

*Transcribed from copy held by Judy White, with added sub-headings and minor changes to punctuation.
Date and author unknown. Describes Abingdon c.1920, but probably written c.1960*

ABINGDON? YES, I REMEMBER WHEN

Much has been written of the history of the Town of Abingdon, the ancient Borough on the Thames, 6 miles South of Oxford. I would not presume, and, indeed haven't the necessary knowledge to attempt to add to these histories, as such. But I, and, of course, many others, (albeit the number is fast dwindling) can remember a vastly different Abingdon from the one which now exists. An Abingdon with a character which developers and other vandals have taken away for ever. So, if you will put up with my rather discursive ramblings, I will try to tell you something of that lost town.

Oxford Road. A year or two after the first world war, anyone approaching Abingdon from Oxford would notice, about ½ mile south of Lodge Hill, and about 1½ miles North of the Town, an apparently purposeless, and fairly modern group of buildings on the right hand side of the road. This, known as new Northcourt, consisted of a terrace of 4 houses, one detached house of fair size, and 2 or 3 detached houses, set back up a field path. No more buildings would then be seen until, about ½ mile further on, one came to a road turning to the right out of the main road. Down this, about 500 yards, was, and is, Northcourt village. First, up the bank on the right, we pass a terrace of houses, of rather regrettable design and built about 1908 give or take a year or two. The village itself consists in a large Georgian House, a beautiful group of Farmhouse, Barn and Bothy, a few cottages and a pub, The Spread Eagle. (It is interesting to note that the sign of this pub was originally a stylised eagle with 2 heads, but during the 1914/18 war it was thought to be too much like the Prussian Eagle, and the sign was altered accordingly).

Returning to the main road and turning right, we see, about 200 yards further, on the left, a cart track. This leads through to the Radley Road and, surprisingly, has in its length 3 houses. One, lying back in the fields, is the residence of a well-known local butcher, and on the right a block of semi-detached houses stand in solitary state. This is Norman Avenue. No more is seen until we have walked about another 100 yards. Then on the left are two blocks of two semi-detached houses and the turning into Swinburne Road. This is the beginning of Abingdon proper. Swinburne Road itself is unremarkable, having been built about 1910 by one builder, and consists in terraced and semi-detached houses facing each other across a length of Street unbroken by as much as a grass strip or a tree. Returning to Oxford Road a few semis on the left lead us to a left turn into St John's Road, which matches Swinburne Road.

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Continuing toward the Town, on our left is a stone wall which conceals a Romish convent and church, and a small school. These fill the triangle formed by the St Johns, Radley, and Oxford Roads. Returning to the intersection of the St Johns and Oxford Roads, and looking to the right, we see the first few buildings of a singularly unlovely design. This is the first of the "Council" estates. Its appearance, as the shape of things to come, should have been warning enough, but unfortunately the warning, as is so often the case, went unheeded. (What is now Boxhill Rd was then a Bridle track leading to Wootton Road. A peculiar feature of this track was the fact that for some of its length there were two tracks, each with a hedge at each side, thus two tracks and three hedges).

Back in Oxford Road, walking toward the Town centre, after passing a pair of semis, we see on the right the Poor Law Institution or Workhouse. The building itself is, of course, strictly utilitarian, but the gardens were a tribute to the Master. The grounds were extensive, and whilst at the back they were devoted to vegetables, pig-keeping etc, the front was a mass of flowers, in which roses were prominent, set off by wide grass verges and wonderfully kept gravel paths. To any carping

critic who would say that this was easily done by use of “slave labour” I would say that the population of the place consisted, at the time of which I speak, almost entirely of passing tramps, some of whom turned up regularly. They did not have to seek shelter there if they did not want to, and a little light gardening was a small enough price to pay for shelter, a good meal, and a bed.

Radley Road. The other approach to Abingdon, from Radley, is really quite rural. Until the junction with Swinburne Road, of which we have already spoken, only one house will be seen. That, on the left, is a large Victorian building known as the “Warren”. From Swinburne Rd to the junction with Oxford Rd, on the right are terrace houses, broken by a lane leading to Goodley’s bakery, and the St Johns Rd turn, and the grounds of the Convent etc already mentioned. On the left are fields, until Barton Lane leaves the road and wanders down to Barton Court. Of this, which was once an Abbey possession, only a ruined tower stands, but a large and fairly modern house occupies the site, with the farm opposite. Legend has it that a passage ran from the Court to the Abbey but, as the intervening ground is boggy and it would have been necessary to go under the river, one may doubt this. Some semis and, set back in a field, a sawmill belonging to Cox & Son, and Jackmans Polo Pony Stable and riding school sees us to the end of Radley Road.

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The Vineyard. We have now reached the Vineyard. This was once just that, the Vineyard of the great Abbey of Abingdon. On our left are 2 unremarkable red brick houses and two cottages. Then a more considerable dwelling which houses the Manager of the Abingdon Gas Co, and the offices and showroom of the same. By it is an entry leading to the Gas Works itself. Then a row of red brick houses, the last of which is Gamage’s Store, and then the Red Lion pub. A short street on the left is New St, locally known as “Little Hell”. This is owing to the belligerent character of the inhabitants of the 15 or so cottages which are, incredibly, packed into this tiny street. Returning to the Vineyard, we come first to a rag & bone yard, owned by a local character known as “Tommy Nichols”, of whom more anon. Next 2 really old cottages and then an alley containing two or three cottages, known as “Pump Alley”. The Friends Meeting House, haunt of the Quakers, comes next and then, up a short alley, and end-on to the road a long row of cottages. These are “Malthouse Cottages”. They owe their name to the fact that the next buildings are the extensive premises of the Malthouse, maltsters in quite a large way, and presided over by Mr Downing, whose considerable Georgian house fronts the street here. Next, we come to an old block of houses, comprising a cottage fronting the street, another behind it, and a small shop. Then, after this the “Vine” pub. A Georgian house, a rather pretentious house known as “Vineyard House”, a row of nondescript cottages, and the “Lamb & Flag” pub brings us to the end of the Vineyard on this side.

Returning to the North end again, we will take a look at the other side of the street. So, on the right is a fair sized house, of no great age, followed by a pair of semis circa 1908. Then two really ancient cottages built on the old pattern of a central alley with the cottage doors opening out of this half-way along, and then an equally ancient pub “The Row Barge”. This, by the way, was kept by a Mr Graham, his widow, his son, and his daughter. Then come several buildings of varying age, a little cluster of Almshouses (St Johns Hospital) and 2 more houses, then Sadlers, the Coal Merchant. Then 2 ancient cottages, one of which housed that by-gone institution, the Common Lodging House. This was kept by “Tommy Nichols” to whom we have referred, but ruled with a iron hand by his wife Mary, who amongst other things was a reputed witch. Here also lived a local character known simply as “Paddy”. He was in the habit, when he had the wherewithal, of taking too much ale and roaring challenges in the direction of New Street, opposite. The challenge was rarely refused, and some lively Saturday nights were a feature of local life.

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Two cottages and Greenwoods shop follow, and after that a collection of houses of all ages, although none, I think, of any great age. An ugly tin-roofed building housing the local Blacksmith, a Mr Aldworth, and next door a ropewalk leads us to a wide yard housing the premises of Mr

Gerring, Abingdon's principal milkman. In those days the milk was taken round in churns on a hand or horse-drawn cart, transferred to galvanised containers from which it was served, by certified measure dippers, to the housewife's jug. A few cottages, terminating with the premises of Mr Sykes (known as Peggy, because of his peg leg) the Barber, and the local vet bring us to the end of the Vineyard.

Stert Street (North). We now come to Stert St. I will treat this street as if it were two, for it is literally divided into two by the intersection with Broad St and the entrance to the Railway Station. First, then, on the right, a Malting owned by Hordeum Products Ltd. Still standing at the end of the buildings, is the oast house, disused now but still there. After the Maltings, two houses of good sort, but no great age, and then a fine large house, known as "The Knowle". This house is probably Elizabethan, and is in splendid condition. Next to it are the premises of the "Co-op", and this brings us to Broad St. Returning to the bottom of the Vineyard, on the left-hand side are four decent small cottages, and then a Georgian building containing the business of Messrs Challenor, solicitors. A fine stone house, of no great age, is next door, and next to this the House and builders' yard of Mr Thatcher. Here is the entrance to the station.

We will digress briefly, to take in the G W R Station and approach. Turning into the entrance, on the left is a long red-brick building known as the Assembly Room. This is under the care of the Landlord, for the time being, of the "Station Inn", of which this room forms part. It is let for wedding breakfasts and other junketings. In front of us is the Station building, which is of red brick and unusually impressive for such a small branch. The (quite true) story behind it is that, many years ago, a train entering the station had a brake failure and ploughed into the very modest station which served at the time, ending up in what is now the approach road. A new station building was then erected. On the other side of the Station Rd is a terrace of 3-story stucco-fronted houses, another of rather newer houses which boast front gardens, and a yard occupied by Langfords the Coal Merchants, whose office is at the entrance to the yard. Another terrace of four houses completes Station Rd. Before continuing with Stert St it is convenient to have a look at Broad St, just across the Road.

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Broad Street & Queen Street. On the left, sharing the corner site with Stert St is a pub, the "Bee Hive", followed by three cottages, one of which is very old. On the corner of Broad St and Queen St is another pub, the "Steam Plough". Next, a very ancient building which houses the photographic business owned by Mr Vasey. Some houses of no great age follow, and bring us to another very old building, kept by a Mr Povey [Pocock] as a sweet shop. A saddlers shop, kept by Mr Gibbons, ends this side of Broad St. Cross the road and face back the way we came, and on the left is a large house with impressive ornamental iron railings. Built into these is a public drinking fountain. A red brick house and yard house the Carrier's business of Mr Bonner. A terrace of four cottages lead us to a Victorian house of truly impressive ugliness. This is Dr Challenor's house and surgery. After this, two cottages, then the yard of Mr Hughes, plumber, two more cottages and a sweetshop, and the Salvation Army Citadel bring us to the end of Broad St.

Before returning to Stert St we will take a look at Queen St or, as it is known locally, "Little Bury Lane". On the left, joined to the "Steam Plough", already mentioned, is a house which was once the "Castle Inn" and is appropriately occupied by a Mr Castle. Following this is a row of ancient cottages which are probably the same ones which many years ago took advantage of the branch of the River Stert, which in those days flowed unrestricted through the street, to become petty business premises. The inhabitants set up verjuice mills, operated by the stream. (The main stream, years ago, flowed open through Stert St, giving the Street its name). On the opposite side of the Road is the Church, or "National" School, and a row of cottages known as "Windsor Cottages".

Stert Street (South). Back to Stert St. This is one of the Town's principal shopping streets. It contains several buildings of genuine antiquity, and the rest represent a fair cross section of architecture over the years. Starting at the Station entrance we face the Church, visible at the other end of the street. On the left is a pub, The Plough, then the local registrar's office. Next, Burgess's printing works, and a courtyard known as "The Mews", and the Cinema. Then Walters cycle shop, Paxmans "Chocolate Box", a small sweet shop, Achille Serre the cleaners, the North Berks Herald office, Masons haberdashery, Perriers second hand clothes, Brewers greengrocers, Cottril [Cottrell] fishmonger, Westalls shoe shop, Shaws mens' outfitters and, up an alley, "Candle House" the home of Hooke's printing works. Then Cullens the grocers, and the George & Dragon, three cottages and Warland Andrew the photographer, ends this side.

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Now for the other side. Returning to our position by the Bee Hive, and facing toward the Church again, on the right is a tobacconists shop owned by "Bob" Ely. Following on come Mrs Edgington, Menswear, Mr Hathaway, Baker, another of Cullens grocers shops, but always known as "Neates" as the Manager, Mr Neate, is an institution, having been there so long. Next is Langfords, seedsmen, Palmers the bakers, and Harkers devoted to the sale and repair of clocks and watches. Then Hiltons shoe shop, Cottril [Cottrell] the butchers, and Hathaways hairdressing saloon, followed by a small saddlers shop, bring us to the tall red-brick building housing Critchley Ward & Piggott, accountants. Next door is Duponts Haberdashery store and the end of Stert St. Although there are still a few buildings on the right, they are the backs of buildings facing the Market Square, and we must deal with them when we get to the Square

The Abbey. Now for the Abbey. This is the local name for all which lies behind the Abbey Gateway, which was once the Gatehouse to Abingdon's magnificent and powerful Abbey. By the square Norman church of St Nicholas a road leads us under the arch of the gateway just referred to, and into the Street known as Abbey Close. On the left is the Church Hall, a very new building, and the Abbey House seen within the tall iron gates. Of no great age it was, I believe, at one time the residence of the Bishop of Reading but, be that as it may, late in the 19th century it came into the possession of a Mr Trendell. This gentleman, a trifle eccentric, caused, in the grounds at the back of the house, where formerly stood the magnificent Abbey church, to be erected some fake ruins. Some parts of these were, undoubtedly, bits of the Abbey, found possibly in the grounds, but also included were such things as the east window of St Helen's Church, removed when the chancel was rebuilt late last century. The stone wall enclosing the gardens extends along the entire left hand side of Abbey Close. At the end of the Road we see on our right a considerable Georgian house, set back in fairly extensive grounds, adjoining another house of some fair size, and the ruins of the Abbey of Abingdon. These extend to Checker Walk, which we shall presently reach, and are in a fair state of preservation owing to the circumstance that they were used as maltings [a brewery] until well into the last century. Returning to Abbey Close, we have on the South side a coachworks (Emertons) and a rather rambling house occupying the corner site.

Here we turn into Checker Walk. On the left is a row of small cottages, followed by the Chapel of the Strict Baptists. Then a court running at right angles to the road and containing, perhaps, 5 or 6 cottages. Before us and to the left is the other end of the Abbey Ruins of which we have just taken note. Here, in a vaulted crypt, "Daddy" Williams makes boiled sweets to the delight of the local kiddage.

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Also a stone passage runs down to Thames Street. Opening out of this passage are two doors, one each side, which give access to cottages contrived from the building (which is also part of the old Abbey) and which are of incredible darkness and meanness. One may see, from here, an Elizabethan half timbered extension to the rear of one of the said buildings. Turning back toward Abbey Close, on the left are cottages, one Georgian brick house of some size, and a court of four

cottages. Then, at the corner as one turns into Abbey Close, a Georgian group of curious shape. Following this, on the South side of Abbey Close, are two stone houses and then the Abbey Gateway. Having passed through the Gateway we see, on the left, an ancient building, albeit much restored and altered, which houses the Borough Court and the Council Chambers of the Borough. At the West end is a gateway, and passing through this we are in a square the sides of which are formed by the Council Chambers on the North, the Roysse Rooms on the East (an ancient building, originally a school set up by John Roysse in the 16th century, and perpetuated in the form of the local Grammar School), 2 houses occupied by custodians of the Guildhall etc on the South, and the backs of shops in Bridge Street on the West. Tucked in the corner formed by the junction of the South and West sides, is the former fire station.

Bridge Street. Bridge St is the logical extension of the expedition. We see a very narrow Street with, on the corner, Hays butchers shop. Next Goff's watch repairing business, followed by a fruit shop and the "Melrose" tearooms. After this is the "Crown & Thistle" Hotel, an old building which has at some time received a new façade. It has a magnificent courtyard and a weeping willow of immense size. A few cottages, one of them occupied by a maker of "Hog Puddings" and a Fish & Chip shop (Bennetts), 2 more cottages, and we arrive at the pub "The Broad Face". This is on the corner of Thames St, which we will look at next. On the left, or North, side of Thames St are several very old and small cottages and the entrance to a court. Here we have two rows of cottages with no backyards, but facing each other over a strip of ground divided into narrow gardens. These rows of cottages are known respectively as "Trendells Row" and "Stanilands Row". Returning to the street, a row of fairly modern red brick houses follows, and then a fairly modern red house, and a fairly considerable house faced with stucco. After this, two or three stone cottages of the Abbey period and, perhaps, connected with it, and the passage to Checker Walk, mentioned earlier. Standing square across the bottom of the street is an old house which must, nevertheless, have been built after the Dissolution because, just inside its front door, is the Alms door of the Abbey. The Mill, which we see on our right is, basically, the Abbey Mill, although much rebuilt. The part of the Thames which was diverted to form the millstream forms the Southern boundary of the Street.

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There is however, a small bridge taking one over the stream to an island on which are 2 cottages, the Abingdon Carpet Factory, and the site occupied until late in the 19th century by the Abingdon Gas Works. Turning left over Abingdon Bridge, narrow and hog-backed, we see the "Nags Head" pub, the Bridge Hotel kept by Mrs Stevens who also has a large parrot and two incredibly mischievous monkeys, and Salters landing for Steamers, which landing includes a tea garden. The buildings mentioned are on an island "Nags Head Island". Crossing the Bridge we see an old cottage and two or three more recent ones, the group being known as Maud Hales Terrace.

Cross the road and return across the Bridge toward the Town, and on the left immediately after leaving the Bridge are three stone houses set end-on to the Road and overlooking the river.

After these is an opening leading to a courtyard and an imposing stone building. This was the County Gaol, but is now used as a store for the stocks of Messrs Harris & Matthews, Corn Chandlers, whose shop occupies the frontage of the large stone house, facing the Street at the entrance to the yard. Next is the Police Station, and then a narrow entry named Turnagain Lane. This leads to a courtyard full of small stone cottages, crammed together round the edge of the yard. These were once the residences of the prison Guards. One imagines that they were not much better housed than the Prisoners.

Returning to Bridge Street, we turn left past the corner house and find a small sweet shop, Whittakers. Next the "Seven Stars" pub and then Moores, the Decorators. After this the local Liberal party H.Q. and Botterils [Bottrells?] the ironmongers. Then Ferrimans, tobacconists, and we find ourselves back in the Market Place, or "The Bury" as it is mostly called.

Market Place & Bury Street. It will be as well now to go round the Market Place, taking in Bury Street while we are here. So, on the corner on which we stand is Shepherd & Simpson, clothiers of long standing. Then Vineys' drapers shop, Woods the Grocer, and a newsagents. Across the Road, the "Punch Bowl" pub, the Labour Exchange as it was then known (Oh, the shame of being "on the dole"). Next a Café, Palmers greengrocers, and Braggs cycle shop. Cross High Street to the opposite corner, occupied by the "Home & Colonial" Grocery Stores, next to which is the London County Westminster & Parrs Bank, and the Corn Exchange, a building of uncommon hideousness, even for the Victorian times in which it was built. This is at the entrance to Bury Street, and on the left is the Fire Station and the entrance to the Cattle Market where, every Monday, hundreds of head of livestock of all sorts change hands. This market occupies practically all this side of Bury Street but, halfway along, is a small group of very old cottages, Ballards Yard. Reaching the end of Bury Street we cross and retrace our steps on the other side. Here we have an ancient double-fronted house, once a pub, a row of small cottages, also of some age. (It is worth saying, at this point, that when these were demolished, a garden and the traces of even older cottages were found beneath).

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Following these, in the corner, the Black Bull pub, and then a row of red-brick houses, 3 or 4 in number. After this, the entrance to the National School, and the yard belonging to, and end wall of, the "Queens Hotel", which ends Bury Street. Turning left, the unlovely Victorian frontage of the "Queens" is on the left. There is however a small part of the building, that nearest to Stert St, which is Georgian and much better looking. Here is the narrow entrance to Queen St, a small bow-windowed shop, and the Market Place door and window of Duponts the Drapers, previously met with in Stert St. On the other side of the arch leading into Stert St is the shop of Mr Hooke, printer and stationer, and something of a local character. Next is "The Globe" pub, a sweet shop, Hales the Shoemaker, and a small piece of ground full of dusty and depressed-looking shrubs. This completes our tour of the Market Place, although we must not forget to note the magnificent Town Hall dominating the scene from its position on the South side, and the statue of Queen Victoria in the centre of the "Bury".

East St Helen Street. Now we will take a look at East St Helens St, still known to the Abingdon people as "Fore St". On the left is the magnificently untidy antique and junk shop kept by a Mr Dixon. Next a pub with Georgian façade and much older back premises, the "Kings Head & Bell". And now on our left stretches a vista of houses, all of which are of some significance. We must single out for special mention the imposing Georgian pile of Twickenham House, with its courtyard, arch, and grounds running down to the river, indeed as do most of the gardens in this, one of the principal residential Streets of the town since Heaven knows when. (Judge Jefferies, of ill-fame, stayed in this Street on his way to the "Bloody Assize"). At the end of the Street, where it narrows to squeeze past the Church, was a pub "The Lord Nelson". This, at the time of writing, has been well restored. The opposite side of the Street is made up of similar, although in most cases smaller, houses, but we should mention the presence, opposite the "Kings Head & Bell" of Slaters general shop.

The Wharf & Caldecott. Returning to the point at which the Street passes the Church, it here turns sharply to the right and becomes "The Wharf". This was once true, as the barges, which were so widely used, loaded and unloaded here. From here we have the River Thames running unobstructed along the left hand side of the road. On the other side there is the back of a group of almshouses, an alleyway leading to the Church, and the end of another group of almshouses on which is displayed an ancient painting of Abingdon Market Cross, before the attentions of General Waller and his troops modified it. A pub "The Anchor", 2 almshouses, and the road to a mill (Clarkes Mill) and the iron bridge over the River Ock which joins the Thames here.

On the left is the entrance to a Road of various names. Originally "Peep-o-Day" Rd, this became Oday Rd, and now the local Council have come out with Wilsham Rd. Take your choice.

On the right as we enter is a large red brick building, now a laundry but once an iron foundry. Opposite it, on the river bank, is a small railed-off garden and a stone-built wharf house. It was at this point that the Wilts & Berks canal left the Thames. Just past the laundry, where now stands a considerable house, was the site of the lock which gave access to the canal. Following this we have Winterbournes Boathouse, and there is also a ferry here. A small terrace of houses and that is the end of the inhabited part of the Road. Returning to the Bridge and turning left we find ourselves in Caldecott Rd. This is a long road which stretches Westwards to join the Newbury Rd. Along its length, on the left, is an embankment which is the containing bank of the canal. On the right is Caldecott House, a very considerable house with stables and gate lodge. Following this, and westward of it, are three pairs of semi-detached houses and one standing isolated. This is the extent of Caldecott.

West St Helen Street. We will return to the junction of East and West St Helens, by the Church, noting the Church itself (reputedly built on the site of the nunnery of Helenstowe, founded by St Frideswyde, but this is doubtful) and its attendant almshouses which make a picturesque group. Now for West St Helen's St. Commencing on the left is the great red brick edifice of Clarke's clothing factory. Now, in order, a crowded and unsavoury court known as Zion's Court, 2 cottages, Mrs Price's sweet shop, a house rather larger than the rest, Smart's General Shop, and another house, then an even larger and more unsavoury court known as "Paradise Square". Then a pub, the "Britannia", and a row of ancient cottages approached up flights of steps, and another pub, the "Plasterers Arms". Here is the entrance to St Edmunds Lane, which contains two small rows of cottages, facing each other across the street. We then have cottages of varying age until we come to Messrs Tombs, Plumbers, and another smelly court known simply as "The Gateway". A small house or two, one of which is occupied by Fred Moss the barber, and another by a junk dealer, and a fair sized shop, Willis' [Fisher's] Dairy, bring us to the junction with High St. We will cross and take a look at the other side. Here we see a pub, "The Barley Mow", at the corner with Lombard St. Lombard St is a narrow Street which gives access to the back of the High St shops and, on its opposite side consists of small houses in an unlovely variety of dark red brick. There is however a considerable Bakers shop owned by Mr Ivey. The building it occupies is, except for the façade, of great antiquity. On the corner with West St Helen's is Backhus's Grocery Store, famous for their cheese. Then a row of small cottages and another court, at the top of which are stables with, over them and reached by rickety wooden steps, a dwelling. The rest of this side of the street is given over to houses of slightly better sort than the rest, culminating in a small court of only three cottages.

Now to take a look at High St. Facing West, that is with our backs to the Market Place, on our left is Lacey's the Chemist. Then the London Joint City and Midland Bank. Walkers Stores, Adkin Belcher & Bowen, Estate Agents, Humphrey [Humphrey] Starks, Ironmongers, the International Stores, David Duce the Fishmonger, and the retail outlet of Belcher & Habgood, locally known as "The Gin Palace". Here West St Helens St enters, and across on the opposite corner is Witham's Jeweller & Optician, followed by Beesleys, Outfitters, Pauls Shoe Shop, and "The Grapes" public House. This ends the South side of High St, so we will cross the road to the red brick building at the opposite corner. This is usually occupied by one or other of the political parties as their local Office. Next, going towards the Market Place, is the Post Office, then Smiths, Chemists, the Town Library, and the Argyle Dairy shop. Charlton, the Photographer, occupies the next shop, and following this is the vast and magnificent "Lion Hotel", a great timbered building with a lofty coach entry and vast yard. Hathaways Hairdressing shop follows this, and then Chivers the Drapers, Clarkes the Dry Cleaners, another branch of Vineys, and then a sweetshop ends High St. Now we will go back Westward along High St until we reach the "Grapes". Here at the junction of High St, Ock St, and Bath St is The Square. In the centre is the new War Memorial. On our left, the South side is a very large house, "Square House". Across, opposite, is Barclays Bank, until

very recently Gilletts, and next door Scotts, Mens' Outfitters. Across the Street, Gibbons tobacconists and, next, a private house. Vernon Whitehead's Garage comes next, and we have covered The Square.

Bath Street. As we are standing at the entrance to Bath St we will look at this next, including what little there is to note in Wootton Rd, which is its continuation. So, on the left is Edwards, Watchmaker, and then Leach's Stationers, followed by Bailie's Shoeshop and an access to a yard. Following this, Gerring the Tailor and a private house, after which is Stones Tobacco and Sports Goods. After this, Mobbs Shoeshop, Ballards Blacksmith and Farrier, and Jarvis's Shoeshop. Then Acklings the Ironmongers and a large Georgian house with a coach entry, "Stratton House", and a small house "Stratton Lodge", and we are at the corner of Park Rd. Crossing, and continuing in Bath St, there are two or three fair-sized houses and then Shorts which, curiously, combines a Builders business and a Sweetshop. Next is Coxeters Furniture Repository (a very ugly Victorian building), a private house, and the Cottage Hospital. Next comes a court containing two houses which were probably built to accommodate upper servants employed at the very considerable half-timbered house which lies behind the high stone wall on our left. This wall continues to the junction with Faringdon Rd, and partly conceals another large house "Waystecourt" [Waste Court].

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Here is Faringdon Rd, which we will cross, noticing the two houses on the corner site. Continue North in what is now Wootton Rd. There is on the left a large house, not old, with very large garden. Then a field, an isolated detached house and several pairs of semi-detached, of the better sort. Two farm cottages complete the habitations in Wootton Rd. Crossing over, and returning on the other side we encounter no building, except a cottage opposite the Faringdon Rd, until we come to some large iron gates and a stone lodge. This is the entrance to Fitzharry's Manor, a large house set in parkland, and once a fortified Manor. The mound on which stood the keep, and the now dry ditch of the moat surrounding it, are still there. Unfortunately, the present Manor, which has been altered and added to over the centuries, is said to be none too sound. We walk on, the grey stone wall of the Manor flanking the pavement, until we come to a large Tudor house and, immediately following it, lying back from the road behind its garden, a fairly large and very old cottage. Two modern houses follow, and a regrettable Georgian house, followed by two stucco-fronted houses and a pub "The Horse & Jockey". A terrace of red-brick houses brings us to the corner of Broad Street. Here, after the Sadlers on the corner site mentioned while we were in Broad St, we see the façade of a building which was once a pub, "The Three Tuns". Derelict, there is still to be seen in the stucco of the upper wall the sign of Three Tuns moulded in plasterwork. A small butchers shop, Faulkners, and an ancient building which was once a pub but is now a private house, and we are at the corner with Bury St. Continuing, we see a pub, the "Black Swan", an old house or two, Barnett's sweetshop, Sparrows Hairdressers, and another pub, "The Blue Boar", and the end of Bath St. Before leaving, however, it is interesting to note that Bath St was once Boar St, hence, probably, the name of the pub.

Ock Street (South side). And now, Ock St. This very long wide street has been so altered that anyone reading these notes must see a lot of it with the eye of faith, and trust in the accuracy of the said notes. Standing in the Square and facing West, or "down the street" as the locals say, on our left is Bayliss's [Baylis's] the Grocers, followed by Trotmans, Bakers, and J N Paul, Jeweller & Watchmaker. Here is Winsmore Lane. This is short and consists in a terrace of houses on the right hand side and a stone wall on the left. It probably exists by reason of the fact that it leads to the east gate of Morlands, the Brewers, and also continues by an alley to St Edmunds Lane, leading off West St Helens. Returning to Ock St, on the corner is Goodleys, Bakers, and next a small bow-windowed shop which is owned by a Vet. After this, a greengrocers and Thomas's China Shop. Now we have a truly impressive Georgian group. This consists of a house named "The Beaconsfield" and a pair of houses. The first of these owns a carriage gateway and an arch with living accommodation above, surmounted by a clock, and has extensive grounds. This imposing pile is known, naturally, as "Clock House".

After this is Brind Gillingham, the Ironmongers, and Gibson's Garage. A small cottage, and the offices and main entrance to a place of great local importance, Morlands, the Brewers. On the right of the entrance is a large house which was the residence of the Manager at that time. Following are three cottages, a fairly considerable Georgian house, and a yard in which a local sweet manufacturer of more than local fame, one Mr Barnett, plies his trade. Next a house and Rant & Tombs, Grocers, the Primitive Methodist Chapel, and a row of cottages. Then a yard leading to the fields between Ock St and the River Ock, known as "Thistlecroft" and "The Witheyhay". After this, a small sweetshop know locally as 'arry Giles's, two or three cottages and a Baker's shop, Miles. Behind it, and reached by a narrow alley alongside, is a row of small but decent cottages, called inevitably "Bakehouse Cottages". From here, this side of the Street is composed of many houses and cottages of varying size and age, interspersed by alleys and courts, in which the occupants wage a constant battle to maintain a reasonable standard of cleanliness in crumbling "one up and one down" cottages, with no back way, no indoor tap or sanitary facilities. Is it to be wondered that some gave up the struggle? One finds, interspersed, Berry's the Bakers and general shop, a pub "The Cross Keys", another the "Jolly Ploughboy" and another "The Ock St Horns". This latter is an old pub, and its name is associated with the Ock St Morris Men who, when they dance, carry the "Horns". These are the horns of a large animal, probably an ox, and their origin is obscure. Now, Simmons the Bakers, and a row of cottages known, quite without justification, as "Pig Row" (maybe there were pigs kept there in the dim and distant past). A fairly large house, and a couple of cottages which overlook and only just escape overhanging the River Ock, bring us to the end of that side of Ock Street.

Ladygrove. Before returning on the other side we will look at two of the roads which radiate from this point. To the left, over the Bridge, lies Ladygrove. Fields on the left side lead us to a fairly large house, lying back in its grounds, at the junction with Caldecott Rd. Past this, a farmyard and a couple of cottages is all there is. Cross the road and turn back towards Abingdon, and Cox's Farm, to which the said cottages belong, is on your left at the corner of a road which goes off into the fields, apparently to nowhere. Actually it leads to New Cut Mill, always known locally as "Buggs Mill". It is a small mill on the Ock, in the middle of Abingdon Common. Next there is a couple of cottages set back from the road, and another rather larger house facing it. Then the bridge, almost indistinguishable as such, over the old canal, and a fairly modern stone house. After this, a cottage and an L-shaped row of cottages, terminating in an old tollhouse, barn, and two farm cottages set back from the road, and we return over the bridge to the point from which we started.

Marcham Road. Looking West, the signpost says "To Witney and Marcham", so down this road we will go. After passing a water meadow, there is a fair sized mill, still operative. This is all on this side, but anyone caring to go further will see allotments and the commencement of Abingdon Common. In fact, it is essential to go this far, because on the other side of the road are two houses and a wooden building, which form the local T.B. Sanatorium. Adjoining, as we walk back to Abingdon, are red-brick buildings of the "Fever Hospital", that is to say the Hospital for Infectious Diseases. A few semi-detached houses, some larger ones set back in grounds, and a small terrace, and we are back at the end of Ock St.

The North side of Ock St, along which we will now go, is if anything rather more varied than the South side. First, at the corner of Ock St and Spring Road, the "White Horse" pub, followed by a terrace of houses, and a larger house, very square and uncompromising, known as "Oriel House". Next, Blakes, Cornchandlers, and a pub, the "Holly Bush". Right next door is another pub, the "Air Balloon", and here is Victoria Rd. Following this, a terrace of four houses, set back a little, and then a terrace of tile-hung houses fronting the road. One of these is Stimpsons, the Greengrocers. It is noteworthy that tile hanging is quite exceptional round here. I should have

mentioned that between the two terraces are the premises of Mr Godfrey, Stonemason. Another pub, the “Happy Dick” (Abingdon people must have suffered from acute thirsts) is followed by a narrow entrance which leads to a row of cottages, built well back from the Road and behind the row which fronts the street as we continue. We come now to a fairly large house, next door is a Butcher’s Shop and then Wrights, Grocers and general shop. Following this is a house and then the Bicycle shop of Mr Hemmings. He and his family are people of some note in Ock St. He is reputed to have made and repaired the cycles which were ridden by Will Morris, later Sir William Morris and Lord Nuffield. One or other members of his family are, almost invariably, elected “Mayor of Ock St” at the annual ceremony of electing the “Morris Mayor”, connected with the Morris Dancers mentioned elsewhere. Now there come more cottages, Exons Bakers shop and, on the corner of Mayotts Road, Wheelers, Drapers. The stock they hold is so extensive that they are known all over the locality as “Billy Whiteleys” after the great London store. We need do no more than glance up Mayotts Rd, consisting as it does of terrace of houses on each side and the entrance to the “Council” Schools.

Ock Street (North side). Back in Ock St we find a cottage or two, Miss Blizzards sweet shop, and a few more cottages before coming to quite a large pub with the peculiar title “Mr Warrick’s Arms”. Then another cottage or so and a pub, “The Crown”. A very small court, holding only two houses and known as “Pump Court”, is so named because it is by the Carswell.

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This is a brick structure, now dry but obviously once a drinking fountain. It was in fact some benefactor’s attempt to supply the local people with pure water from a conduit under the adjacent road, Conduit Rd, and originating from a small stone building in the corner of the Park. Following this well is a row of really beautiful Almshouses, reached through a doorway let into a wall, and stretching back from the road in two facing rows. The back of one row forms the pavement frontage of part of Conduit Rd, at which we have arrived.

Continuing in Ock St after crossing Conduit Rd, there is Pollards Builders & Plumbers, Enochs Coal Yard, and a row of cottages, one of which deserves mention as being inhabited by Mr Oakley, a veteran Chimneysweep. Next, a large dismal-looking house of the peculiar dark brick which was produced at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. This is Dr Woodford’s, and he has been there so long it is difficult to imagine Abingdon without him. Then comes a court, “Willow Place”, in which operates Mr Parry, a Tailor, and at the entrance a Barbers shop. Now a cottage or two divided by a passage leading to two cottages set on their own in splendid isolation at the back, and then a pub the “Cock & Tree”.

Here is the Manse and, set back, the Baptist Chapel. In front, facing directly onto the Street, is a square and forbidding building known as the “British School”. As far as I can find out, this was an attempt to give some sort of education before the “Council” Schools reigned. The rest of Ock St, to the Square, consists in the quite considerable shop of Coxeters, Furnishers, a pair of houses, a shop which was taken over by Viney’s as a third shop in the period of which I write, Allee the Butcher, a Georgian house, d’Almaine, Solicitors and Accountants, and the Congregational Chapel. This ends Ock St, and we have quite a considerable walk in front of us, as the logical thing to do is to return to far end of Ock St and take a look at the part of Abingdon lying to the North.

Spring Road. So, having reached the crossroads, we turn to the right into Spring Rd. On the left is a builders yard, followed by a row of cottages, the last of which is a small sweetshop. Then three more considerable houses with front gardens, and two stone-built ones, and we are the corner of Winterbourne Rd. This Road contains three terraces of houses, the first on the left as we enter the Road being Freestone’s general shop. We emerge again into Spring Rd, and turning North see on the left Heavitrees House, quite an imposing place, two stone built houses and then, built end on to the Road, a terrace of four or five houses with gardens, known as Spring Terrace. Past these is a row of red-brick cottages, with an alleyway through the centre of them giving access to the

cottages' back doors and also to two cottages built way back of them, in the fashion so popular around here. Following this, a builders yard (Buckle) and a series of fairly large houses of various designs brings us to the corner of Cemetery Rd. On the left side of this Road are pairs of houses of an undistinguished variety.

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The far end of the Road gives access to the works of the Pavlova Leather Co, famous for its Chamois Leathers. The other side of the Road is bounded by the Cemetery, with the Keeper's Lodge on the corner as we again enter Spring Rd. Here we again have the boundary of the Cemetery, then a cottage, and a road leading off to the left. This is Spring Gardens, and is another way to the Pavlova Works. There are one or two houses also. Back in Spring Road there is now no building between here and the junction with Faringdon Rd. We will take in Faringdon Rd whilst we are so near. To the left there are, on the left, several semi-detached houses built at the top of a high bank. These were built for the employees of the Pavlova. On the North side of the Road is the "High School" for Girls. That is to say, the School of St Helen & St Katharine, to give it its full [pretentious] title. Following this are a few large stone houses set back in fair-sized grounds, some fields, another rather hideous battlemented house, and the corner with Wootton Rd.. Retracing, practically the whole South side of the road is occupied by a stone wall, marking the boundary of the Roysse School grounds, and the gardens of various large houses. This is broken at one point by the emergence of Albert Rd. This leads from Faringdon Rd to Park Crescent, and is called Albert Rd by the locals, but I have been unable to prove that this was ever its official name. However, the presence, just within the park gates at the end of the Road, of a very imposing column surmounted by a statue of Prince Albert is doubtless as good an excuse as any for the name.

Back at the corner with Spring Rd we have a small stone-built house, possibly an old Pikehouse, and then again the walls etc marking property boundaries taking up the left of the Road until the entry of Park Rd. The houses commence again and, at the corner of Exbourne Rd, Rant & Tombs Grocers Shop, then a pub, "The Prince of Wales", a row of houses and then, at the corner with Edward St, a corrugated iron chapel, of which denomination I know not. On the opposite corner Cullens, Grocers, and a row of cottages ends Spring Rd.

Between The Park & Ock Street. We are now nearing the end of our travels. Exbourne Rd and Edward St, just mentioned, both run from Spring Rd to Victoria Rd. They are both completely filled by small terraced houses, of the type which normally survive over the centuries. The same may be said of Victoria Rd, except that here the houses are rather larger and set in gardens. Leading from Victoria Rd to Conduit Rd is Bostock Avenue [Road]. This is named, as is also the terrace which takes up most of the South side, after local benefactors of a bygone day. Also, on the South side, is the "Council" school, and these two, the terrace and the school, take up the whole of the South side of the Road.

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On the opposite, North, side semi-detached houses occupy the length of the Avenue, but half way along is a short road leading out to the North. Up this road are a few modest houses and one of the entries to the church of St Michael, in Park Rd, also a pathway through to that road. We are now left with Conduit Rd and Park Rd. Conduit Rd is, as was mentioned just now, at the end of Bostock Avenue, and it leads from Ock St to Park Rd. Starting from Ock St, on the left is the back wall of Tompkins Almshouses, and a school building. Here is Bostock Rd, and then until the junction with Park Rd are semi-detached houses. On the other side, going from Ock St, the wall of a builders yard, four semis, two detached houses, and the rooms, school, and chapel of the Wesleyans.

Park Rd which, so far as we are concerned, is the end of our quest, is as long as Ock St. Starting from Bath St, at the entrance, left and right, are small stone buildings, gate lodges. This is because the whole of the area comprising the Park, Park Rd, Conduit and Victoria Roads, and Bostock

Avenue are private property protected by gates, which no doubt you have noticed. The owner is Christs Hospital. So we enter Park Rd past the gate lodges and see, on the left a stone wall marking the boundary of the grounds of Stratton House in Bath St. Then the Roysse School playing fields and Conduit Rd. After Conduit Rd are several detached [and semi-detached] houses and St Michael's Church. More semis and the corner with Victoria Rd, two more blocks of semis, and the end of Park Rd. The other side of the road is the boundary of Albert Park, but leaving Park Rd opposite Victoria Rd and re-entering opposite Conduit Rd is Park Crescent. This contains large good-class houses, in which live the local notabilities and some of the more prosperous tradespeople. From the corner with Conduit Rd back toward Bath St we see, set behind its playing fields, on our left, the local Grammar School, Roysse's School. Of regrettably Victorian design, it is mercifully masked by trees. Nevertheless, its academic standards are second to none and, as scholarships are available, no-one in Abingdon or the surrounding district need lack education. Before ending, you may have noticed in the garden of the house at the corner of Park and Victoria Roads a most magnificent elm tree. This is known all over Abingdon as "The Lonesome Tree" or sometimes just as "The Lonesome". It is the sole survivor of a whole avenue of elm trees which stretched the length of Park Rd, but with typical Victorian vandalism were ruthlessly cut down when the houses were built.

And that brings us to the end of our journeys around Abingdon.

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Conclusion. A word before leaving you. Should this ever reach print, or be distributed in some other form, someone will inevitably say that it reads like a catalogue. Well, of course it does. It is a catalogue of the businesses and buildings in an Abingdon which existed quietly, usefully and happily, and which has now gone in its previous form, and will never be the same again. Some may object that it is, in parts, inaccurate. To these I say that every writing which treats of a Town or District is inaccurate about a week after it is written. Change takes place all the time, and the period of which I write is the period just after the first world war, before the spread of the Council houses built of ticky-tacky, and before the malignant rash of speculative jerry-building had done its worst. To inaccuracies caused by failure of memory, and doubtless there are these, I plead guilty. Memory fades, and I can only ask forgiveness and hope that those who look [read] will make allowances.

You will look in vain for many of the buildings and pubs. Of the pubs, you will not find the "Black Bull", the "Ock St Horns", the "Plasterers Arms", nor the "Britannia". These, and more, have been demolished. There are others still standing and used as private houses – the "Row Barge", the "Happy Dick", the "Cock & Tree", to name but a few. Some few of the shops survive under other names and selling other goods. Some still, I am glad to say, carry on the same business, in the same name, and at the same premises. You will spot these, however.

So, having done my best to keep alive the image of Abingdon as it was, I end.