

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF JORDANS WAY

### *Background: Quaker Jordans and the Railway*

From the 16th and 17th centuries, Buckinghamshire, like much of rural England, consisted of large manorial estates with many villages having small houses and shops around a village green. Many of these villages survive with this structure at their core. Although Jordans Village looks similar, its origins are quite different, as construction of the Village set around a Green was largely completed between 15th February 1919 and 1930. Old Jordans is the true heart of the village, and it was where Quaker farmers lived and began to meet after the property was acquired by Thomas Russell in 1618.

When the Quakers first established themselves here, it was a corner of England suited to a group seeking isolation from religious persecution. The 1687 Declaration of Indulgence passed by James II negated laws punishing dissenters and enabled the Quakers to build their permanent Meeting House the following year in 1688. Betwixt Old Jordans and the Meeting House remains the Mayflower Barn [1624], said to be made from the timbers of the eponymous vessel that carried early settlers to America, based upon the evidence that a Robert Child was part owner of the vessel, and the burial ground (that pre-dates the Meeting House) contains the remains of various members of the Child family, as well as the famous Quaker settler William Penn, after whom Pennsylvania was named.

Jordans is of course not so far away from London, which grew steadily to become one of the world's largest cities by the beginning of the 20th century. During the Industrial Revolution, many labourers who had moved from the country to work in cities ended up in poverty and squalor. By the end of the 19th century, persecution of Quakers had ended. They were still barred from entering the professions and by nature they avoided any trade associated with war, so many entered the grocery trade.

Joseph Rowntree [1836-1925] was one of the most successful Quaker confectioners and an energetic social reformer. He analysed and published his findings on the causes of inner city poverty, drawing attention to economic down-turns, sickness, age, and lack of education as key factors. Rowntree and other Quakers such as George Cadbury (a founding shareholder of Jordans Village Ltd) were instrumental in introducing numerous welfare reform laws, which included the care of poor city workers seeking to return to the country.

In addition to building villages for their workers in Birmingham and elsewhere, the Quakers decided to create a model village for artisans and land workers near the Meeting House in Jordans, utilising legislation introduced in the [Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1885](#). Building commenced in 1919, around an open area to form a village green, and architect Fred Rowntree, second cousin to Seebohm Rowntree and the fourth child of John Rowntree, created the village layout and designed the first properties in Jordans. His sons Douglas and Colin both joined the family's architect practice at 11 Hammersmith Terrace; after their father Fred's death in 1927, Douglas moved to Further Pegs in Puers Lane, Jordans.

The land for Jordans Village was acquired from Lt Col William Baring du Pre [1875-1946], a politician, major land-owner, croquet and golf enthusiast, who then lived at Wilton Park, on the edge of Beaconsfield. His family came here as part of William the Conqueror's entourage. Lt Col du Pre ended the isolation of the area and opened it to Londoners by allowing the railway to pass over his land. One condition for this was a railway stop at his new golf

course, to extend its use to Londoners. The stop was originally called Beaconsfield Golf Links Halt [opened New Year's Day, 1915] and now known as Seer Green and Jordans Station. A Lower Palaeolithic axe was found by the station, indicating that our ancestors visited this area shortly after the retreat of the ice that ended the last major Ice Age and made the southern part of Britain inhabitable. In 1928 Crutches Wood was acquired by Jordans Village through donations by Henry Cadbury and Baron Trent of Nottingham (aka Jesse Boot, the philanthropic Chemist). Cadbury placed the stone in the south west corner of the woods in 1934 in memory of his late uncle, Dr R. Hingston Fox. In 1939, Du Pre also sold land at [Wilton Park to the War Office](#) which became the interrogation centre for Nazi prisoners of war.

Opening the railway transformed housing in the area. In addition to the social housing established in Jordans Village, the edges of Seer Green and Longbottom Lane were marked out with large 'Villa-style' plots for housing the growing middle-class commuters who could easily walk to the station. Similar developments occurred around the stations at Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross.

In the immediate case of Jordans Way and Long Wood Drive, developments were affected predominantly by the affairs of the Sinclairs, who moved into what would become known as The Old House [originally 'Oakfield'] in 1949. Mary Gwladys Sinclair came from a wealthy family and lived off a Trust which, over the years, provided the money for the acquisition of land and the development of Jordans Way, Meadowside, and Long Wood Drive now amounting to 44 properties. There were several legal disputes between members of the family and others. In addition to the deeds of properties sold by the Sinclairs, the Proceedings, Statements and Judgements from these cases provides information relevant to the history of Jordans Way.

### ***Jordans Way Residents Association [JWRA Ltd]***

The properties on Jordans Way, Meadowside and Long Wood Drive are relatively recent and most arose from the block of land acquired by Mary Gwladys Sinclair in 1953. The original purchase is shown in red on the plan, which forms a part of the "Title of Mary Gwladys Sinclair to land at 'Oakfield', Jordans, Beaconsfield" and forms a part of the deeds for each plot subsequently sold to builders. The Sinclairs referred to their land as the Estate and this term will be used here because of its brevity. Jordans Lane Estate is now fully developed and the plan of current properties shows the current names of the 28 that are members of JWRA Ltd.

The Jordans Lane Estate represents a significant section of the village of Jordans, albeit on the opposite (east) side of Jordans Lane from the village centre. The block of land acquired by Mary Gwladys originally formed part of the Grove Estate and had on it six houses, already in 1924, as seen on a Council plan of that date as well as on the Estate plan. Using the current house names, and going clockwise from Jordans Lane, they were: No.2, Little Orchard, Nine Elms, Grove Meadow, 'Oakfield', and Pennwood. Oakfield is shown as having three plots. This is because the plot with the house was already Mrs Sinclair's but the adjacent two plots, to the east, were in the name of William Lindsay Sinclair, her husband. The plot with the house had been gifted to Mrs Sinclair by her father, Percival Octavius Watson in 1949. Mr & Mrs Sinclair lived in this house until they sold it to Mr Humble in 1964, having changed its name to 'The Old House'. At some time later the two Sinclair sons, Christopher and James, moved into the adjacent [then adjoining] house, built by the Sinclairs, namely

'Oakfield Lodge'. More on this later.

The land acquired by the Sinclairs was part of very extensive lands acquired by a Charles Herbert Watson in 1933. He was not related to Mrs Sinclair's family and the land had not come from Du Pre estates. Charles Herbert Watson was an architect, in Beaconsfield and had already redeveloped several houses along Jordans Lane including Cluny House and Wellfield, which now have access onto Jordans Way and are contributors to JWRA Ltd. These two properties are not on land acquired by the Sinclairs. Charles Herbert Watson had already sold a large tract of land to Grove Farm before being persuaded to sell the plots around 'Oakfield' to the Sinclairs. The Sinclairs set up two companies to manage the developments: Jordans Lane Estate (Constructors) Ltd and Jordans Lane Management Co Ltd, both now dissolved. The only non-Sinclair on the boards of these companies was Mr Michael Wood, who early on, acquired from Mr Sinclair, Longreach - the easterly-most plot adjoining the Sinclair's first house [now The Old House].

Unravelling the history of Jordans Way is not easy and is only possible through the deeds for the properties the Sinclairs sold, and legal documents relating to their disputes. The disputes concern rightful ownership of lands, just prior to the divorce of Mr and Mrs Sinclair in 1974, and a dispute regarding proceeds from the sale of Oakfield House to Mr and Mrs Gold in 1995. The author has had access to these documents but not to the deeds of the 5 properties on the Estate that did not belong to the Sinclairs. Because these 5 properties are significantly older in origin, it is hoped that their owners will, in due course, provide information.

Understanding the development of the road is made easier by knowing which properties were occupied by Sinclairs at various times and how the name 'Oakfield' was attached to different properties at different times. The neighbouring and originally adjoined house [now Oakfield Lodge] did not have a separate name but was occupied by Mr and Mrs Sinclair, after the original 'Oakfield' was sold to Mr Humble and its name changed to The Old House. The unnamed house was referred to by the Sinclairs as 'The Flat' and it remained empty for several years after the Sinclairs moved away in 1967 but was lived in at some times by two of the Sinclair's sons, James and Christopher. By 1975, this house was called 'Old Oakfield': it was then derelict and about to be repossessed by the mortgage company. But Christopher Sinclair prevented this by borrowing money from his "friend and neighbour, Mr Humble, who in return acquired land to the rear of his garden". It was on the sale of this house, that the unnamed house [The Flat] became known as 'Oakfield Lodge'. The next house, to the east, is Maple House [originally called 'The Bungalow']. This was owned, in 1974, by Mrs Sinclair as part of the divorce settlement but not lived in by her as it was also derelict until refurbished and sold. The last property lived in by Sinclairs and also called 'Oakfield' was originally called 'Greenacre' and is now known as 'Oakfield House'. It was bought back by Jordans Lane Estate (Constructors) Ltd in 1964 and lived in by James and finally, before sale to Mr and Mrs Gold, by Christopher Sinclair.

Developments, in terms of selling off lots, proceeded rapidly from 1953 to 1957. In some cases two or more lots were sold to developers. Each lot was restricted to one house, and there were quite a number of restrictions placed on the householders, such as no streetlights, no access from one property to another, as well as restrictions on the roads and verges, in particular, no parking of vehicles or leaving any building or other materials thereon. The restrictions and conditions and covenants were set out in Mary Gwladys' "Title" document referred to earlier. Because ours is a private road whose restrictions and covenants do not apply to others living outside the area these are generally not recorded by the Land Registry,

but nevertheless they apply to all the properties on the Estate. Except when considering Long Wood Drive, the word 'road' in this history generally means the roads included in the remit of JWRA Ltd i.e. Jordans Way and Meadowside.

The biggest development on the Estate was Long Wood Drive, for which the entire block of land (plots and road) was sold in 1964 to T & R Properties Ltd. The vendors were Jordans Lane Estate (Constructors) Ltd. The original intentions for Long Wood Drive were for access to be directly from Jordans Lane and the road (Long Wood Drive) to be adopted by the Council. Neither of these things happened: it seems that the Council or Highways refused access directly onto Jordans Lane (hence the current access along Jordans Way) and the road was not adopted. Years later, lack of adoption allowed Long Wood Drive Management Ltd to purchase the road and its verges from the Treasury Solicitor, who had automatically acquired ownership of T & R Properties when that company was dissolved. Unlike Jordans Way, the Long Wood Drive properties were not encumbered by any of the strange property ownership deals between the Sinclairs. Curiously, the strip of land intended as access for Long Wood Drive from Jordans Lane is clearly seen on Mary Gwladys Sinclair's Title plan. A part of it, at the Jordans Lane end, is still evident, but overgrown.

The first plots developed on Mary Gwladys' land were those nearest to Jordans Lane: Gables and Fieldgate. Thereafter the properties around the pond were developed, one of which was "Greenacre". This was the house later re-named "Oakfield House" by Christopher Sinclair, perhaps because he had originally grown up at "Oakfield". His parents' house had been sold and renamed The Old House. Two additional properties, Hadley Grange and Wellfield Cottages, were built in the gardens of Cluny House and Wellfield respectively. Some of the houses have undergone significant expansion and in the case of Nine Elms and Grove Meadow they are now set further back on their sites than the original houses (as shown on the Council plan from 1924). Two properties, Orchard End and Larkswood, were both developed on land transferred first to Robert Russell Developments Ltd in 1969 and then to Hindsbray Builders Ltd in 1978. Until the recent modification to the porch at Larkswood, these two were identical. The last developments were on Meadowside.

JWRA Ltd manages the upkeep of the road and verges of Jordans Way and Meadowside for the 28 houses that now have access onto these roads. We work with Long Wood Drive Management Ltd in regard to the section of Jordans Way that they also use. The remit of JWRA Ltd is very broadly defined in the Articles and Memorandum of Association but JWRA Ltd limits its activities to maintenance of the road and it transfers responsibility for upkeep of the verges to each dwelling house. This has been the case since a Residents Association was formed. Prior to its formation each "Purchaser (was) to pay the Vendor an annual sum of £2-10-0 on the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan each year for the upkeep of the road and open spaces". This was increased to £5, then £50 and now the JWRA Ltd annual fee is £250. There is no evidence that the Sinclairs ever collected any money for the upkeep of the road. They were entitled to stop collection of money and maintain the road but thereafter the residents had to and did do this. It was done through the Residents Association, formed in 1989. In 1998 the association became a limited company, JWRA Ltd, which has continued with the necessary tasks. Several residents recall that in the early days, the Sinclairs would exert their rights over the verges by growing peas and suchlike crops along the road and then plough them in at the end of the growing season. The current pattern is for each household to maintain the verges as grass. Our verges are a distinctive feature of Jordans Way. They are the "open spaces" mentioned in deeds and Mary Gwladys' Title. The largest piece is outside

Pennwood and this has been kept as meadowland for several years. Pennwood was originally called Thika and the owners tell me they are about to change the name again.

JWRA Ltd is unlikely to be able to acquire ownership of the road and verges (as did Long Wood Drive) for several reasons. There is the piece of road at the beginning of Jordans Way which was not part of the land acquired by Mrs Sinclair. Ownership of a stretch of road and verges linking Long Wood Drive to Jordans Way seems to have belonged to Mrs Sinclair and this was confirmed in the divorce settlement in 1974 but probably not regularised by documents. Furthermore, although Jordans Lane Estate (Constructors) Ltd is now dissolved, it was not the only vendor shown in various property conveyances. Thus, outright purchase of the road and its verges from the Treasury Solicitor does not seem possible for Jordans Way.

Despite this situation all members should be aware that their Right of Way (in common with all others having a like right) to "Pass and Re-Pass with or without vehicles along Jordans Way "...is permanent for their dwelling house and does not cease if the house or road changes hands". The primary reason for this is the fact that whoever 'owns' the road and verges does so only as Trustee for the benefit of the adjoining properties.

It is understood that payment of JWRA Ltd dues is not enforceable. Fortunately all Members pay their dues. However, Members should be aware of the consequences of not doing so. The existence of a Right of Way does not in itself mean that access is possible. This will only be the case if the road is maintained in a fit state for vehicles and this is of course the job taken on by JWRA Ltd. Although a minimalist approach to road maintenance may be acceptable to some, who might resort to 4-wheel drive or more extreme off-road means of transport, there are other reasons, indeed responsibilities, to consider. All house-holders have a legal liability to compensate those who are injured or who suffer loss due to faults in the road. Failure to deal with uneven road surfaces, falling branches or trees and poorly marked hazards such as ditches would all be deemed to be breaches of the Legal Duty of Care. The law states that liability for accidents arising from such failures cannot be excluded simply by means of a notice stating that the road is Private. Fortunately, private roads, of which there are many throughout the UK, are generally safe roads. Any household (Member) not contributing to the work of the JWRA Ltd, for example by not providing the annual dues sought, would then assume all responsibilities for any accidents arising to themselves or their visitors. In the event of attempting to sell their property, such householders would have to demonstrate to a potential purchaser how they would ensure that the Right of Way provided in their deeds could be exercised and maintained independently of JWRA Ltd. The underlying issue to all this is, in law, the Doctrine of Benefit and Burden: a Right of Way (benefit) only exists if the cost of upkeep (burden) is maintained.

Members know that the Private Road status that we enjoy means that the road is for use by its residents and their visitors. The road is not a Highway and its upkeep is not a public responsibility. The way the road and its verges are maintained is entirely up to us. The Board of JWRA Ltd (past and present) with your financial contributions to road maintenance and your efforts in caring for the verges has succeeded in making ours an attractive and well-cared for road. We should all appreciate what we share.

**By Nowell Stebbing, Oakfield House, 14th December 2015**  
*Chairman, Jordans Way Residents Association Ltd*





Jordans - 02 May 1968





## JORDANS LANE ESTATE

### JWRA Ltd Properties:

1. Wellfield	8. Larkwood	15. Longreach	22. Jordans View
2. W. Cottage	9. The Pantiles	16. Maple House	23. Woodstock
3. No. 2	10. The Bower	17. Oakfield Lodge	24. Mujon
4. Gables	11. Nine Elms	18. The Old House	25. Peveril
5. Fieldgate	12. Oakfield House	19. The Darren	26. Penwood
6. Little Orchard	13. Middlewood Ho.	20. Beeches	27. Hadley Grange
7. Orchard End	14. Grove Meadow	21. Treetops	28. Cluny House

