the brook, is the privilege of the Plough Angling Club who fish in the beautiful, secluded Mill Pond at the back of Dandridge's Mill three times a year, competitively as well as singly

sometimes. Well-visible on the other hand are the boys who fish in the tailwater by the bridge, making a familiar and timeless spectacle. I don't know how successful they are. Some fish escape I am told from the stocked millpond but upstream kingfisher and heron seem only casual visitors.

Acknowledgements
My thanks to Mr. D. Hasler of the Engineering Department of the Vale and to the Environmental Agency, Thames Water and the Ordnance Survey for information, Ann Fewins for the North Wilts Herald account of Holmes's defence of his ditch and all the Hanney residents, both named and unnamed for information and stories. No doubt there are others who might have offered something of interest. If so a note in the Hanney News would be welcome. My special thanks to Vic Lucey who offered to make my maps more presentable and converted my script to print and for supplying the opening illustration.

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2. Hayden, E. (1908) *Islands of the Vale.* p242
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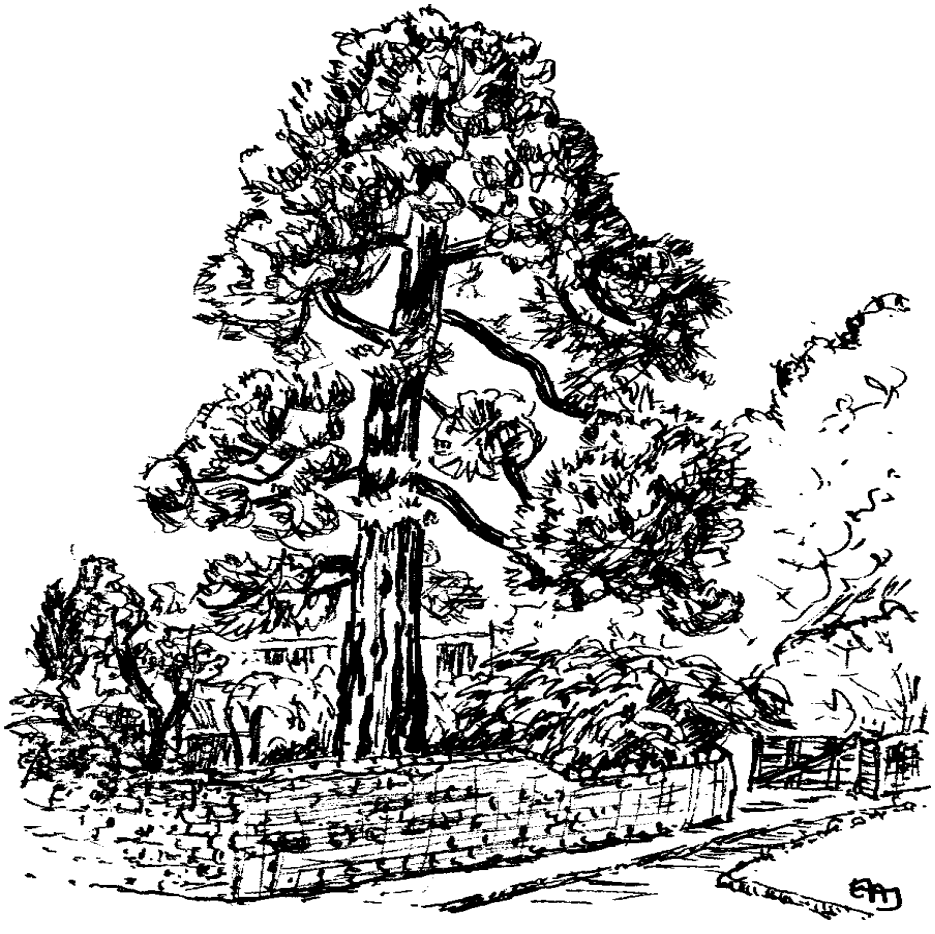
NOTABLE TREES IN HANNEY

Judith M. Hockaday



The Hanneys are well planted with trees, and it would be a huge task to record them all. There are fine plantings particularly of native trees (chestnut, lime, birch, beech, oak and pine), and some of these have been listed, with planting dates, elsewhere.

This list is different: it is a highly selective attempt to record trees in and around the gardens of the Hanneys, which catch the eye of the passer by because they are uncommon, or very beautiful, or old, or large, or some or all of these. Most were recorded by Betty Jones, together with Ted Carter, Jane Christie-Miller, Frank Poller, and others.

We hope this selection will be of interest, and, even more, hope it may lead to an effort to record The Notable Trees of The Hanneys in a more systematic and comprehensive way, perhaps by report to The Hanney News of notable trees we have missed.

The list is alphabetical, by botanical name, and numbered, and each tree position is shown on the map with its number, at the end of the list. Common names are also given.

	Botanical name	Common name	Tree position
1.	*Acer negundo*	Ash-leaved maple, Box elder	Lakeside (& Downside)
2.	*Acer pseudoplatanus*	Sycamore	Churchyard, West Hanney
3.	*Aesculus hippocastanum (4)*	Horse chestnut	West Hanney House
4.	*Betula pendula*	Silver birch	Waylands
5.	*Betula pendula 'Dalecarlica'*	Swedish birch	Sunningwell
6.	*Betula pendula 'Youngii'*	Weeping birch	Borley Bank
7.	*Betula utilis var. jacquemontii*	Himalayan birch	Sunningwell
8.	*Carpinus betulis 'Fastigiata' (3)*	Hornbeam	Borley Bank
9.	*Catalpa bignonioides*	Indian bean tree	Varlins
10.	*Cedrus f. glauca*	Blue Atlas cedar	Halfacre
11.	*Cercis siliquastrum*	Judas tree	The Stables
12.	*Cornus mas*	Cornelian cherry	The Stables
13.	*Cydonia oblonga*	Common quince	Westbrook House

14.	*Davidia involucrata*	Pocket handkerchief tree, Dove tree, Ghost tree	Meadow View
15.	*Fagus sylvatica f. pupurea*	Copper beech	The Green, West Hanney
16.	*Fraxinus ornus*	Manna ash	Philberds
17.	*Ginkgo biloba*	Maidenhair tree	Varlins
18.	*Gleditsia triacanthos 'Sunburst'*	Honey locust	Westbrook House (& Sunningwell)
19.	*Juglans nigra*	Black walnut	The Mulberries
20.	*Juglans regia*	Common walnut	Half Acre Cottage (& Kings Farm Cottages, The Grange, Lakeside, etc)
21.	*Liquidambar styraciflua*	Sweet gum	Borley Bank (& Lay Cottage)
22.	*Morus nigra*	Black mulberry	The Mulberries (& Morus House)
23.	*Paulownia fargesii*	Foxglove tree	Varlins (& Hale Cottage, Ashbrook House, etc.)
24.	*Phillyrea latifolia f. spinosa (probable)*		The Old Vicarage
25.	*Pinus sylvestris (4)*	Scots pine	Waylands
26.	*Populus alba (4)*	White poplar, Abele	Philberds
27.	*Populus nigra*	Black poplar	Lydbrook Farm
28.	*Populus simonii Fastigiata* (probable)	Balsam poplar	Castle Acre
29.	*Robinia pseudoacacia*	False acacia, Black locust	Lakeside
30.	*Robinia pseudoacacia 'Frisia'*		Westholme
31.	*Salix babylonica*	Weeping willow	Mill Orchard
32.	*Salix babylonica var. pekinensis 'Tortuosa'*	Dragon's claw willow	Rowans
33.	*Sequoiadendron giganteum*	Giant Redwood, Wellingtonia	Robey House (illustrated)
34.	*Sorbus aria*	Whitebeam	Waylands
35.	*Sorbus commixta*	Rowan	The Mulberries
36.	*Taxus baccata 'Fastigiata'*	Florence Court or Irish Yew (2)	Robey House

37.	*Ulmus glabra 'Camperdownii'*	Camperdown elm	The Grange
38.	*Ulmus procera*	English elm, truncated, and planted with a conifer	The Green, East Hanney
39.	*Zelkova serrata*	Japanese Zelkova	The Grange

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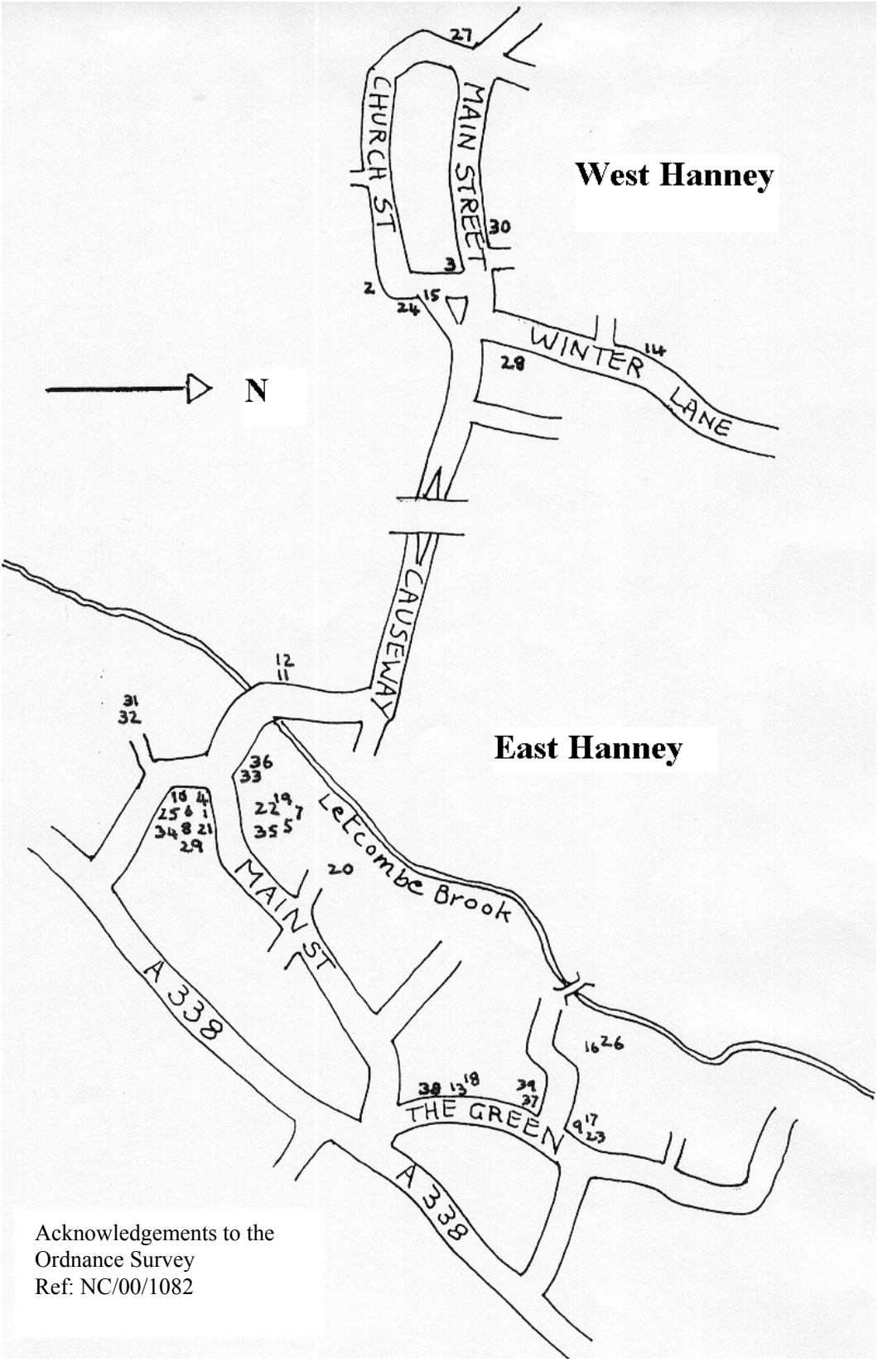
20 Widely planted in the extensive orchards of Hanney (see "Late Victorian Hanney". Hanney History Group Occasional Paper Number 2, p 8).

27 Conservation order. This, Britain's largest native tree had become its rarest until recent efforts at conservation and planting (The Countryman August/September 2000 p 101).

31 This large tree was originally the corner post of a chicken run.

33 This specimen was amongst the first planted in UK.

38 Eleanor Hayden (Islands of the Vale, Smith, Elder & Co. London 1908) described this, the so-called Cross Tree (meaning at the crossroads), as "the trunk of what in its glory was a gigantic elm that could shelter five loaded haywains beneath its spreading branches".



Acknowledgements to the
Ordnance Survey
Ref: NC/00/1082

THE SCHOOL MILLENNIUM GARDEN

Judith Hockaday and Maggie Mellersh

Introduction

The Millennium garden at Hanney School came about by a series of fortunate circumstances. In 1998 the old swimming pool, built with money raised by the PTA was, after twenty years, no longer economically viable. What could be done with the site? The first suggestion (as always) was for a car park: indeed this proposal proceeded so far as to be costed. The cost, fortunately, proved too great. The next suggestion came from a school Parent Governor, who, again by good fortune, was a professional grower of organic produce. Knowing that the children of Hanney had a long past tradition of involvement in farming, and then in gardening, she was eager to introduce them to modern horticultural ideas and techniques, by giving them a garden of their own, in the School. A good omen, when the project started, was finding miniature- child size- garden tools, including forks, hoes, rakes and spades, in an old school shed. Maggie Mellersh's account of how the garden grew follows.

The Garden

In autumn 1998 the decision was made to go ahead with a garden and the children were asked for ideas and designs. Some were rather ambitious, but the Upper Juniors measured and drew up plans. We had seen some living willow structures and we suggested to the children that willow could be incorporated, and mazes, tunnels and shelters were envisaged. Other features planned included grand flower and vegetable beds, trees and seats.

On a very cold Saturday in March 1999 a group of parents, staff and friends met at the school to learn how to weave willow. Matthew Mears from Windrush Willows in Witney had kindly offered his time free of charge, to help us build a "fedge"- a living willow fence/hedge. It was very hard

work, pushing the willow rods 30 – 40 cm into the ground, then weaving them together to form a trellis design. This formed the back boundary of the garden, and it was satisfying to see all the willow take root and sprout leaves throughout the year. It needed pruning twice.

We then amalgamated some of the childrens' modified designs and built six raised beds around a semi-circular lawn area. These were for the children to grow flowers and vegetables in, and were filled with a trailer- load of manure from Weir Farm, and then topsoil donated by parents. One long bed and two corner beds at the back of the garden were for perennials, particularly those which would attract wildlife. An Appeal in the Hanney News brought a mass of cuttings, shrubs, iris tubers, plants and seeds, and the garden suddenly began to take shape.

A Gardening Club was started, for ten to twelve children from the Upper Juniors. The children worked in pairs, sharing a raised bed and deciding themselves what seeds to sow and plants to put in. In 1999 we had a mixture of all sorts of flowers, herbs and vegetables, and the children were particularly keen on edible plants. The staff were presented with lettuce, beetroot, radish and beans amongst other things. The children would have regular tasting sessions, comparing nasturtium flowers and leaves, chives, parsley and other herbs. In the autumn, squash and tomatoes were collected for the Harvest Festival, and lots of leaves were gathered up to make leafmould, before the Club finished for the winter.

We were fortunate to receive a grant from The Mary Jane Memorial Fund, which was set up to encourage environmental projects amongst schools and childrens groups, and we used this to buy some more willow. In March 2000 we built a willow "dome" in the centre of the lawn, and again have been pleased that it all seems to have taken root, although we have had problems keeping the roof tied together. We hope that when it has grown for another season it will be easier to weave it all together.

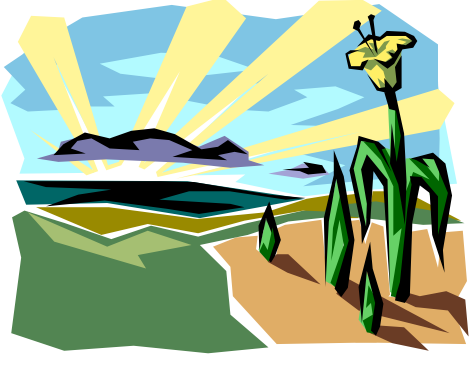
We also entered The Rover Environmental Challenge, run by the car company for schools in Oxfordshire, and were delighted to receive a prize from them, and we were also delighted to receive a Highly Commended Award from the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. There has been a lot of interest in the garden, both locally and further afield. There will be a feature in the Kitchen Garden Magazine later

in 2000, and we were pleased to welcome many visitors during the Hanney Gardens Open Weekend.

The Gardening Club ran again, from Easter 2000 until the summer, and in spite of the difficult season was successful. We had a good crop of potatoes, each child taking home a bag full of new potatoes just before the summer holiday, and also broad beans, runner beans, lettuce, Swiss chard and ornamental gourds. Sadly the tomatoes suffered from blight, and some of the Brassicae were attacked by caterpillars. Marigolds have seeded themselves and provided a splash of colour. The perennials and shrubs have become more established, in particular the Buddleia and lavender, and several lavender bags were made and sold at the Summer Fete.

The garden provides a place for all the school to use for nature studies, and artwork, and during breaktimes as somewhere peaceful to relax. The Willow Dome is particularly popular as a chatting place. The children who come to Gardening Club gain from learning to sow and watch seeds germinate and grow (or not in some cases) and from learning more about where their food comes from. Their delight in being able to eat something which they have grown themselves is something which we hope will stay with them. The garden is managed organically, and so they learn about composting, using natural methods of pest control and working with the seasons and conditions.

There are further plans for the Millennium Garden, when funds and time permit. We would like to have some seating- tree trunks or logs perhaps, and we would also like to provide an area for the children to make some sculptures from natural objects. The school is hoping one day to get some permanent outdoor musical instruments, such as gongs, swinging chimes, xylo bars and voice/listening tubes, and these would go near the new garden. We are hoping to buy a coldframe, to start off seeds without taking up space on the narrow school windowsills. And we want fruit trees and bushes and a wildlife area and a waterfeature and……..who knows?



St. James C. of E. Primary School,
Hanney
October 2000