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St Benet's Home in Kidmore End Road was built in 1902 by Dr Powell as a home for orphaned boys. In the early days many of the boys emigrated to Canada. Mr Fisher taught the boys woodwork, and each lad had to make his own box ready for departure. Mr Johnson, one of the masters used to escort them to Canada and return for the new school term in September. At one time Mr Hill, a wonderful gardener at St Benet's, grew enormous melons in his greenhouse. Two cottages at the end of the drive housed the gardener and the local policeman. A current resident of Emmer Green recalls life there in the 1920s as being very harsh, but the children were already integrating into the local community and attended Emmer Green School. Many went on to serve their country in the Second World War. In latter years the home was run by The Church of England Children's Society. It eventually closed and was demolished in 1982 to make way for a retirement development, Lyefield Court.

Caversham Grove (Listed Grade II) appears on maps as early as 1761, was built in Queen Anne revival style, and has had many owners since, including the earliest known, a Mr David Fell, in 1788. The house was extended on many occasions, the most significant being by Norman Shaw in the late 1870s for the then owner Frederick George Saunders, chairman of the Great Western Railway. Mr Saunders died in 1901, and his widow remained there until about 1914. During the 1920s it was lived in by the Foster-Browns who are remembered for helping to raise funds for the new church. A barn, the stables, and the kitchen garden wall, all listed, still stand within the grounds. One curious feature of the house is the extensive labyrinth of cellars. Reading Corporation purchased the house in 1932 and it was subsequently used as a general archive depository, home for stuffed birds and animals from Reading Museum and emergency wartime maternity home, before becoming a school in the 1950s. The estate included several farms- Shipnell's Farm in Gravel Hill, and Grove Farm. **Old Grove House** (Grove Farm) near the junction of St Barnabas Road and Surley Row has a Tudor front of flint and brick, and three gables. Over some windows can be seen brick dripstones, and there was once an old timber barn with a wooden threshing floor. Before 1914 it was farmed by Mr Paxman who sported marvellously sandy whiskers!



CAVERSHAM GROVE

St Agnes, Grove Hill- an interesting 17th century flint and brick cottage with scalloped barge-boards, and hoodmoulds to the windows. The cross in the gable is said to indicate Cromwellian sympathies. Cromwell was supposed to have directed the firing of his cannons on Balmore Hill from an upstairs window of St Agnes. No doubt in those days the view to Caversham Bridge would have been unobstructed.

Luke's Court) has been built in the grounds, whilst the main house has been converted into flats. **No. 23 'Farmcote', No. 4 'White Cottage' and No. 2 'Fir Tree House'** are all listed 18th century buildings. **Caversham Hill**, an early 19th century stucco villa, with an unusual two storey portico and verandah to the south, was once a nurses home. **Hill House and No. 1 Surley Row**, early 19th century, were one house with extensive grounds to the south, originally owned by Captain William Montague. He was something of a Regency buck, and was one of the Stewards at the Reading races held on Bulmershe Heath in 1813. Later it was the home of the Noble family. After Miss Emma Noble died the estate was broken up and sold. A bell once used to announce one's arrival or summon coachmen is still a prominent feature of No. 1.

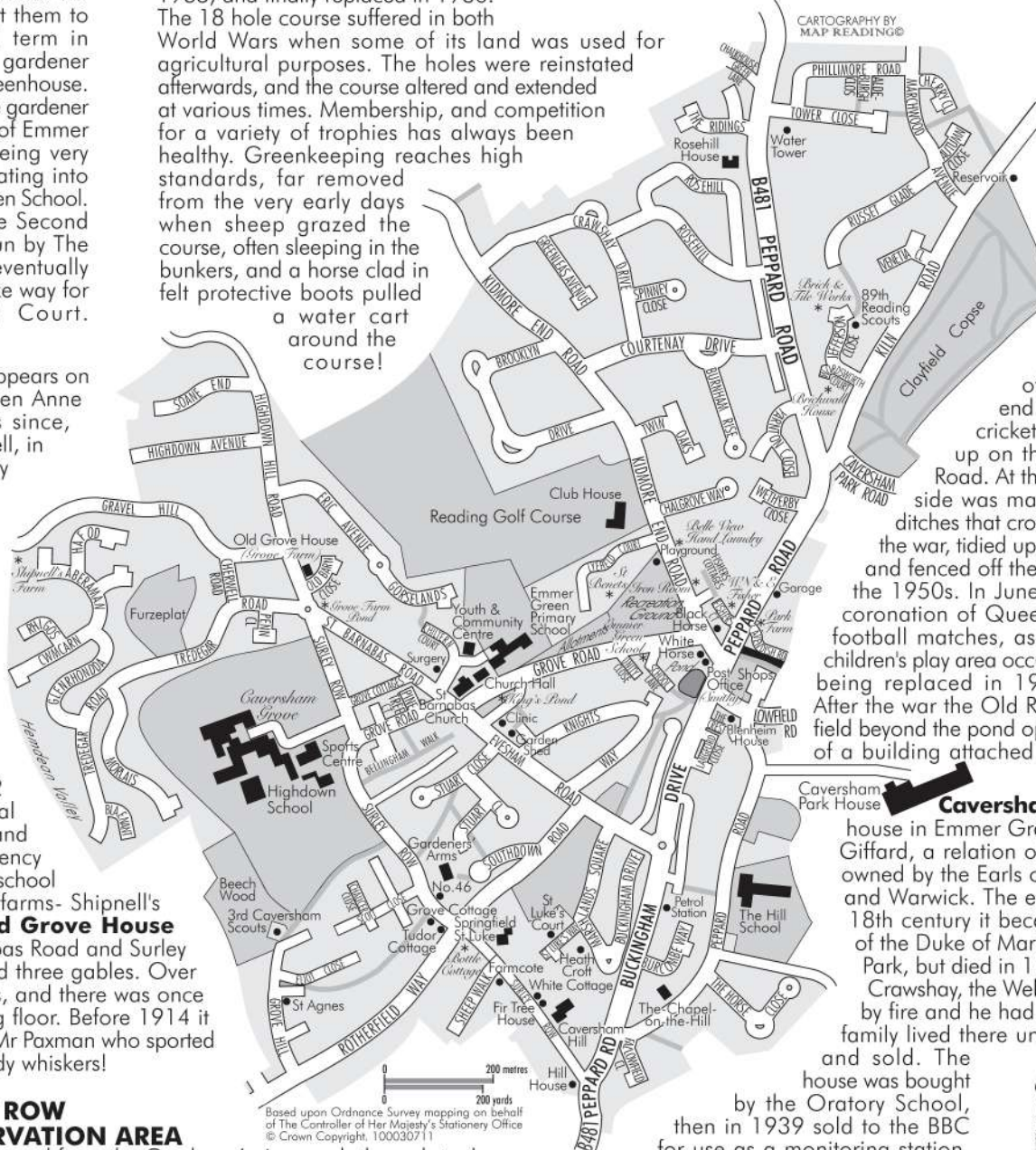
The Heart of the Village

Although today Emmer Green covers quite a wide area, it is still possible to focus on the original village as being centred around the junction of the Kidmore End and Peppard Roads. The White Horse Inn has always been at the heart of village life. Records suggest an inn has stood on the site since the 16th century. Its early history as a coaching inn is speculation, but outwardly the building has changed very little. The adjacent smithy, run by generations of Eynotts in the Victorian era and thereafter by David Turner, and outside stabling remained until the early part of this century. Food and lodging were always available at the inn, with guests sleeping in an open dormitory, but it had no bathroom until the 1950s. Internal renovations have taken place at intervals over the years. Right up until 1973 the inn comprised a number of small rooms for crabbage, darts or skittles, and another for singing and the gossip of the day. There's an early history of bread baking at the inn, and right up until the 1920s it sold groceries, as well as beer. People often took their Sunday dinners to the pub to be cooked in the bakehouse ovens. In 1973 a dining area was added, and internal walls knocked down to give open-plan facilities. In 1993 the then owners provoked fierce local opposition when they changed the name to the 'Pickled Newt'! Fortunately it quickly reverted back to the White Horse. The pub briefly closed in early 1998 whilst the brewers Greene King undertook comprehensive refurbishment. Across the road from the White Horse is the Black Horse. This was originally situated on the old Peppard Road next to the Chapel-on-the-Hill, but the OS map of the late 1870s already shows it in its present position. The local fire brigade used to keep their fire cart in the Black Horse yard. Next to the Black Horse (14 Kidmore End Road) was the village bakery run by Howards. A building (now 18a) to the other side of the pub was the granary. The grain was stored on the upper floor, and the entrance for the horse and cart was underneath. A little further up Kidmore End Road by the entrance to Fishers Cottages used to be a small confectionery shop. In the 1920s the post office was part of the bakery mentioned above, until it eventually moved to the opposite side of the road. Here, next to the White Horse pub, was the village

grocery store. After the war this and some nearby thatched cottages were demolished and the present shops built. Bob Hodges ran the Post Office and established a thriving general store. The real change came in 1970 when the shopping precinct was built as part of the Caversham Park development. That included a major supermarket, as well as a number of smaller shops. Unfortunately this was to have a serious impact on Mr Hodges' trade, and eventually his shop was sold to the Balfour chain of newsagents. Until the early 1980s a distinctive old Iron Room occupied a piece of land facing the park in Kidmore End Road. This was brought up from the Forbury Gardens in Reading in the 1870s to be used as a parish room. There was a row of cottages next to the White Horse which were demolished for the car park, but a couple of surviving cottages in School Lane were built in the mid 1800s. Pond Cottage, originally two homes, painstakingly restored forty years ago, dates back to 1563. Park Farm, the home farm for Caversham Park, was situated on land the other side of the Peppard Road, near the present shopping precinct. Cows grazed in the fields beyond and local residents collected their milk daily. A flint wall behind the Emmer Green Garage is the sole remnant of this farm. The original wooden garage building was gutted by fire in 1983, and a brick structure replaced it. Blenheim House on the Peppard Road was built for the farm manager of Caversham Park estate around 1770. Adjoining cottages housed the farmworkers.

Reading Golf Club

began life in 1910 as the Caversham & South Oxon Golf Club. The original club house was destroyed in a blaze in 1963, and finally replaced in 1980. The 18 hole course suffered in both World Wars when some of its land was used for agricultural purposes. The holes were reinstated afterwards, and the course altered and extended at various times. Membership, and competition for a variety of trophies has always been healthy. Greenkeeping reaches high standards, far removed from the very early days when sheep grazed the course, often sleeping in the bunkers, and a horse clad in felt protective boots pulled a water cart around the course!



a water cart around the course!

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Rosehill House

lay to the north of Emmer Green, and was built in 1771. The cedar in the grounds was planted by Elizabeth Richards who owned the property from 1802 to 1837. Martin John Sutton (the seed family) also lived there and called it Kidmore Grange. The flamboyant Captain Maitland, whose family lived at the house in the early 1900s, caused quite a stir when he landed in the garden in his hot-air balloon one Saturday afternoon. For a while during and after the last war the Salvation Army had its headquarters there. From a fire-warden's post on the roof of the building the blitz in London could be clearly seen.

Public Transport

For a long time for many people the only way to get to Caversham or Reading was to walk. Kidmore End Road was originally a gravel track, and the first bus service from Emmer Green to Reading terminated at the junction of Grove Road and Kidmore End Road for fear children playing on the recreation ground might dash out into the road. It was operated by a woman from Kidmore End. In time Reading Corporation took over, but it wasn't until houses were built north of the village in the 1930s that the service extended to Chalgrove Way. Eventually the buses ventured to Courtenay Drive to return down the Peppard Road.

Recreation & Sport

The land around the pond was known as Chambers Green, and must have been common land, for it was enclosed in 1865. Every year several fairs were held on this great open space, part of which is now the recreation ground. It was here that a massive bonfire was built to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII. The huge pyre was built around a scaffold base in which was a small 'room' where two men stayed guard against would be fire-raisers until the appropriate fire-lighting time arrived. The area of common land remained unfenced until the end of World War II. Although it was rough ground, cricket used to be played, and a quoits area was set up on the corner of Grove Road and Kidmore End Road. At this time much of the ground on the Grove Road side was marshy land, and reeds and rushes grew in the ditches that crossed it. The council assumed responsibility after the war, tidied up the land, installed an effective drainage system, and fenced off the park area. Steam fairs were held there during the 1950s. In June 1953 a big party was held to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Today the park offers regular football matches, as well as impromptu games and pastimes. A children's play area occupies the northern corner, the original equipment being replaced in 1993, the design chosen by local children. After the war the Old Redingensians Rugby Club had their pitch in a field beyond the pond opposite the church. They used the upstairs room of a building attached to the White Horse Inn as a dressing room.

Caversham Park House

was by far the most important house in Emmer Green. The original 'Manor' belonged to William Giffard, a relation of William the Conqueror. It was subsequently owned by the Earls of Pembroke, and later the Earls of Gloucester and Warwick. The estate passed through many hands, until in the 18th century it became the home of William Cadogan, a friend of the Duke of Marlborough. He attempted to rebuild Caversham Park, but died in 1726. In 1844 the estate was bought by William Crawshaw, the Welsh ironmaster. In 1850 the house was destroyed by fire and he had it rebuilt around an iron frame. The Crawshaw family lived there until the 1920s when the estate was broken up and sold. The house was bought by the Oratory School, then in 1939 sold to the BBC for use as a monitoring station.

Churches

Until 1989 Emmer Green did not have its own parish, and was part of Caversham. During the late 19th century the church gathered for worship in the village school, but it was felt a more permanent meeting place was needed. The old St Barnabas Church (now the church hall) was consecrated in 1897. In the 1920s local people, led by Mr and Mrs Haydon-Bacon, and the Foster-Browns of Caversham Grove, eventually raised enough money for a new church, and this was built by the Fishers, local builders, and finally consecrated in 1929. The east and west windows in the church were designed by Mr Percy Haydon-Bacon, a resident of Springfield St Luke and a Fellow of the British Society of Master Glass Painters. His work was renowned both home and abroad with perhaps his most notable contribution being the rose window of the cathedral in Victoria, British Columbia. St Barnabas has never had a graveyard. Two teams of six pall bearers would carry the coffin on their shoulders down what is now Rotherfield Way to St Peter's in Caversham for burial. This was known as Coffin or Church Way. Sunday School for children was held at the old Emmer Green school until 1933. In the 1920s there were Sunday School outings to Balmore Park, and occasionally more exciting trips by steamer to Marlow or Wallingford. The Chapel-on-the-Hill in Peppard Road is Emmer Green's oldest church. It was built in 1827 on land donated by farm owner Mrs Burchett, and has the smallest graveyard in England. The sole grave belongs to James Dadsell, minister at the chapel until his death in 1865.

Schools

The Chapel-on-the-Hill in Peppard Road offered daily education to children, but the first proper school was built of brick and flint, on the corner of Grove Road and School Lane, in 1877 to serve local children up to the age of thirteen. It first had one classroom, but was later extended to two. It finally closed in 1933 when pupils then had to attend school in Caversham. The building was gutted by fire in 1977 and demolished a few months later. In 1950 the Hill School was built in the Peppard Road, shortly followed by Emmer Green Primary School in Grove Road. In 1951 Caversham Grove became The Grove Secondary School- this is now Highdown School, a comprehensive school for children up to the age of eighteen, from Emmer Green, Caversham, and north Reading.



EMMER GREEN SCHOOL