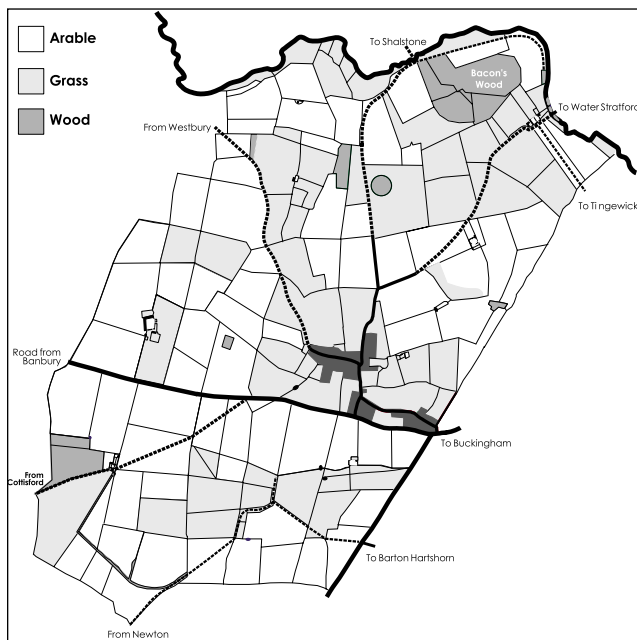


🌀 The Parish Land 🌀

The greatest change in the parish landscape in recent centuries was the sweeping away of the medieval open fields and their replacement by rectangular hedged fields in the late seventeenth century. The formal agreement for this inclosure was signed in 1667 but it likely that some fields were inclosed before then. The medieval rabbit warren (Warren Farm) was not inclosed until 1760–73 and Finmere Northend (we are not certain where this is) until 1771–84. Only one small fragment of a map from the seventeenth century has survived, but the Tithe Commutation Map of 1840 shows the fields much as they would have been immediately after inclosure.



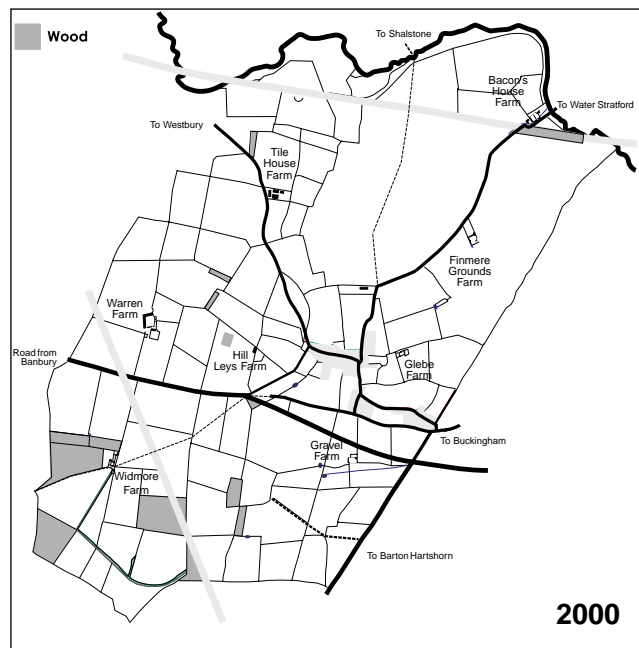
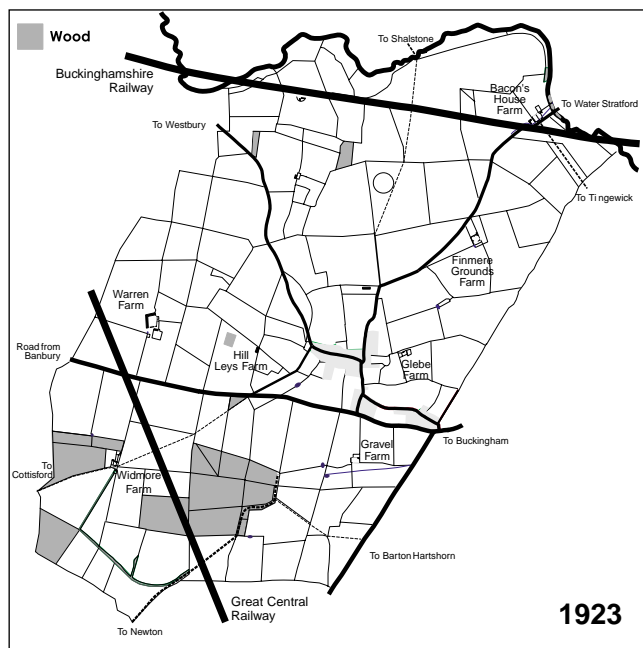
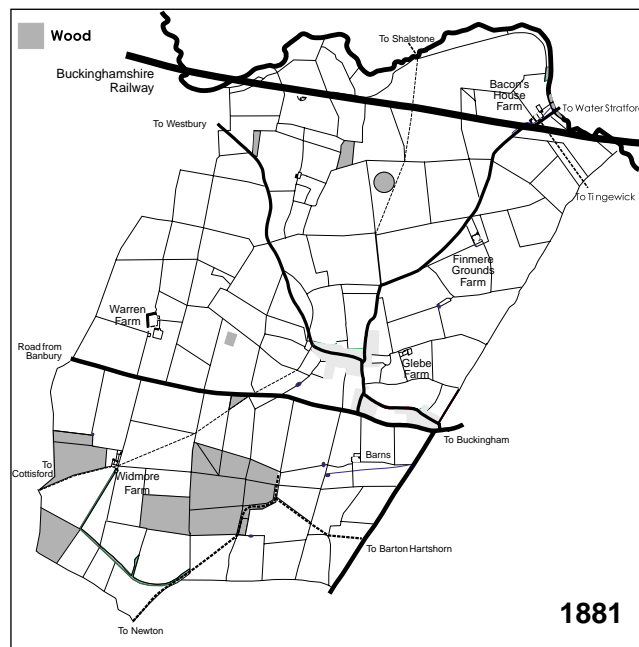
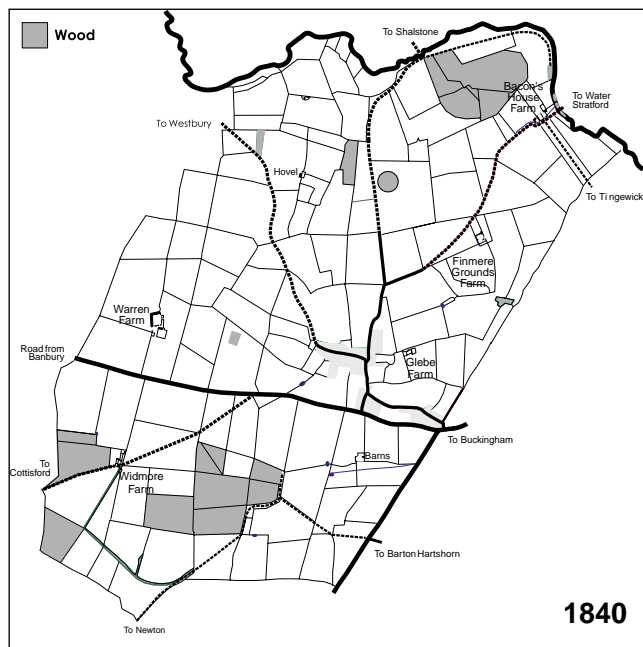
Land use in Finmere parish in 1840

Based on the Tithe Commutation Map drawn as part of an agreement to convert tithe payments from produce to rent charges, though in practice much of the Tithe in Finmere was paid as rent before this date. The map was drawn by Robert Russel, a valuer from Brackley.

Later, the railways cut through the parish. The Buckinghamshire Railway, which opened in 1850, made the greatest impact. In the north of the parish, Bacon's Wood was felled and its timber was probably used in construction of the railway. The tenants of Bacon's House Farm took the opportunity to create larger fields. Nearly half-a-century later, the Great Central Railway cut through the parish from north to south but this had little effect on the fields or woods, the latter perhaps because much of the wood used for railway construction at the end of the nineteenth century was imported.



A fragment of a late seventeenth century map
This is the earliest map of Finmere and shows the area of the medieval rabbit warren (now Warren Farm) to the west of the village. It probably dates to the time of inclosure.



The changing landscape: 1840 to 2000

The maps are based on the 1840 Tithe Map, 1881 and 1923 Ordnance Survey maps and a recent field survey.

There were also changes in the crops grown. In 1919, Finmere Grounds and Bacon's House Farm had 163 acres (66 hectares) of arable land and 284 acres (115 hectares) of grass. In 1991, the consolidated Grounds Farm contained 422 acres (171 hectares) of arable and 17 acres (7 hectares) of pasture. Alf Lepper described the changes on Tile House farm:

[It is] a mixed farm. I do a bit of beef, sheep, pigs and arable, mainly arable. And that is the big change in village acreage today. It's nearly all gone arable. There's some now going back to grass but its mainly arable now. We were forced into it you see, during the War. (Hello Finmere, BBC, 13 June 1971)

During the 1960s and 1970s, many more hedgerows were removed, particularly north of the village.

The Landowners and their Farms

Finmere Parish has had at least nine farms. Bacon's House, Glebe Farm, Finmere Grounds and Warren Farm are described below. Town Farm and Tile House Farm were on Fulwell Road within the village and date to at least the seventeenth century. Hill Leys was commissioned by Seymour Ashwell, possibly for his retirement. It was designed by Swingen Harris and may have been completed after Ashwell's death in 1901. The inscription in Latin on the front means 'A mind that is conscious in its own right.' Gravel Farm first appears on maps in the early twentieth century, though there were barns on the same site in 1840. Widmore Farm was originally two red brick cottages, probably erected in the early nineteenth century, perhaps for the brickworks.

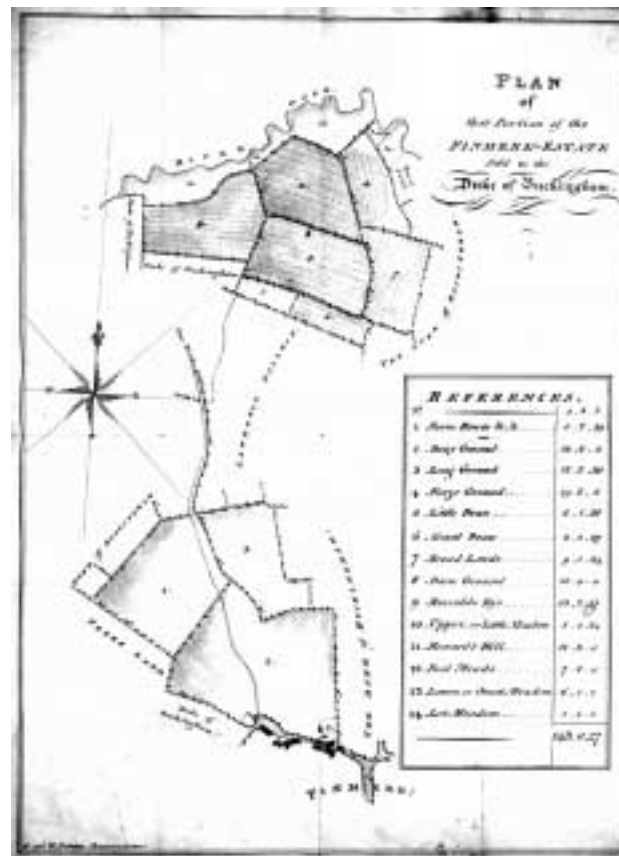
The Stowe Estate

In 1547, the manor of Finmere became the sole possession of John Blundell, a mercer (textile dealer) of London. He had purchased all the land in the parish, except the glebe. The patron, the Abbey of St. Augustine, Bristol, owned this and the rent from the tenants helped support the Rector. After his death in 1559, Blundell's land was divided between his three daughters, two of whose sons sold their inheritance.

The sales by Blundell's descendents allowed John Temple of Stowe to buy one portion of Finmere in 1602 and his son, Sir Thomas Temple, to buy a second portion in 1614. In 1753, Richard Grenville-Temple grasped an opportunity to purchase a third part of Finmere, which had passed to Edward Bacon of Bacon's House. Typically, for the family, the £8,800 paid was rather more than it was worth but Richard Grenville-Temple argued:

I am very unwilling as it lies so near me, that it should not be purchased by some of the family.

Details of landowners before 1547 can be found in Blomfield's History of Finmere.



Map of part of Finmere purchased for the Stowe estate in the 1820s

1753 2000
£8,800 £1m

We follow contemporary usage and Blomfield in using the name Bacon's House, though early maps show it as Bacon House.

The status obsessed Grenville-Temples achieved their highest ambitions on 31 March 1822, when George IV granted the title Duke of Buckingham and Chandos to Richard Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville. Richard was a close friend of Robert Holt, Finmere Rector. Holt died in 1802 and Richard dedicated his memorial in St Michael's church.

1848	2000
£1.1m	£70m

Garroway's Coffee House was in Exchange Alley, Cornhill in the City of London. It opened in 1669, probably to sell fur for the Hudson's Bay Company, and became one the chief auction houses in the City.

1848	2000
£30,000	£1.9m

The family purchased further properties in 1763, the early 1820s and the 1830s. The Grenville-Temples then owned most of the parish, except for the Glebe and an area behind the current Tile House Farm. Finmere was incorporated into the Stowe Estate, part of the massive landholdings built up by the family to further their attempts to increase their status.

Bacon's House, named after its early owners, was the former manor house and manorial courts were held there. Later, as part of the Stowe estate, there was no need for a manor house in Finmere and the Vestry and the Stowe Steward dealt with parish matters. The Grenville-Temples pulled down much of Bacon's House in the early nineteenth century leaving a more modest farmhouse, and demolished its water mill. The current building retains seventeenth century features behind its eighteenth century front.

The farmhouse at Finmere Grounds was probably built soon after inclosure in the seventeenth century and the farm to which it was attached was called Thornhill Farm. It was home to the Barrett family from 1823 to 1904. The Warren, which became Warren Farm, got its name from an artificial rabbit warren. This was constructed in or before 1339—long before rabbits became a pest—to breed rabbits for food.

The Disposal of the Stowe Estate

In his drive for social advancement, the first Duke of Buckingham and Chandos accumulated crippling debts through excessive borrowing, extensive land purchases and energetic collection of rare artefacts and books. His son, the Marquis of Chandos, was also a poor financial manager and the family spiralled into debt. By the 1840s, their financial woes could no longer be hidden. At 6 am on 30 August 1847, bailiffs smashed into Stowe House to seize goods on behalf of creditors. On 29 April 1848, it was determined that the family's main borrowings totalled £1,094,000. This extraordinary debt could not be sustained and the majority of landholdings were put up for sale. On 10 May 1848, Finmere was auctioned at Garroway's Coffee House in London. The asking price was £30,000 but the highest bid was just £27,700. To disguise the failure to sell, Finmere was 'bought in' by the auctioneers at £31,300.

Warren Farm, along with the title to the Manor of Finmere, was later privately sold to Mr W. M. Warner of Oxford for £9,000 in August 1848. He hoped to live in the farm but Mr French had a lease that prevented this. Thomas West of Silverstone inquired about purchasing Finmere Grounds in 1851 but a price could not be agreed. Two years later, Merton College Oxford bought Bacon's House and Finmere Grounds Farms for £11,833 at an auction at the White Hart in Buckingham.

On Sunday, 25 November 1849, in the midst of the uncertainty about ownership of Bacon's House Farm, farmer William Treadwell killed himself by discharging a gun loaded with glass fragments through his bowels. At the inquest, he was described as a man of substance who had been in a low desponding way for some time. Rector William Jocelyn Palmer recorded his death in the parish registers as being 'by his own hand having been of unsound mind for sometime previously.'

The Tredwell family of Bacon's House is spelt 'Treadwell' or 'Tredwell' in some early documents and consistently as 'Tredwell' in later documents.

Bacon's House Farm, was let to Mrs Mary Treadwell for £143 a year and Finmere Grounds to William Barrett for £237 a year. With six cottages in the village at £10 a year, Merton College's total rental in Finmere was £390. By 1932, the farm rents had risen to £572 11s but from that year, they were reduced to £450. In 1947, they were raised to £700. The Tredwells continued to farm Bacon's House until the death of Charles Tredwell in 1978 and were farming Finmere Grounds by 1929, after the tenancy of William Roper. The house at Finmere Grounds fell into a bad state of repair and was demolished in 1965. Mrs Tredwell remained tenant of Bacon's House farmhouse until her death in 1991 but by then the lands were being farmed with those of Finmere Grounds by Radstones Estates Ltd. Jonathan and Joanne Brooks bought the two farms in 1993.

1848 2000
£390 £21,000

1947 2000
£700 £14,000

1856 2000
£73 £4,200

The Glebe Land

The Rector's income came partly from rent payments in lieu of tithes and from renting the glebe land, which extended from the Rectory into Tingewick parish. The field in Tingewick was used to pay the salary of the Parish Clerk. In 1856, the Glebe barn was rebuilt at a cost of £73 1s 9d.

1856. On January 23rd the roof (thatched) of the glebe barn fell in. This barn was built by Rector Palmer in 1826. The timber for the new roof was all cut in the Glebe with the exception on 30 feet of planking. (Rectors' Book)

The rebuilt barn survived until 5 April 1997, when village children burnt it down. Earlier, in February 1947, Glebe Farm was sold to Captain Wood Jackson for £2,000, £220 more than the reserve.

Finmere Grounds had a circular, thatched pig house on the site of the present barns. In 1949, it burnt down.

Nothing but rows of blackened standards, a practically destroyed diesel engine and a scene of general desolation remain at Finmere Grounds... about 700 pigs perished in a devastating fire on Friday Night. (Buckingham Advertiser, May 1949)

One former farm worker remembers that 'the dead pigs were cooked up and fed to other pigs.'

1947 2000
£2,000 £40,500

Ewe makes history by having SIX lambs

A four-year-old Welsh ewe at Hill Leys Farm, Finmere, near Buckingham has made farming history by giving birth to six sprightly lambs. The lambs were born within two hours and yesterday both they and mother Betsy were alive and full of spirits. There have been crowds of visitors to the farm to see the lambs...

Betsy is one of 16 sheep that belong... to Gladys and 19-year-old daughter Carol. Mrs Allen and Carol have been kept busy since the lambs were born, bottle feeding them every two hours, as Betsy has not enough milk for the six yet... 'She is a wonderful mother,' said Carol.

Farmers Weekly, 10 March 1961.



Map of the Glebe in 1804 sketched in the Rectors' Book



Mrs B. Allen and her daughter, Carol, with the ewe, Betsy



Plan of Glebe Farm from 1947 sale catalogue

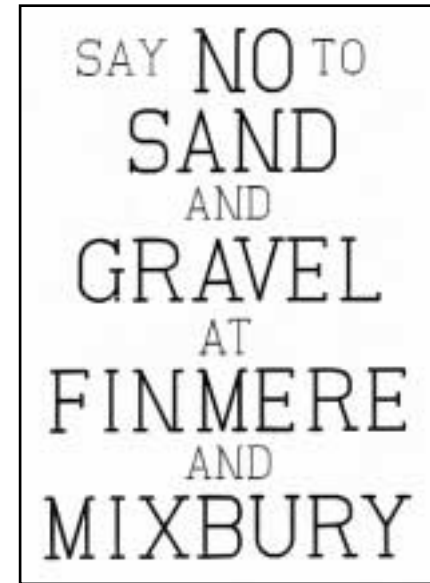
Finmere Quarry

In 1990, rumours of local farmland being excavated for a quarry and a landfill site rallied almost all of the residents to attend a meeting at the village hall and to form an action group called FAMAGE—Finmere and Mixbury Against Gravel Extraction. The Parish Council of Finmere and Mixbury Parish Meeting, together with Cherwell District Council, were unanimously opposed to the application from Regal Reclamation Limited. The proposal was to take 120,000 tonnes of sand and gravel a year, and to fill the hole with inert waste within a period of fourteen years.

The main objections were the lack of market need, environmental impact upon the village, increase in heavy vehicle movements on an already busy road, and sixty-eight possible contraventions of the structure plans and minerals and waste disposal policies. Despite a well organised and prolonged campaign, permission was granted at appeal and extraction commenced in 1993. The quarry is now operated by Premier Aggregates and infilling commenced in November 1999. The land filling phase will take fifteen years to complete based on 75,000 tonnes of waste being accepted each year.

It is a condition of Premier Aggregate's operating licence that they continue to monitor the site for a period of thirty years, or until such time as any environmental concerns have been alleviated, after completion of infilling and restoration work. The operating company cannot surrender this responsibility and, in case of problems such as insolvency, a bond has been lodged with the Environment Agency to ensure sufficient funds to continue environmental monitoring for the designated period. On completion of land filling, the majority of the quarry site will be returned to agriculture, with small areas retained as a nature reserve, including woodland, impoverished heath land and a pond.

In the autumn of 2000, Premier Aggregates applied to increase the volume of land fill, raising a mound seven metres over the pits, and for a recycling and crushing facility. This application is being strongly opposed by the Parish Council and FAMAGE was reformed.



A protest poster

ALIFE *news*

20TH OCTOBER 2000

ISSUE 2

Will you still want to live in Finmere?

Welcome to our second newsletter. The first one circulated one month ago introduced ourselves as an independent group of villagers who have formed an action group in order to object to the recent proposals by Premier Aggregates (Finmere Quarry) to extend their operations at their site.

After studying the proposals, visiting similar sites in operation and researching into the possible effects of the expansion of the site we are very concerned about the following, which may effect the village in various degrees and pose a serious threat to our quality of life in Finmere.

Substantial increase in noise and airborne dust

This would be due to the substantial increase in the volume of waste handled on site, 1000 tons of Category A waste (brick, rubble, concrete) would be brought in each week. A portable crusher would be in operation at Foxley fields farm, this would handle 100 tons per hour. Noise and dust generated from this machine would be in addition to that produced by the normal activities of the permanent recycling plant.

The rubbish mound

The visual intrusion of a mound a quarter of a mile long and thirty two feet high on the main road to the village. This mound would contain 1.25 million tons of waste of which 555,000 tons would be category C waste (food and food processing waste). The lorry/trailer from this would possibly carry to the village dependant on the wind.

Risk of environmental pollution

We are concerned that contaminants may leach into the local water chain from category C and D waste (food waste, food processing, contaminated soils and electrical cabling). This may also have an impact on the growing noise if population in and around the village, causing further health risks.

Litter and traffic

We believe there would be a possible doubling of the number of lorries carrying rubbish to and from the site resulting in more rubbish along the local roadsides and clay and dust on the road.

Would you choose to live in a village with these prospects and their consequences which will be with us for at least the next sixteen years??

What we are doing

We are currently putting together our report to Cotswolds County Council planning department which outlines our objections to the application. We have been investigating the number and location of all waste disposal and recycling sites within the proposed 35 mile catchment area and will be preparing a map showing the various sites. If accepted the course of waste for recycling and disposal will stretch as far north as Coventry and will extend to Luton, Kettering, Haverhill, Hemphstead and Harlow. It will include towns such as Northampton, Banbury, High Wycombe and Oxford.

Our next task

On completion of the report we will plan our presentation to the Planning Committee which will take place on 27th November at 2pm. This has to be brief and we are only allowed five minutes.

Free transport for all Finmere residents who wish to attend the presentation to the planning committee meeting on the 27th November.

We are sure you will acknowledge that a sizeable presence in the public gallery has a significant influence on many decisions. Please mark the date in your diary and try to make the effort to come along. More details will be given at the village meeting (see later).

ALIFE news: the newsletter of FAMAGE