

CHINNOR HILL PART 2, WEST OF KEENS (DONKEY) LANE – 1948



This article follows on from that last month based on the eastern photo. Apologies if the photos are not that easy to follow in the articles. Both articles (as .pdfs) and the full photographs (as .jpegs) are now available on the Chinnor Heritage Group website at www.ChinnorHeritage.org.uk under the **History/Chinnor Village** tabs.

This second aerial photo of the same date (probably taken at exactly the same time as the first), shows the area to the west of Donkey Lane along to the cement works as it was in 1948. The building on the extreme right on the Icknield Way immediately above the cement works is Icknield Hatch, the home of William Benton who founded the works. This has long been demolished and subsumed into the quarry that now occupies virtually the whole of this area south of the Icknield Way and west of Hill Road. At the time of this photo the only quarries in operation were those on the north side of the Icknield Way. There remains a set of steps up the wooded section of the quarry face just below Icknield Hatch that once provided direct access from the house into the works site. Just along from

this is the tunnel that now connects the quarries on both sides of the Icknield Way (not accessible to the public).

The eastern end of the cement works and what appear to be the “hot” end of two rotary kilns is shown clearly, as is the line of the original 5 brick-built kilns. One of these kilns has been retained within the new Old Kiln Lakes development on the old cement works site and is now a Listed monument.

Westdown Farm is obvious at the bottom of the triangular field between the Upper Icknield Way and the hill although the building has now been extended significantly. Above it, alongside Hill Road, the small white area is the site of the largest of the old chalk pits on Hill Road. It still exists, albeit now largely covered with scrub. There is a number of old chalk pits scattered across the hill: chalk was widely used to make an early form of cement and to condition. Flint, which occurs widely distributed in the chalk, has been used over the years to make road beds. Submerged in the woods to the southeast of the chalk pit is another of the iron age round barrows, now on private land.

Just discernible running from above the chalk pit and to the right of the dominant circular garden feature at the top centre of the photo is the line of the path running from the top of Westdown Steps (100 steps) alongside the house with the circular feature, to the corner of Hill Top Lane.

The line of Hill Road can be seen sweeping round to the south west, together with what appears to be a track running below this that may well be the line of the old hill road before it was re-positioned and re-laid in the late 19th century.

The houses lower down on the opposite side of Hill Road, just before the Icknield Way, still exist relatively unchanged: these are Hillside (was Carlton House) and Hillfoot Cottage.

The higher level areas of Chinnor Hill above the Icknield Way on both sides of Hill Road contain a number of very large houses with extensive grounds, with most of those on the east side accessed from Hilltop Lane or Hill Road beyond the Goose Neck..

The almost square site of the Rec on the east side of Hill Road north of the Icknield Way stands out as do the houses on one side – the north side - of Wykeham Rise. The south side of Wykeham Rise together with most of the land up to the Rec has since been developed, mainly as the Golden Hills Estate, although there is still an undeveloped space between these houses and the Rec. Just north of the railway on the west side below the station can just be seen the houses of Meadow Road and part of the old Siary's Woodyard – now also housing.

The wooded area at the bottom centre below Wykeham Rise has now been built on a later extension to the Avenue estate and the land from Hill Road (now Station Road at this point) westward has now been almost totally redeveloped as housing along to Oakley.

The old cement works access road has now been relocated to a point further up Hill Road and the car park for the heritage railway now occupies the position on the corner by the railway bridge. Chinnor station and the station approach road are clearly shown with the approach road extending well past the station. Crossing diagonally behind the houses in Meadow Road to a point on the railway just beyond the station is the old rail connection into Siarey's wood yard. This has now gone

although a small part of the line remains visible, embedded in Meadow road fairly close to the old station access road.

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