Lighthorne, A Short History

by Peter Hinman (2006)

As a settlement, Lighthorne has existed for about four thousand years. Successive occupiers have left traces of their time here; burials and other remains from the Neolithic, Iron age, Roman, Anglian and early Christian periods have been found within the parish. Major events in Britain's history, such as the Black Death, the Wars of the Roses, Reformation, Civil Wars and Enclosure Acts have all had their impacts on the village story.

Although Lighthorne lies close to the centre of modern England, for most of its long history it has been a frontier town, lying between conflicting tribal, political, religious and social boundaries. Located at the geological change from the limestones of the Cotswolds to the red earth of the Midlands plain, this natural frontier has shaped our early history.

The Etymology of the Village Name

Modern etymology *Midland Place Names* (1992) indicates that the name "Lighthorne" was given to the village by the Middle Angles, the most recent wave of settlers to occupy the area. The name is of the type which would describe the land in a way which would mean something to newcomers, without the benefit of the written word. The first written reference to Lighthorne is the Domesday Book, giving the name as "Listecorne". Later documents give spellings such as Lychtehurne (1252), Lytehurn (1301) and Lyghteherne (1331). "Lighthorne" first appears in 1545.

The earliest explanation of the name is in *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* by Sir William Dugdale (1656). "I am confident that the last Syllable should be 'hirne', which in our old English signifies a corner; and by which I guess at the former Syllable, Viz. Lich, which is the same with cadaver, I suppose that it had originally its name from some sepultre (sic) of dead bodies there". Rev. George Miller, Vicar of Radway, also suggested this dead body theme. *The Parishes of the Diocese of Worcester* gives the origin as "ligea" – a stream, with "horne", a corner or "lic lea", a corpse. Either of these is possible. The Victorian publication *Warwickshire Place Names,* by a Mr. Duignan, is the first and only one to use the interpretation "The (place of) the light thorn (bush)", with no supporting etymology.

[See LH87(E) "The Origin and Explanation of the name Lighthorne" by Peter Hinman (1998)]

The Pre-History

The written record of Lighthorne dates from 1086, so only one fifth of our past has a historical record. The earlier story has to be read in the landscape and the remains that lie beneath it.

The division between the high limestone of the Cotswolds and the red earth of the Midlands plain appears to have formed a frontier from earliest times. To stand in Owberrow Field or Mill Field and to look west is to appreciate why this point would have become the edge of tribal territories. The pre-Roman British tribe living on the Cotswolds, the Dubonni, supported the Roman invaders against their neighbours, the Coritani, a tribe based in the Leicester area, which was occupying the northern part of their land, probably including this village. The Romans divided Britain into the 'Civitas' and 'Militas' districts along the line of the Fosse Way, with the Dubonni living in the more privileged Civitas or civilian rule sector.

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, a Germanic tribe called the Hwicce settled this area. The Anglian Hwicce people were one of the last waves of Germanic invaders and were also the last to adopt Christianity. Their area was incorporated in the Bishopric of Worcester in 688 AD when it fell under the control of Offa of Mercia. The See of Worcester was established with limits that matched the Hwicce lands, ending at Lighthorne on the northern and western edges, with the Warwick - Banbury road and the Fosse Way forming the See boundary. The Bishop of Worcester was given the early title "The Bishop of the Hwicce". These Germanic invaders will have given the name "Lighthorne" to the settlement. Their name, Hwicce, has carried through to some local areas such as Wiggerland Wood, next to Oakley Wood, and Wiggerland Farm.

There is evidence of burials within the parish from the Neolithic, Middle Iron Age, Christian Roman period and Christian and Pagan Anglian periods, indicating a fairly continuous occupation for at least 4500 years. Many of these burials are of great significance and remains from some can be seen by appointment in Warwick Museum.

Bronze cauldron escutcheons, Lighthorne *(Warwick Museum)*

Lighthorne was again close to the frontier during the Danish invasions of the 10th & 11th centuries. Following the sack of Cirencester by King Cnut in 1016, his army would have marched along the Fosse Way to sack Warwick the same year. The Anglo Saxon Thegn of Warwick, Thorkell, is recorded as maintaining seven men at arms at Chesterton, presumably to guard the Fosse Way.

At the time of the Norman invasion in 1066, Lighthorne was in the control of Ralph, Earl of Hereford, through his Thegn, Thorkell of Warwick. The Anglo Saxon Chronicle says that Ralph took no part in the Battle of Hastings and became known as "Ralph the Timid". He was only sixteen years old at the time so he may be forgiven. His absence from the field of battle certainly favoured his standing with the incoming Normans and both Thorkell of Warwick and the Bishop of Worcester, St. Wulfstan, (from Bishops Itchington) kept their positions for the first years of Norman rule. The English revolt of 1073 brushed the borders of Lighthorne, when the village of Harbury was laid waste by the Normans as a punishment for their support of the revolt. Lighthorne escaped unscathed.

Despite their loyalty to the Normans, Ralph and Thorkell were dispossessed and replaced with French expatriates following the revolt. Lighthorne and Warwickshire passed to Henry de Newburgh, the first Norman Earl of Warwick, and his supporters. William decided to assess his Kingdom for both taxation and security purposes, the work being carried out by the monks of Worcester. With this Domesday Survey, the written history of Lighthorne begins. The village also moves from a village on the edge of tribal lands to its present settled position in the heart of England.
[See LH137(E) "List of Lighthorrne Ancient Burials and Comments" by Peter Hinman (1998)]
[See LH95(E) "Stone Age Lighthorne, the first known Villagers" by Peter Hinman (2000)]
[See LH96 (E) "The Nine Guardians Ritual Burials in Owberry Field" by Peter Hinman (2000)]

Domesday 1086-7, the First Tax Return

Lighthorne is listed in the Domesday Book. The following text was edited and printed by Abraham Farley in 1783.

XXIX. TERRA WILLI Buenuallеth *IN REMELAV HVND.*

Wills Buenuallеth ten de rege *LISTECORNE*. Ibi ſunt .v. hidæ p̄t inland. Tra. ē. xviii. car. In dñio ſunt. ii. car. 7 vii. ſerui. 7 xix. uilli 7 ix. bord cū pb̄ro hñt. vi. car. Ibi. xxx. ac̄ p̄ti. 7 una Graua. ii. q̄rent lg̃. 7 xx. p̄tic̄ lat. Valuit. c. ſolid. Modo. vii. lib. Radulf tenuit.

Domesday Book, Warwickshire *(pub. Philimore)*

"Land of William Buenvasleth, in Tremelau Hundred. William Buenvasleth holds Lighthorne from the King. 5 hides, beside the inland. Land for 18 ploughs. In lordship 2 ploughs; 7 slaves.19 villagers and 9 smallholders with a priest have 6 ploughs. Meadow 30 acres; a copse 2 furlongs long and 20 Perches wide. The value was 100s; now £7. Earl Ralph held it."

The Tremelau Hundred is one of the eleven medieval divisions of Warwickshire, later reduced to four. William Buenvasleth was the Lord of the Manor. The "inland" means that farmed by the Lord of the Manor in his own right, about 230 acres. He worked this with 7 slaves. Slavery was a Saxon practice which the Normans tried to abolish. They were fully supported by Bishop Wulfstan who was later beatified as Saint Wulfstan for this work. Most slaves were captured in Ireland, but some criminals and prisoners were also made slaves. The rest of the cultivated land in the Parish comprised about 600 acres of ploughland, which was divided into strips, plus 30 acres of meadow and a small coppice, plus common grazing known as wasteland. Most of the wasteland lay to the east of the lane to Heath Farm, the original Lighthorne Heath. The area known as Lighthorne Rough was also probably wasteland. The ploughland and meadow was worked by 19 villeins, who supported themselves from holdings of between 20 and 100 acres and by 9 smallholders, usually with less than 10 acres each, who added to their income by some rural trade such as mason, sawyer, shearer, butcher or weaver. The villeins and smallholders would all be liable to work for several days a year for the Lord of the Manor and to do military service as payment for their land holding.

The level fields stretching from Dark Lane bridge to the Fosse Way were the principle meadowlands for supplying winter fodder and the Coppice was probably where the Dark Lane copse is today. The priest probably worked a smallholding. No church is mentioned but it may have existed. Most Saxon churches were built around 965 AD. If there were no church, services would have been in the open around the preaching cross, the base of which, or a later replacement, can still be seen in the churchyard, to the south of the nave.

Feudal Lighthorne

The Norman Knight, William Buenvasleth, did not hold Lighthorne for very long. In 1095, the year of the first crusade, for reasons that are not known, the lordship passed to the Mundeville family. Perhaps the call of arms was too strong for Buenvasleth and he joined the crusades. The Mundevilles' lordship is well documented and lasted until 1277 when the holdings passed to the Earl of Warwick. The Lordship was granted in one knight's fee at first, later reduced to a half fee, shared with Berkeswell. The fee means that in return for the income from the manor, one knight with his horse and equipment had to be provided when required.

The Mundevilles established a strong connection with the Priory of St. Sepulchre in Warwick. In 1154 a yardland was bequeathed to the priory in return for allowing the burial of Ranulph de Mundeville in their church.
Documentation from these years includes the acceptance in 1349 of three acolytes from the village, William Hunt, John Lovecock and Richard Freeman, being accepted at

Worcester. There are also records of non-balancing bookkeeping by the Countess of Warwick, and an account of 200 horses from Lighthorne invading the fields of Chadshunt, invoking a penalty on the village.The incident with the horses is from the Courts Leet or Manorial Courts and refers to the inability of Lighthorne to control horses grazing on the common land of Lighthorne Rough.

These three items refer to the period immediately following the years of the Black Death, which probably reached the village by the spring of 1348. Although no record has come to light of the number who died in the village, the discovery, on the north side of the churchyard, of two skeletons, which appeared to be encased in pitch, may be an indicator of some losses. This was a medieval practice, where burials of victims of infectious diseases such as plague and leprosy were involved. The depletion of the population by the plague caused the surviving tenants to refuse to pay the full rental on their holdings to the Countess. They cited the case that they could easily find other cheaper holdings elswhere if the full rents were demanded. The account rolls, rolls of parchment on which the accounts are written, show two columns, one indicating what should have been received and the other what was actually paid. The Countess's Council added the comment in Latin "Quousque mundus metius relevetur" which translates as "We must take what the world lets us." The rolls show that in 1410 the phrase "Q.M.R." was still being used to excuse the relaxation of services. The decay of rents had doubled.

The Village remained with the Earls of Warwick until the end of the 14th century, when it passed to the King following Warwick's attainder for treason. It was returned to the Earls of Warwick on the accession of Henry V in 1413. The oldest glass in the chancel of St. Laurence Church and the inscription on the oldest bell both bear this date. They were probably installed to get back in the King's good books. The historian, Dugdale, records these windows in the 17th century church.

15th century glass in St. Laurence Church

The lands remained part of the Warwick estates until the reign of Edward IV (1461-70) when they passed to the King and remained there until the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547).

The agricultural method was initially the three field system, with north, south and west fields. The Westfield became impoverished, probably due to over-farming, and was left as a wasteland in Tudor times. The remaining two fields were worked in rotation, tenants and smallholders each holding ridges scattered through the parish in different fields. Details of these holdings can be seen in the church "terriers" or statements of land holding and tithes, prepared at various times.

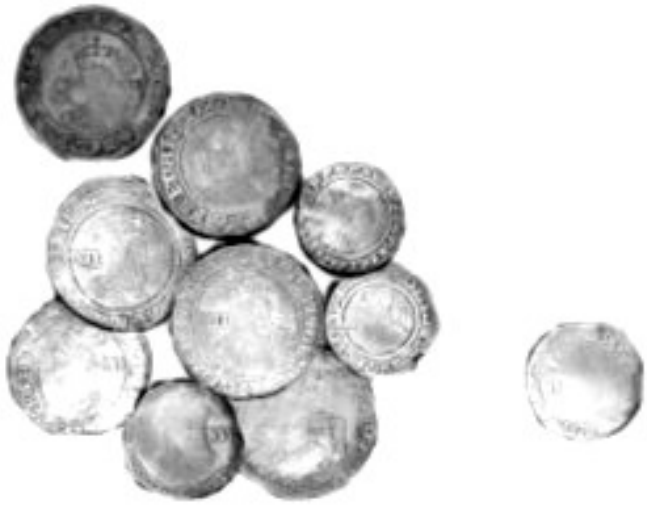
The Tudors, Reformation, Civil Wars and Great Plague

Following the Wars of the Roses and the Reformation, the estates of the church were broken up and sold off to emerging political allies, wealthy landowners, and merchants. This raised desperately needed revenue and consolidated the King's grip on the throne. Henry first leased Lighthorne to Robert Wigston then sold it to Sir Thomas Pope, a commissioner for the suppression of the monasteries. Following the dissolution of the monasteries all the estates belonging to the Priory of St Sepulchre in Warwick, including the yardland in the village, which had been granted to them by the Mundevilles, were secured by the Pope family. Records show a rental payment of 13 shillings and 4 pence by Ludovic Smart to St Sepulchre's in 1528. A field called "Parsons Piece" existed until the last century and now forms part of Three Gates Field.

Illegal enclosures took place, probably in the time of the Pope family, who were absentee landlords from Wroxton in Oxfordshire. These include the fields to the left of Heath Farm Lane, which were enclosed from the common land of Lighthorne Heath. These enclosures were subsequently legalised by the payment of a fine.

The Pope family held the manor from 1542 until 1702, with a short break between 1662 and 1666, when the manor was held by Lord Wenman of Tuam, an Irish Lord. He was a relation of the Pope family and his short tenure is thought to result from the mortgaging of the lordship to raise a marriage dowry. The Popes held the manor through the years of the Civil Wars and Great Plague. It is probably the Pope family who built Church Hill farmhouse around 1548, on the site of the former manor house. One of the younger Popes is known to have lived there as a minor while under the tutelage of the rector, William Smart. The Church records start in 1538 and many family names can be traced to this period.

The village seems to have supported the Parliamentarian cause, and to have escaped the worst of the destruction. Despite the closeness of Edgehill, the parish records show no evidence of any unusual activity at that time, nor burials nor reports of robbery or damage to church property. [See LH235(E) "The Lighthorne Loss Accounts of the English Civil Wars" by Ann Such with contributions by Colin Such (2020), for a more detailed account of Lighthorne in the first Civil War]



A hoard of silver coins was found in Old School Lane in 1972. The 93 coins were buried in a trench outside Mr Tricker's house. The coins were declared treasure trove, meaning that they were believed to have been deliberately hidden by the original owner. Warwick Museum purchased the coins and Mr. Tricker was paid their market value. They can be viewed at the museum on request. The dates on the coins varied between 1551 and 1646, from the reigns of Edward VI, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I. A few were Scottish and Irish coins. All were in small denominations, mostly shillings and sixpences, the total face value being £4 13s 6d. This amount would have represented the life savings of a small farmer or tradesman. Hoards such as this are typical of the Civil Wars period. The dates of the latest coins in the hoard indicate that they were buried soon after the attempted disbandment of Cromwell's army and the subsequent arrest of King Charles I. This was a time of great lawlessness and unrest; many people hid their savings as a precaution against robbery.

The rector at the time of the Civil Wars, John Philpott, held the post until 1665, the year of the plague. One of his predecessors, William Smart, was strongly puritan in his views. He was the father of Peter Smart, described as a Puritan Divine. He is the only son or daughter of Lighthorne known to have achieved a place in the history books, being described at length in the *National Biography*.

Peter Smart was born in Lighthorne in 1569, the third of five sons. He was probably born in Church Hill Farm three years after his father became rector. He studied at Westminster School with Richard Neile (later

Bishop of Durham). On the 25th October 1588, aged 19, he matriculated as a batler at Broadgates Hall (now Pembroke College), Oxford and was elected to a studentship at Christ Church, where he studied Latin verse and commenced his bachelor's degree on the 26th June1592 and his master's on the 26th June 1595. He was appointed to the Mastership of Durham Grammar School in 1598 and was ordained in 1606 as Chaplain to the Bishop of Durham, who gave him the rectory of Boldon in 1609. In 1627 he was placed on the High Commission for the Province of York and was still a member when he was summoned for "a seditious invective sermon".

For many years Smart had absented himself from the monthly communions at Durham because the Bishop of Durham had brought in altars and images (such as embroidered copes) to the rituals, which offended Smart's puritanical views. The enrichment of the cathedral and the service caused Smart to deliver a sermon, based on Psalm 31, on the 27th July1628, later reprinted under the title *The vanitie and downfall of superstitious Popish Ceremonies* and described as Miltonic in the strain of its invective. The Commission for the Province of York met the same day and commenced proceedings against Smart. John Cosin, who was especially mentioned in the sermon, was one of his judges. On the 2nd September 1628 Smart was suspended and his prebend sequestered. On the 29th January 1629 the case was transmitted to Lambeth and Smart was held in custody and his sermon was publicly burned.

Although he had influential friends, his bitter words before the Commission did not help matters. He was "deposed, degraded and fined £500". Refusing to pay the fine, he was imprisoned but still brought an action against his successor on the basis that he had not been deprived of the living and if degraded could hold the prebend as a layman. The case failed and his friends raised £400 a year to support his family while he remained in prison.

After nearly 12 years in prison, refusing to recant, he petitioned the Long Parliament for his release in 1640. The Commons resolved on the 22nd January 1641 that his sentence was illegal and directed the prosecution of the judge, John Cosin, who had convicted him. Smart's letters show that he was stubborn in suing for arrears. He was described by John Cosin as "an old man of most froward (meaning cantankerous), fierce and unpeaceable spirit."

As well as *Old Smart's Verses*, a selection in English and Latin, he published a number of treatises and sermons, mostly attacking high church practices and customs.

The exact time and place of his death is not known but he is believed to have died in Baxterwood, an outlying hamlet in the parish of St. Oswald, Durham, in the early 1650s. He left a wife, Susannah, a son, William, and at least two daughters.

The Great Estates and Enclosure, 1721 to 1724

Lighthorne was the first Warwickshire Village to have its common fields enclosed by Act of Parliament. The Lord of the Manor, Lord Willoughby de Broke, had the largest holding of just over half the parish. He also owned the "advowson", the right to appoint the rector, who was his son-in-law, the Hon Richard Lydiatt, who, as rector, had the rights to Glebe Farm with a further 84 acres. There were four other major landowners, Mr Green at Curacy Farm, Mr Jaycocks at Home Farm, Mr Mason at Pratt's Farm and Mr Webb at Hill Farm. All except Jaycocks supported the enclosure. He, together with Webb and Mason sold out to Lord Willoughby de Broke after the passing of the Act. A number of smaller tenants had holdings of up to 40 acres with rights to use the areas of open land such as Lighthorne Heath and Lighthorne Rough. They lost their rights to the field strips and to common grazing land. With the enclosure of the meadow land the availability of winter feed was denied them and livestock apart from pigs became difficult to manage. To compensate for the loss of their arable strips and grazing rights they received 'allotments' of land proportional to their field holdings. These allowances in no way compensated for their loss of self-respect and standing in the community. The small landholders of this type, who had formed the backbone of the feudal system for centuries, lost their equal status in law and position with their larger neighbours.

The enclosure act enabled the big landowners to improve the land, impossible where fields had been divided into strips owned and part-owned by as many as thirty people. Land drainage, hedging and other improvements were implemented, but the substantial reduction in labour requirement and comparatively easy returns from sheep farming over mixed farming led to a conversion to this type of agriculture. This in turn led to a loss of population to the towns and colonies, as many of the smallholders relying on agricultural trades to supplement their living were unable to support themselves. These lesser tenants suffered greatly and agricultural wages fell by 50% by 1830, leading to great hardship in the rural community. The number of tenants reduced from 22 to 8 in this period, the remainder becoming labourers or leaving the village. In 1829 the Green family, the last major freeholders in the village, believed to have lived in Dene Hollow, sold their 89 acres to the Verney family, who then owned all but 8 acres of Lighthorne parish. The Lattimer family, who ran the alehouse, held the main part of this land.

The enclosures created great wealth for the landowning families and greatly increased farming efficiency. This increased wealth lead to the construction of most of Lighthorne's older buildings. The old school, the old rectory, the church tower, Bishops Farmhouse, Curacy Farm and the Antelope are thought to date from this period. Records indicate that there were two mills in the village; a windmill on Mill Field and a watermill. The latter was probably the cottage now known as Whitegates. It may have been a mill for fulling wool rather than grinding grain as its probable construction date coincides with the major switch from mixed farming to sheep grazing which followed the enclosure.

Very few records have been found referring to developments in the village for the period between 1723 and 1926. In this period, in addition to the buildings listed above, the Church was re-built twice, the Broadwell was built and the stream enclosed in a conduit, eliminating the ford in the centre of the village.

The Great Sale

The Verney estates in Warwickshire were broken up and sold off in a series of sales in the late 1920s. Descriptions of the various lots of farms and cottages give details of what living conditions were like at that time. The majority of properties seem to have been sold to tenants. The Antelope was rented to a Mr. J. Tarver and the malthouse to the Lighthorne Harmonic Society. Only one house is described as having electric light. Several successive sales were held and some properties remained unsold in 1930.

World War II

The settlement at Lighthorne Heath was developed when RAF Gaydon came into use early in 1942. The main function of the airbase was as a training unit, mostly training Canadian pilots flying Wellington bombers from Wellesbourne. However several operational sorties were flown from RAF Gaydon and several aircraft and crews were lost. The base was always in the hands of the RAF, although it was mainly used by the RCAF. The US Air Force sometimes used the base for emergency landings.

Lighthorne had a Home Guard Platoon, mostly manned by farm workers, and there was a searchlight placed by Keeper's Cottage. Dances were held in the malthouse and were well attended by the RAF and RCAF personnel. Many aircrew from the RAF and RCAF stations at Gaydon, Wellesbourne and Tachbrook would visit Harwoods House during off duty hours. The Lean family, owners of the house at the time, provided late suppers, principally spam and chips, for the airmen. Their son, Pilot Officer Richard C.R. Lean, was killed in 1944 while undergoing basic flying training as a fighter pilot in Scotland. He is buried in Lighthorne churchyard.

On the 13th June 1942 the base opened as a satellite for No.12 Operational Training Unit, based at Chipping Warden. This was a training unit in No 91 Flying Group for night bombers, flying Vickers' Wellingtons. When No. 91 Group obtained Edgehill as its permanent satellite, Gaydon station was transferred to Wellesbourne Mountford as a satellite. Wellesbourne was home to 22 OTU, a 91 Group station operating Wellingtons, crewed mainly by Canadians. A and B Flights of 22 OTU, based at Gaydon, became the Wing's training unit until the end of the war. Because of Wellesbourne's runway repairs

in 1942, Gaydon was used for operational sorties. Initially, Mk.1c aircraft used the station with Mk.111s arriving in October 1942 and Mk.Xs in 1943.

When completed, Gaydon Airfield had three runways, two of 1400 yards and one of 1600 yards. However, it was completed too late to send aircraft on the 1000-bomber raids in May and June of 1942. The crews flew many sorties dropping propaganda leaflets. This was a standard procedure for recently-trained crews, to give them additional flying experience on lower risk sorties before they became fully operational. These raids were normally without incident but in 1943 two aircraft from Gaydon were attacked while on a leaflet mission over Brest and St. Nazaire. One was damaged by a Ju88, losing one engine and part of its hydraulic system in the attack. It crash-landed at Exeter, fortunately without injury to the crew. The newly-trained Gaydon aircrew undertook occasional bomb carrying raids. In 1943 five aircraft took part in a raid on Versailles. November 1942 was a bad month for Gaydon. On the 8th, Wellington DF472 crashed near Harbury with the loss of two crew members. The following night, HF648 plunged into the ground just after take-off, due to engine failure. There were no survivors. On the 30th HF633 hit trees while circling the aerodrome in bad visibility; again there were no survivors from the crew of six. The crew of LT-F had a lucky escape when the aircraft belly-flopped two miles from the end of the runway after both engines cut out at 300 feet, just after take-off.

Keith Douglas, who was a navigator based at RAF Tachbrook, remembered a Wellington from Chipping Warden crashing in bad visibility near the Chesterton windmill. One of the crew died in the accident. Keith's opinion is that many of the accidents were caused by the inexperience of the crews. [See LH74 "The Windmill and the Wellington Bomber" by Keith Douglas (2001)]

RAF Gaydon in the Cold War

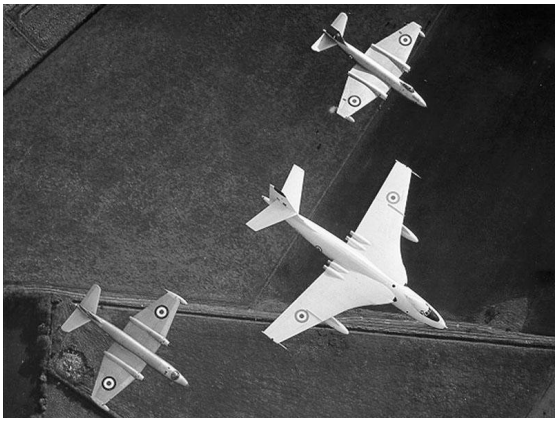
Flying training ceased at Gaydon on July 1st 1945. Control passed to 23 Group Flying Training Command and it became part of 23 Glider Training School. May 1946 saw a brief tenure by the Glider Instructors Flight before being put on care and maintenance on August 28th 1946.

The base remained on care and maintenance between 1946 and 1953, when Gaydon was selected as a V-bomber base. A new 3000 yard runway with parallel taxiway and access tracks needed an additional large tract of agricultural land to the southwest, almost all of which was from Lighthorne parish. John Laing did the construction work on the base and the married quarters, now known as Lighthorne Heath. The original airfield was to become the technical area. Excavation involved the removal of half-a-million cubic yards

of earth. 80,000 square yards of concrete from the wartime runways and perimeter track was broken up to make hardcore for the new runway. In addition, 700 trees were felled and three ponds filled in. There were also compulsory closures by the MOD of some footpaths and bridleways.

Laing's contract included the construction of over 100 buildings, including a new control tower, since the original was nowhere near the new runway. The new airfield opened on March 1st 1954, under the control of No.3 Group Bomber Command. However, it was not until January 1st 1955 that No.138 Squadron was formed as the first Valiant Squadron. After "working up" they moved to Wittering on July 6th. They were followed by 543 Squadron, equipped with the photographic reconnaissance version of the Valiant and Canberra T4s for runway approach aid training, departing after training for Wyton on November 18th. Meanwhile, on July 4th 1955, No.232 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) was formed at Gaydon with Valiants and later, from the 11th November, with 7 Victors.

One Victor crashed in Combrook Woods, killing all the crew. No. 232 OCU was disbanded in June 1965, its task of training the Valiant and Victor crews completed. Gaydon then became home to No.2 Air Navigation School. The school taught basic navigation. The Navigation school remained at Gaydon until May 1970 when it transferred to Fillongley.



Valiant with Canberra escorts

The Strike Command Special Avionics Servicing Unit of No.1 Group lodged at Gaydon until disbanded on December 1st 1971. Control passed to 71 MU Bicester Maintenance Command on April 1st 1972 under care and maintenance until closure on 31st October 1974. The last Commanding Officer at Gaydon was Tom Knight who became the vicar of Southam on his return to civilian life.

From April 1st 1966 until 1977, No.637 Gliding School used the site and up to 1975 the annual RAFA Midland Air Display was held at Gaydon, moving to Coventry Airport in 1976.

A Refuge for Ugandan Asian Refugees

In October and November 1972, groups of Asians from Uganda, arrived in this country, forced to flee their country by of the oppressive regime of General Idi Amin.. The army in Uganda had not been paid for several months and had set about extracting money and goods through kidnapping, looting businesses, torturing and killing members of the Asian community. Families arrived in the U.K., where one of the hastily set up transit camps was at Gaydon Airfield (now Lighthorne Heath). They were greatly distressed and had little idea of where they had been taken. A warm welcome was given to them. One of the first groups of 200 was transferred to North Wales whilst a later group was accommodated in forces' quarters, mainly Nissen huts. At the beginning of their stay, a group set off to walk to London but were picked up and returned to camp.

The day after the main group arrived, the school's deputy head, Mrs. Pickston and infant teacher, Mrs. Small, walked around the various buildings collecting the children. They were very moved by the way the exhausted and traumatised parents handed the children into their care. Only two adults could be persuaded to accompany them.

Classes had started rehearsing for the Christmas celebrations, so costumes were found for the new infants and everyone took part in the nativity play and carol concert. The older children were formed into a choral speaking group and recited "Uncle John's Pig", which was a huge success. It was a very happy occasion; the parents were delighted. Junior class teacher, Mrs. Proudman, and school secretary, Mrs. Carr, remember the strange scene in the school hall when assistants from "Fishers", the outfitters from Kineton, helped the children find suitable sized underwear, warm clothes, pyjamas and duffle coats, ready for the approaching winter.

The older children, who were obviously well educated, spoke English with varying degrees of competence, whilst those under six years who had not started school in Uganda, knew very little. Two of the Asian ladies, Mrs. Da Sousa, a teacher, and Leila were able to help in school which was especially helpful with the younger children. Most of the children were added to existing classes but Mrs. Richards taught a separate group with little or no English. Miss Henry, with a class of younger juniors recalls that her class numbers grew from 30 to 46 and that two empty mobile classrooms were brought back into service.

Everyone commented on the polite behaviour of the children. Mrs. Humphreys remembers how at the end of a session they would stand and say "Thank you teacher for a very nice lesson". Similarly Miss Henry found that at the end of the day many would shake her hand and thank her before going home. They were bright, intelligent children who quickly made friends with others. Their mathematical skills were excellent; many had a sound knowledge of English grammar but were unused to any form of creative writing.

The older children went home at lunchtime but were delayed by queues in the camp canteen, frequently arriving back at school late or not returning. It was agreed that they

would stay for school dinners. Mrs. Lawrence, the school cook, remembers preparing and cooking 300 meals each day for several months.

During all this time, friendships had blossomed, so the following year, as several families moved on to more settled lives, it was difficult to say goodbye. Many moved to Leicester or northern towns and some started a new life in Canada, taking with them the professional skills and business acumen that had made them so successful and such a loss to Uganda. Press cuttings from the time relate the considerable efforts by the local community in assisting the WRVS in making these people welcome.

There was a further emergency use of the airbase soon after the refugees left. It came into use as temporary premises for the children of Southam High School. The children were located at Gaydon for two terms while the repairs were carried out to their permanent building.

The Development of Lighthorne Heath

The officers' quarters were let for a time to the USA forces. The other ranks' quarters were sold to Stratford District Council in stages, the first in 1976 with the final batch of 48 in 1981. A high fence separated the quarters until 1978 when the USA forces left. The officers' quarters were sold as "Kingston Fields" because of the perceived stigma associated with parts of Lighthorne Heath. There were also separate tenant campaigns to both retain and remove the bollards which had separated the officers' and other ranks' quarters. The existing NAAFI shop became the village shop and the school was taken over by the education authority. Children from Lighthorne had been using the school for some years.

A number of MOD tenants were still occupying some of the houses, mainly army families from the CAD at Kineton. Some of these families no longer had a military connection. 98% of the new tenants came from the Stratford District, many from rural locations. Additional building and infilling has increased the population of the settlement to over 1000. With over 90% of the houses now in private ownership, Lighthorne Heath has grown into a substantial community and formed a separate Parish Council in May 2004, while remaining part of the St. Laurence Parochial Church Council.

The Development of the Gaydon Airfield

The landing runways and associated buildings were sold by the MOD to the British Leyland Group in 1977. Interestingly part of the condition of sale was that there would be no further development of motor manufacturing at the plant. The building of the test track, by Bob Lyle, in 1977, involved the construction of 13 km of perimeter fencing and the removal of 260,000 cubic meters of soil. The network created came to came to a total of 47 km of test surface, since increased to 58 km. This includes high speed tracks and primitive roads with many types of obstacles which reproduce extreme conditions found in all areas of the world. Bob Lyle laid out the original track in 1977.

Norman Lamont, then Minister of State for Industry, opened advanced research and development facilities at Gaydon in June 1982. These included a climatic wind tunnel, cold driveability chamber, 10 engine test beds and two semi-anechoic noise test chambers for engines and whole vehicles. In 1992 Rover Group centralised its core design and engineering activities at Gaydon.

Appendix

Timeline

Year	Monarch	Event
3000		Probable long barrow built in Mill Field
2500		Two skeletons from the Neolthic age were buried in Mill Field.
500		Nine male skeletons were buried in Owberry Field.
43	Claudius	The Roman invasion of Britain: Lighthorne sides with Romans
584	Hwiccan Kings	Anglian conquest following the Battle of Fethanleag
688	Eanhere (Hwicce)	Lighthorne accepts Christianity and becomes part of the See of Worcester.
959	Edgar the Glorious	Diversion of Tithes law. 959-963 first Lighthorne church built
1016	Cnut	Danish invasion; Cnut advances along the Fosse Way to Warwick
1066	Harold II	"Ralph The Timid", Earl of Lighthorne, does not join Harold at Hastings
1073	William I	In a revolt against Norman rule, Harbury is wasted by Norman troops
1087	William II	Domesday; the Lord of the Manor is William Buenvasleth.
1169	Henry II	Lighthorne incorporated into Kington Hundred
1236	Henry III	The Lord of the Manor is Richard de Mundeville
1278	Edward I	Earls of Warwick buy the Lordship of the Manor from the Mundevilles
1307	Edward II	First rector named, Henry de Hampton
1316	Edward II	Windmill recorded as belonging to the Manor
1348	Edward III	The Black Death probably reached Lighthorne in the spring of 1348
1366	Edward III	Lighthorne is styled a warren; fish ponds recorded
1397	Richard II	Lighthorne leased by King Richard II to Rector, Thomas Blockley
1401	Henry IV	Lordship restored to Earls of Warwick
1402	Henry IV	The Church valued at 20 marks
1413	Henry V	Glass panel in the church and the oldest bell installed
1436	Henry VI	The Verneys buy land in Lighthorne
1437	Henry VI	Tenants negotiate a rent reduction with Countess of Warwick
1485	Henry VII	Henry VII takes over Lordship following defeat of Richard III

?	Henry VII	Richard Verney buys more land in Lighthorne
1529	Henry VIII	Roger Wigston granted Lordship
1536	Henry VIII	Reformation; Church valued at £15 6s 8d
1538	Henry VIII	Parish registers commence.
1545	Henry VIII	Lighthorne sold to Sir Thomas Pope for £536 18s 11d
1569	Elizabeth I	Peter Smart, protestant devine, born, probably at Church Hill Farm
1627	Charles I	A windmill and watermill recorded in the parish
1642	Charles I	Civil War Battle of Edgehill in October
1649	Commonwealth	Charles 1 executed. Coin hoard buried in Old School Lane
1662	Charles II	Lordship passed to Viscount Wenman of Tuam, probably by way of a mortgage
1667	Charles II	Lordship returns to Pope family. Rectory granted to Sir Greville Verney
1707	Anne	Act of Union. Lordship passes to Sir John Morduant
1715	George I	Lordship passes to the Lords Willoughby de Broke
1720	George I	Enclosures proposed 1720, passed 1721, implemented 1723
1746	George II	The Verneys inherit Chesterton estates. Old Rectory enlarged
1771	George III	Church rebuilt 1771-1774
1781	George III	Old school opened in existing buildings
1829	George IV	Curacy Farm, the last freehold farm in Lighthorne, sold
1874	Victoria	New school built on The Bank
1876	Victoria	Church nave and chancel rebuilt by John Gibson
1930	George V	Sale of Verney Estate assets in Lighthorne completed
1940	George VI	Airfield and camp built on Lighthorne Heath
1973	Elizabeth II	Lighthorne Heath military quarters house 2000 Ugandan refugees
1976	Elizabeth II	Lighthorne Heath becomes a civilian settlement
2004	Elizabeth II	Lighthorne Heath and Lighthorne become two parishes