



## Local History Collection

### 05 - Parish of Braywood

Winter 2020

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The village of Braywood is not strictly a village but a community made up of several parts which include Oakley Green, Fifield, Forest Green and Hans Hill. It was originally located in the province of Wessex.

When Christianity arrived in this area, Parishes were created and the Parish of Brai (now known as Bray, low lying land) was founded somewhere around 650AD and its Abbey was in Abingdon. Eventually this Province was divided into shires and by 860AD these shires were further divided into 'hundreds' or 12,000 acres approximately. The 'hundred' of Brai included Hawthorn Hill, Braywick, Moneyrow Green, Touchen End, Stud Green, Holyport, Water Oakley, Oakley Green and Fifield.

The first authentic mention of Braywood occurs in the Domesday Book, where it is noted that Bray had sufficient woods to feed 60 pigs on acorns and beech mash for a year. This area is largely the area now known as Braywood. The early history of Braywood is found in the records of Bray Parish, however the Parish of Braywood was not taken/created from the Parish of Bray until 1871.

Local areas were used by Drovers to graze their sheep and the village grew as it was located on the main pack horse route from Windsor to Reading and the Water Oakley Wharf belonged to the Queen and it was used to send the wood from Windsor Great Park to London via the River Thames. The tithing man of Water Oakley Wharf collected eight shillings in tolls from the 16 passing boats in 1333, considered quite a heavy toll!

The Manor of Bray was offered for sale just after the beheading of King Charles 1 (he owned the Manor) and it was stated that the Beadle of the Manor had the right to take four loads of wood yearly from Braywoods for executing his office.

Other notable local properties include the hunting lodge New Lodge, Oakley Court, Foly John Park (Queen Elizabeth 1 is reputed to have dined here en- route to Reading and Bray Church was fined for not ringing its bells as a mark of loyalty to the Queen), Old Lodge Farm in Coningsby Lane (named after Richard Coningsby), Grove Farm and Yew Tree Cottage all date back to the 15th Century. In 1442 there is mention of a hospital with almshouses in Fifield but its location is unknown. Along Oakley Green Road there is the Old Malt House (originally the 15th Century Nags Head Inn).

Kimbers Farm is mentioned in 1288 and Mills Farm with its ancient moat was reputed to be an Inn for the pack horse travellers. The original Fifield House was first mentioned in 1479 when its owner John Fowler died, the house was not in its present location and was a manor farm. By the 16th century Fifield House was owned by the Norreys family and William Norreys was Keeper at Foly John Park. John Norreys lived in the house, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth 1, appointed Sheriff of Berkshire and was Usher of the Black Rod at the most Noble Order of the Garter and Controller of the Works at Windsor Castle.

A survey of the Parish of Bray in 1608 accounted for land as follows; Fifield 12 acres, Moneyrow Green 30 acres and Holyport 10 acres.

If you are the owner of one of these 'old' properties in the local area please do let the Editor have further information about your property to add to the local history of the area.

I shall continue the Braywood story in the next magazine.