

# Mortimer Common After Enclosure 1806 - 1900

The thin, gravelly soil of the common made poor farmland and did little to help food production. Most of the enclosures became conifer plantations, with oak and beech along the roadsides, but some areas were laid to grass, such as Stephens Close, Leighfield and the triangle between Victoria and West End Roads.

The development of Mortimer Common as a residential area started very slowly. Existing groups of squatter cottages at Longmoor, Groves Corner and Summerlug were joined by a few more. Even by 1840 the only houses of any size were West End House and Briar Lea House. The first edition of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1872 shows only a few more, including the Victoria Arms and its neighbours, then in 1870 there was a sudden and marked increase in house building. In May of that year there was an auction sale at the Horse and Groom of building land bounded by the western edge of the Fairground, by Windmill Road and by Victoria Road. In 1872 there was only one building on the corner of King Street and Victoria Road (now Swards, then a smithy), one at the north end of King Street (now Jewells, then Mr King, a baker, who gave his name to King Street) and two cottages on the opposite corner of Windmill Road. In 1871 Thomas Perkins had bought a plot of land stretching from Victoria Road to about three-quarters of the way down King Street. He built Heath Villa (now Wayside) in 1880 and sold off much of the rest of the land for building. Within a few years many houses were built and occupied in King Street and Windmill Road. Nearly all of them are still there, and so is the miller's house, which became three cottages when the mill failed.

St. John's Road and St. Mary's Road appeared in the 1880s on land that had been allotted to Nute Gould, whose grandson John H. Gould started the brick kiln. St. John's Road came after St. Mary's, and an old plan shows the two roads joined up, although this was never done. Probably the first house to be built in these two roads was Hollybank Cottage in St. Mary's Road in 1877. Coronation Cottage in St. John's Road was built by Albert Spratley in 1901 and was no doubt named after the coronation of King Edward the Seventh in the next year. By 1913 the Ordnance Survey maps show both roads to be fully developed.

The population of Mortimer Common can only be estimated but appears to have risen by 400 between 1871 and 1891 and by another 200 by 1911, when the total for the parish reached 1423.