

THE HUMBLE DWELLINGS OF READING

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MMXXV

Humble dwellings: tenements in courts and cottages

In mediaeval and 16th century Reading, before the development of courts, the dwellings that the lower classes inhabited were cottages; almshouses; larger houses or buildings in mixed use where they worked, for example as servants; and rents.

Cottages were on the outskirts and probably had much to do with the countryside as well as the town. Almshouses were linked with the parish churches and were set up as charitable causes by notable people. They housed old widows and widowers. The earliest almshouses in Reading seem to have been those maintained by the Abbey next to St Laurence's Church: in mediaeval times, a section of the Hospitium of Reading Abbey was dedicated to a residence house for 26 poor brothers and sisters, which had its own chapel in the north chancel of St Laurence's Church and was connected to this by a timber cloister*. (Ewelme Almshouses, which are connected to the church of St Mary, are worth seeing, being mediaeval almshouses complete with a timber cloister.)

With regard to the larger houses referred to earlier, some poor people worked in various small-scale industries: in the shop or as servants in a wealthier household, and slept there. Some townhouses would have had an open hall and one presumes the workers would sleep there, but space in a mediaeval town was at a premium and so smoke bays may have displaced open halls somewhat.

Buildings called rents were probably inhabited by the lower classes. They were buildings split into dwellings that were rented out. Rents were owned by the parish and managed by the parish churchwardens. The high number of rents in the parish of St. Giles in the early 16th century can be seen in John Man's History and Antiquities of the Borough of Reading (1816) in which is copied an ancient rent-roll of 1518 which lists all the rents in the Parish and the income from them. An inquiry of 1599 into the state of the rents of the parish is also reproduced in Man's History. The following description from 1599 of the New Rents on the west side of London Street is particularly interesting:

“Two capital messuages adjoining together, on the west side of the said London Street, in the several tenures of R. Green and J West, with an inner court, wherein is made and contained divers small dwelling places, inhabited by poor people, and thereunto, likewise, a backside belonging, now divided into small gardens, all which last mentioned dwelling places, and gardens, are now commonly called the Church New-Rents.”

The New Rents were demolished in 1753 and the present handsome townhouses, 54-58 London Street erected. On the other side of the street, opposite the New Rents were some more rents, also called the New Rents. 49-53 London Street now occupies their site. The present building may date from this time.

In the post mediaeval period, a combination of factors led to the building of courts of small houses. Shrinking household sizes led to courts being built. Also, an influx in people from the countryside due to the increased mechanisation of agriculture led to a demand for cheap houses. The owners of plots of land and builders catered for this by erecting rows of cottages behind the capital messuage (the principal building fronting the street). This would have been highly profitable for the builder.

* See Reading Abbey by JB Hurrey, 1901.

The earliest buildings in a court seem to have been those of Steeple Place off London Street whose timber-framed construction is said to have been of the 17th century. However, the author believes they may be of a slightly later 18th century date. The building of courts reached a peak in the late 18th- early 19th century, when the population of Reading shot up, but Reading's boundary did not much expand. The ancient street plan was not much altered or expanded until the 1830s.

During and after the Napoleonic wars, it was remarkable that so much was going on in the way of building. The following is from Reading Seventy Years Ago, A Record of Events From 1813 to 1819, describing the events of 1814:

“It was predicted that when peace came Reading would revert to her original size; that there being no longer any fear of invasion, the people would resort to the sea-shore and leave many houses without inhabitant; but, instead of this, others are still erecting and occupied as soon as they are finished”.

This was so with the houses of all classes, not only the residences of the upper classes, which is what is described above.

Courts ceased to be built by the mid 19th century, when terraces of houses were built further out of town on pre-existing roads or new roads. Naturally, this had happened before, yet not for the lower classes.

Some streets of terraces directly replaced courts. Short Court on the north side of Church Street was replaced by Letcombe Street around the early 1850s.

Many courts were destroyed when a new building was built fronting the street which no longer had a carriageway or passage to the court. Some courts were cleared for slum clearance, such as those of Coley, and others became depopulated and so were demolished.

Some streets hung onto their courts for longer. From the late 19th century, with big developments and the destruction of the old burgage plots, courts in some of the streets where this happened the most, such as in Broad Street, disappeared, whereas, in streets such as London Street, in which the old buildings remained for longer, some courts also survived for longer. For this reason, the author has included a list of courts off London Street as an example of the number, age and character of the courts of Reading.

A List of Courts in London Street

East Side:

1. Vine Court. Vine Court was accessed from Queen's Road. Ideally, it should be omitted from this list. It seems to have had seven tenements when surveyed in 1853 for the Reading Board of Health Map.

2. Sims Court (Plate 1). Sims Court is behind 39 London Street and 41 London Street. The through-passage is of small light timber-framing with brick infill and this was probably constructed in the mid 18th century when 39 London Street, formerly William Smith's, was rebuilt. On the south side of the court, there were two pairs of tenements: a pair of incongruous narrow 3-storey 18th century houses (1-2) situated to the west of a pair of late 18th/early 19th century cottages (3-4). The last inhabited house in Sims Court was Number 2 but it ceased to be between 1949 and 1952.

3. Steeple Place (Plate 2-3). Steeple Place was the courtyard to the rear of 49-53 London Street. Before its name changed in the mid 19th century, it was called Steeple Court. It is

listed here as Steeple Place as the author has taken care to name the subjects of this work as they are called now or before they were demolished as opposed to their ancient name. It was named after the steeple of St Giles Church. Indeed, the court has associations with St Giles and parish: 49-53 London Street was owned by the parish of St Giles and managed by the churchwardens as the New Rents in the 16th century, not to be confused with the other New Rents opposite on the site of 54-58 London Street.

49-53 London Street is a timber-framed building dating from the 16th or 17th century. It was refronted in the 18th or early 19th century.

Between the two shopfronts on London Street is a through-passage of light timber-framing. It leads to what was Steeple Place. A brick path led to three old cottages. To the left was an old streetlamp which probably remained in that position until 1985 when it would have been removed. The three old cottages in the court were of the late 17th or possibly 18th century. (see page 21 of *The Parish Of S. Giles-In-Reading* by Leslie Harman. Harman writes of the cottages that “most of the movements are known from the 18th century.”)

Of the three cottages, Number 1 was to the north and 3 to the south. Number 1 Steeple Place had a big lath and plaster dormer to the east. 1 and 2 Steeple Place shared a large central chimney which was a nice feature. The cottages’ west elevation was mainly of brick although Number 1 had timber-framing, and to the rear, all of the cottages were timber-framed. They were built with small, light framing, characteristic of the 17th century. Number 2 became uninhabited in the early 20th century but Numbers 1 and 3 remained occupied until the mid 20th century. Number 3 remained occupied until between 1952 and 1954.

After this, the court seems to have become the garden of 49 London Street, owned by Gerald Tooby, an artist, who owned the house and court probably until he died in 1985, after which date 49-53 London Street was partially rebuilt. When this happened, new buildings were erected in Steeple Place but alas they are hardly as beautiful as what came before and are far nearer to 49-53 London Street.

As a consequence of the court’s having been a picturesque old corner, it was relatively well documented by the photographer and artist. This has enabled the author to write a description of the cottages. Frank Corbitt and Reginald Ford drew the court and their works can be seen in Reading Library. Allen William Seaby painted the court and the painting is in the possession of Reading Museum. One imagines Gerald Tooby also made an artwork of the court.

4. Fountain Court, anciently Font Court. This was behind the 15th century 83-85 London Street which was demolished in 1971 and was so named because of its having been behind the Fountain Inn at 83 London Street. There seem to have been two houses on the south of the court. Fountain Court became unoccupied between 1933 and 1934. It is notable for having been the site of St Giles Infants School which was opened in about 1840. The By 1971 when the court went, it seems it was more of a garden.

5. Hand Court. This was behind 107 and 109-111 London Street and was probably destroyed in the late 19th century with the erection of modern buildings fronting the street.

6. Small’s Court. This was behind 109-111 London Street and 113-117 London Street. The author does not know the date of the houses but knows that the court existed in the mid 19th century. There seem to have originally been more than this number but by 1895 there were 11 occupied houses numbered 1-11. By 1939, there were six occupied houses (5-10). By 1958, there were four inhabited houses (6-9) and in 1960, only Number 6 was

inhabited. By 1962, the court seems to have been completely unoccupied.

7. Cocks Court. This was listed in the Post Office directory of Reading (1842-3) as having been between 70 and 72 London Street. This was before the renumbering of the street. It seems Cocks Court's entrance was between the Anchor and 123 London Street. The author presumes it ceased to exist in the mid 19th century.

Cocks Court was probably named after James Cocks, a fishmonger, of Cocks's Reading Sauce fame, who occupied 71 London Street in the early 19th century. This adjoined 72 London Street, inhabited about the same time in the 1820s by Joseph Huntley of Huntley and Palmers fame. The author acknowledges the discrepancies and confusion arising from the old numbering and his various sources.

West Side:

1. Bath Court (Plate 4). This was accessed through a carriageway under 44 London Street, a building of the 18th century or earlier with a mansard roof, employing lath and plaster. It was rebuilt in the 1970s in a similar style. To the north, Bath Court was accessed from Mill Lane.

Bath Court seems to have existed in 1641, as in the Royal Berkshire Archives there is a quitclaim entitled: "Quitclaim of a capital messuage on the south or west side of London Street, Reading St Giles, and a lane or way leading from Mill Lane into the back yard of the messuage." This seems to describe the court. There were probably no houses in it then.

The court's name comes from the Baths which were owned by Dr. John Hooper in the early 19th century. The hot, cold, and shower baths were opened by the doctor in 1818. They were in a building in the west of the court which survived into the 20th century, numbered 10 Bath Court. It seems to have been of an early 18th century date with an exposed queen post roof truss on its south end above a flint wall and with a two storey brick façade to the east (Plate 4). A very detailed plan of the court and baths from 1819 is in the Royal Berkshire Archives. It shows the four tenements on the north side of the court, which also survived into the 20th century. The plan was drawn for Dr. Hooper.

The baths continued until about 1894. On the north side of the court, running east from the baths were the four tenements already mentioned, numbered 2-8 Bath Court. They were small, possibly early 18th century houses and are seen in the photograph of about 1935, reproduced on Plate 4. Between 4 and 6 Bath Court, in the middle of the row, was a central passage which led to another tenement behind to the north. 1-5 Bath Court were on the south side and survived later than the rest of the buildings. 2-8 and 10 Bath Court were vacated by 1936 and probably went soon after that to make way for a factory, and 1-5 were vacated by 1958 and later demolished.

3. Dress or Forty Court. This was behind the modern day 78 London Street. It seems that when 78 London Street was rebuilt in the mid 19th century, the court ceased to exist.

4. Post Boy Court. This was behind the modern day 82 London Street. There were 4 or 5 houses in the court. It was named after the pub which it was behind. When the present pair, 82-4 London Street, were built, probably in the late 1870s, after 82 and 84 London Street were surveyed in 1876 for the OS map of 1879, the court disappeared.

5. Home Court, alternatively Holme Court. The court's entrance was between 100 and 102 London Street. There seem to have been 9 tenements in the court, this number increasing to

13 by about 1900. It ceased to have been occupied between 1904 and 5. The modern buildings which now occupy its site are also called Home Court.

Friar Street has the last remaining court in Reading with cottages still present, though not inhabited: Fife Court, to the rear of The Bugle on the south side of the street. The two or three remaining former cottages are early 19th century. They are of two storeys and have burned header bricks. The sash windows are very pretty. However, they are now boarded up. The surviving cottages were incorporated into the Bugle in the early 20th century. The court became uninhabited between 1933 and 1934. With the construction of an hotel on this site, only the facades of the former cottages shall remain. The cottage the furthest south, it seems, shall not be retained in any way. Here is a link to a report by RBC on locally listing the Bugle and the cottages: <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/documents/s22948/The%20Bugle%20144%20Friar%20Street%20Local%20Listing%20report.pdf>

Southampton Street no longer has any courts. Manor Court (Plate 5) features in a book of drawings at the library by Ida M Tunbridge, so for this reason, the author shall write of it. Manor Court's entrance was between 32 and 34 Southampton Street, 34 being the main section of the Red Lion. It had seven houses.

Also on Southampton Street was the row of eight almshouses in Almshouse Court, founded in 1617 by Bernard Harrison and rebuilt in 1816. They were demolished at some point in the 20th century.

St Giles Parish Workhouse (Plates 6-7), also known as St Giles's Buildings and Chesterman's Buildings, was on the west side of Southampton Street, set back from the street. It was built in 1746. The façade was symmetrical with a classical central two storey porch. Behind this was a courtyard of 15 dwellings with attractive casement windows. It continued to be occupied until between 1954 and 56, and was demolished soon after in August 1958. By the 20th century, it was no longer a workhouse; it was just a collection of dwellings in a courtyard.

The names of courts are quite interesting. Some streets had courts whose names mostly conformed to one theme, for instance Silver Street's courts were for the most part named after birds, with courts such as Robin, Martin, Sparrow, Hawk, Crane, Linnet, Starling, and Swan. The author does not know the reason for this.

The northern section of Southampton Street, called Horn Street in the early 19th century, had grand aspirational names such as Baron, Manor (mentioned earlier), Earl, King, and Mitre. It is funny to think that the southern section of Southampton Street, however, had courts named after flowers such as Rose, Pink, and Lily.

Also, mention must be made of Coley's courts with tree names, between Coley Place and Coley Street.

Many courts' names were so called because of their position, e.g. West Court behind the row of 17th century houses on the west side of St Mary's Butts, or because of a trade or name of a business nearby, e.g. China Court, Minster Street; Bear Square, behind the Bear on Bridge Street; or Bell Court on Church Street, the Bell having been a few doors down from the court. The insulting custom of naming streets or in this case courts after what was destroyed to make space for them is by no means a modern invention. In Reading Seventy Years Ago, a record of events from 1813 to 1819, the following is said as having happened in 1813: "Champion & Co have finished their houses in Broad Street, and gave the court the name of "Laud place," to

perpetuate the memory of Archbishop Laud, who was born in one of the houses which they pulled down.” The house in question was, as can be seen on Plate 3 of Man’s History and Antiquities of Reading, built of brick, symmetrical and had a central dutch gable. It may have been a bit later than would have allowed Laud to have been born there in 1573. The court was destroyed in 1901 with the Queen Victoria Street development.

Many less major streets had rows of cottages along them, and the ensuing examples conform to this. The cottages mentioned here are of three types: very old dwellings of a unique nature, built as cottages; rows of cottages built at one time, of the 18th and 19th centuries; and those which were divided to form cottages. Those that were built in a uniform manner at a single date can be similar to houses in courts, with the only exception being that they are along a street.

In John Man’s History of Reading, Appendix A is dedicated to a copy of Reading’s governing charter of Charles the First, and a paragraph of this relates to cottages: (The author has omitted some of the unnecessary sections of the text. They are marked by three dashes.)

“And, whereas certain covetous persons, preferring their own private benefit to the public good of the said borough, have built, and daily do build divers cottages within the said borough, --- and have subdivided, and daily do subdivide, several messuages and houses fairly built, fitting for dwellings of men of the better sort, in small tenements, or rather receptacles and harbours for poor people, not only those that are natives, and people of the same borough, but also foreigners flocking thither from other places, and coming privately and intruding into the same borough, to the great grievance and manifest impoverishment of that borough, unless it be prevented by our princely care, as we are informed. --- we do declare, that, for ever hereafter, no cottage be erected, no messuage be divided into two tenements, nor two families live asunder in one messuage either so divided or not divided, upon any demise, grant, or contract hereafter to be made within the said borough, --- and if any one presume to offend, in any case, contrary to the form and effect of these letters thereof; --- , he shall incur the pains and penalties to be ordained by the mayor, aldermen, and assistants of the borough aforesaid for the time being, or the greater number of them, in their assemblies hereafter mentioned in that behalf.”

Evidently, as with so many of these planning policies of earlier ages, this did not work.

Abbey wall (Plate 8) was a row of 15 old brick cottages adjoining the Abbey Ruins to the south of Abbot’s Walk. They incorporated or abutted the south wall of the Abbey frater or refectory, some of which can be seen today. On the western end were low two storey cottages of the 18th or 19th century and on the eastern end, there were some irregular taller late 18th or century houses with silver and red bricks, and a double pile roof. The row was demolished in 1927 and two pairs of new semi-detached houses erected. See The Town of Reading and its Abbey by Cecil Slade.

East Street (Plate 9); Silver Street and Mount Pleasant (Plate 10); and to a certain extent Church Street (Plates 11-12) were streets which were lined with small old houses at the commencement of the 20th century.

East Street is a back street. It had entrances to the burgage plots on London Street for vehicle access and had much stabling, alongside cottages. All of East Street’s old houses are long gone and in their place are now flats, car parks and commercial buildings.

Silver Street and Mount Pleasant had some old rows of houses, some of which were timber-framed. One of the most evocative and picturesque rows on Silver Street was 64-66

and 68-70 Silver Street (Plate 10) which were two late 15th or early 16th century continuous jetty houses, each split into two cottages. They were demolished after 1912 when Ida M Tunbridge drew them. They occupied the site, excavated in 2019, where the remains of a mediaeval tilery were found.

In *Kennet Country* by Fred Thacker (1932) are the following lines on Silver Street: "Therein stand many ancient houses of the sieviers: the old basket makers; heavily eaved: now upon their lintels are scrawled in emasculate Latin the names of exiles from Italy."

Church Street, running between London Street and Southampton Street, is not changed so greatly as the other two streets. Old houses still grace it but the 17th century rough cast cottages of timber-framing on the north side which are shown in Plate 10 were unoccupied by 1939 and subsequently razed. They are mentioned in the VCH of Berks Vol. 3. At the east corner of Letcombe Street, on the west end of the row was the Bell at 18-20 Church Street, which closed in 1928.

On the other side of Letcombe Street from the Bell, there was a cottage of the 17th or 18th century with a timber-framed façade and with brick infill between the panels which was probably demolished in 1958 along with the other buildings on the corner of Church Street and Letcombe Street to make way for a garden in memory of Alfred W Milward. It seems a disused section of St Giles Churchyard was also swallowed up in the memorial garden. The only picture of it the author has found was drawn by Frank Corbitt in 1940 (Plate 11).

Strangely, in the drawing, it seems not to have a door, the space where it should be being bricked up. It seems it had become part of the 19th century 22 Church Street which was in front of it. Prior to being on the southern end of Letcombe Street, it seems the cottage would have been in Short Court which was replaced by Letcombe Street in the mid 19th century. The 1853 Board of Health map, which can be seen in the central library, seemingly shows Letcombe Street being constructed, with the north end yet to be completed.

Another cottage of a similar size and date was until very recently 38 Southampton Street, a tiny timber-framed cottage of the 17th or 18th century. 38 Southampton Street was originally a pair with 36 Southampton Street. 36 Southampton Street was incorporated into the mid 19th century Red Lion in the 1930s and a parapet constructed which partially obscured the shared roof line. They shared a central chimney. The committee report by RBC on its proposed demolition says the following of 38 Southampton Street:

"Internally there are large bressumer with supporting timbers and ceiling/floor joists visible at ground floor level all painted bright blue. The first floor front bedroom has a large bressumer with ceiling/floor joists visible; these have been painted bright blue. The remains of a fireplace are visible at this level. The rear bedroom has no visible timber framing, probably due to its enclosure in plasterboard.

Windows have been replaced with modern casements. The attic level, within the roof, has been boarded out and the roof structure is not visible. The whole first floor level floor (sic) is uneven and sloping and the passageways and doors have the character of a small cottage."

The features of this description can be seen in the photographs at the end of the very detailed report by Alison de Turberville of Oxford Archaeology.

Given 38 Southampton Street, and indeed The Red Lion's age and architectural interest it is unforgivable that they were demolished in 2021. This is just one example of RBC's continuing disregard for the heritage of Reading. That they weren't listed, as a result of arguably warped ideas with regard to selection, is also a matter of shame.

One of the most deplorable instances of the destruction of a row of cottages occurred in 1960 when Finch's Buildings, formerly Lady Vachell's House (Plates 13-15), were demolished to make way for a car park. Finch's Buildings were a row of cottages of brick, stone and timber, possibly built as a house for the Vachell family. They were at the corner of Hosier Street and Grape Passage*. Opinions differ as to the age of the house, with dates ascribed to it ranging from the mid 16th century to the early 17th century. A will of 1611 probably refers to it, but this has been detailed before, notably in an article in the Berkshire Chronicle by Ernest Domer from the 30th October 1959, which the author has seen in Reading Library. If the house was built for the Vachell family, it would not have been difficult to obtain the stones from the Abbey for the construction of the house: Thomas Vachell was the supervisor of the Abbey after the dissolution. In the 18th century, it was a silk factory, and the weavers' cottages on the western end (nos. 10-12 and 14-20) may have been built then, in the mid 18th century. In the late 18th century, Henry Finch bought the house from Hayward Garlike and from Finch, the building got its name. It is likely they were divided into cottages then and that Finch Court (a row of cottages opposite Finch's Buildings facing it across a "green" was also built then. In the 1790s it became a RC presbytery and some French priests, fled from the Revolution, lived there until the early 19th century. By the 20th century, it was a slum, and the markers of this can be seen in the photographs in plates 12-13.

An attempt was made in 1959 to preserve it as a museum. The author finds himself imagining a delightful place, similar to Newbury's West Berkshire Museum. In 1960, it was demolished and in its place a car park was laid. The area was cleared about 10 years after Finch's Buildings's demise for the IDR and associated developments. The cottages' site is now about where the IDR is now, near the Hexagon.

The rear on Hosier Street had few windows, and those that existed were narrow and small. It incorporated stonework from the Abbey and had modern buttresses. (A surviving house with carved stonework from the Abbey incorporated into its rear wall is 45 Castle Street.)

The front was mainly of brick but had stonework from the Abbey on the ground floor. It had tile-hung gables and delightful brick dripstones over the windows. The windows were casements for the most part. It had some of the oldest brickwork in Reading. Its nature was rather irregular. (Some other ancient bricks of the 15th century can still be seen on the north stair turret of the surviving portion of the Hospitium in St Laurence's Churchyard.) There was a sitting chimney on the eastern end at the confluence of Grape Passage and Hosier Street.

The silk weavers' cottages at the western end had mansard roofs mansard casement windows.

An early 17th century cottage of timber-framing behind the early 16th century 35 St Mary's Butts still exists. It is of light timber-framing with a central transom and with brick infill above a brick base. A photograph of it by Gareth Thomas can be seen on Reading Library's online catalogue. In Royal Reading's Colourful Past by Leslie North, there is a drawing of the cottage and the weatherboarded and timber-framed rear of 35 St Mary's Butts. Leslie North writes that it is "a rambling one-storey structure known up to late last century (19th) as 'the gaoler's house'".

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Old Reading Buildings as they appeared in the years of 1939 to 40 by Frank Corbitt. An unpublished book of drawings in Reading Central Library.

A book of pencil drawings by Ida M. Tunbridge, 1912 and later. An unpublished book of pencil drawings in Reading Central Library.

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Cottage to rear of 35 St Mary's Butts:

Royal Reading's Colourful Past by Leslie North, 1979.

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS:

All the photographs and drawings, save my own sketches, are courtesy of Reading Library's Local Studies Illustrations Collection.



PLATE 1: Sims Court. Above: the author's sketch based on a photograph of the court of 1943, looking west. The nearest cottages, on the left, were the early 19th century 3-4 Sims Court. Further on is the 18th century pair, 1-2 Sims Court. Below: Sims Court looking east in the late 1920s by Reginald Ford. Here is a link to the photograph which the author's sketch is based on: [https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15527?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%20+Reading+\(Place\)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15527?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%20+Reading+(Place)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421)

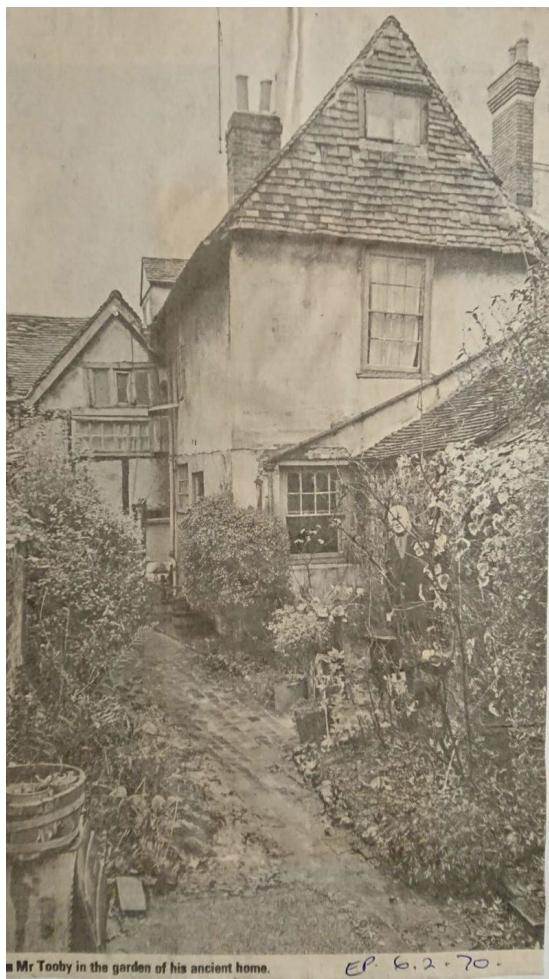


PLATE 2: Steeple Place. Above: Steeple Place showing the west side of the cottages in 1940 by Frank Corbitt. Below: the rear of 49 London Street, with Gerald Tooby in his garden. By this point, the cottages were uninhabited and were most probably demolished.



PLATE 3: The author's sketch based on two photographs of the rear of the old cottages in Steeple Place. The dormer of Number 1 Steeple Place is seen to be of lath and plaster as the condition is so bad. Part of the hipped roof of the dormer is caved in. Note the light small framing which they are constructed of. The higher drawing also shows the end of the cross-wing of 49 London Street.

Here is a link to the photographs: [https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15544?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%20c+Reading+\(Place\)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15544?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%20c+Reading+(Place)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421)



PLATE 4: Bath Court in about 1935 with 2-8 Bath Court of the early-mid 18th century on the right and 10 Bath Court, formerly the baths on the left. Note the queen post roof truss. In the background is the chimney of the tram depot. This may have been taken soon before the houses were demolished. By 1936, they were unoccupied.



PLATE 5: Manor Court, Southampton Street, drawn by Ida M Tunbridge in 1912. It was behind 32 Southampton Street and 34 Southampton Street, the Red Lion, which was demolished in the last few years. The chimney stack on the right is that of the Red Lion. On the left is the row of houses which ran west in the court. There were about seven of them in total.



PLATE 6: Two sketches by the author based on old photographs of St Giles's Buildings. Above: after a photo of the façade facing Southampton Street in 1943. At this point, some of the dwellings were still inhabited. It was set back from Southampton Street. The entrance portico has something of a grand Elizabethan house in the author's opinion. In the background is the rear of a house on Henry Street. Below: the courtyard in 1958. By this point it was unoccupied. It is evident the workhouse deteriorated between 1943 and 1958. Here are some links to the photographs:

[https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15538?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%2c+Reading+\(Place\)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15538?bc=0%7c10%7c21%7c22&i=0&place=Reading%2c+Reading+(Place)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=421)



PLATE 7: A 1912 pencil drawing by Ida M. Tunbridge of St Giles's Buildings, looking east towards the entrance gateway.

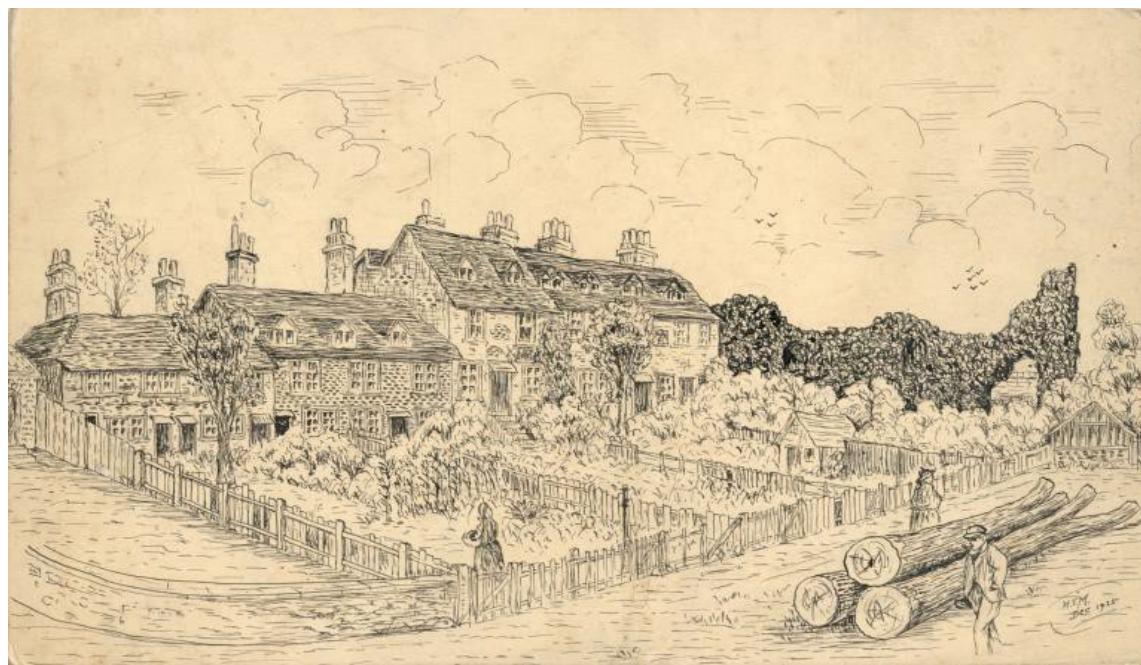


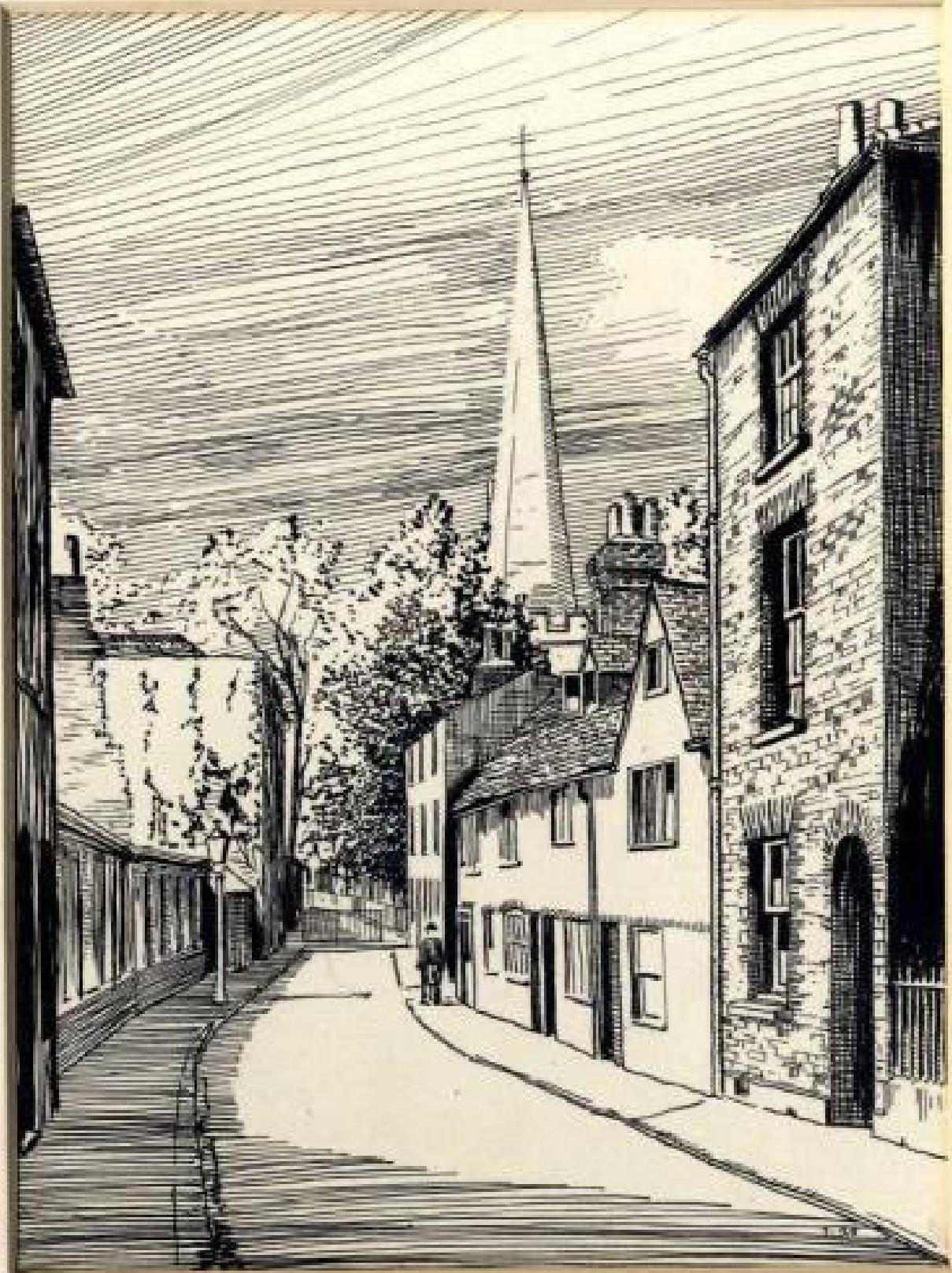
PLATE 8: Abbey Wall. Above: A drawing of 1925 of the row. Below: A 1920s photograph of some of the abutting higher and lower rows of cottages.



PLATE 9: An early 18th century row of four houses on East Street in 1940 by Frank Corbitt.



PLATE 10: Silver Street. Above: 64-70 Silver Street, on the West Side of Silver Street in 1891. This was a pair of late 15th or early 16th century continuous jetty houses with a queen post roof. Below: 64-70 Silver Street in 1912, drawn by Ida M. Tunbridge. On the left is the entrance to Hawk Court which contained 9 tenements in 1853.



Church Street

PLATE 11: 17th century cottages in Church Street, drawn by Reginald Ford in 1929. The early 19th century house on the far right still exists.

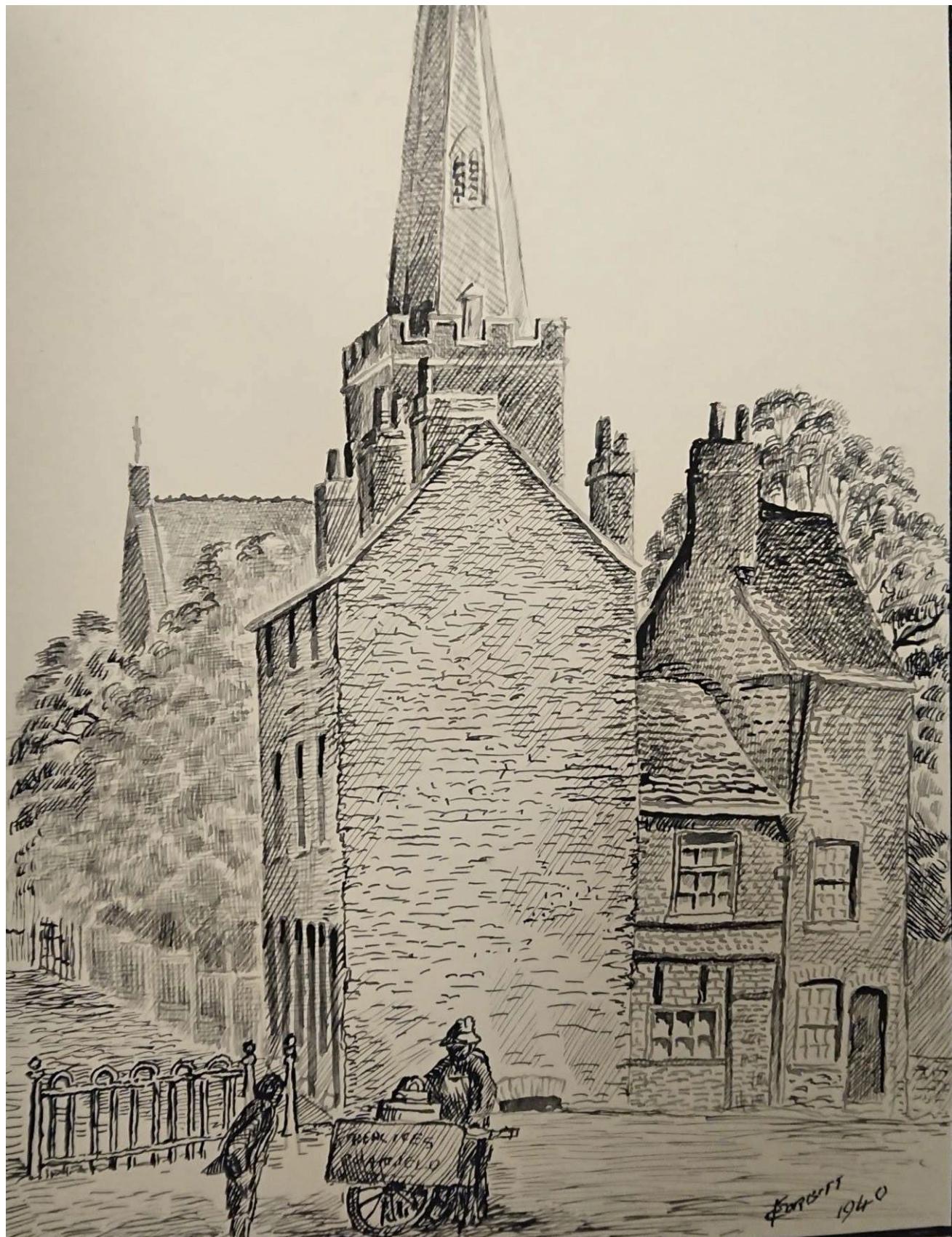


PLATE 12: A tiny timber-framed cottage on Letcombe Street adjoining the taller 54 Letcombe Street, seen on the right of the drawing. On the left is the entrance to St Giles's church yard. Note the fact that the cottage's door has seemingly been bricked up. By this point, it may have been incorporated into the 19th century building on the left, 22 Church Street. This was drawn by Frank Corbitt in 1940, and can be seen in a book of his drawings in the central library.



PLATE 13: Finch's Buildings. Above: The eastern end of the cottages from Hosier Street at the entrance to Grape Passage, shortly before their demolition in 1960. Note the sitting chimney, somewhat obscured by the lean-to. Below: the fronts of the cottages from their gardens in 1960. Further on from the 16th or 17th century cottages are the 18th century weavers' cottages with mansard roofs.



PLATE 14: Finch's Buildings. Above: the fronts of the cottages from Grape Passage in 1957. Below: the author's attempt at a sketch based on a photograph of 1944 of the façade of Finch's Buildings. Note the use of Abbey stones on the ground floor. Here is a link to the relevant photograph:

[https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15401?bc=0%7c10%7c17%7c18&i=0&place=Reading%2c+Reading+\(Place\)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=419](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/englands-places/card/15401?bc=0%7c10%7c17%7c18&i=0&place=Reading%2c+Reading+(Place)&searchtype=englandsplaces&terms=reading&wm=1&g=419)



Finch Buildings -
(Front view) 1912

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PLATE 15: Finch's Buildings in 1912 by Ida M. Tunbridge.



PLATE 16: Finally, though not mentioned in the text, here is a drawing by Frank Corbitt from 1940 of Mill Court, off Mill Lane. Though the drawing is quite stylised, the Corbitt's ascription of circa 1700 seems to be relatively near the truth. This is the only image the author has seen of this cottage.