

Pangbourne Place-names

Pangbourne Lodge Drive

Perhaps surprisingly, **Pangbourne Lodge Drive** is not the name that was originally intended for this roadway. The Pangbourne Parish Council Minutes for 1 December 1964 state, in connection with the ‘New Development off Tidmarsh Road’, that it was agreed “That the alternative names of ‘Fairmead’ and ‘Garden Close’ be suggested to the Bradfield Rural District Council (predecessor of West Berkshire Council) as the names for the above development”. The proposed occupiers of the three houses being built there objected, and the rest is history.

Standing at the end of Pangbourne Lodge Drive and largely hidden from view is an elegant house, a real jewel at the very centre of our village. Pangbourne Lodge is early Georgian architecture at its most charming.



Pangbourne Lodge.

Traditionally, such a house would have an imposing, tree-lined drive leading up to it, but with the proliferation of housing in the 20th century and since, the drive as a feature has been reduced in status, and can now be just a short driveway. One would be hard-pressed to claim that one actually drove down it, and in any case ‘drove’ nowadays only refers to what one has done, usually behind a steering wheel or else perhaps in securing a hard (commercial) bargain.

However, until the advent of the railway network from the 1850s, ‘droving’ was an activity in its own right, and the only way of moving animals to market. A ‘drove’ was a substantial herd or flock, the large numbers echoed in expressions like “people arrived in droves”. Former drove roads are often wider than other roads, and with broad verges on either side.

The men involved in this trade were drovers, who accompanied their livestock either on foot or on horseback, often travelling substantial distances – for example, the route from North Wales to London and Smithfield Market is over 250 miles, which was covered at a rate of 10-12 miles per day. As Bruce Smith points out on his excellent website “*Local Drove Roads*”, many drovers started as boys from Welsh farms, joining a drove where three generations were at work, with the elder men teaching their sons’ generation while the sons guided the youngsters in that tough trade with its long, hard apprenticeship. Routes had to be learnt by heart, without signposts or maps, and water found without fail or the herd would be lost, because each bullock or heifer needed 8-10 gallons a day. The boys had to learn how to survive in the open, use dogs to manage awkward beasts, speak English, since their mother

tongue was Welsh, and even resist the temptations of the Big City... Drovers wore the sign of their trade, the bowler hat, with pride.



Boy drover from Merioneth.

The lead drover or *porthmon* handled the money, arranged any trading of cattle on the way, got the cattle to market on time and guaranteed wages. Each day he rode ahead on a pony, returning to direct man and beast to where they could be watered, and to the next available inn. Such inns were usually large, rambling, near a crossroads, sometimes named to catch the eye of a *porthmon* and with plenty of outbuildings. There, the cattle needed a field near-by, called a 'stance', that had plenty of grazing, because the animals had to be kept in good condition so as to fetch a worthwhile price when they were sold on. The stance would ideally be triangular, to aid rounding up in the morning.

The routes used for droving, either nationally, or locally by men called 'cattle-drivers' taking livestock to local markets, are echoed in names like **Drove Lane**, Bucklebury and Hermitage. An unenclosed road used mainly for driving cattle could be known as a 'driftway', giving **Driftway Close**, Barkham, and the simpler **Drift Farm**, Basildon. At Stratfield Mortimer a field beside the drove road was called *Drove Piece*, and at Steventon *Drove Way Piece*, both perhaps announcing to drovers that they would be welcome to rest their animals overnight there, for the dung left behind, and, in later droving days, for the rent paid for the grazing. An example of the rent is echoed at *Halfpenny Catch Piece*, East Ilsley, referring to the overnight charge of ½d (0.5p) per beast. Farmers' wives were even known to offer drovers breakfast, to delay the departure of the animals and so increase the amount of dung deposited. Many villages on droving routes, but none in our area, have lanes or odd corners called **Little London** or **London Lane**, facetiously named by drovers as they paused on their way to the capital.

Droving took place in Britain for many hundreds of years, with the Anglo-Saxons having plenty of experience of driving domestic animals over considerable distances. The activity gradually built up over the centuries to its heyday in the 17th to 19th centuries and the satisfying of the demand for meat in the growing cities. In 1800, 200,000 cattle and 1.5 million sheep passed through Smithfield Market, London, and the capital had 4,000 butchers' shops in the 1840s, when the rest of the country had few or none at all. This demand was satisfied by livestock from Wales from mid-February to June and September to December.



Cattle near Smithfield, 1820.

In place-names, cattle destined for the meat markets are most easily recognised in the South of England in names in Rother-, usually derived from the Anglo-Saxon *hryther*. At **Rotherfield Greys** and **Rotherfield Peppard** cattle were kept and bred for the market, probably London, with -field referring to 'rough pasture (*feld*)'. *Grey* and *Pipard* were feudal families associated with the properties.

At Pangbourne we are relatively close to one of the major droving routes to London. We pick it up on the **Ridge Way**, *hrucg weg* in a 12th century document, with *weg* indicating that it was an unmetalled road particularly suitable for animals. The 15th century **Bull** at Streatley was probably so named to try to attract drovers to its stance, with their cattle penned in **The Bull Meadow** overnight before fording the Thames to Goring. Its very name calls to mind lush grass beside running water, even though the field is in fact not that close to the river. From there the cattle were driven onto the 'uncultivated land (*heath*)' on **Goring Heath**, heading for **Wyfold Grange**. The meaning of Wy- is obscure, but the -fold may refer to the circular earthworks in **Wyfold Wood** that would have been a handy place to pen cattle. Along the route there were 'man-made pools' (*mere*, often become -more), such as at **Uxmore**, Stoke Row, probably 'oxen pond'. **Wigmore Pond** was probably 'wide (*wid*, become Wig-)', followed closely by **Blackmore Lane**, both in Sonning Common, whilst **Pond Farm** says it all. After possibly resting at **Rotherfield Peppard** or **Rotherfield Greys** the drove might have headed to Henley, and so on to Maidenhead, Hounslow and London. It might otherwise have been driven down **Harpsden**, the 'harp-shaped valley', mentioned as *Harpdene* in the Domesday Book of 1086 and whose shape might have been helpful in controlling the drove as it was herded down to **Bolney**, *Bulehide* in 1285. This was the 'landing-place (*hyth*)' where bullocks (Bol-) were loaded onto rivercraft.*** Without the journey on foot to London, they would have been in better condition to fetch a good price on arrival.



Droving by boat.

What then of **Hardwick Road**, leading from Whitchurch to Caversham and passing **Hardwick House**? The reference here is probably just to a more local movement and trading of cattle.

So – when you see a cattle truck on the road, spare a thought for the way of life that it has replaced. In our village one might even pass you as you stand at the entrance to Pangbourne Lodge Drive.

Nigel Suffield-Jones