

Conservation Area Character Appraisal: A Consultation Document

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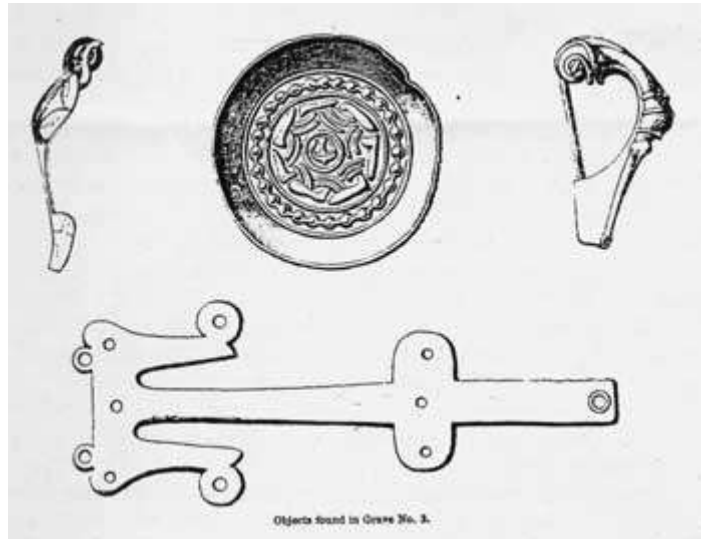
Filkins and Broughton Poggs

The villages of Filkins and Broughton Poggs are located in the south west corner of Oxfordshire, close to its borders with Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. The town of Lechlade lies across the Thames 2 miles to the south west. The two villages developed in part along the former Burford to Lechlade Road, the modern route of which now passes to the west of the settlements. A network of narrow lanes, tracks and paths integrate the villages into the surrounding landscape, and connect Filkins with the neighbouring villages of Kencot and Broadwell to the east, and Langford to the south east.



Approaching Filkins from the Barringtons

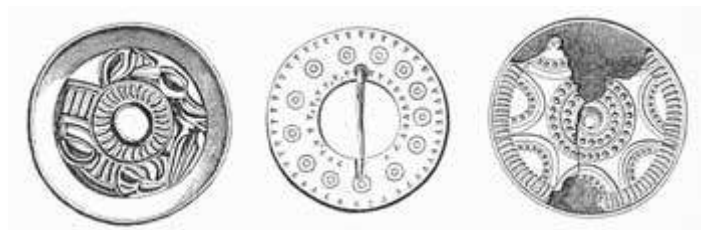
The surrounding area comprises a low lying, but gently rolling, clay vale landscape situated between an area of oolitic limestone to the north and the expansive floodplain which borders the River Thames to the south. The villages are located on an outcrop of Cornbash limestone which forms the transition between the oolitic limestone and clay, thus taking advantage of the springs that emerge at the junction of the two, and utilizing this stone extensively as a building material. The underlying geology of the area just beyond the village yields a variety of limestone and mudstone, referred to as Forest Marble. This has been used for the distinctive stone planks or slats used as boundary markers and roofing within the Conservation Area.



Objects found in an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Purbrick's Close, Filkins by John Farmer, a local mason, in 1855

The immediate landscape setting has a strongly pastoral appearance and is characterised by tranquil watercourses and meadow pasture lined by clumps of mature trees. This contrasts with the more open character of the surrounding farmland.

Archaeological evidence uncovered close to the 20th century swimming pool on the western side of the village suggests that Filkins is a settlement of considerable antiquity. Finds include the remains of circular pit dwellings and a considerable Saxon burial ground, whilst artifacts from these excavations suggest the possible existence of a Romano-British settlement.



Objects of Anglo-Saxon antiquity excavated near Filkins in the mid-Nineteenth century

The name Filkins is believed to be Saxon in origin; early spellings include 'Filching' (1174) and 'Filechinge' (1269), and the name may originally have meant 'the dwelling of Filica's people'. In the middle ages Filkins was part of the Manor of Broadwell, and was held by the Abbot of Cirencester. Until 1850 the village had no church, utilising instead Broadwell church and graveyard which lie across the fields to the east. Part of the route to this church was marked by a gravel drive, tall stone slats and large horizontal stones. These stones provided a convenient surface on which to rest coffins during their transit to the church, when a pony and trap could not be afforded.

In the 16th century, Filkins was characterised by its compact form; a factor recognised by William Harrison, who wrote at the time of there being 'houses uniformly builded together with streets and lanes'. This observation was echoed more recently by Christopher Hussey, who likened the village's compact plan and general disposition to that of a 'champion manor' surrounded, until the Enclosure award, by its open fields.

The form and character of the village reflect the status of agriculture as the primary source of employment. Within the village, the four main farms were interspersed with individual smallholdings, outbuildings, workers' cottages and productive gardens. There were two mills; one near to the bridge between Filkins and Broughton Poggs, and the other on the Langford Road.

The present day names of some of the lanes in Filkins recall those of previous residents; for example Hazells Lane (a village cobbler), Rouses Lane and Kemp's Lane.



Hazells Lane, Filkins

From early times, the quarrying of stone has intermittently provided the village with a secondary source of income. During the middle ages though, the manor was not wealthy and the Filkins quarries, situated away from the river and principal means of transport, offered little commercial competition to the nearby quarries of Burford and Taynton, both of which were located on the Windrush. Within the village however, almost every element of the built environment comprises the local limestone, including walls, roofs, and boundary walls, and – unusual for the 19th century – road surfaces.

The most notable buildings in the village date from the 17th and early 18th centuries. There are however, also some 20th century buildings of special interest. These include a row of four council houses built in the Cotswold vernacular style. Their form and traditional use of local materials was a conscious device to integrate the council housing visually and socially into the life of the village, and was copied by subsequent housing in Filkins, Burford and Kelmscott. The extra costs of labour and materials were met by two notable village residents, Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps, whose other philanthropic and social works are a distinctive part of the village's modern history.



Houses in Saxons Close, Filkins

The foreman for the community projects was George Swinford, a resident of Filkins, stonemason and biographer of the history and life of the settlement from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. His first hand recollections are recorded in his book 'The Jubilee Boy'.

The parish of Broughton Poggs has always been separate from that of Filkins. The villagers of Filkins shared the church in Broadwell, and not the early Norman church of St. Peter in Broughton Poggs. The name Poggs is thought to derive from the Pugeis (or Pogeys) family who owned one of the lesser manors of Bampton in the early 13th century; the village was referred to during this period as Bampton Poges. The source of the name Broughton is believed to be Broctun, which means 'enclosure by the brook'. The manor of Broughton was one of those granted to Anne of Cleves by Henry VIII. The hamlet is characterised by a few substantial houses dating mainly from the 17th century, and a small group of peripheral, later cottages. The earliest dwelling in Broughton Poggs is Broughton Hall, the former manor house which is thought to belong to the 16th century. It was subsequently altered and remodelled in the 17th, 18th and 20th centuries. The distinctive ponds and water features within the settlement are also thought to encompass the remains of medieval fish ponds.



Broughton Hall today

Broughton Poggs today is a compact and introspective hamlet focused around a small group of buildings, each defined and separated from the others by substantial landscaped grounds and orientated about an inner shared drive. An informal mix of modest cottages and ancillary buildings are situated on the periphery of the group where the main Lechlade Road passes to the north and the settlement is penetrated by a short access lane. Within the hamlet, a labyrinth of narrow, walled footways, or tuers, converge on a sheltered, leafy grove at its centre. Ponds and water courses are interwoven within this complex mix of semi-public and private space. The dense canopies of the wooded grounds and high boundary walls of the principal buildings effectively define the extent of the hamlet within its open countryside setting.



A "tuer" in Broughton Poggs

The main focus for the development and evolution of Filkins village has been the axial route of the Lechlade to Burford Road. The village is principally linear in form, though gentle bends in the road give subtle variation and interest to views through the settlement. The form of the village is loose-knit and semi-rural in character, with farmhouses, cottages and farm buildings arranged informally along the main northeast-southwest orientation of the road. Filkins Hall and its extensive grounds form a substantial area in the north eastern corner of the village, and are visually and physically isolated from their vernacular context by a high and continuous stone wall.

Secondary spurs of development occasionally extend from the main thoroughfare, extending the village to the east and west along narrow lanes, tracks and paths. Cottages and farm buildings interspersed with gardens and pasture occur informally along these routes, blurring the transition between the village and the surrounding countryside.



Goodfellows, Filkins

The junctions of the larger of these lanes with the main road have formed a focus for more intense pockets of development. The junction of the lane to Goodfellows (formerly Moat Farm) was originally marked by a village green before the construction of St Peters Church in the 19th Century and the diversion of the main road to the east. The island of land formed around the church creates two narrow, winding lanes, which have an informal and picturesque quality reinforced by the sloping topography of the land towards the brook to the west. Two prominent groups of buildings also define the extent of the village along the main road. These are focused on Pear Tree Farm to the north and Broughton Poggs Mill to the south.

The early development of the village was largely restricted to the western side of the main road. Today a patchwork of small fields and pastures still stretch back from the rear gardens of these dwellings to the watercourses and springs, which define the immediate western environs of the settlement. The present pattern of the village to the east of the road is defined in large part by the boundary set by the line of the Kencot Road . This long straight axis strongly contrasts the form of the settlement to the west with expansive views out over open countryside to the east.

Within the area defined by the two roads, early development was restricted to sporadic groups of buildings interspersed with fields, paddocks and tracks. With the exception of Filkins Hall and its parkland setting, these open areas have gradually been developed and few key spaces now remain. These afford both a reference to the pattern and use of land within the historic settlement, and a richness and complexity to the streetscape.



Horse Chestnuts near the Weaving Centre in Filkins