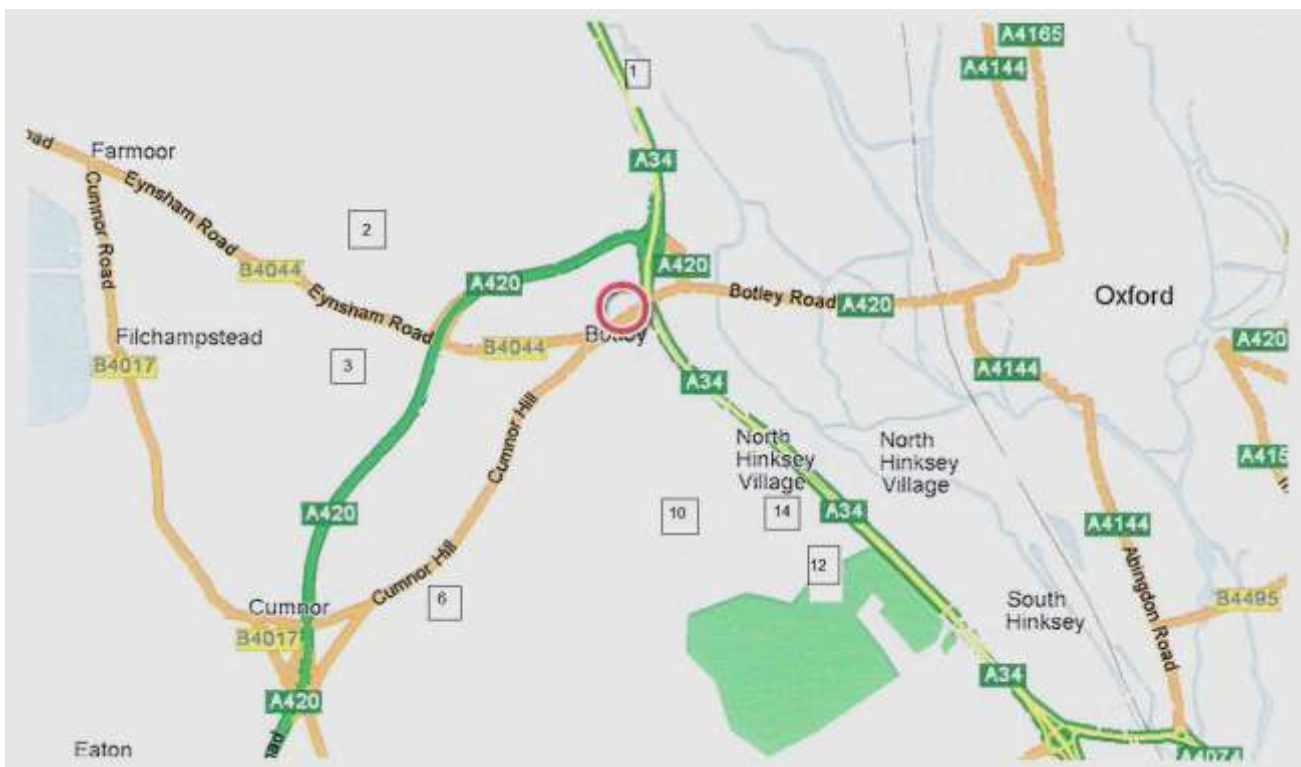
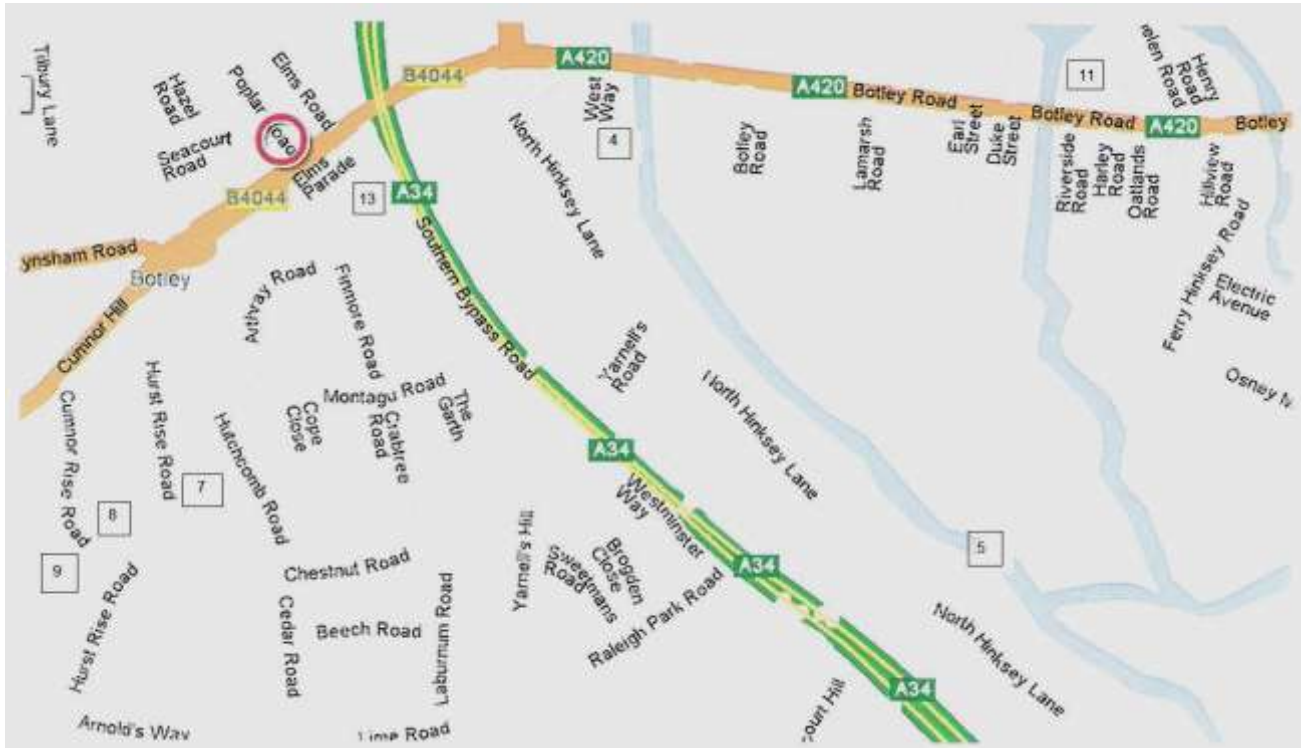


A disappearing world

The following pages show a selection of interesting landmarks within a mile or so of Botley that are unfortunately no longer with us. Their previous locations are shown below on current maps of the Botley area:



(1) Seacourt (or Seckworth) village:

Draw a line between Elms Parade and the Church / Church Farm at Binsey, and where it crosses the A34 was the location of the village of Seacourt. Originally settled in the 10th to 12th Century it remained relatively small, but did include a church and manor house as well as several stone buildings. By c.1440, however, it had been virtually deserted, probably due to the poorer soil in that area, and since the building of the by-pass the only signs of its existence are the findings of two archaeological digs in 1938/39 and 1958/59. The name lingers on however in the form of Seacourt Stream, Seacourt Farm, and subsequently Seacourt Road, Seacourt Hall, and of course the Seacourt Bridge pub. More details about Seacourt can be found on the following websites:

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=62742>

<http://www.ashmolean.org/PotWeb/seacourt/sc02.html>

(2) Hill End & Wood End:

Although both of these names still exist as Hill End Camp and Woodend Farm on the northern side of the Eynsham Road they are of less significance now than in earlier days. Wood End can be seen clearly on the Rocque Map of 1760, and the name Hill End appears on a number of large scale maps of Berkshire up to the mid 19th Century which fail to show Botley. The origins of these names are not difficult to establish, however it should be remembered that the current Wytham Woods include areas of more recent (19th & 20th Century) woodland linking the ancient 'Wytham Great Wood' to the north and 'Marley Wood' to the south east. Much of this recent woodland would have been farmed or used as common grazing land, some right up to 1943 when the whole of this area was handed over to the University by Raymond ffennell. Historically the area to the west of the Botley Tything was known as the Hill End Tything (see the 1728 map below), with Wood End falling within the neighbouring Stroud Tything. These areas included a number of widely spread farms and cottages, rather than any recognisable village, as did the area immediately to the north in Seacourt. Even now a few remaining signs of cottages can be found amongst the trees in the southernmost part of Wytham Woods (to the west of the Marley Wood section).

1728: Hill End Tything



(3) Blind Pinnock's Alehouse:

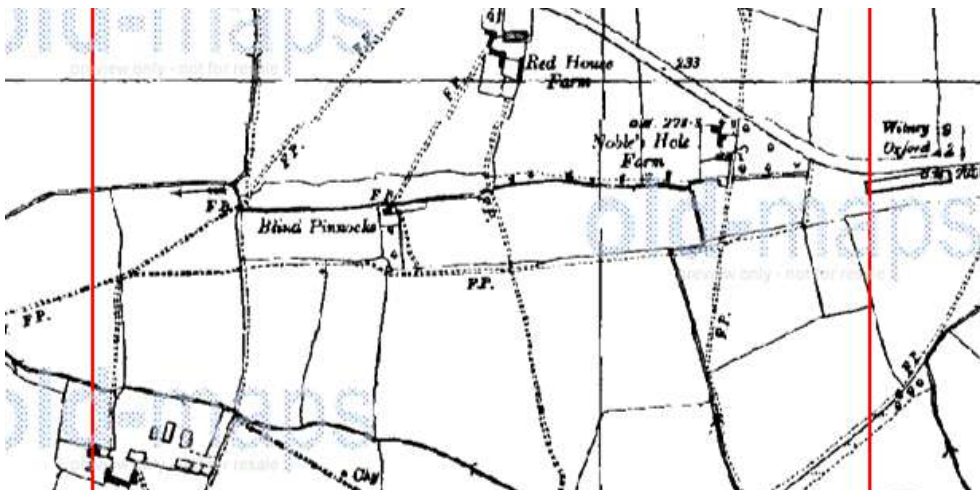
Located to the south west of the Eynsham Road, and between three farms (Red House Farm, Noble's (Hole) Farm and Denman's Farm – see the 1944 map below) this alehouse managed to establish a good reputation, with frequent visitors from Oxford despite its remoteness. The name 'Blind Pinnock' can be clearly seen on the Rocque Map of 1760 to the west of Dean Court (the inn was located below the 'o' in the name). In 1660 the green next to the Alehouse was renamed Blind Pinnock's Green (see the Hill End Tything map on the previous page) after this innkeeper. Anthony Wood's diaries of the 1660's also mention Pinnock's on dozens of occasions (sometimes 'mother' or 'widow' Pinnock's from c.1665 onwards, and Pinnock's alias Taylor's from late 1669, presumably after widow Pinnock died, the new innkeeper being a Taylor). Some diary entries can be found under 'Articles' on the Cumnor village website: <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/external/cumnor/index.html>

Pinnock was the name of an early tenant of the building and we know from Hearth Tax records that they died by 1663. It is believed that the gentleman in question was a Richard Pinnock, born c.1601 who died in 1663. His first wife, Ellena, died in 1630 after having 2 children, but Richard went on to marry a second time and have a further 3 children, however the name of this second wife is unknown. The building operated as an alehouse during the 17th and 18th Centuries before being used as a cottage, and eventually pulled down in 1935. About half a mile to the east, and on the other side of the A420 you can now find the road Pinnocks Way, named after this particular Pinnock.

Blind Pinnock's Alehouse



1944 Map showing the location of Blind Pinnock's Alehouse



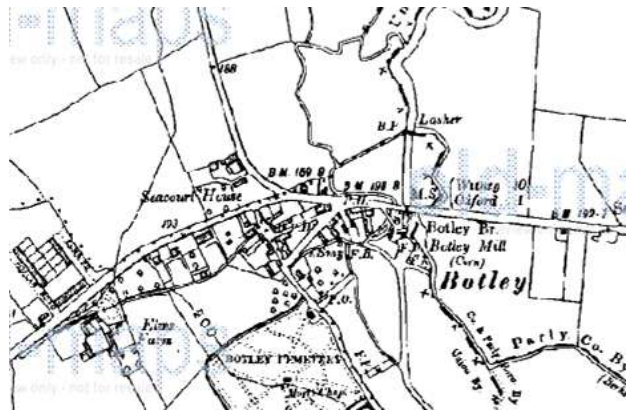
(4) Botley Mill:

There is evidence of a mill in Botley at the Seacourt Stream from at least the 12th Century. During the siege of Oxford in the Civil War there are records of the mill being partly destroyed by Parliamentarian troops as they swept through the area from their base in Marston via Godstow, Wytham and the Hinkseys to the south of Folly Bridge, however it was restored later. During this action a separate mill at Hinksey suffered complete destruction and St. Lawrence's Church also had the roof of its tower removed by cannonballs, although that was subsequently repaired. In its last incarnation Botley Mill consisted of a dilapidated clump of buildings dating back in parts to medieval times which ceased operations in 1910, and was finally demolished in 1924. It was located immediately behind The George pub, but no signs of it remain today.

Botley Mill in the late 19th Century



1914 map showing Botley Mill



(5) North Hinksey Ferry:

The main route west out of Oxford used to be via the ferry at North Hinksey operating (for the last few hundred years at least) at a location next to 'Ferry Cottage' (follow the footpath running between Ferry Cottage and 'The Fishes' pub to the river where a small bridge now stands). This small but important ferry gave the village its alternative name of 'Ferry Hinksey'. In fact the ferry operated from around 1370 right up to 1928 at which time the improved road and bridge infrastructure led to its demise. The type of ferry in use from at least the 19th century onwards (as shown in the photographs below) was operated by hauling on a cable which passed through runners at the side of the boat. It is believed that Mr Overnell a former licensee of The Fishes was the last ferryman.

North Hinksey Ferry:

1892: A woman & dog being ferried across



1917: Military training exercise



(6) Chawley Brick Works:

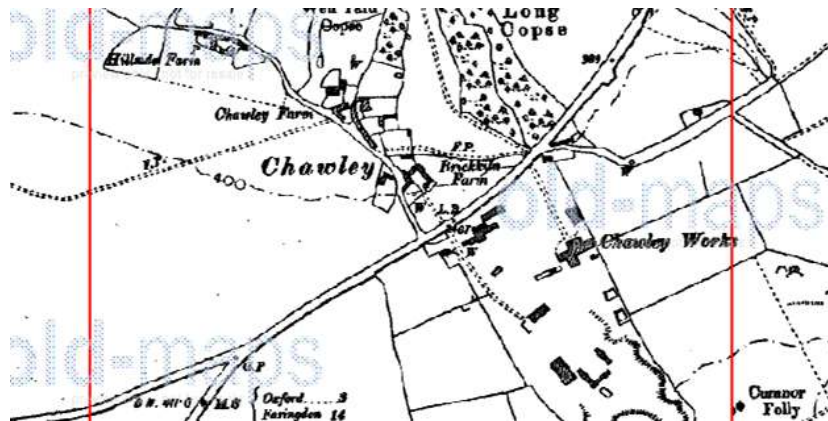
Bricks and tiles were being manufactured by John Neale, a Farmer in Cumnor from at least 1846. This was a boom period for brickmaking, with a high point of 83 brick or tile works in operation in Oxfordshire as a whole (current borders) around the 1870's. In 1877 the Earl of Abingdon took over Chawley brick works, although members of the Neale family continued in the positions of manager and foreman until the early years of the twentieth century.

The Earl of Abingdon invested heavily in the brick works and it remained profitable up to WWI. The photograph below of the clay pit (which was situated just under Cumnor Hurst) shows that it was an enterprise of some size in the late 19th century, certainly one of the largest in the region. A pair of cottages were built in Botley Pound in 1879 with a stone carving of the Earl of Abingdon on the front wall, and they are still standing today (No's 24 and 26 Eynsham Road). The yard behind these cottages were used for drying and storing tiles, which were brought down from Chawley on a narrow gauge railtrack.

After WWI the business ran into difficulties, and by 1937 was bankrupt, with the works finally closing in 1939. Part of the business was a sawmill operating on the same site as the kilns, and this was bought out by Mr. Kempfer, a Jewish refugee from Hungary and run by him as a timber company. In the 1950's this became Timbmet, which continued on the site until its closure in 2008. One local resident by the name of George Avery worked in the brick works up to its' closure in the 1930's. As one of the last two employees he never received the final pay packet owed to him when the works closed. Further details about the Brick Works can be found under 'Articles' on the Cumnor Village website:

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/external/cumnor/index.html>

1900 map showing Chawley Brick Works



The Clay Pit at Chawley, late 19thC.



(7) Volunteers Rifle Range:

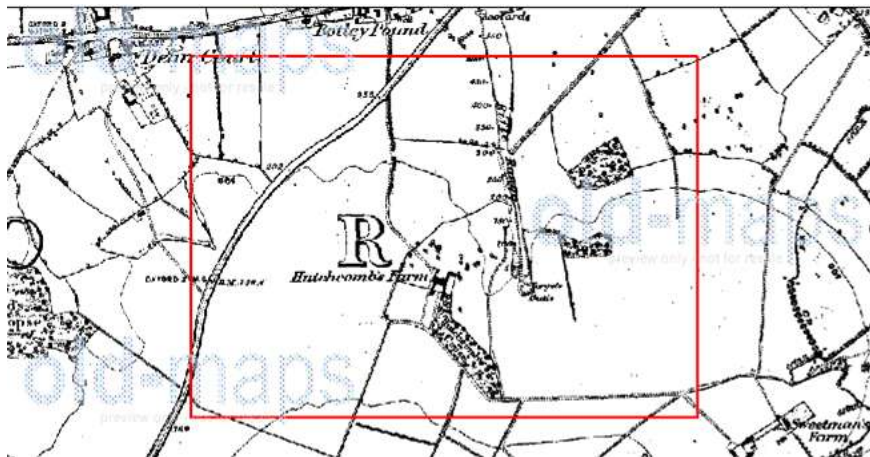
Around the 1880's there was a 600 yard rifle range running from the junction of Eynsham Road and Cumnor Hill up the hill to targets and butts just to the east of Hutchcomb's Farm (now in Hutchcomb's Copse). It appears on maps of 1876 and 1886, but had disappeared by 1900. It is labelled 'Volunteers' on one map, referring to the Volunteer Force, who were units of Rifle Volunteers originally raised in 1859 in several counties including Berkshire and Oxfordshire, and linked to regular army regiments in 1881. Along with other 19th Century units described as 'Local Militia', 'Fencibles' (from 'defensible'), and 'Yeomanry' they were forerunners of the current Territorial Army. They originated because of a perceived threat of invasion from France which never occurred – see the following website:

http://www2.army.mod.uk/infantry/regts/the_rifles/regiment_today/battalions_locations/7rifles/a_coy/heritage/1859.htm

These types of rifle range were relatively common at the time. One ran from South Hinksey village up towards Boars Hill and featured on maps up to the 1920's as 'Old Rifle Range'. A smaller range appeared on maps from 1914 to 1938 on the far side of Harcourt Hill, half way between the current location of Westminster College and Hinksey Hill Farm. This site also included a series of trenches during WWI for training. Alice Harvey in a book on North Hinksey mentions this range - 'The Butts' - being used as a rifle range for undergraduates after the First World War and in fact it was in use by the University Volunteer force 'The 1st & 2nd Volunteer Battalions of Oxfordshire Light Infantry' as a 'Rifle & Musketry Range' from 1903. Remains of other WWI training trenches are still visible towards the SW corner of Wytham Woods (see photo below). A website on the similar Cissbury Rifle Range can be found at:

http://www.findonvillage.com/0958_cissbury_rifle_range.htm

1886 Map showing the Botley Volunteers Rifle Range



Cissbury Volunteers Rifle Range c.1900



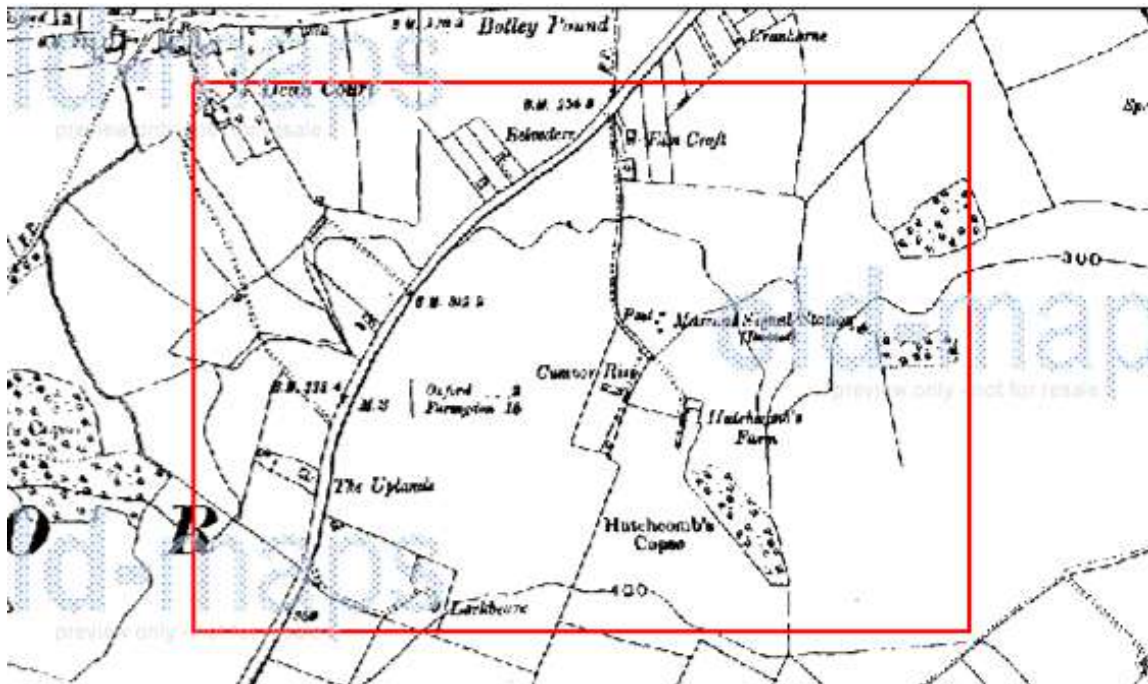
WWI training trenches in Wytham Woods



(8) Marconi Signal Station:

The map below suggests that at some time between 1901 and 1911 a Signal Station was built by Marconi in a location just north of Hutchcomb's Farm (now just north of the junction between Cumnor Rise Road and Hurst Rise Road). By the time that this Ordnance Survey map was published in 1913 the Signal Station was described as 'disused'. It is thought that nothing remains of this building, and its intended use remains a mystery. At that time most signal stations were built either in coastal locations or on top of hills, not half way up a hill, and no reference has been found in the Marconi Archives (now held by the Bodleian Library) relating to this particular building.

1914 map showing disused Marconi Signal Station & Cumnor Rise Hospital



(9) Cumnor Rise Hospital:

This establishment was opened in 1907 as a home for young ladies with learning disabilities, or 'Feeble Minded Girls' as they called them at the time. Additionally girls who had 'disgraced themselves and their families' were often placed here. It was set up by a Miss Townsend with help from a Miss Anne Wynne Thackeray (a relative of William Makepeace Thackeray), and the inmates enjoyed activities such as embroidery or working in the vegetable garden. In later years it offered sheltered accommodation for patients from Borocourt Hospital before they were released into the community. Cumnor Rise Hospital was finally knocked down in 1991, and the land used for building new properties in Hutchcombe Farm Close.

(10) The Oxford Ice Rink / Majestic Cinema:

At the time it was built in 1930 this building was the largest ice skating rink in the world! It remained so until 1932 when the marginally bigger rinks at Madison Square, New York and Streatham, London were opened. Activities included ice dancing, ice ballet, speed skating and ice hockey matches. The first international ice hockey match to take place there was between Oxford University and Germany in November 1930, and subsequently the University team took on and beat Canada, Russia, Sweden and France amongst others. Before too many Union Jacks are waved, however, it should be pointed out that the University team itself included about 60% Canadians amongst its international line up. Less sporty individuals paid 6d. as spectators, 1s. to skate, or 4s. for skating lessons with a professional, half price on Tuesdays. Regular punters included celebrities of the day such as Hitler groupie Unity Mitford and her socialist sister Nancy, plus comedic film star Will Hay. The rink even had its own resident orchestra led by Max Chappell. On 'Gala' nights and at other special events crowds of 5,000 to 6,000 were not unusual.

The building was converted into a cinema from 1934-39 to take advantage of higher financial returns, despite being highly popular as an ice rink. After that it operated as a World War II Evacuee Centre from 1940-45 then c.1951 became Frank Cooper's 'Victoria Works' producing 'Oxford' marmalade. They moved out in 1967 and it was used by Brown and Poulson before Oxford Instruments briefly housed their electronic and cryogenic production facilities there. From 1971 it was an MFI furniture store combined with other showrooms for Carpetland, Apollo Gas & Electrical and Hyford Business Machines before being knocked down in 1987. It stood on the north side of Botley Road to the west of Binsey Lane and was replaced by a large retail unit now containing Halfords.

The Oxford Ice Rink / Majestic Cinema / Marmalade Factory / Furniture Store:

Painting of Xmas Party 1940



Interior in 1950's / 60's as Marmalade Factory



Jan 1970 – Oxford Instruments staff
with a superconductive magnet



Exterior in 1976



(11) The Water Tower:

A 120 foot water tower was built on top of Harcourt Hill in the 1930's, and subsequently demolished in 1993. It was located in what are now the grounds of Westminster College a short distance to the west of the current buildings.

The Water Tower prior to demolition



(12) World War II Prisoner of War Camp:

From about 1942 until after the end of the war an area of land on the far side of Harcourt Hill was used as a Prisoner of War Camp, housing a variety of prisoners including Italians, Yugoslavs, and possibly Officers of the German Navy. These prisoners were repatriated in 1947, however some stayed in the local area, and one (a Yugoslav called Mr. Judt who lived in Finchampton, Farmoor) ran a shop called Lanka on Elms Parade (where Dillons News Agents is now) during the 1950's, 60's, 70's and possibly as late as the 1980's. During the First World War about 50 German Prisoners had simply been kept in Upper Whitley Farm and used for labour in various local farms plus the Chawley Brick Works.

(13) Elms Court Ballroom & Blazers Night Club:

One short lived venture was the ill-fated Elms Court Ballroom – built in 1968, and then demolished only 16 years later due to lack of use. Part of the land that was freed up was used to build Seacourt Hall.

In the late 1970's there was the rather noisier Blazers Night Club, sited at the bottom of Westminster Way, which also didn't last long.

One that didn't get away

(14) Conduit House & Cistern:

If you walk over Harcourt Hill, past Raleigh Park and into the fields overlooking the by-pass you will find the small, but historically significant Conduit House. This structure was originally built in 1616 by Otto Nicholson to supply water to Oxford and North Hinksey Village. The same source had been used to supply Osney Abbey in Medieval times. In Oxford lead water pipes terminated in a magnificent cistern located in Carfax. This cistern remained there until 1787 when it was given to Lord Harcourt who placed it in his estate at Nuneham Park, where it can still be seen today.

Further details can be found on: <http://www.follytowers.com/carfax.html>

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.001001001013007006004>

A visit to Oxford University on May 18th 1683 by the Duke of York was described by Anthony Wood in his diaries. The Duke was welcomed to Oxford by the Earl of Abingdon, the High Sherriff and various dignitaries from the University before continuing on to Carfax. Here the activities were described by Wood as follows:

“At the conduit they were received by wind-musick of houtbois by the city musitians who stood on a gallery built on the east side of the conduit, who played till they were out of hearing. All which time, and for about half an hour after, the conduit ran claret for about half an hour at two places. All which the vulgar sort and rabble received in cups and hats and drank the duke's health.”

This type of celebration seems to have occurred relatively frequently over a short period at the end of the 17th Century, with at least two other civic occasions recorded by Anthony Wood as involving the cistern running with claret, the first in October 1684 (also with music) and the second in February 1685 (without music). Both of these occasions involved the presence of the Earl of Abingdon at the centre of events, so perhaps it was the type of thing that he enjoyed. Outside of these events, however, there are no other known records of the cistern being used in this way, even when King Charles II visited Oxford a few years before, and King William a few years after, and unfortunately free claret is not available at the cistern in its current location today.

Conduit House on Harcourt Hill



Carfax Cistern in Nuneham Park

