

# THE STREET DEVELOPMENT OF FENNY STRATFORD

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THE layout of Fenny Stratford consists almost entirely of a gridwork of private street development of post-railway times overlying the Roman road from London to Chester, and the three local roads to Newport Pagnell, Aylesbury and Buckingham.<sup>1</sup> The main part of this article will be concerned with the period after 1838.<sup>2</sup>

First, however, the older roads must be described, for they hold a feature in common which the later streets lack; they were made as a means of communication between settlements in an untamed countryside, not just as frontages to a row of houses. This can be shown particularly clearly in Bletchley Road. Originally this was just a lane running between field hedges. The fields were then turned into streets, and the frontages were built upon, facing the road. There was no order about this; it was just as they became available, and as a result Victorian mansions are found rubbing shoulders with twentieth-century pebble-dash, because they are built in different fields.

Probably the oldest of these roads are those of Roman origin, for although traces of earlier civilization have been found in the area<sup>3</sup> we may be fairly sure that any traces of their beaten tracks have been long covered by the palimpsest of the modern map. These Roman roads have already been covered adequately in *Records of Bucks*. The Watling Street, as is stated there, does not seem to have suffered any deviation at all, though when it was built the land around may have been much more marshy.<sup>5</sup> The Bletchley road route is slightly altered,

<sup>1</sup> There are two other roads connected with the parish—the Water Eaton road from Bletchley to Water Eaton, which, although actually outside the parish, forms part of its boundary, from Buckingham Road to the point where it crosses Cottingham Brook. The other, Rickley Lane, connected with an old road to Winslow and formed part of the boundary with Bletchley and Shenley. The north end of this road, so remarkably straight as evidenced by the present boundary, was destroyed by neglect in the eighteenth century. On page 31 of the Rev. Coles' *Blecheley Diary* he records "Wed. 9th Ap. 1766. Mr. Knapp of Lynford called on me with Mr. Emerson Warre and Chandeler of Shenley; they agreed at last to put it to the arbitration of 6 Neighbouring Gentlemen to determine how our Rickley Road was to be mended, but in 2 or 3 days a Letter came to Mr. Cooke to let the Parish know that Shenley would have nothing to do in it and that the whole should lie on Blecheley. As our Farmers seemed alarmed at the Expence and said that they could do tolerably well without the road by going a Mile about I e'en left it with them."

<sup>2</sup> The year the London and Birmingham Railway was completed.

<sup>3</sup> *Rec. of Bucks.*, Vol. XI, p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI, pp. 103-4.

<sup>5</sup> I am told by Mr. G. K. Tull that brushwood has been found under the road near the former "Wipac" factory.

especially near the railway bridge<sup>6</sup> and at the North-east end, where it joins Aylesbury Street. This is probably due to the preference of later settlers to keep to high ground rather than descend to the banks of the Ouzel, which even now are prone to flooding.

No further development seems to have taken place in the Roman era, and it is probable that it was the Saxons who first used the roads to Sympson and Water Eaton, both of which are mentioned in Domesday Book. Fenny Stratford itself is not mentioned until 1252,<sup>7</sup> although pottery has recently been found in the area datable to the eleventh century. Unlike Stony Stratford, it has never made much use of the Watling Street for building and although it had houses on both sides of the road by 1419<sup>8</sup> at the latest, it was nevertheless Aylesbury Street which became the main thoroughfare and where, until 1926, the weekly market was held. Cross Street, as it was known until about 1865,<sup>9</sup> had all the principal houses, each in its narrow croft, fronting on the street, their neighbours on either side, and a lane at the back. On the east side the crofts were short and the lane was little more than a footpath, known even to the present day as the Jetty. On the other side, where the curtilages were deeper, the lane was of a good width and was called simply the Back Lane.<sup>10</sup> This track linking Watling Street (or High Street, as it is called within the town) with Bletchley Road and Vicarage Road is first shown on Ogelby's map of 1675, although it is much older. In the nineteenth century it was called Stag Street, commemorating the death of a stag on the railway lines where it had leapt to escape the hounds of the Whaddon pack in 1848. The bridge still bears the name, but the street was renamed Victoria Road.<sup>11</sup> in 1886.

All of these roads were, of course, kept in repair by the inhabitants at large. In February 1388<sup>12</sup> the court list presented "that there are many defects in the highway therefore it is ordered that each one holding amend the highway against his house under penalty 12d. and all those who have dung heaps lying in the highway to be a nuisance are warned against the next court under penalty 12d."<sup>13</sup>

There were two exceptions to this obligation of individual responsibility for maintenance. The first occurred when the road was shared between two parishes, i.e. Rickley Lane<sup>14</sup> with Shenley, and Watling Street with Sympson.<sup>15</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> See below.

<sup>7</sup> *Cal. Ch. Rolls*, 1226-57, p. 413.

<sup>8</sup> *Cal. Pat.*, 1422-9, p. 555.

<sup>9</sup> It is called Cross Street in the Bletchley Enclosure Award, 1813, the *Post Office Directory*, 1848, and on the Electoral list for 1868. In *Musgrove and Cravens Directory* of 1853 it is called Aylesbury Street, as also in *Cassons Directory*, 1865, and *Kelly's Directory* from 1864 onwards.

<sup>10</sup> In both the Fenny Stratford Award, 1792, and the Bletchley Award of 1813 it is called Back Lane Road.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Parochial Sanitary Committee, 5th April, 1886. See also the Vestry Book, 29th March, 1887, and *Kelly's Directory* of 1891.

<sup>12</sup> *Rec. of Bucks.*, Vol. XI, p. 292.

<sup>13</sup> In 1871 the surveyor was ordered to prosecute those leaving manure on the roads after 10 a.m.

<sup>14</sup> See above, footnote 1.

<sup>15</sup> In 1710 the indictment against Sympson for not repairing the Watling Street was discharged upon the production of a justices' certificate that the road from Willowhall Ford to the foot of Gossington Hill had been sufficiently repaired. *Bucks. Sess. Recs.*, Vol. 3, page 215. Neither of these two places are now identifiable. The hill to the north of Denbigh Hall has been called Bunch Hill after a highwayman who was gibbeted there in the mid-seventeenth century.

second was where there was a Turnpike trust set up to collect tolls from travellers and repair the road with money thus taken. Here again, there are two examples: the Watling Street and the Sympson-Newport road.

The Watling Street was first turnpiked in 1705<sup>16</sup> as a temporary measure in an attempt to secure some lasting improvement in the road. Like many other temporary measures, it became permanent under successive acts<sup>17</sup> until the growth of the railways in the nineteenth century led to its abandonment. The total benefit to the town during all those years was very slight. The Trustees during the nineteenth century were probably the most active, for besides collecting the money, they did do some levelling of the road in the centre of the town in 1828,<sup>18</sup> and in the following year they widened it by demolishing some houses near the churchyard.<sup>19</sup> Earlier, too, in 1800 they had in an indirect way been forced to improve the southern approach to the town. Prior to this date it had made a dog's leg here towards Belvedere Farm,<sup>20</sup> across the bridge over the Ouzel behind the King's head,<sup>21</sup> and up the Hollow. When the canal came to the town in 1800<sup>22</sup> the old route became impassable and the road had to be straightened on to the old Roman line of road and two new bridges built, both of which have since been replaced.<sup>23</sup>

The Sympson turnpike, although strictly outside the parish, is still within the limits of the town. It seems to have had even less active Trustees, and although its road was described as excellent in 1819,<sup>24</sup> the only reminders of its existence today are the six white iron mileposts between Fenny Stratford and Newport Pagnell. The only other mention known to me occurs in 1868,<sup>25</sup> when the Surveyor of Fenny Stratford was ordered to obtain some agreement with his opposite number at Sympson as to the repair of this road, following the abolition of the Turnpikes.

This, then, was the position in the town up to 1813.<sup>26</sup> The centre of the settlement was in Aylesbury Street and High Street; and a few houses stood scattered around the parish: Denbigh Hall<sup>27</sup> cottages (houses had stood here beneath Richley Wood since the seventeenth century); the outhouses belonging to Waterhall, the mansion built by Browne Willis in 1711 and demolished between 1794<sup>28</sup> and 1805,<sup>29</sup> and Sympson Lodge as it is now known, an

<sup>16</sup> Wyness, *Little Brickhill*, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> 49 Geo. III, 11 Geo. IV, 30-1 Vic., etc.

<sup>18</sup> *Pattersons Roads*, 1828.

<sup>19</sup> Deeds at Lincoln Rec. Off. Consec. 270/3.

<sup>20</sup> Then known as the Woolpack Inn.

<sup>21</sup> This is not an original Roman road, I think, although sufficiently ancient to be used as part of the parish boundary. Possibly when the Romans left and their neglected bridge fell down, the rush of water through the debris made travellers ford the river lower down where the river bed was less scoured.

<sup>22</sup> *Journ. Trans. Hist.*, Vol. 4, pt. 2.

<sup>23</sup> There has been a bridge here over the river at Fenny Stratford in recorded times since 1347. Pontage was granted in May 1383, July 1398 and February 1401. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Lord of the Manor repaired it and it is shown by Belvidere on the Bow Brickhill Award Map in 1791.

<sup>24</sup> J. Hassell, *Journey down the Grand Junction Canal*, p.69.

<sup>25</sup> Parish Vestry Book in care of Bletchley U.D.C.

<sup>26</sup> See Bletchley Award Map.

<sup>27</sup> These were demolished in 1960.

<sup>28</sup> *Universal Directory*.

<sup>29</sup> *Lysons*, Vol. 1, p. 512.

eighteenth-century stone-built house standing on its own in Sympson Lane, the canal cutting it off from the Old Cow pastures behind.

The land of the town was mainly in five persons' hands: Thomas Ager, Lord of the Manor of Caldicot in Bow Brickhill, who held about 100 acres; John Brett who held Denbigh Hall Farm of about 130 acres; P. D. P. Duncombe, the Lord of the Manor, with about 100 acres between the town and the river; the devisees of Thomas Harrison held the lands of the former Waterhall estate totalling nearly 400 acres, and the Rector had received over 140 acres in lieu of tithes, including the remains of Rickley Wood.<sup>30</sup> Farming at this time seems to have been profitable in the town, as is evidenced by the extensive additions made to the buildings of the farms there in the first half of the nineteenth century, and thus none of the above landowners seems to have been interested in providing land for building.<sup>31</sup>

The population was increasing at this time from 469 in 1801 to 635 in 1831,<sup>32</sup> but fortunately during these thirty years two small pieces of land became available for building. First came a close of land in the High Street belonging to Benjamin Dunville, a draper. A Lancastrian school was erected here, then a Wesleyan Chapel in 1813,<sup>33</sup> and these were followed by the houses now numbered 2-22. Round the corner in Victoria Road, two terraces, one of which has since been demolished, and behind the school and chapel five ugly little cottages were squeezed in and called Mount Pleasant.<sup>34</sup> Next it became the turn of Aylesbury Street to be extended. In 1824<sup>35</sup> Philip Constable, a wharfinger at Fenny Stratford and Blisworth, died, leaving among other property a close of land next to the church, and within a year his executors, Messrs. Pickering Phipps and George Osborn, had started to sell it as building plots. By 1834<sup>36</sup> the whole area was built over even more thoroughly than the High Street site. Again large houses were built in front, numbers 66-86 Aylesbury Street, and small cottages behind. These include a small terrace known as Pacey's Yard, which is now part of a garage showroom.

The total effect of all this building was not very great, however, for in 1841 there were still only 227 houses in the town including 54 on the Sympson side of the High Street<sup>37</sup> There were 48 on the south-west side of the High Street, 90 in Cross Street (Aylesbury Street), 10 in Back Lane, 11 at the back of the High Street and 13 others scattered around the parish.<sup>38</sup>

In April 1838 came the event which was to change Fenny Stratford and its neighbour, Bletchley, completely. The London and Birmingham Railway was built through the parish. It was opened at first only as far as Denbigh Hall by the Watling Street. From there passengers joined the coach to Rugby, where the next section of the railway was in operation. The landlord of the Denbigh Hall

<sup>30</sup> Bletchley Award Map.

<sup>31</sup> Some of these landowners held only in tail, e.g., the Duncombe family.

<sup>32</sup> *Comparative Account of Population*, 1831.

<sup>33</sup> Archdeaconal Court Book.

<sup>34</sup> These are shown on the 1-in. O.S. map, sheet 46, 1st edition.

<sup>35</sup> Title Deeds.

<sup>36</sup> 1-in. O.S., sheet 46, 1st edition.

<sup>37</sup> Census returns H.O. 107/59.

<sup>38</sup> H.O. 107/56.

Inn did a roaring trade, but not for very long, for on 24th June the guard on the 9.30 from Euston Grove waved his flag and the train steamed on through Sympton Wood cutting to Birmingham. At first only a few trains went through at the engineers' discretion, but by September it was opened to all.<sup>39</sup> By 1840<sup>40</sup> Denbigh Hall Station had been abandoned and a new station opened in the middle of Fenny Stratford. This was called Bletchley Station because of its proximity to that village's church. In 1846 the line to Bedford was built via Fenny Stratford<sup>41</sup> and in 1848 work was started on the Oxford and Buckingham line.

Men from the locality were needed to work this junction and in order to provide some incentive for them to work for the company it was decided to erect a few houses for its staff near the station. The spot chosen was probably the only one then available—a small area of land between Bletchley Road and Water Eaton Road. Here twenty terraced houses were built in 1853,<sup>42</sup> the ones in the middle being a little larger, as also the one at the Bletchley Road end. These were known as Company Row,<sup>43</sup> Railway Cottages or Railway Terrace.

All Fenny Stratford was now divided into three parts by the railway embankments, and this separation was made even more acute in the 1840s when the level crossing at Bletchley Road was replaced by the present bridge, a further deviation of the road being made in consequence in order to attain sufficient headroom without making the road totally impassable after heavy rain.<sup>44</sup>

Population, too, was increasing fast from 765 in 1841 to 990 in 1861.<sup>45</sup> The five large landowners were standing firm, and although twenty-four houses were built between 1851 and 1861<sup>46</sup> this was in no way sufficient for the town, and the average rose from 4.5 to 5 persons per house over the same period. Continual pressure was laid on the town by the neighbouring villages; during these same years one-sixth of the houses in Water Eaton were demolished, 4 on the Sympton side of Fenny Stratford, whilst Bletchley remained static with 97 houses.<sup>47</sup>

This pressure is shown in the type of house erected at that time. The earliest Methodist Row,<sup>48</sup> or Stimpson Row as it was later called, stood at the back of Mount Pleasant until demolished in 1958. Six little cottages stood there with only one outside door to each house, four tiny rooms and a pantry under the stairs, entirely devoid of light. These certainly date from this period, though they are not mentioned by name until 1869.<sup>49</sup>

The Sympton side of Fenny Stratford was the next to be built. In 1871 there are forty-three more houses there than in 1861,<sup>50</sup> nearly all of which are along

<sup>39</sup> Mostly taken from Rolt, *Stephensons*.

<sup>40</sup> Morrell *Hist. of Bow Brickhill*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* A station was built at Fenny Stratford at the same time.

<sup>42</sup> Information supplied by archivist B.T.C. who also states that 5 more were built in 1892-3.

<sup>43</sup> Entries in Fenny Stratford Parish Registers. The original name was apparently Drivers Row.

<sup>44</sup> This was done following a complaint by the Rev. T. D. Broughton.

<sup>45</sup> *Census Reports* 1841 and 1861.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1861.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Probably after the chapel in the High Street, nearby. See also H.O. 107/1723.

<sup>49</sup> *Kelly's Directory* 1869.

<sup>50</sup> *Census Report* 1871.

the Sympson Road; although these are a little better than others of that time, the standard deteriorated as the buildings got farther away from the crossroads. The worst now, since demolished, stood on a small triangle of land between the canal and road next to the canal bridge, known locally as Frogs Island. Nearly all in this period are built of a yellow-white stock brick made locally and are thus easily distinguished.

The final development in these long rows of terraced houses took place about 1864 when Denmark Street was laid out.<sup>51</sup> This was in fact the first new street built in the town, if we leave out Railway Terrace, which has a narrow lane to it. It is also the first street which was built contemporary with and ancillary to its houses. Here, too, there is a puzzle as to why the houses are all built on one side only during that period, for the previous owner of the land had held all the land where the road came to be built, and on both sides, as well.<sup>52</sup> It was taken over by the parish and made repairable by the inhabitants at large on 24th March, 1865,<sup>53</sup> and was then known as New Street. In March 1868<sup>54</sup> a piece of land was purchased of Robert Holdom to widen the road in the vicinity of New Street, whilst in 1869 it is mentioned under both names in Kelly's directory, as also in 1877 in the fifth edition. In 1880 the O.S. record it as New Street.<sup>55</sup> In 1886 it is called New Road on a printed bill head of J. F. Warren & Sons, the builders,<sup>56</sup> whilst on another of 1889 it is called Denmark Street,<sup>57</sup> by which name it has been known ever since.

All this building, although ugly and poor by modern standards, yet provided some benefit to the town at that time, for although the population increased by 251<sup>58</sup> in the ten years immediately prior to 1871, the density dropped to just over 4 per house. It is in these circumstances that we must consider the next phase of building, particularly the next street.

This was Napier Street, named after Baron Napier of Magdala who achieved fame in the Abyssinian Campaign of 1868. Many novel features were introduced into the town by this street. It was, I believe, the first street in the town where the plots were put up for sale by auction. This took place at the Swan Inn on 23rd July, 1868,<sup>59</sup> under the direction of a Mr. Derbyshire—the street having been laid out previously by William Milligan, of Dunstable, who had himself purchased the field on 3rd January, 1868, from Mr. Samuel Thomas Harris.

Not all the plots were sold at this time; in fact, the last houses were erected about 1914, which is a further indication that the housing shortage was temporarily over. This, together with the fact that Napier Street was probably the first to have any restrictive building covenants, although only concerning the build-

<sup>51</sup> I am not quite certain about this; Robert Holdom bought this land in August 1845 from Wm. Linnell and the original deed, which I have not seen, was between four parties. Consequently there may have been interests in this land which prevented its earlier development.

<sup>52</sup> Bletchley Award, 1813.

<sup>53</sup> Vestry Book.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> 1st Edition 6-in. sheet 15.

<sup>56</sup> Papers at St. Martins Church.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. On 5th April 1886, it was proposed by the Parochial Sanitary Committee that New Street revert to its old name of Denmark Street.

<sup>58</sup> *Census Report* 1871.

<sup>59</sup> Title Deeds.

ing line, helped to produce a somewhat better house, and although there was one terrace of seven houses erected by John Gordon, the remainder were never more than four in a row with a sprinkling of detached and semi-detached houses. The street was adopted by the parish at a vestry held on 13th March, 1884.<sup>60</sup>

All the private development so far had been concentrated near the town itself. The railway station at Bletchley still stood on its own, apart from the employees' cottages at Railway Terrace and a house which stood half-way between the station and town facing the Bletchley road. This house, built about 1870, became the New Inn about 1879.<sup>61</sup> Even the Bletchley road had not settled down to its present name, being still occasionally called Station Road.<sup>62</sup>

All of this was quickly changed during the next few years, starting with the laying out of Duncombe Street by the Railway, but on the opposite side to Company Terrace. Much mystery is attached to this road, for it is not mentioned in the vestry book, and although it is known to have been built at some time prior to 1877,<sup>63</sup> it cannot be dated with certainty. From title deeds to some property in that area of Bletchley Road I have discovered that about 1871<sup>64</sup> Robert Holdom was selling off plots of land in the neighbourhood, but whether this includes anything more than the Bletchley Road frontage is uncertain, though the number of plots seems over-large i.e. over 60, unless we include Duncombe Street. Unfortunately, the copy of the map showing the plot numbers is missing from the abstract. It is to be hoped that further information will eventually be forthcoming.<sup>65</sup>

It is not certain whether both sides of the road were intended for houses, for in 1880<sup>66</sup> the west side was partly a brickyard, which is expressly prohibited in the deed mentioned above, together with the building of public houses, beer houses, refreshment houses, or houses of less than £20 per annum. It is interesting to note that the building line of the oldest houses is completely different from the later one, a fact difficult to explain as yet. The street itself was named after the Lord of the Manor. In 1878 an attempt was made to bring houses near the station which met with much greater success. This was on the north side of the road in two fields which had become available in that year.

The reasons why this should have happened just then are quite complicated and go back to the beginnings of the nineteenth century, when Thomas Ager, one of the five large landowners at that time, started settling rent charges and annuities on his land for the benefit of his children. Various sales, alienations and deaths had taken place since that date and eventually the relations between the various parties got so strained that the matter was taken to law. The courts decided that the best settlement would be on a monetary basis and ordered that

<sup>60</sup> Vestry Book.

<sup>61</sup> 1st Edition 6-in. O.S. 1880.

<sup>62</sup> Title Deeds Brooklands Estate, 1885. It is called Fenny Stratford Lane in 1813 and Station Road in 1853.

<sup>63</sup> *Kelly's Directory*, 5th edition.

<sup>64</sup> He purchased this land on 6th July, 1869, with a title relating back to 1865 and connected by a deed of indemnity to the Harrison family, who held the land in 1813. In 1873 he is stated to have held 47 acres worth £140 per annum, probably mostly near Duncombe Street. *Return of Landowners 1873*.

<sup>65</sup> Mr. James Marchant did very kindly make a search of the records in his office, but was unable to find anything earlier than 1880, which, however, did refer to Robert Holdom's son Thomas.

<sup>66</sup> 1st Edition 6-in. O.S., Sheet 15.

fields totalling about twenty acres by the Bletchley Road should be put up for sale.<sup>67</sup>

These were purchased by Henry Pettit, a Leighton Buzzard solicitor, who drew out a gridwork of streets on them and gradually sold them off plot by plot. At first he laid out only Park Street, South Terrace and East Street, and by 1880 some houses had been built,<sup>68</sup> but development was slow, seemingly because some of the buyers were holding the land as a speculation. Nevertheless, Mr. Pettit soon decided to complete the estate by adding Bedford Street, Oxford Street, Cambridge Street,<sup>69</sup> Regents Street and St. Martins Street. Civilization had reached a slightly higher level since Napier Street was constructed and the occupiers were now enjoined to use the public drains laid down in the street, as well as the usual building line covenant. Lighting, too, was provided at the expense of the Lighting Committee, who in turn levied a rate. (Park Street was lit in October 1883.<sup>70</sup>)

In 1884 Park Street and East Street were adopted by the parish, whilst Oxford Street was refused and had to wait another year. Cambridge Street and Bedford Street did not become public until 1891,<sup>71</sup> whilst only part of St. Martins Street was adopted in 1894. (East Street became Albert Street in 1886.)

In 1882 development restarted at the old end of the town. The ancient Home Farm, which had been owned by the Ager family for nearly 100 years, was sold up. A new farm-house was built at Yards End, now in Western Road, and the land between Aylesbury Street and Victoria Road came available for building. There was already a footpath over the field, part of a long one which had once led to Tattenhoe, and in that year two solicitors from Leighton Buzzard, George and David Thomas Willis, gave notice to the parish vestry of the change they proposed to make, bringing the footpath in line with a new street.<sup>72</sup> The first houses in Church Street, as it was subsequently called, were erected the following year, as may be seen by their date-stones. The street was adopted by the parish in 1884.<sup>73</sup>

It was about this year, too, that the publican of the Three Tuns, not to be outdone, decided to build a few houses in his back garden. Here he built twelve terraced cottages with a tiny strip of ground in front and with their backs nearly touching Methodist Row. These tiny little four-roomed houses he named Woodbine Terrace.

A very different kind of house from these was planned by the designers of the Brookland Building Estate, which was laid out by the Rowland Brothers in 1885. These brothers, who had started a timber mill in the town in 1874, had purchased a large piece of land between Bletchley Road and Water Eaton Road from the representatives of Robert Holdom on 7th February, 1885. By the end of the year they had laid out Brooklands Road and Westfield Road and set the frontage of Bletchley Road out, together with part of Brooklands Road,

<sup>67</sup> The above paragraph is taken from a printed Abstract of Title dated 5th May, 1878.

<sup>68</sup> 1st Edition 6-in. O.S.

<sup>69</sup> This street, the end one and presumably the last set out, is mentioned in *Kelly's Directory*, 1883.

<sup>70</sup> Vestry Book.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Title Deeds.



into sixty-three lots (1–23 on Bletchley Road; 24–43 on the west side of Brooklands Road; and 44–63 on the east). With these lots went a host of restrictive covenants forbidding, among other things, the building of blacksmiths' shops and beer houses and the opening of gravel pits.<sup>74</sup> At first all went well. Dr. McGachan built the Gables and the Rev. A. H. Barrow built the Mission Hall, but after that Brooklands Road was given over to the terrace builders. Some of the lots were never sold but put back into the field. The road was connected with Water Eaton Road in 1910,<sup>75</sup> whilst Westfield Road also remained nearly empty till the present century. Part of Brooklands Road was adopted in 1894.

During the remainder of the nineteenth century development was again centred on the older end of the town. About 1880 the first brush factory had been erected in the town by Samuel Hackney. The track to it was built upon shortly afterwards and was called Brush Street.<sup>76</sup> This latter became the east end of Tavistock Street. George Street is first mentioned in 1883.<sup>77</sup> The Temperance Hall built there in 1892 is one of its oldest buildings.

Western Road was built on farm land as Yards End gradually sold its land. The earliest houses there were erected prior to 1898,<sup>78</sup> though most of them were built between 1900 and 1914, as shown by their date stones. The lower half remained just a footpath, leading to Cambridge Street, until the late 'twenties, when the road was made up and council houses erected.<sup>79</sup> On the older roads, development of frontages took place as the side streets were built leading off from them. In Victoria Road, only one piece of land remained undeveloped—the frontage facing Lees Terrace; and even on this Mr. Pettit had laid out plots.<sup>80</sup> The first of these, Nos. 13–19, were in course of erection, but the rest had to wait until the first decade of the present century. Bletchley Road was still in the throes of development: Oliver Road had still to be built, but this was the only large space east of Cambridge Street. On the south side, at the north-east end, the schools had just been built, one in 1890 and the other in 1897. The next plot to them, now the school tennis courts and playing fields, was an allotment, whilst the remaining fields between these and Westfield Road were still farm land. On the northern side the picture was just the same, with a group of seven large private houses facing the schools, a type of development which was to become characteristic of this land between the New Inn and the Methodist Chapel, itself erected after this period in 1909. Manor Road, as the road from Fenny Stratford to Water Eaton was later called, was still undeveloped, as also was the frontage on Water Eaton Road.<sup>81</sup>

The present century has seen the infilling of Fenny Stratford, and, beside those areas already mentioned, another spate of building took place between

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *North Bucks. Independent.*

<sup>76</sup> This is also called Factory Street in 1898 in Fenny Stratford Parish Register and is first called Tavistock Street about 1903. (*Ibid.*)

<sup>77</sup> Parochial Sanitary Committee Minute Book, 2nd October, 1883.

<sup>78</sup> O.S. 25-in. Sheet 15/10 2nd Edition.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid* 3rd edition 1925.

<sup>80</sup> Vestry Book. 26th March, 1886, and 26th March, 1887. Victoria Road was widened at the same time.

<sup>81</sup> Practically the whole of the above paragraph is taken from an examination of the O.S. 25-in. maps, 2nd edition.

Brooklands Road and Duncombe Street. This started with the building of the houses facing Water Eaton Road. By 1908 Oliver Street had been laid out and houses built, whilst Osborn Street and Windsor Street were built up two years later,<sup>82</sup> and it only remained for Sandringham Place and Clifford Avenue to be built between the wars to complete this area. Tavistock Street<sup>83</sup> was also extended in these years in the old brick bay terrace tradition. The pebble-dashed semi-detached came in after the First World War, when the Bletchley U.D. Council erected their first houses in Water Eaton Road and the private development took place in the three new streets around the recreation ground,<sup>84</sup> Lennox Road, Leon Avenue and Eaton Avenue.<sup>85</sup> Slightly after this came the laying out of the central gardens, and the development of the Bletchley Road frontage, following the sale of this land by Sir E. Duncombe to W. Charter Wilson in 1925.<sup>86</sup>

All building ceased during the Second World War and even immediately after the war progress was slow, for the council was at first only allowed to build twenty houses, but there was an air of expectancy in the town, following the publication of the Abercrombie *Report for Greater London*. Much of the remaining part of the story of Fenny Stratford is writ much larger in the town as a whole. Suffice it to say that the town did allow itself to be expanded, under the New Towns Development Act, 1952.

The first five years of this work was done under a plan produced in 1954, which was designed for a population of 19,000. This resulted in little further development for new areas in Fenny Stratford, for most of the open spaces left around the town, east of the railway bridge, had already been covered by the ordinary housing programme, but under the provisions of the map of May 1959, the remains of Home Farm are being built upon to enable the final population to be raised to 24,000.<sup>87</sup>

It remains only to express my thanks to Mr. R. Coleman for the map, and the Bletchley U.D.C., the Bletchley and District Co-operative Society, the staff of the *Bletchley Gazette* and also the *Leighton Buzzard Observer*, the Area Planning Officer, the Rev. K. H. Wright and the others whose willingness to help by producing documents and answering my many questions have made this article possible.

<sup>82</sup> This is shown by the datestones on the houses on these streets.

<sup>83</sup> V.S. Note<sup>76</sup>.

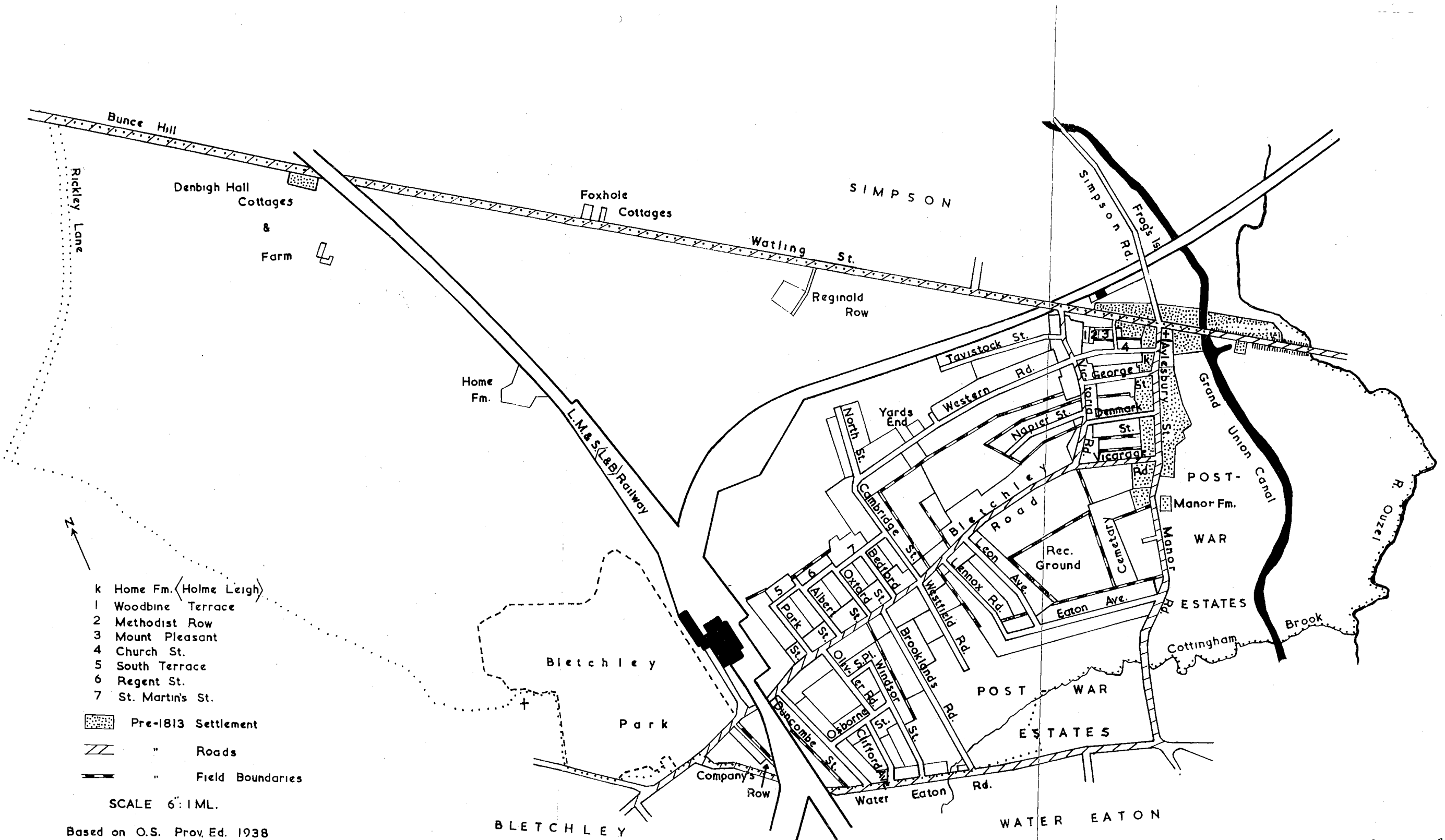
<sup>84</sup> Presented to the town by Sir Herbert S. Leon in 1898.

<sup>85</sup> They are mentioned in the *Fenny Stratford Official Guide*, 1922, but remained practically empty for many years.

<sup>86</sup> Title Deeds.

<sup>87</sup> Information supplies by the Area Planning Officer.

The map shown is a composite one based on the pre-war O.S. 6-in., with additions from the Enclosure map surveyed by J. King in 1813. It is to be noted that neither this award, nor the earlier one of 1790, did much to alter the town boundaries, as most of the enclosure, and the emparking of Richley Wood-Bletchley Park area, took place before 1694.



- k Home Fm. (Holme Leigh)
- 1 Woodbine Terrace
- 2 Methodist Row
- 3 Mount Pleasant
- 4 Church St.
- 5 South Terrace
- 6 Regent St.
- 7 St. Martin's St.

- Pre-1813 Settlement
- Roads
- Field Boundaries

SCALE 6" : 1 MILE.

Based on O.S. Prov. Ed. 1938

FIG. 6.