

The land before it was allotments is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1085. Before 1066 it was part of the Manor of Little Kimble under the ownership of Bictric – who was almost certainly killed at the Battle of Hastings. As William the Conqueror's cavalry advanced on Berkhamstead they destroyed the village and manor of Little Kimble. Thurstan "Son of Rolf" was then given the manor but rented it out to Albert a local Saxon.

Before long the manor was acquired by Hugh de Bolbec who built a castle at Little Kimble, of which nothing remains except the double motte – two mounds on which the castle was built, along with a chapel which acted as the church for Little Kimble. The de Bolbecs sided with Henry III's brother-in-law Simon de Montfort who tried to seize power but when de Montfort was killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265 the castle was demolished. The only thing that survived was the simple stone font which is now in Little Kimble Church.

Little Kimble's luck did not change, unfortunately, and in 1315 following a disastrous famine the village and manor were abandoned leaving the new church half-built. The land in Clanking was acquired by the Molins family as part of the Manor of Fennells Grove the manor house of which stood near Grove Farm – you can see the front part of the moat in the form of a long, deep, narrow pond. The Molins displeased King Edward III and he seized the manor and gave it to his spoiled eldest daughter – who lived most of her life in France.

At this time there was a terrible outbreak of plague which killed a third of the population of England. As a result land became cheap as there were fewer people to work and the land upon which the allotments are situated was sold to local peasants who set up two "messuages" – smallholdings with cottages.

The owners probably still worked for the Lord of the Manor – but for cash rather than to pay their rent.

By 1420 the Lord of Fennell's Grove was King Henry V's younger brother John Duke of Bedford. Hardly anyone has heard of him but he was effectively king of England for 15 years because his brother died leaving a baby son and John was appointed regent. He spent most of his time in France and won a remarkable victory over the French and Scots and their Italian mercenaries at the Battle of Verneuil. He may have visited the manor as what is now Doe Hill used to be called 'Dog Hill' because his hunting kennels were there and there used to be a warren by Chequers Common called 'John, Duke of Bedford's Warren'.

After John died the manor passed to his young wife, Jaquetta, Duchess of Luxemburg. When she died King Henry VI granted it to Robert Whittingham who renamed it "Whittingham's" after himself. He backed the wrong side in the wars of the Roses and lost the manor. The land in Little Kimble parish went to the De Vere Earls of Oxford but the messuages would have stayed with their owners. Little Kimble manor then went via the Spencer Family to the Bernard family.

In 1812 the village was enclosed which meant the common land and open fields were split up. The owners of the messuages would have got a small share of this land. Allotments were set up to help the poor but were later sold in exchange for a ration of coal for the village poor



The
Enclosure Map for 1797 to
1812

The allotments were then
two fields numbered 83

The red line is the parish
boundary

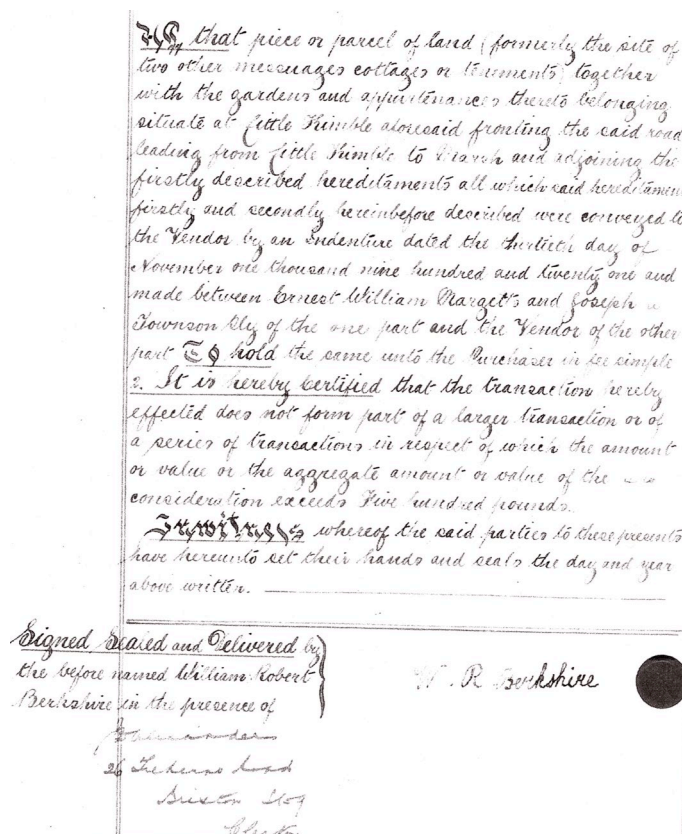
The allotments were owned by one person by then. The parish boundary is the hedge beyond the allotment between the owners of "The Laurels" and Martin Saunders' land. The long narrow field behind the allotment was part of a droveway where cattle were driven from the Welsh borders up to Smithfield for slaughter. In 1797 30,000 cattle left Hereford to be driven - mostly up to London. When Hartwell was enclosed Marsh Road was built as a turnpike so that the drovers could be charged for using it. There used to be a drover's pub in Marsh called the 'Old Queen's Head'. The cattle then went to the Great Kimble pond to be watered and then up onto Chequers Common to graze or onto Swinegate Common - now the Whiteleaf Golf Club Golf course. When railways were introduced they took the trade - and from the 1870's refrigerated meat was imported.

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the government ordered land to be set aside for allotments but in 1919 this went back to the original owners, leaving Little Kimble Parish [combined with Great Kimble Parish in 1885] with no allotments.

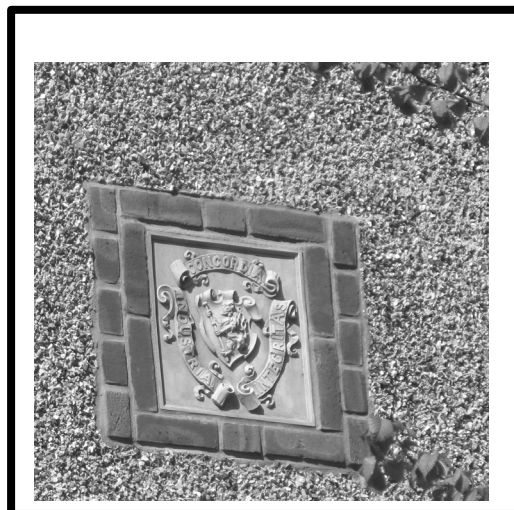
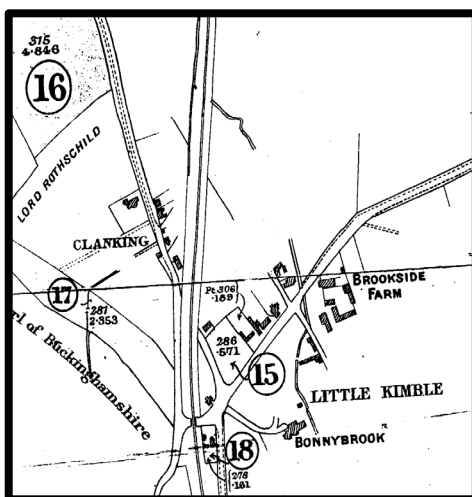
The land on which the allotments now are was bought by the Rothschild family in the 1880's and two houses - Jasmine Cottage and Thrift cottage were built. Ferdinand de Rothschild junior was killed in the First World War while serving in Palestine with the Bucks Hussars. Serving alongside him were John Allen, Robert Chilton, Fred Chilton, Albert Clarke, Harold Darville, John Langston and Herbert Pitcher - all from Kimble.

When in 1920 it was decided to buy land and create allotments the Rothschilds supported this and a number of other projects in the parish in memory of Ferdinand. Exactly how this was done is a puzzle because the land had been conveyanced to two local men - Ernest Margetts and William Townson and they in turn sold it for £500 in November 1921 to a company set up to run the allotments.

Allotment holders bought shares in the company but also paid rent and sold the shares back to the company when they finished. This seems to have been to prevent the allotments being sold on at a later date and for tax reasons.



The legal document confirming the sale of the land, signed by the Rothschild's solicitor. The allotment is a company and all allotment holders have shares in the company, but they cannot be sold to anyone else. The registration of the company is an ongoing cost but rents are so low and there are so few expenses which are not covered by voluntary actions by the members that a small profit usually accrues, year on year.



The map from 1912 shows the land as belonging to the Rothschilds. One of their Coats of Arms is on the side of Jasmine Cottage

The allotments were very successful throughout the inter-war period but it was in the years of the Second World War and the harsh 'austerity' period afterwards that they had their heyday. During that period pigs, goats and poultry were kept and a pram was used to deliver a litter of pigs on one occasion. The rules were tightened up in 1942, so that not one inch of land was wasted.



Charlie Adams, Ron Miller [the milkman] and another member at work in 1942. In the background are elm trees which were a feature of the parish but died out in the 1970's.

The allotments played a large part in the feeding of the village in the 1939 – 1945 Second World War. Things became worse in the period immediately after the war – especially in the bitter winter of 1947 when snow lay on the ground for months. When the thaw came the allotments were flooded.

Rules & Regulations

OF THE

Kimble Allotment Society, Ltd.

- (1) The Allotments shall be cultivated in a good husband-like manner, to the satisfaction of the Committee; if not so cultivated, the Committee shall impose such fine as they think adequate, or give the occupier notice to give it up at once.
- (2) No rubbish shall be deposited on the cartways or paths of the Allotments. Any member so doing will be liable to a fine of 2/6 for each offence.
- (3) No dogs shall be allowed in the Allotments except on lead; a penalty of 2/6 will be imposed on the member offending.
- (4) All transfers or business relating to the Allotments must be submitted to the Committee by the Secretary; also any member wishing to give up any land must give at least six months notice in writing to the Secretary; also the Committee reserve the right to pay out the shares capital of any member when he gives up occupation of the land.
- (5) No member to hold more than 50 poles of land if there should be any other application for it. Any member holding more than 50 poles must be prepared to give up land at short notice if required to do so.
- (6) Any person taking an Allotment must take up at least two shares, £1 0s. 0d., in the Society upon entering, and make a further payment of 10/- annually until they hold three shares, £1 10s. 0d., for each 10 poles held, unless they hold over 40 poles of land, but any member may take up to 20 shares, £10 0s. 0d., in the Society, subject to the consent of the Committee.
- (7) No children allowed on the Allotments unless with a member, or sent there on business by a member.
- (8) Any complaints must be sent to the Secretary in writing, any such complaint or any dispute will be settled by the Committee, whose decision shall be final.

By Order of the Committee.

May 5th, 1942.

Mark & Lee, Printers, Aylesbury.

These were the revised rules in wartime

The allotments remained an important part of village life through to the 1980's but low food prices and increasing car use and the attractions of TV caused a decline and allotments were made available to people from outside the parish.

In the present century there have been changes in the allotments. We have said goodbye to many stalwarts who gave years of work on the allotments. Doug and Jean Shirley, Jimmy and Dorothy Malin, Tim Rooke, and Dick Green have left us and Colin Wood has retired. We still have some of the stalwarts – Betty, Ed, Janice, Martin, Vicky and Steve and Keith – star of the show bench.[Inevitably I will have missed someone really important from the other part of the allotment to where I am] We have been very lucky to welcome Terry and Lesley and Debbie and Mike as our neighbours at Thrift Cottage and Eadon. Just recently there has been an influx of new blood – welcome! One thing I regret having gone – victim of Health and Safety - is the November 5th bonfire that my grandchildren enjoyed so much.

We are very lucky to be able to rely on people to roll up their sleeves and get things done. A special mention should be made of Martin Saunders whose men come and do

the mowing and who arranged for the water troughs. Thanks to Terry for fixing the leak and to David for taking the responsibilities of Treasurer and Secretary.