



## BRIEF HISTORY OF IVINGHOE PARISH

The parish of Ivinghoe is in an area rich in archaeological evidence of prehistoric occupation dating from the Pleistocene and Palaeolithic periods. However, only limited archaeological evidence of prehistoric activity has been discovered in Ivinghoe village itself. The area known as Ivinghoe Beacon, to the north-east of the village, contains a concentration of prehistoric monuments the majority of which date from the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. A geophysical survey in 2000 suggested that the site had multiple usage from the Neolithic period onwards. The most prominent prehistoric monument on the Beacon is the scheduled hillfort.

There is little evidence of a Roman settlement in Ivinghoe village although a number of discoveries do suggest a Roman settlement in the surrounding area. Roman pottery and tile were found at Ward's Combe, further pottery was found above Combe Hole and a fragment of Roman quernstone was found in Ringshall. Ivinghoe and Ivinghoe Aston existed in Saxon times and following the Norman conquest, the Manor of Ivinghoe was given to the Bishop of Winchester by Queen Emma for the sake of the soul of her son King Hardicanute who died in 1042 and the Manor of Ivinghoe Aston, which in Saxon times belonged to Asgar, the Standard Bearer, became part of Geoffrey de Mandeville's Barony. At the time of the Domesday Book of 1086, Ivinghoe was known as Evinghehou. This was thought to mean the *hoh* of Ifa's people, where *hoh* was the Old English word for *heeland*, a term reflecting Ivinghoe's location at the end of a ridge, possessing the distinctive shape of the heel of a shoe.

The earliest surviving fabric within the Grade 1 listed church of St Mary in Ivinghoe dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and at the end of that century, St Mary's was the seventh most valuable church within the county. At the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Bishop of Winchester granted Ivinghoe the right to hold a weekly market within the village as its location made it well placed for trading goods and produce from both the arable land of the vale and the foothills of the wooded Chilterns. Where the market was originally held is not clear although the strange shape of the B488 through the village may reflect the positioning of the market but from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was held on the ground floor of the Town Hall.



In medieval times, the economy of the parish was based on agriculture with the main crops being wheat, barley and oats. There was also a warren in the area which would have provided rabbit meat. The woodlands of the Chilterns were used for pigs and also for timber used in the construction of buildings and for firewood. In the meadowlands of the Vale, hay was grown for animal feed and the streams within the lower part of the parish powered watermills. At Tithe Farm in Ivinghoe Aston, its medieval homestead moat is now protected as an Ancient Monument and nearby to its east house platforms suggest that this is an ancient manorial site.

Ford End Watermill, which is the only surviving watermill within the parish, is probably post-medieval - the oldest verifiable date for the mill being a parish record of 1616. The Pitstone Windmill just to the south of Ivinghoe also dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

During the post-medieval period, the ownership of the Manor of Ivinghoe passed between the Mason, Glenhan and Cheyne families and the Bishopric of Winchester. In the mid 2sixteenth century, by which time the market at Ivinghoe was in decline, the owner of the Ivinghoe estate, Sir John Mason, surrendered the existing rights to hold markets and fairs and successfully applied for new grants to hold a weekly market on a Saturday and two fairs, one in April and one in October. He was also granted the right to hold a summary court on market or fair days.

It is not clear what happened to the parish during the Civil War. There is reference to Ivinghoe village being occupied by Parliamentary Soldiers and attacked by Royalist forces, but there appears to be no historical evidence to support this.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Manor of Ivinghoe became part of the Ashridge Estate. Historic maps dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century show significant development within Ivinghoe with the construction of buildings along Vicarage Lane, and the northern and eastern boundaries of the churchyard. Development was relatively dense around the road junctions and churchyard and less dense at the northern ends of Station Road and the western extremities of the High Street.



The Ivinghoe Aston estate was purchased from Sir P Monoux, Bart., in 1806 by the Earl of Bridgewater thus also becoming part of the Ashridge Estate. The Wesleyan Chapel, a red brick building to hold 200 people in Ivinghoe Aston was erected in 1831 and its attached Sunday School was built in 1869. The mixed *National School* was endowed with £10 per year bequeathed by the Countess of Bridgewater in 1848. Kelly's Directory of Buckinghamshire of 1887 described Ivinghoe Aston as a scattered hamlet.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of considerable change within Ivinghoe and its surrounding area. In 1821 a Parliamentary Enclosure was awarded which coincided with a period of agricultural boom and a dramatic rise in population during the first half of the century. This is reflected in the development of a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings within the village, particularly along Vicarage Lane, Wellcroft and Ladysmith Road.

Sir Walter Scott took the title of his novel, "Ivanhoe" (published in 1820), as well as the name of its hero, from the name of the village of Ivinghoe. However, Scott apparently had forgotten the true name of the place, as he quoted it incorrectly.

The development of the railway in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century helped support the economic boom and provided competition to the canal. The railway provided a direct link between London and Birmingham with stations at Cheddington and Tring. This opened up the market for the importation and exportation of goods and the movement of people. The railway would also have reinforced the importance of Tring as a market town, a factor which may have contributed to the decline of the market at Ivinghoe during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



A period of agricultural depression during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought hardship to the local population of Ivinghoe which was further compounded by a decline in the straw plaiting trade. Straw plaiting had been an important cottage industry in Ivinghoe, Ivinghoe Aston and throughout Buckinghamshire probably since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. The straw plaits were used to make rustic hats and bonnets. The Napoleonic Wars cut off the supply of finer quality plaits from Italy during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century resulting in a boom in the industry in this country. Census figures for the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century show that straw plaiting was a major cottage industry within Ivinghoe and one in which all members of a family were employed. The plaits were sold either to straw plait dealers or at the village market and the decline in the trade during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to competition from cheaper foreign importations may have contributed to the closure of Ivinghoe market at the end of the century.

During the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was some Coprolite mining in the parish. Coprolite is fossilised animal dung, which when burnt releases phosphate for use as a fertiliser. Although there are no entries within the census records around this time of Coprolite miners, it is likely that local farm labourers may have been employed to dig Coprolite during the winter months when there was limited work to be done in the fields. By the late 1870s cheaper imports made the industry uneconomical and local supplies of the material had become exhausted.

The Aylesbury Prune was farmed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century around Ivinghoe and Ivinghoe Aston and the fruit was collected in Edlesborough and Eaton Bray. The skins were used to make blue-grey dye for RAF uniforms in World War II, and in the Luton hat trade. Aylesbury ducks and geese grazed under the damson trees. A significant number of fruit farms in the Parish were auctioned in September 1923 by the Ashridge Estate following the death of the Rt. Hon. Earl Brownlow. These included Ivinghoe Aston Farm, Beacon Farm, Lilac Farm, Orchard Farm, Dibblock and Vine Farm in Ivinghoe Aston.

During the 1920s, a Lime Works were constructed at Ivinghoe Aston Farm and operated until 1961. Eventually, there were 6 kilns and the lime was sold to builders merchants in London. Following the closure of the works, the associated chalk pit has been operated as a waste tip.



There remain over 40 listed buildings/structures across the Parish with Ivinghoe village itself having 19. 17 of these are listed at Grade II and St. Mary's parish church is Grade I. Pendyce House (12-14 Station Road), is Grade II\* as it originated as a 13th century aisled hall making it one of the oldest secular buildings in the county. It contains a base cruck whilst the neighbouring King's Head has three true cruck trusses. Outside of Ivinghoe village, the remaining (Grade II) listed buildings are in Ivinghoe Aston, on the Grand Union Canal, at Seabrook and at Ford End. Those on the canal are primarily 19<sup>th</sup> Century whilst the remainder are largely 17<sup>th</sup> Century/early 18<sup>th</sup> Century in origin.

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