

**FILKINS
and
BROUGHTON POGGS**

Oxfordshire

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A HISTORICAL WANDER THROUGH THE VILLAGES

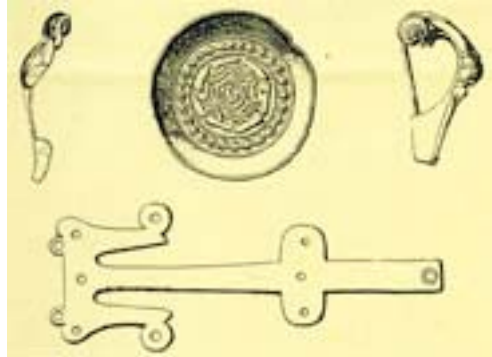
with the

FILKINS GENTLEMEN'S WALKING CLUB



The Beginning

Broughton-cum-Filkins was originally a Saxon village, but it is believed that there may have been a settlement here much earlier. Indeed the Roman road Akeman Street passes a couple of miles to the north, and there is evidence of several trackways converging nearby and leading down to the river Thames at what is now Lechlade.



Objects found in the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Filkins

Long before 1066, it is known that Filkins and Broughton Poggs were part of the Manor of Broadwell and at one time belonged to Aelfgar, King of Mercia. According to the Domesday Book, ownership passed later on to Christina, sister to Margaret, Queen of Scotland. There have been a number of important archaeological finds in the area which have shed light on its Anglo-Saxon history, and two ancient burial sites have been identified within the present parish, at Kinching Knoll and at Purbricks Close.



Horse chestnuts in the Main Street in Filkins near the Weaving Centre

Until the present by-pass was built forty years ago, Filkins and Broughton Poggs sat astride a small section of the main road between Burford and Lechlade, and life for twentieth century locals had become noisy, fume-laden and occasionally downright

hazardous. One villager recalls a foggy night in the late fifties when there were more than a dozen car crashes on the narrow, winding northern approach to Filkins, just where the high wall of Filkins Hall stands at the junction of Clock Lane and the entrance to Pear Tree Farm.

Today, the villages are relatively tranquil, with the busy A361 passing by in a gentle curve some distance away from the heart of the community. To the south, the old village main street leaves the by-pass just west of Broughton Poggs and rejoins it more than a mile to the north. Most first-time visitors nowadays enter from the south, at Broughton Poggs, and this is where we can begin our stroll through nearly two thousand years of English history.



Pound and Stocks, Filkins

The attractive jumble of locally-quarried, honey-coloured stone houses that is Broughton Poggs is set well back from the B 4477, the “back road”, which leads to Kencot, Alvescot and eventually to Carterton and Brize Norton. The unusual name is said to derive in part from the Norman Pugeis family, who owned the manor for a while after the Conquest and who are also remembered in the Buckinghamshire village of Stoke Poges.



Manor Farm yard at Broughton Poggs

THE D'ARCY DALTON WAY

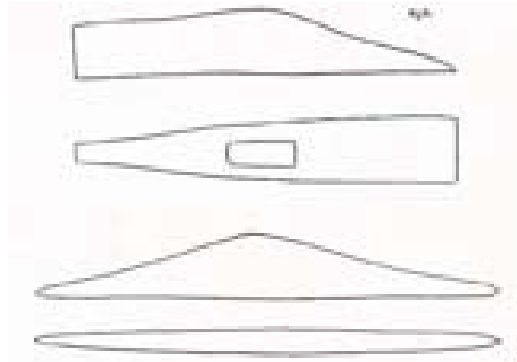
Here and there whilst strolling through Filkins and Broughton Poggs, you will see signposts pointing to the D'Arcy Dalton Way.

The D'Arcy Dalton Way is a 65-mile long walk across Oxfordshire. It starts just over the Warwickshire border on the Oxford Canal, and wanders west of Banbury, Chipping Norton, Burford and Faringdon, finishing at Waylands Smithy on the Ridgeway in Wiltshire.

It was named in honour of Col. W P d'Arcy Dalton, who worked tirelessly for over fifty years to preserve rights of way for walkers and ramblers in Oxfordshire.

FILKINS STONE

One of the principal sources of building stone in Oxfordshire was the Forest Marble, beds of clays and limestone which vary in thickness up to a foot. The thicker beds are used as hardstone for walls and the thinner ones for paving stones and roof tiles. The quality is such that Filkins stone has been specified for several public buildings and colleges in both Oxford and Cambridge.



Side and top views of the Hammer and Pick used by Filkins stone masons

Dr Plot, in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire* published in 1676, observed that “they dig a sort of flatstone, naturally such, without the help of winter, and strangely great, that sometimes they have them seven foot long and five foot over . . . and I have seen a small Hovel, that for its whole Covering has required no more than one of these stones”.

Much of the villages of Filkins and Broughton Poggs is built and roofed with this stone. It was said that enough walling stone to build nearly four houses is produced in getting one roof of slates.



The last Filkins quarry closed some years ago, but was located a mile or so northwest of the centre of Filkins on land belonging to the Cripps estates and known as Long Ground.

By the almost unnoticed bridge over the Broadwell Brook, just before the Alvescot road veers off to the east away from Filkins, are two sets of gates at the bottom of the drives up to Broughton Hall and Manor Farm respectively. The manor of Broughton's long history is said to have included a spell belonging to Anne of Cleves, one of Henry VIII's more fortunate wives, who received the manor of Broughton as part of her divorce settlement with King Henry in 1541. A little way up the drive to the Hall, which for part of its length incorporates the public footpath up to the beautiful little church of St Peter, are some mediaeval fish ponds amongst the many trees, including yews, which were planted by successive residents of the Hall over the years.

Broughton Hall itself is a mixture of styles, some of it 17th century or earlier, but architecturally undistinguished. There is an interesting gazebo in the garden, possibly, according to local historian the late Ned Foster, by Pace of Lechlade, who also carried out work on the stables and dovecot at Filkins Hall.



Broughton Hall

Close by is the fine seventeenth century Old Rectory which was once occupied by Revd Dr Goodenough, a member of a prominent family of landowners and benefactors, several of whom are commemorated by plaques in the church as well as by their burial places, and who still own and farm land nearby. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, it was leased to the Revd Samuel Warneford, who founded and built the Warneford Hospitals in Oxford and Leamington. Not far from the gate to the neighbouring Rectory Cottage, in a small stone alcove in the roadside wall, may be seen one of the original village hand pumps. There were once six of them altogether in Filkins and Broughton Pogs, but all except one of the others have been removed and their wells capped.



The Pump at Broughton Poggs

St Peter's Church is very old, probably Saxon, but with a Norman nave and chancel arch and a small Norman window in the north wall. The chancel itself is 13th century and has a priest's doorway on the south side. The tower is actually oblong rather than square, and is believed to be very early but with evidence of later rebuilding of the upper storey.



St Peter's Church, Broughton Poggs

Back beside the bridge is the carefully restored building of the Broughton Poggs Mill. Now a private dwelling, this was once one of the two great mills in the area which ground corn for hundreds of years, powered by the flow of the Broadwell Brook, which itself is now much smaller than it must have been a century or so ago when it drove the paddled waterwheel, the wooden-cogged shafts and the great millstones. The other mill, Filkins Mill, is located outside the village about half a mile downstream to the east.

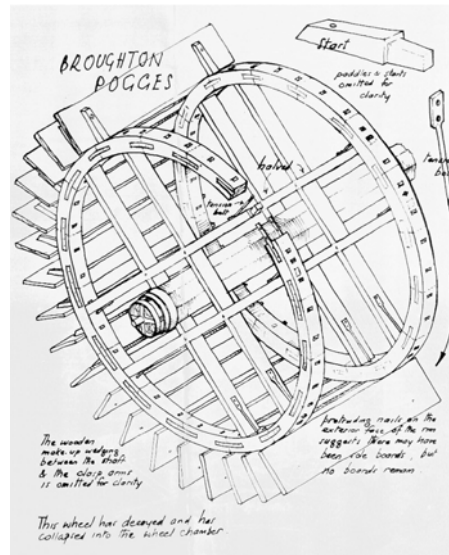


Diagram of the Mill Wheel at Broughton Poggs Mill
from *Oxfordshire Mills*

On the other side of the road by the bridge are firstly a curious little house with steps down to the stream and, a little further on around the corner, the pretty, traditional cottage called “Pound and Stocks”, where the old common keeper, responsible for rounding and impounding up stray animals, lived. Just opposite is what at first glance looks like an old barn, but at one time it used to be the Old Baptist Chapel, its origins recalled by the dignified rear windows.



The Old Baptist Chapel at Filkins

On the road leading into Filkins village, the first building which catches the eye is the seventeenth century Five Alls, a famous inn-restaurant, the meaning of whose odd name is told in its inn-sign. Originally, this depicted the Queen who governs all, a Lawyer who pleads for all, a Parson who prays for all, a Soldier who fights for all, and a Farmer who

pays for all. Some years ago, however, a different mix of Alls was adopted, the Queen being replaced by the Devil, who takes all. Elsewhere in the country there are a few similarly-named inns with slight variations on the Alls theme: there is a Four Alls where the Lawyer is left out, and a Six Alls with both the Queen and the Devil included.



The Five Alls at Filkins

Just past the Five Alls on the left is the Village Hall, originally a temperance institute founded and endowed by a Mrs Amelia Carter (of Carterton fame) and built just before the start of the First World War. The datestone is on the side of the building. Opposite the Carter Institute, to give it its proper name, is a small paddock used as a public green, and the village school, which was built to accommodate over 100 children but closed in 1981 with only fifteen pupils on the roll. It is now a privately-run kindergarten.



The School House and Paddock at Filkins

The roof is under repair following the tornado which hit Filkins in 2003

Close by on the same side is a cottage called Fox House, which was once a public house called the Fox Inn. The roadside cottages next door used to be several shops: a carpenters, a cycle repair business and a grocer-cum-draper, all recorded on old photographs which can be seen in the Swinford Museum. Looking back, one can only

wonder at the proximity of two pubs (there were two more, the Lamb and the Bull, just up the road !), a temperance hall and a church reading room (the other side of the paddock) in such a small community, and reflect on the importance and the competing interests of the social institutions they represented in their time.

Further on, on the right, are two houses of some note. The first, nestling behind some ornamental topiary, is Little Peacocks, an eighteenth century house (the datestone says Jonah Bassett 1759), where a generation ago Miss Brenda Colvin founded one of the country's most celebrated firms of landscape architects, which still practices from here. Next door is the Old Bakehouse, a remarkable dwelling with a prominent datestone reading "TTA 1626". This stands for Thomas and Anne Turner, who, when it was built, occupied what was the largest house in Filkins at the time. The Hearth Tax returns of 1665 indicated that it had five fireplaces, and this was long before they started baking bread there.



The datestone on the Old Bakehouse, Filkins

Opposite the Old Bakehouse beside a tall yew hedge is a shady lane apparently leading off to the west between some Georgian houses which stand well back from the road. On the right is Green Dragon House, which has a variegated history. Although now a private residence, it was for a while during the last century the vicarage associated with St Peter's Church, Filkins. Before that, it is said to have been an inn (hence the name), although some local historians see its features as being more typical of a manor farm than a coaching hostel. It is a substantial pile, set back from where the road between Nether Filkins and Over Filkins was straightened and turnpiked in 1792. Undoubtedly the house has from time to time been extensively altered and possibly in parts rebuilt.



Green Dragon House, Filkins

Past St Peter's House, supposedly built as a rectory but never used as one, and the present relatively modern vicarage, the lane suddenly opens out as it joins another lane at the corner of an unusually imposing eighteenth century house known as the Old Smithy. Looking upwards, one can see a strange carved face stone set into the wall just below the gable, not as terrifying (nor as functional) as a gargoyle, but slightly eerie nevertheless.



The Steps by the Moat Stream ford at Filkins

The road appears to head out into the countryside, but still holds some secrets. On the left is a row of cottages, the first of which is where "Old" George Swinford, the Jubilee Boy who lived to be a hundred and founded the museum in Filkins, lived. Occupied in the seventeenth century by the local maltster, the house has a curious semi-circular stone projection, which inside, in fact, is an old bread oven. Further on there is a little bridge and a ford, where wagons would once pause to tighten their wheels in summer. The stream is the outflow from the moat which surrounded the old farmhouse now known as Goodfellows, another house with an interesting history and a connection with the Cripps family. The original was destroyed by fire in 1947, but rebuilt later in a modern style.



The old Bread Oven at Moat Cottages

Turning back towards the village and leaving the Old Smithy on the right, the lane winds between the back of the church and some attractive old cottages with pretty gardens, amongst which is the Filkins Methodist Chapel with its little schoolroom. At the end of the churchyard wall, by the war memorial, the lane rejoins the main village street almost opposite the old Lamb Inn, a solid-looking building now converted into a well-designed group of modernised cottages with an inner courtyard. The three-acre field in front, although for many years nothing to do with the Clark family who used to bake bread in the Old Bakehouse, is still known locally as Clark's Field and is occasionally lent by its present owner for big village events such as the bi-annual Filkins Festival. The open road space between the former pub, the war memorial and the bus shelter (erected to commemorate King George VI's accession) was at one time used for the village's famous Street Party, still held in July each year near the Village Hall.



The former Lamb Inn at Filkins

The church of St Peter in Filkins was built on what had been an open green and consecrated in 1857. Until then, Filkins had been a hamlet of Broadwell, and many Filkins folk preferred to walk across the fields to Broadwell rather than go down to the church at Broughton Poggs. The architect was George E Street, who also designed the Law Courts in the Strand in London. St Peter's is similarly solid-looking, and clearly influenced by French Gothic, with the outer wall being re-graded a few feet from the ground at the hexagonal east end, a steeply pitched, tiled roof, and three tall windows on

each side. It takes more than a casual glance to notice that the tracery of the windows is designed so that no two windows are exactly alike.



St Peter's Church, Filkins

A must for visitors (although its opening times are restricted) is the Swinford Museum, named after "Old" George, whose son, "Young" George, was Parish Clerk and a trustee of the Museum for many years. The old cottage, thatched in the sixteenth century when it was originally built but with the thatching and the upper storey now removed and re-roofed with slates, was given over by Sir Stafford and his son Sir John Cripps to house the astonishing collection of objects, artefacts, memorabilia and ephemera gathered by Old George over his lifetime working in and around Filkins. Beside the Museum, roofed and partly sheltered by some of the big, quarried stone "slats" used for fencing in several places around the village, is the village lock-up, wherein the constable would lodge unruly offenders against the peace pending their appearance before the magistrates. Through the little barred, unglazed window you can just see one of the horrific mantraps used by gamekeepers in the "good old days" to help protect their employers estates.



The Village Lock-up

A short distance down Rouses Lane, which turns westward opposite the old Lamb Inn alongside the Museum, is an outstanding group of features which remain a tribute to the beliefs and philanthropy of Sir Stafford Cripps in the years before the Second World War. The Bowling Green on the left was given by him in 1936 “to the men of Filkins” to be held in trust by a bowls club for as long as the club should exist. Beside the green is another of his foundations, the Village Centre, which featured hot baths and a health clinic, and now houses the little post office and village shop; just beyond is the village swimming pool and the children’s playground.



The Village Centre, Filkins

On the opposite side of the lane is Saxons Close, a group of four houses with long front gardens distinguished by being the first council houses in the country to be Grade II listed. Cripps had the houses built for the Witney Rural District Council by direct labour, and he personally paid for the difference in construction cost, donating the stone slates, in order to ensure that the quality and style of building integrated successfully into a picturesque Cotswold village. Later council houses in Filkins at Bulls Close and The Gassons were also furnished with roof slates from Cripps’ quarry.



Goodfellows, Filkins



Saxons Close, Filkins

Heading northwards up the main road, there is a view of The Gassons (the name derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “horse paddock”) on the right and Bulls Close on the left, built as council properties as mentioned above. If you are lucky enough to be passing in the late summer, you can pause to admire the amazing display of dahlias grown every year by John Truman on the unpromising patch of ground between the houses and the old pub which several residents cultivate as small allotments. Just past the Gassons is the Old Bull, surprisingly small for a former inn, behind which is the Forge, where generations of Trinders worked as village blacksmiths. A small turning on the right opposite a rather dignified house with a bow window and a datestone reading 1741 which used to be the village post office and shop, is the narrow, winding little Hazells Lane.



Hazells Lane, Filkins

Named after an old cobbler who plied his trade in one of the cottages, Hazells Lane is an example of necessary neighbourliness, the small stone cottages tucked tightly together along the lane, which at its other end joins the “back road” near the eastern side of The Gassons and the cemetery. Near the end on the left, one can stop and puzzle over the curious little “arches” set low in the drystone walling. Over the main road there is a footpath leading across the fields to Alvescot and Black Bourton, and on this side, just along the road towards the Gassons, a sharp eye will spot one of the stone stiles typical of the area set in the wall just by the path.



A stone stile by The Gassons, Filkins

Back in the village main street, beside the Old Post House is Filkins Farmhouse with its Granary to the rear. This fine eighteenth century house is built in a later and more formal style than most of its neighbours, with sash windows, architraves and keystones. A little further on is Well Cottage, with the subject of its name prominent in the tiny front garden, and the old farm complex now used by Cotswold Woollen Weavers as a fascinating working mill, exhibition and shops. At the centre of things is the cathedral-

like Bridal Barn (sometimes also called the Barley Barn), so-called, apparently, because village wedding celebrations were occasionally held there.



The Bridal Barn at Filkins

Another building of major interest at this end of the village is Filkins Hall itself. It was first mentioned in the history books in 1646, but the original building is long since gone as a result of various remodelling efforts and a couple of disastrous fires, one in 1876 which destroyed most of the Old Hall. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Filkins Hall was in the possession of the Colston family, who were Bristol-based shipowners and merchants. Around 1810, Edward Francis Colston had the fine stable block designed and built by Richard Pace of Lechlade, and the Colston family crest, which featured a dolphin, can be seen over the datestone.



The Coach House and Stable Block at Filkins Hall

The present main house was rebuilt in the Elizabethan Cotswold style in the early twentieth century, and was bought by Frederick C Goodenough in 1917, in whose family it remained until 1985. The Park and the South Lawn, which once sported a cricket field of near county quality, may still be seen across the sadly overgrown ditch and ha-ha opposite the Clock Ground and through the old main gates on the Alvescot road.



The old gates to Filkins Hall, now disused

Just past the weaving centre is a small triangle of grass with a single oak tree growing in its centre, in front of a row of cottages. This is the Cross Tree, whose origins are still debated. One theory is that each year the members of the village council used to be hoisted up to a wooden platform built high up in the tree (presumably an ancestor of the young one there now). The ropes and ladders would be taken away, and the elders were left up there, day and night, until they agreed on a policy or some action with which the villagers were sufficiently happy to let them down. Maybe they knew more about democracy in action in the old days that we often give them credit for !



The Cross Tree at Filkins

Two of the cottages behind the Cross Tree were, in Victorian times, the municipal workhouse, one for the men and the other for women and children. The adjoining cottage on the right hand facing them was originally one of the village barns, essential premises for work such as threshing and for storing the little community's harvest to see them through the winter.

Facing down the street as you approach the bend which confounded those fog-bound motorists half a century ago is Pear Tree Farm. Hard to see, and near the roof overhang is an old sundial and datestone giving 1687 as the year of its construction. The back of this house is possibly more interesting than the front, as the oddly tall brick chimney tells of the days when it was used as a small brewery !

Beyond Pear Tree and the old allotments may be seen a few scattered clumps of houses and a converted barn whose name also recalls the local industriousness of the Clark family.

The three slightly isolated but attractive cottages a few hundred yards down a gravelled track off the Burford Road to the left are called Hietts Gardens. The solemn-looking terrace of houses just past this turning was built in the middle of the twentieth century, a few years later than the council houses in the centre of Filkins, and a little further up the road is the Grey House and Apsley Cottage, both of whose names evoke thoughts of past and present residents of the village.



Looking over the old allotments to Hietts Gardens



A footpath across the fields just west of Filkins

Away down the fields to the south west, now demolished, there used to be the fever house, a tiny isolated cottage where villagers with what would have been frighteningly infectious diseases could rest up until recovery or otherwise. But still visible along the line of one of the streams which feeds the Broadwell Brook are what appear to be ruined stone garden sheds. These are the old pump houses, where water for livestock could be pumped from the stream up to the Hall's coach house, the Calf Pens at the Cross Tree and the smallholdings on the western edge of the village.

A century ago, the 1901 Census counted 308 heads of population in Filkins, and 91 in Broughton Poggs. The 2001 Census gives the total for both at about the same. So the numbers have remained, and so have the echoes. Just the faces have changed.

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The End