

The Basingstoke Road starts in Three Mile Cross where there is lots to look out for: Hawthorne Cottage, the church behind the Mitfords, the Post Office with its old barn at the back, Wistaria Cottage and four pubs (The Swan, Fox and Horn, George and Dragon and The Star) of which only The Swan remains today. There is also the old Chapel for which SWLHG has produced a history. The road on your right at the cross roads leads towards Grazeley, as the name implies, but it is now cut off by the bypass. At the far end, Grazeley Road is crossed by Woodcock Lane which is very old and was the 'low road' avoiding the hill. Note the ancient pond where the lane starts. On the left at the crossroads is Church Lane which leads to the parish church, St. Mary's in Shinfield.



*The Mitfords in Three Mile Cross, home of author Mary Mitford in first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

Go straight ahead up the hill following the 'high road' and on your left at the top of the hill is a complex of buildings: St Michael's church (explore the churchyard), the Village Hall, an arts and crafts style building, the Farriers public house and around the corner, in Clares Green Road, the Rec, or recreation ground. Further down Clares Green Road on your right is Apple Tree Lane, which used to be orchards; old fruit trees are still to be found in the some of the gardens. At the corner, Clares Green Road bends round to the right past the allotments, while Ryeish Lane continues on towards Ryeish Green where you'll find the old Ryeish Green School, another lovely building. Beyond the allotments you come to the junction with Croft Road and

Grovelands Road. Beyond the bend, on your right, you'll find a drive leading to Shinfield Cemetary where you can pause and be reminded of past residents of Spencers Wood.



*The Farriers on the corner of Clares Green Road dating to before 1860,*

Turn right at the end of Grovelands Road along Hyde End Road back towards the Basingstoke Road. Look out on your right for Floyers Barn, all that remains of the Floyers Farm, and next door, an old house called The Homestead, parts of which date back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Further along the road turn right into the Square; near the corner stood Adeys bakery. (In our latest book you'll find details of a walk around the Square). You will come out back on the Basingstoke Road, opposite Wellingtonia Avenue, planted as a land mark when the common extended this far. Wellingtonia Avenue used to lead to Stanbury House but this was demolished and is now the site of Wellington Court, although the former stables have been converted to a residence.

Turn left along Basingstoke Road and on your right by the traffic lights is the old village school, originally founded by Frederick Allfrey, owner of Stanbury House, and now the Library. A little further on the left is the old United Reformed Chapel, now converted into homes. The original church was further down Chapel Lane and

between the two churches was an institute built by the young men from the Bible Class. Just a bit further down on the opposite side of the road lies the common and in the corner, the pond. The drive just before the pond leads up to Highlands, the other "Gentleman's" house in the village.

Further down Basingstoke Road there are a cluster of businesses: the bakery has been there forever, the Post Office has been modernised and on the opposite side of the road a small industrial estate. The Red Lion used to be next door but has been converted into homes and a close but the garage has been there for many years and featured in the Group's first book.



*Lambs Lane School was built in 1908 on the edge of the village to serve both Spencers Wood and Swallowfield. The two existing schools were closed.*

Turn right onto Beech Hill Road and on your right, a little way past Clements Close, you come to Kiln Lane, a public footpath, which runs alongside the Common, down the hill to Woodcock Lane. A little way down the path on the left, another footpath leads to the ruined brick kiln in the woods. Try and find it. This footpath comes out at White House Farm. Turn left by the farm and it brings you back to Beech Hill Road. Cross the road and continue down Lambs Lane and you will come to Lambs Lane School.

Turn right opposite the School and follow the lane round to the left at the bottom and you come to Kings Bridge, so called because before the bypass was built the road went to Beaumys Castle from Swallowfield, and then onto Beech Hill. (Alternatively carry on past the school back to the Basingstoke Road.)

The footpath on the left just before the Bridge will take you back to the Basingstoke Road along the River Loddon, emerging beside the Mill House Hotel, formerly Sheepbridge Mill. The Loddon continues East and is joined by the rivers Blackwater and Whitewater. It can be seen again in the newly created SANG in Hyde End Road before emerging at Arborfield Bridge on the Shinfield-Arborfield road. In the past there were a number of mills on all three rivers, including one in Riseley and another one at Stanford End.

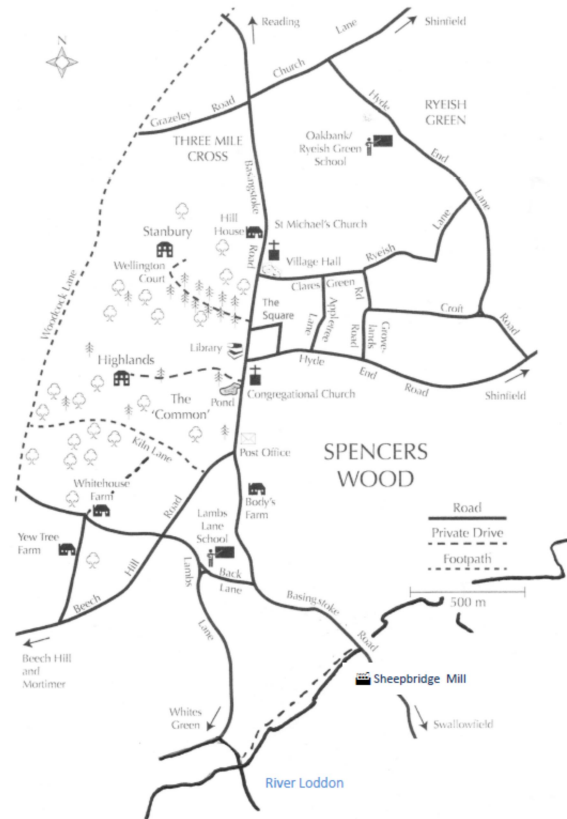


*The River Loddon near Kings Bridge. The river is an SSSI which is home to a range of protected species including Loddon Pondweed, barn owls, red kites, otters, water voles and great crested newts. There are also invertebrate species such as white admiral and small heath butterflies and stag beetles.*

If you follow the Basingstoke Road on towards Swallowfield there are many old places to see there including Swallowfield Park, All Saints Church, where Mary Russell Mitford is buried, and on the right beyond the church down Nutbean Lane, the cemetery. Beyond this the lane leads to the ford over the River Blackwater.

## A walk up Basingstoke Road

Some people say there isn't any history to a place like this - that is just a main road; hopefully this walk will prove them wrong. It follows the route of the Basingstoke Road from Three Mile Cross through Spencers Wood to Swallowfield with various detours as you go. Of course there's no need to follow it from end to end, you can pick up and follow parts of the route to suit you.



Spencers Wood Local History Group, 2020  
Text by Margaret Bampton; Production Jeremy Saunders  
Further information <http://swlhg.co.uk/>

## A walk up Basingstoke Road



*The former United Reformed Chapel, now converted to apartments and the Library, formerly the village school.*