



Wolvercote Commoners'

NEWSLETTER July 2019

Wolvercote – what's in a name?

A history of our village, the site of which has been inhabited for thousands of years, emerges from archaeological artefacts, such as traces of structures on Wolvercote Common and 200 palaeolithic implements from the Old Stone Age found near the junction of Five Mile Drive and Banbury Road, from place-names, such as Cutteslowe, from Old English **Cuthes hlæw**, 'the funeral mound of **Cutha**', a king of the West Saxons whose death is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 584 (the name survives also in **Cuddesdon**), and from references in documents.

Twenty years after the Norman Conquest William the Conqueror sent commissioners round the kingdom to record who owned what, determining how much landowners owed in military service and tax. In the record of that survey, known to us as the **Domesday Book** of 1086, Roger d'Ivri owned the manor of **Ulfgarcote**, 'the house' or 'cottage of Ulfgar', Old English **Wulf gar** 'wolf spear'. From Roger the land was held by Godfrey and passed later to John of St John, who gave land for the foundation of the Benedictine house of Godstow nunnery in a charter of about 1133 that spells the name **Wlgaricot**. The manor contained 5 hides of land for 6 ploughs, in demesne one plough, 13 villeins (peasant or tenant farmer) with 7 bordars with 4 ploughs, 120 acres of meadow 6 furlongs (1200 metres) in length and 3.5 (704 metres) in breadth. It was worth 100 shillings. By 1279, when the abbess of Godstow held the manor, there were 33 tenants, and in 1377 144 people paid poll tax in Wolvercote and Godstow.

The two parts of the village, Upper and Lower Wolvercote, were connected on the west to **Witham**, Old English **with ham**, 'safe dwelling by the bend in the river', by two bridges over the Thames and the Mill Stream by 1139, and on the east to Cutteslowe by Church Road, now First Turn, that intersected with **Port Stræt** (now Banbury Road), 'a paved road that led to a market town', and another that ran through Goose Green to Lower Wolvercote.

In 1662 undergraduates rescuing a comrade from the stocks in Wolvercote, where he had been put for stealing a goose from Port Meadow, broke all the windows in the village. During the 1670s or 1680s the fulling mill became a paper mill.

Although Godstow House, now the Trout, was in the city of Oxford, Wolvercote had in 1774 its own pubs, the Red Lion, the Boot, two called the Crown, the Blue Boy (later the Green Man), from 1782 the White Hart, and from 1812 the Plough.

In 1788 the canal and in 1846 the railway split the common lands and separated Lower from Upper Wolvercote. From 1905 to 1926 there was a railway halt at Wolvercote Green. Oxford buses started running to Wolvercote Turn before 1910 and from Carfax to Upper Wolvercote in 1914. Gas arrived in 1913, mains water before 1914, mains drainage about 1920, electricity by 1923, but there was no mains water in Lower Wolvercote before incorporation into Oxford in 1929. In 1929 the Wolvercote Parish Council was abolished and management of our Wolvercote Common, Wolvercote Green and Goose Green passed to the Wolvercote Commoners' Committee, which continues to this day. This year the committee celebrates its 90th birthday. The Commons, Wolvercote Common, Wolvercote Green and Port Meadow are all designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and need constant care and vigilance which includes monthly work-days undertaken by bands of volunteers.

(Thanks to David Howlett for the words and Simon Pressey for the drawing)

Whilst on the subject of the Commoners' 90th birthday it's time to mention our special celebration. We will be 'Beating the Bounds' of Wolvercote Common on Saturday 5th October, followed by food and drink at the White Hart Community Pub. Put the date in your diary – more details will follow.



During the Iron Age (700BC to the Roman invasion AD43) Port Meadow was part of the territory of the Dubonni tribe. The farmers made a series of temporary dwellings and ditches in the area which were revealed by aerial photography in the 1930s. Today we can still see the shapes of the round houses and enclosure ditches in the northern half of the Meadow. Their dwellings were wattle and daub constructions, with a limited life due to the Meadow being a flood plain. During the summer, when they grazed their livestock, as many as 20 houses existed altogether which may have represented a single family group.



A happy band of work-day volunteers after a morning grass and reed scything on Wolvercote Green



Don't forget Village Work Mornings second Saturday of every month

Meet outside the Village Hall at 10am (bring garden gloves, wellies and any gardening tools you have). Children welcome

www.wolvercotecommoners.co.uk – wolvercote.commoners@yahoo.co.uk
Chair: Mary Brown (01865 236897) Secretary: Eleanor Woods (07815 548351)