



HISTORIC PYRFORD

Originally the area was mainly heath and wood land used for grazing and timber. The flood plain of the Rivers Wey and Bourne created spring grazing for cattle. Population was sparse because of poor land and few roads, the main ones connecting to Chertsey Abbey, Woking Palace, Guildford market and the river crossings. For many centuries Pyrford was owned by the Crown or the Church. St Nicholas' church was established in the 12th Century (possibly on a Saxon site) because its position commanded the river crossing and water mills.

In the 15th century two enclosed Deer Parks were created. One for hunting from Woking Palace and the other in Pyrford to breed deer for it. The latter contained the Manor House. Under Forest Law, most people were not allowed into these Parks. As a consequence, the few farming habitations were established around the church and the edges of the park.

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Pyrford land reverted to the Crown. Queen Elizabeth gave some to the Earl of Lincoln. He rebuilt a Manor House outside the Park and this became Pyrford Place, demolished in the late 20th century for housing. Under the manorial system of the 15th and 16th centuries, medieval, yeoman and tenanted farms and houses were created throughout Pyrford, especially near the church and the manor house. Roads footpaths and bridle ways were established linking these habitations and the river crossings. This layout is known as a dispersed village, i.e. one without a central cluster of houses.

During the 17th and 18th centuries land and manorial rights were sold to aristocratic families as the growth of London made farming profitable and better transport (including the Wey Navigation canal) put the area within reach of the Capital. The Agricultural Depression of the 19th century, together with the coming of the railway, saw more and more of the land being sold for housing, especially to the north of Pyrford.

At the beginning of the 20th century Pyrford Court was built as a summer residence of the 1st Lord Iveagh with views over to the North Downs and his wife's home at Clandon. The remaining farms centred on grass land for dairy herds (rotated with cereals) and market gardens. By the end of the century, these uses of land became uneconomic. Recently, much of the former grass land has been devoted to biofuel production. One consequence of these changes is a major reduction in the number and thickness of hedgerows.

Early 21st century Pyrford retains much of its dispersed village layout with St Nichols' church and several listed buildings (especially late medieval wooden framed houses) and the historic network of bridle ways and footpaths. Fragments of the ditches and fences of Woking Palace hunting park are still visible along the western edge of Pyrford Common. Views of the North Downs can still be had. Many of the early & mid-20th century houses with relatively large gardens remain. Local facilities have been added within the residential areas, including the church of the Good Shepherd, shops, schools, sports facilities, and a village hall. By the Wey there is a marina. The gardens of Pyrford Court have Grade 1 Listing and houses one of the National Collections of Wisteria.

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