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CORN EXCHANGE, FARINGDON

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THE VALE OF THE
WHITE HORSE FROM
THE FOLLY

Introducing . . .

FARINGDON

The parish of Faringdon is situated in the extreme north-west of Berkshire near the county boundaries with Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. It extends southwards from the River Thames to the old quarries known as Cole's Pits, near Little Coxwell, a distance of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles; and it has a breadth from Oak Wood, in the west, to Barcote Hill, in the east, of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles. In the north the course of the Thames forms the natural boundary of this parish (as of the county) for a distance of 3 miles.

In addition to the ancient market town of Faringdon, occupying a high but sheltered situation on the western edge of the range of low hills which separate the upper Thames valley from the fertile Vale of White Horse, the civil parish includes the village of Littleworth and a number of outlying farmsteads and hamlets.

Faringdon lies amidst much very pleasant country and has widespread and diversified views. It forms a most convenient centre for surrounding places of interest and of scenic beauty.

ACCESSIBILITY.

Faringdon is approximately midway between Reading and Cheltenham. It lies 9 miles north-west of Wantage, 12 miles north-east of Swindon, 17 miles south-west of Oxford and 12 miles south of Banford. London is 69 miles distant by road and 70 miles by rail.

The town is served by the Western Region of British Railways with a branch line from Uffington, which is on the main line from Paddington, through Didcot, to the West Country.

Excellent bus routes of the Bristol Bus Company and the Oxford Bus Company link Faringdon with Wantage, Swindon, Oxford and other surrounding towns. Long-distance coaches of the Red and White Company provide a regular daily service between London and Cheltenham via Faringdon.



Local Information

Area. The civil parish extends to 5,807 acres.

Banks. Branches of Barclays Bank Ltd., and Lloyds Bank Ltd., are established in the town.

Churches. In addition to the parish church of All Saints, there is an Anglican Church at Littleworth. The Nonconformist places of worship in Faringdon are: Baptist Church, Block Green; Congregational Church, Marlborough Street; Methodist Church, Coxwell Road.

Climate. Faringdon stands high but in a sheltered situation. The air is clear and bracing; a good sunshine record and a moderate rainfall combine to give the town a congenial and healthy climate.

Early Closing. Thursdays.

Education. The Primary School in the town provides education for pupils up to the age of eleven. After this they are transferred, according to their ability and aptitude, to the County Grammar School for Girls in Faringdon, King Alfred's Grammar School for Boys in Wantage, or the Secondary Modern Mixed School in Faringdon. There is one private school in the town.

Technical education is available for a few pupils, selected by examination at 13 plus, in Swindon and Oxford. An Evening Institute is held in the Faringdon Modern School during the autumn and spring terms.

Fire Station. In Marlborough Street.

Hospital. Faringdon Cottage Hospital.

Housing. The Rural District Council is pursuing an active post-war housing programme.

Industries. Agriculture and its associated rural undertakings are still maintained as the principal local industries; but a few additional light industries are established in the town.

Local Government. The parish is administered by the Faringdon Parish Council, which consists of 13 members. The Clerk is Mr. A. C. Dowdeswell, Corn Exchange, Faringdon. This is one of the twenty-five constituent parishes of the Faringdon Rural District, the Offices of this Council being at Market Place, Faringdon. Telephone: 2296. The Clerk is Mr. L. Pearce.

Magistrates' Courts and Petty Sessions. These are held at the Court House, Coach Lane, Faringdon. The Clerk to the Justices is H. C. Rose, Esq., of Faringdon.

Market Day. Tuesdays.

Newspapers. *Wiltshire Herald and Advertiser* (Swindon), and *Oxford Times*.

Police Station. In Coach Lane.

Population. Estimated at 3,500 (1951).

Public Services. Electricity is distributed by the Southern Electricity Board and gas by the South Western Gas Board. The town has gas street lighting. Faringdon is provided with an ample supply of piped water which is of a high degree of purity. The town has main drainage to a modern sewage disposal plant. Domestic refuse is collected regularly by the Local Authority and disposed of by controlled tipping.

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LOCAL INFORMATION (cont.) . . .

Recreation and Sport. Clubs are established for cricket, football, tennis, bowls and hockey. Hunting is available in season with the Old Berks Hunt. The Thames, within 2 miles of the town, affords unrivalled angling, and excellent trout fishing may be obtained in some of its local tributaries although considerable stretches of such water are preserved. Rough shooting is also available in the district.

Dances, whist-drives, socials, entertainments and public meetings are held in the Core Exchange Buildings. A branch of the British Legion, a Women's Institute, youth movements and other clubs and societies are active in the town.

In addition there is a Freemason's Lodge, and branches of the Ancient Order of Foresters, Royal Order of Buffaloes and Berks. Friendly Society are established here. Faringdon also has a Chamber of Commerce.

Shopping. The town has excellent shops and forms the shopping and market centre for a considerable number of surrounding villages.



LONDON STREET FROM MARKET PLACE

History of Faringdon

Great Faringdon is a place of considerable antiquity. It was known in early times as Fearindune, or Ferendune, and was recorded, together with Little Faringdon, in the Domesday Survey, compiled by the Normans in 1086, as Ferendone. A later variation of this place-name was Farington. When the grant of a weekly market had been made the prefix Chipping was added to indicate the new status of the town.

In Saxon times Faringdon was the third town in importance throughout the vast Kingdom of Wessex. According to tradition, it was the site of one of the king's palaces and Alfred the Great, who was born at Wastage close by, is said to have lived here. His son, Edward the Elder, first of the Saxon line to assume the title of King of England, died at Faringdon in the year 924 and was buried in the new cathedral at Winchester.

HISTORY OF FARINDON (cont.) . . .

The great battle fought by King Ethelred and his younger brother, Alfred, against the Danes in 871 must have taken place on the downs within a few miles of Faringdon, although it is doubtful if the traditional place near Alfred's Camp, between Faringdon and Lambourn, indicates the actual site of this battle.

Faringdon remained a royal manor from Saxon times until 1203 and was so recorded in the Domesday Book. The entry, which included both Great and Little Faringdon, states that it was assessed at 30 hides with land for 15 ploughs during the reign of Harold, the last Saxon King. At the time of the Survey there was one mill, a fishery worth 35s., nine closes worth 40s., and 120 acres of meadow and woodland. The whole demesne was valued at £16 in the time of Edward the Confessor and at £12 6s. 8d. in 1086.

After the Norman Conquest.

In the reign of Stephen a castle was built at Faringdon by Robert, Earl of Gloucester, half-brother of the Empress Maud, who held all this part of the country on her behalf after she had landed on the South Coast and marched to Bristol. The castle at Faringdon fell after a short siege and was subsequently demolished with all other fortresses in Berkshire by order of Stephen.

Although no traces of this castle remain, it has been suggested that it occupied either a site in the present town or the summit of Faringdon Hill, popularly known as The Polly; but the trees here more likely mark the site of a prehistoric burial mound than of a mediæval stronghold. In any case, a castle so hurriedly erected would probably be of bulks of timber and rough masonry and, as such, would have been so utterly destroyed that its site would be lost within a single generation.

It would seem that some Cistercian monks were already at Faringdon in 1203 when King John bestowed this manor on the Continental monastery of St. Mary of Citæux, for he made it a condition that a new monastery should be built here for these monks. A year later, as the result of a startling dream, John founded the great Abbey of Beaulieu, in Hampshire, and re-granted Great Faringdon, together with numerous other manors, to this foundation. Most of the Faringdon monks subsequently went to Beaulieu leaving only a few to manage their local estates and Faringdon became a cell of this wealthy Abbey.

Henry II granted the Abbots of Beaulieu a weekly market at Faringdon in 1218, which was confirmed by a charter of Edward II in 1313. It is of interest that this charter changed the day from Monday to Wednesday, as the townspeople maintained they already held the entitlement to a Wednesday market from even earlier times.

THE CORN EXCHANGE



In Peace . . .

Various royal visits to Faringdon are recorded throughout the following centuries. The Abbot of Beaulieu entertained Henry III and his Queen with Prince Edward and the royal favourite, Roger Mortimer, for one night here. The expenses incurred by this ecclesiastical hospitality are set out in a document in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, as : the King, 200s. 6d. ; the Queen, 75s. ; the Prince, 50s. 4d. ; Mortimer, 4s. ; making a total of £11 9s. 10d.

Queen Elizabeth visited Sir Edward Unton at Wadley House in 1574. Twenty-nine years later, King James and his Queen were entertained here by the widow of the famous Sir Henry Unton.

THE PORTWELL, GIVEN TO THE TOWN BY SIR HENRY HUNSON,
WHO DIED IN 1596



In War . . .

In the year 1400 the Earls of Kent, Salisbury and Huntingdon rebelled against Henry IV but were forced to retreat from Windsor. They marched across Berkshire, passing through Faringdon, and were later defeated at Cirencester.

At the outbreak of the Civil War the County of Berkshire stood for the King. In 1644, Faringdon House, home of Sir Robert Pye, who had declared for Parliament, was garrisoned by the Royalists in his absence. A year later the only Royalist strongholds remaining in this county were Wallingford, Donnington Castle and Faringdon, the last-named being of considerable importance as it occupied a strategic position on the road by which Royalist support was expected. Radcot Bridge, 2½ miles north of the town, was fortified against the approach from Oxfordshire.

In April, 1645, Faringdon was attacked by cavalry under the personal command of Cromwell ; but the siege lasted only two days. Just over a year later, after the fall of Oxford, Parliamentary troops, under the command of Sir Robert Pye, forced the passage of Radcot Bridge and attacked Sir Robert's own home. The Royalist garrison, under Sir Marmaduke Rawdon, surrendered after a siege of seven weeks.

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