

THE HIGH WYCOMBE SOCIETY

newsletter

NUMBER 219

SUMMER 2026

Looking Forward

A NEW CHAIRMAN; a new Treasurer; and two new Trustees: all welcome outcomes from the Society's well-attended AGM, which took place on 17th June.

There was an air of expectancy as **Steve Strutt** called the meeting to order and declared it to be quorate, modestly admitting that he was not sure what the constitution required him to do if a quorum wasn't present. Half an hour later, as the newly elected Chairman of the Society, Steve was visibly more relaxed.

To take on the role of Chairman, Steve relinquished his former position as Treasurer. That role will now be filled at least for one year by **Malcolm Connell**. Malcolm is a long-standing Trustee, better known to many as a Pann Mill ambassador. On Mill Open Days he can usually be found at the top of the mill loading grain into the hopper. Some readers may recall that he has also previously served in the capacity of Treasurer when a need arose.

Our very capable and deservedly popular Hon. Secretary, **Steph Osborn**, was unsurprisingly re-elected to her role for another year. In addition to her Society duties and family commitments, Steph somehow manages to find time to edit the weekly "Wycombe Pulse" email newsletter, which many of us enjoy.

All the remaining current Trustees had been nominated to serve again and had indicated their willingness to do so. Hence the following were duly re-elected: **Tony Hatton, Gillian Humphreys, Tony Mealing, Nigel Phillips, Willie Reid, David Snoxell, Brian Tranter**.

Joining them for the first time as newly elected Trustees are: **Peter Lerner** and **Chris Balkwill**. Neither are strangers to these pages. Peter recently took on the role of Chair of the Planning Group and has a fortnightly column in the Bucks Free Press. Chris joined the Society in 2023, and many readers will know him from one of his former roles as Chair of the East of Amersham Hill Residents Association.

Jackie Kay (Newsletter Editor)



Caught in the Spotlight – at the We Make Wycombe Hub on Saturday 9th May...

Treasurer and exhibition organiser, Steve Strutt, (now High Wycombe Society Chairman) was pleased to welcome Cllr Majid Hussain, then Mayor of High Wycombe.

Also pictured here: (between Steve and the Mayor) Peter Cartwright, whose visit to the exhibition coincided with the mayor's; and (far right) Kat Kemsley, a newly recruited volunteer, who was manning the exhibition at the time.

...caring about our town: past, present and future

Patron: Lord Carrington

Registered Charity No. 257897

Honorary Secretary: Steph Osborn, Pann Mill, London Road, High Wycombe HP11 1BJ. Tel: 07724 881440

Planning Matters

AS SUMMER arrives, our town centre comes alive with cultural events and there are new educational opportunities on the horizon. The pace of change across High Wycombe shows little sign of slowing down. Major projects are moving forward, some more visibly than others, with significant planning decisions shaping the future of our town. Against this backdrop, we plan to engage constructively with the Council and other stakeholders about the future of key town centre sites. In this edition we look at the progress of the new Buckinghamshire College Group campus, and we revisit some recent planning applications where decisions have now been made concerning padel courts at the Lido and residential development on the West Wycombe Road. We also reflect on how communications could perhaps be improved.

Buckinghamshire College Group A new campus is now being built at a rapid pace. Regular readers will remember we reported that Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) is closing its campuses in Flackwell Heath and Amersham once it has completed its brand new seven-storey building on the site in High Wycombe that manages to be both directly opposite Sainsbury's and also opposite the Bus Station.

A ground-breaking ceremony took place in May, attended by Cllr Steve Broadbent, the Leader of Buckinghamshire Council; Martin Tugwell, BCG Chair of Governors; and Jenny Craig, BCG Principal and CEO.

Once complete, the campus will support more than 1,300 full-time and part-time students and provide specialist facilities for construction, engineering, health, science, creative industries and digital technologies.

The development will include a purpose-built construction and engineering skills centre on Brook Street, providing hands-on, industry-focused training, and a nearby seven-storey building on Oxford Road featuring contemporary classrooms, specialist workshops, creative studios, digital learning spaces and student social areas.

The project forms part of BCG's long-term commitment to strengthening skills education across the county and supporting local employers with a skilled future workforce. There are exciting times ahead for young people being educated in High Wycombe.



Image credit: Buckinghamshire College Group

Wycombe Rye Lido and Padel Courts In the Spring we reported that we had objected to the planning application for padel courts at Wycombe Rye Lido. Our objection was not made because we don't like padel courts, but because of the impact the proposed development would have upon the historic setting of the site landscape, gardens, listed buildings and the conservation area. The council agreed with us and refused planning permission. We wait to see if there is an appeal, or an amended scheme.

We only found out that the council had refused permission by reading about it in the *Bucks Free Press*. Buckinghamshire Council might have told us about this, at the very least out of courtesy, as we had helped them with their decision-making process. But they didn't. We raised this with a local councillor, who told us that councillors are not told about planning decisions either! If you want to have any information, you must search through the council's planning website or go to Aylesbury and search through the planning register.

We don't think that this is acceptable public service. One member of our Planning Group was Chief Planning Officer of another council a few years ago, and he recalls that his team would always notify everyone of a planning decision on a case in which they had registered an interest. They saw this as a matter of courtesy, and a way of thanking people who had spent their time researching and writing to the council on an issue that they felt strongly about. Of course, it is possible for us to make a search online every few weeks about the many planning applications that we are interested in, but it's not at all easy for people who have no access to a computer, to find out what has happened.

We have raised this with the council, who tell us that they are not obliged to advise us of planning decisions, but just to make the information available. We are not sure if this decision has been made for cost reasons, but the cost of doing this must be minimal, as the council already has our addresses on file. On behalf of everyone who is interested in local planning applications and who takes the time and trouble to write to the council, we will continue to argue our point strongly.

25 West Wycombe Road – Update Earlier this year, as reported in the Spring Newsletter, we highlighted a proposed new development of a part four-storey, part five-storey apartment block on the West Wycombe Road. While appreciative of its architectural merits and the developers' view that it would provide a striking "gateway" into the town centre, we had some concerns about it as an example of overdevelopment. We were not alone in our views. Buckinghamshire Council have refused permission, on several grounds including its "excessive scale, bulk and massing" and the need for a "suitable buffer to the adjacent watercourse".

Queen Victoria Road council offices We have also talked to the council about the possibility of their issuing Planning Briefs for the controversial land at Queen Victoria Road (the former Council Offices) and at Easton Street (the former car park). This process would allow the council to

gather, and consider, expert views from many sources, via public consultation. Indeed, the process could, and probably should, be extended to Frogmoor, an area which always attracts interest and a desire for enhancement. The council has resisted our arguments so far, but we will continue.

In fairness, we should also say that individual councillors and council officers have always been friendly to the High Wycombe Society and quick to respond to our queries. We are pleased that they recognise that the Society above all intends to help them with their work, not to hinder them. Of course, it would be nice to see them agreeing with our point of view a little more often; our communications represent the views of the Society's many members, and we are proud of our town.

Planning Group

Spotlight HWS

NEWLY PURCHASED "Feather Flags" standing in Church Square did their bit back in May to advertise the Society.

Inside the We Make Wycombe Hub, a continuous loop of film extracts compiled by Malcolm Connell showcased SOFA films from 1989 and 1990 with a brief explanation of the Society's past role in rescuing them.

Posters and exhibits were designed to engage visitors in conversations about planning and to raise awareness of overlooked aspects of our town's heritage.

It is difficult to distil the Society's work into the sound bites required for a general exhibition of this kind. Our appreciation to all who contributed and to those who attended.

It was a useful exercise, and we look forward to other opportunities to use some of the material.



SWOP Update

THE PROMISED newly refreshed version of SWOP (Sharing Wycombe's Old Photographs) has just gone live, thanks to Steve Strutt's sustained development efforts over the past few months. The new website offers "improved navigation, a new search feature, and a cleaner, more intuitive design — all aimed at helping users explore the 48,000 photographs that vividly depict our local history".

For some time there has been a "demo" version maintained in parallel with the old version, and it has stood up well to testing – so now it's your turn! Please give it a go at <https://swop.org.uk/>.

Over 700 new images have been added to the collections. These include some of the previously announced photographs taken by Lorna Cassidy, which can now be found in the HWS collection, and some much earlier photographs, which were

carefully collated and annotated by the late Derek Woods, a member of the Rye Protection Society. A separate "RPS" collection has been created for these.

Among the first to learn of the enhanced website were subscribers to "WHIP – Wycombe's History in Pictures", the Facebook group started by John Gurney, whose growing membership has now passed 11,000.



In Pursuit of Local Stained Glass

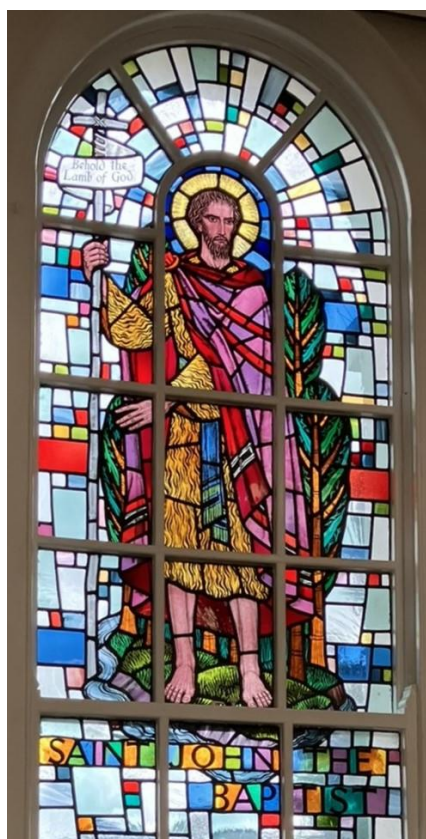
WHILE PREPARING for a recent talk entitled “For the love of stained-glass”, I noticed an unfamiliar image within the HWS collection on SWOP (ref HWS:20501). It claimed to be a “close-up view of three stained-glass windows at the Royal Grammar School (RGS), containing geometric shapes, the school crest, two head and shoulders figures, a depiction of the school building and the Wycombe crest”. The photo was taken in 1982 by Elizabeth Beard and was of a single Venetian window. It piqued my interest as I had no recollection of anyone ever mentioning any stained-glass at the school.

I reached for my copy of the definitive book, “The History of the Royal Grammar School” by L J Ashford and C M Haworth, published in 1962, but could find no reference in it to any stained-glass. There was, however, a helpful mention of a chapel that had come into being in 1960. It was said to be a “conversion” of a former “large centrally placed chemistry laboratory”. I deduced that it could be part of the main 1914 building designed by architect Arthur Vernon with its distinctive facade. I searched for details in official listings. English Heritage merely noted that there were three Venetian windows on the first floor. This description was echoed in the County Historic Environment Record.

More “googling around” soon uncovered copies of “The Wycombiensian” magazine, and in the 1964 edition I found there was a helpful account of the installation of the stained-glass.

“Three stained-glass windows”, were said to have been donated by a Mrs Nutt in memory of her late husband, Mr J C Stanley Nutt, a former pupil of the school.

Illustrations made it clear that the SWOP photo had only captured the middle Venetian window in a row of three. The others included depictions of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Catherine of Alexandria as shown below.



Left: The central panel of the left-hand window (when viewed from inside) depicts Saint John the Baptist, a natural choice for the Royal Grammar School whose foundation was on the site of the St John's Hospital in Easton Street.

Right: the central panel of the right-hand window (when viewed from inside) depicts Saint Catherine of Alexandria. This was the personal choice of the donor, Mrs Nutt, who had attended St Catherine's school in Bramley as a child.

Centre top of page: The façade of the 1914 Vernon Building includes a row of three Venetian windows. For several decades these fronted a school chapel (since de-consecrated).

Top left and right: medallion portraits of two past headmasters: G W Arnison and E R Tucker are embedded in the design of the central window.





Above left: near the portrayal of St John is a stylised picture of the ruins of St John's hospital on Easton Street and the yellow-brick building behind, which was home to the RGS from 1882 until 1915. By 1964 it had become "the Tech". Above right: near the image of St Catherine is a roundel with an open book and crossed palm leaves symbolising wisdom and her martyrdom. The small pieces of glass may be a deliberate allusion to the "shattered wheel" of her legend.

My planned talk went ahead on schedule. I could not be sure that the 1964 windows were still extant, but I was glad to be able to include them in my narrative. Taking my theme in a roughly chronological sequence, I drew on many examples of stained-glass in High Wycombe, and the installation of the RGS windows fitted neatly half-way between two well-known windows at All Saints' Church: the 'Dove Window' created in 1932 by Caroline Townsend and Joan Howson; and the 'Treaty of Paris Window' created in the 1990s by David Wasley.

The stained-glass artist chosen for the RGS windows was Joseph Edward Nuttgens* whose studio was at Piggott's Hill (neighbouring Eric Gill's). There is a lovely [video](#) of him towards the end of his career at work in his studio; it was posted on YouTube by one of his sons, Damien Nuttgens, a past pupil at the RGS. There is also an example of Joseph's work featuring Saint Catherine of Alexandria at the Stained-Glass museum in Ely Cathedral.

On Monday 18th May, I was delighted to be able to visit the school to see the windows, and to take photographs. My thanks to Ann Davies who made the arrangements for us both to attend. We were warmly welcomed and guided round the school by the headmaster, Mr Philip Wayne, and the archivist, Hilary Munday. The windows are huge and the colours are remarkably vibrant. They now front two small classrooms, but sadly spend much of their time shielded from view behind plain white blinds. Perhaps that explains why so few people know of their existence.

Jackie Kay

** a minor error in the Wycombiensian gives the artist as Joseph P Nuttgens. Joseph Edward Nuttgens had a son, Joseph Ambrose Nuttgens who also became a stained-glass artist. Neither artist used a middle initial "P". Fortunately, the younger Joseph, who is now retired, was able to confirm that the windows were the work of his father. My thanks to Ann Davies for her initiative in resolving this puzzle.*



The central window includes a depiction of the school building and the Wycombe crest. The current Headmaster of the RGS, Mr Philip Wayne, was happy to pose in front of the window which includes small portraits of two of his predecessors

From Templars to Troopers

EARLIER THIS YEAR, the Society received an appeal for help from an enquirer based in the US. He was researching his father's wartime experiences in the UK. Specifically, he wanted to know what we could tell him about the "St John's Estate" on the outskirts of High Wycombe - better known to most of us as the former Equity and Law site, just off the Amersham Road. Shortly before D-Day, he said, his father had been posted there for some military training prior to transferring to Normandy.

Armed with David Gantzel's authoritative 1988 work on the history of Hazlemere, I was soon able to assemble an outline history of St John's Wood in Hazlemere. It originated in 1203 when King John divided the Manor of Wycombe between two of his councillors, Alan Basset and Ralph Vipont. At that time, the area became known as Kingswood. During Henry III's reign, Ralph Vipont granted his lands to the Knights Templar, who controlled them as part of Temple Wycombe. The Knights held these lands until Edward II dissolved the Order in 1324 at the request of Pope Clement. Much of the land was transferred to the Knights of St. John, hence the name of St John's Wood, but the Crown retained half of the estate.

Gantzel concedes that the early records are not entirely clear, but it is certain that the wood was Crown property during Henry VIII's reign (1509-1547). A later survey from 1655 indicated it spanned 275 acres and was bordered by Hughenden, Hazlemere, and Penn.

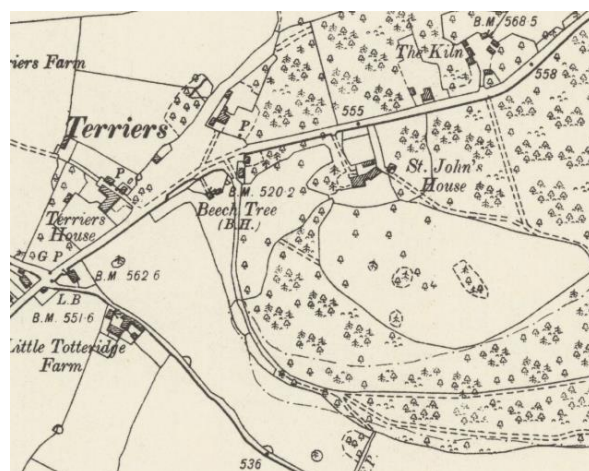
In the early 1700s, Hazlemere was a very small community with few buildings. Though tracks across the heath had existed since medieval times, a significant change occurred when the Hatfield-Reading turnpike was established in 1768 by the Marquess of Salisbury and the Earl of Essex. Both men suffered from gout and used to travel to Bath for its waters. The new route avoided London and shortened their journey by approximately 20 miles. It became known as the "Gout Track". Passing through Hazlemere, it is better known today as the A404.

Old maps show that between the toll-houses at Terriers and Hazlemere, the only significant structures were Terriers House, The Old Kiln, and the Three Horseshoes. Grazing on common land continued across King's Wood and St John's Wood, where cattle, sheep, and goats roamed freely.

The nineteenth century brought more significant change to the area. Wycombe Heath, the highlands between Wycombe and Amersham, was enclosed in 1854, and St John's Wood followed in 1868. James Walker Williams was the landowner who in 1854 constructed St John's House on 18 acres of land. By 1867, he was recorded as residing at Terriers House, renting 480 acres in the area. He died in 1882 and is buried in Hazlemere churchyard.

Later, St John's House came into the possession of Robert Wheeler of Wheeler's Wycombe

Brewery Co. Ltd. (a direct descendant of the brewery's founder). For several years in the early 1900s, the *Bucks Free Press* advertised the Hazlemere and District Horticultural Society's annual exhibition held in the grounds of St John's Park.



OS Six-inch 1900: Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland

In 1913, St John's House was sold to the Reverend Frederick Francis Field, a retired rector who became a significant local benefactor, involved in planning and helping to build the nearby St Francis Church.

At the start of WWII, arrivals included staff from the Canada Life Assurance Company who had been transferred from Croydon. The estate was commandeered, with the military constructing Nissen huts on the grounds. For a time, the Royal Engineers and the Black Watch were stationed there. As D-Day approached, the Black Watch vacated the site, moving closer to the coast to be ready for the invasion. The 230th Field Artillery Battalion of the American Army arrived in February 1944, but unexpectedly, two days after D-Day, they were gone.



Nissen hut with St John's House in the background. c1950
Image SWOP ref. PRI94647

A historical narrative of the 230th Field Artillery is accessible online, courtesy of "World War Two Veterans LLC" whose well-established website serves as an archive for rare accounts produced during and shortly after the war.

As war loomed, the US standing army was relatively small, leading to the decision to draft National Guard units from different states to strengthen the regular forces. By 1941, Guards' units made up roughly two-thirds of the US Army. One such unit was a Georgia National Guard battalion from Savannah, part of the 118th Field Artillery Regiment, later renamed the 230th Field Artillery Battalion.

On 12th February 1944, the 230th sailed from Boston on the SS Argentina, arriving in Scotland on the 22nd. After a brief stay in Petworth, Sussex, they arrived in Wycombe on April 4th for final training.

After the war, like many other units of that era, they documented their wartime experiences with dark humour.

The following extracts give a flavour of the narrative.

"ON THE WAY": A historical narrative of the Two-Thirtieth Field Artillery Battalion. Thirtieth Infantry Division.

"As we settled down in huts just vacated by units of the famous 5th Black Watch, little did we realize that there was beginning one of the most bitterly fought "battles" in our history – the Battle of High Wycombe. Scouts brought back the first reports – of "enemy" strongpoints in The Falcon, The Red Lion, The Three Tuns, The King George; of friendly girls and scotch, while it lasted. Passes were issued and the battle was on, not to stop until we pulled out for Southampton and Normandy. Even the hill couldn't stop us; that was one battle we decisively won!"

Tours were arranged to Windsor Castle and Oxford University, and the battle of High Wycombe got hotter and hotter.

"The training program was speeded up. We went to Dunwick range for service practice and combat team problems. The range is on the North Sea and in Suffolk County. The beach was heavily mined and lined with barbed wire in depth. Hundreds of our heavy bombers passed over daily. The war was a lot closer."

A highlight in May was a visit from General Dwight Eisenhower, which took place on 8th

June. They knew the D-Day landings had started two days earlier, but the men had no idea how quickly they would become involved in the invasion.

'In mid-afternoon of the 8th, whistles blew all over the place. "Load up - you've got forty-five minutes." Another dry run - t'hell with it. But we loaded up, and the first trucks were going through the gate when the time was up. General McLain stood there, gravely watching each truck as it passed. It wasn't a dry run; it was decidedly "wet", and not only from the light drizzle that was falling. We were bound for Southampton and Omaha Beach, to replace, as we learned later, a field artillery battalion of the 29th Division whose howitzers had been lost in the assault on the beach.'

These former Georgia Guardsmen artillerymen were now part of the 29th Division, and within hours, the 230th would become the first Georgia Guard unit to land in France.

Steve Strutt



The hills of High Wycombe played their part in training our US allies. One of many illustrations in ["ON THE WAY"](#) Courtesy of World War Two Veterans LLC

Postscript

After the war, Wycombe Rural District Council repurposed the camp for temporary housing, accommodating British families until its closure in 1953. In the late 1950s, it was taken over by Equity and Law Insurance, employing many of the town's residents for four decades. After Equity and Law was acquired by AXA, Berkeley Homes purchased the site in 1999 and converted the former offices into homes. Despite over quarter of a century's use since, many locals still refer to it as "Equity and Law".



Soldiers of the 230th Field Artillery awaiting transport from Southampton to Normandy. One of many illustrations in ["ON THE WAY"](#)

Over the Hill to Missenden – but not by Rail

IF YOU EVER find yourself at High Wycombe railway station and needing to get to Great Missenden, then the chances are you will swiftly abandon any thoughts of travelling by train in favour of an alternative means of transport, be it a bus or a car. If you are determined to make the journey by rail then of course it is possible, and indeed it has been ever since 1892, but it involves the added time and expense of a massive detour either via Aylesbury or London. Might it ever have been otherwise?

In the second half of the 19th century and early in the 20th many ideas for railway connections between High Wycombe and Great Missenden were suggested. Some stemmed from the transport needs of local businesses while others arose within the railway companies themselves as they vied with one another to expand their networks. Many surveys of the area were undertaken but none of the schemes came close to the actual building of a railway line.

To understand why, it is useful first to look at how each town acquired its own station and how the connections evolved over time.

In August 1854 the Wycombe Railway Company opened the first railway line to High Wycombe. It began as a branch line from the Great Western Railway (GWR) station at Maidenhead and crossed the River Thames at Bourne End on its way to Wycombe. The line was extended in stages and eventually provided a route to Oxford by joining the GWR line at Kennington Junction.

Meanwhile, in 1860, the Wycombe Railway Company also considered a proposal for a new line from Wycombe to Rickmansworth to join the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). This was part of a larger strategy to expand networks across Buckinghamshire. This route was to pass through Beaconsfield where there would be a branch off to Great Missenden which at that point didn't have a railway. The line would also pass through Amersham on the way. The project failed mostly due to opposition from landowners.

The Metropolitan Line was also steadily expanding out from London. In 1887 it had reached as far as Rickmansworth and in 1889 an extension was built to terminate at Chesham. The Metropolitan railway plans originally were to continue further out to Tring

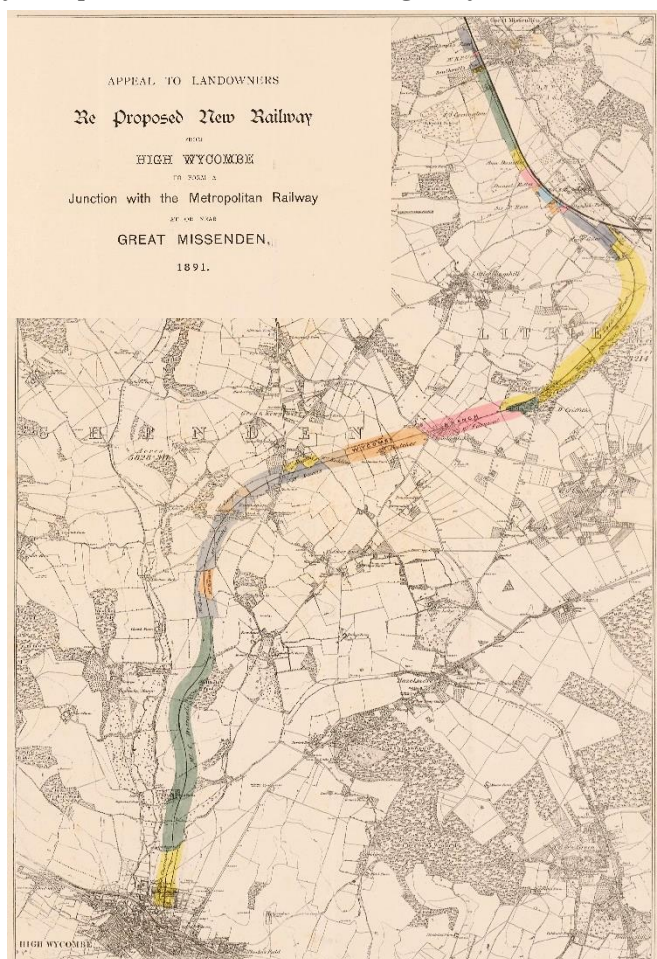
to meet with the LNWR; but in 1892 those plans were abandoned and the route was redirected from Chalfont Road (now Chalfont & Latimer) towards Aylesbury passing through Amersham and Great Missenden on the way.

After the completion of the Metropolitan Line through Great Missenden there was talk of a "Misbourne Loop" and a possible route was surveyed to connect the Wycombe Railway to the Metropolitan Railway near Amersham. This route would have used the natural valleys avoiding the steep hills between the towns, but it was never built.

Various ideas for routes between High Wycombe and Great Missenden were considered in the early 20th century. Of these the most

popular seemed to be a route that largely followed the present A4128 through Hughenden Valley, Cryers Hill, Prestwood and Great Kingshill. Another route suggested ran closer to Penn.

To stand any hope of getting off the ground, any such idea for a route through the Chilterns, however, had not only to overcome the topographical challenges involved, but also to address the demands of all the local landowners along the way.



Details of one of many proposed railway connections between High Wycombe and Great Missenden are included in an "Appeal to Landowners" which Lord Lincolnshire pasted into his scrapbook. The route headed North along the Hughenden Valley, to Cryers Hill before turning towards Great Kingshill.

The objections raised by Landowners were many and wide-ranging ...

In the 19th century, railway development in the Chilterns was frequently delayed or diverted by powerful landowners.

Among the many reasons given for opposition by aristocrats was the view that the "hissing railway engines" would destroy the "noble sport" of hunting across the Chiltern hills.

Also, it was claimed that:

- Smoke would ruin crops.
- Hens would be too scared to lay eggs.
- Other livestock would be frightened and drop down dead.
- Estates would be divided by the railway lines which would ruin the landscape.

Some landowners' opposition to schemes was motivated more by economic factors. By voicing their objections in parliament, they could then demand a high price for withdrawing their opposition to a scheme. In some cases, this enabled land sales at three or four times their normal market value. By negotiation, they could also obtain convenient access to a railway for their own use.

A local example of this was the creation of the station known today as "Seer Green and Jordans" between Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross. The station was built on the Great Western and Great Central Joint Railway, which opened in 1906. It was initially a private halt called "Beaconsfield Golf Platform" commissioned by the local landowner Colonel William du Pre as a condition for the railway crossing his estate.

Topographical constraints remained ...

In the age of steam, railways were designed with a "ruling gradient" of 1 in 100 or 1 in 200 to allow locomotives to pull heavy loads up that gradient without assistance whereas a line across the hills between Wycombe and Great Missenden would involve very steep gradients of at least 1-in-80.

Extensive route surveys were carried out between Wycombe and Great Missenden. Some were undertaken for Charles Watkin the chief engineer of Great Central Railways (GCR). Others were done by Sir James Inglis who was the Great Western Railway (GWR) chief engineer and who was recognised as a master on the topography of the Chilterns. All would have met with problems due to the elevation difference between the two locations, Missenden station being 130m (425ft) above sea level while High Wycombe is only 70m (230ft) above sea level. The Holmer Green/Penn ridge area between the

two rises to 170m (550ft) above sea level. The direct distance between Wycombe and Missenden is only 5.5 miles so considerable tunnelling, embanking and cutting would have been necessary.

The surveys would also have highlighted the composition of the ground as that of white chalk interspersed with hard flint nodules. While chalk is easy to dig, it is highly porous and prone to sinkholes. Instability could have necessitated a more meandering route to join the two locations. Adding to the expense and difficulty of the project in the Hughenden Valley was the need for a large bridge or viaduct to start near Temple End, a feature unlikely to appeal either to the owner of the Hughenden Manor Estate or of the land on the other side of the valley.

In the early 21st century, during consideration for an HS2 route through the Chilterns, many of these surveys were carefully re-examined. An alternative route to the present one being built called HS2.2 was considered; this would have included a tunnel under Holmer Green and a large viaduct across the Hughenden Valley. It was decided not to use this route because of similar objections and topographical problems to those cited a hundred years ago against a Wycombe to Great Missenden railway.

Meanwhile ...

At the very end of the 19th century the Great Western and Great Central Joint Railway was authorised for construction; it opened in 1906. The upgraded line between High Wycombe and Princes Risborough made it slightly easier to travel between Great Missenden and High Wycombe via Aylesbury.

But ...

An alternative means of transport was also soon available. The first motorised bus services in High Wycombe appeared around 1907 and soon after the First World War there was a regular route to Great Missenden. The company that operated it was founded by Mr William Sugg and was one of the most successful independent bus operators in the central Chilterns. Based in Tylers Green, Sugg's fleet provided the critical "missing link", carrying passengers across the high ridges between High Wycombe and Great Missenden, passing through Holmer Green and Great Kingshill, villages that had previously been considered for stations on the proposed railway.

There was no longer a demand to travel by rail over the Chiltern Hills, at least not for another hundred years.

Mick Lewis

Local Anniversaries

THE ROTARY CLUB of High Wycombe is celebrating its centenary this year, and they want us all to know about it! You may have seen the signs on entry to our town with the motto of Rotary International: "Service above Self". Plans include a massive Community Day in July at which the High Wycombe Society intends to have a stall. What began locally in 1926 as a businessmen's luncheon club has evolved over time. Since 1987 the club has even admitted women into its ranks (but only after a Supreme Court Case in the US told Rotary International that they must do so. A legal battle started by a small Californian club in 1977 resulted in that change – and High Wycombe, like all Rotary clubs, fell into line.) And this year, at least, I know they have had a female guest speaker!



A civic tradition which predates the foundation of both Rotary International (1905) and the local Rotary Club (1926), is the Annual Weighing of the Mayor of High Wycombe. It is not as ancient an activity as some would have you believe, but there is solid evidence that it has taken place almost every year since 1892. Frances Dove was among those weighed each year from 1907 until 1912 despite being denied the role of mayor because she was a woman.

This year, Society member and Honorary Burgess Peter Cartwright was among those taking part in the ceremony on 23rd May, exactly 50 years after his initial weigh-in as a new councillor. Our congratulations to him on reaching this milestone. Before the event, the Charter Trustees processed to the Guildhall for their AGM at which



*Peter Cartwright's turn to be weighed
Photo: Steve Strutt*

Imran Hussain was formally elected to serve as Mayor and took the appropriate oaths of office. As an Honorary Freewoman of the Town, I too, was weighed and was glad to learn the verdict of the scales as the words "And No More!" were announced to the crowd.

Taking an interest in proceedings were some visitors from Kelkheim im Taunus, our twin town. Later that day they attended a celebratory dinner at Hazlemere Golf Club to mark 40 years of the twinning.



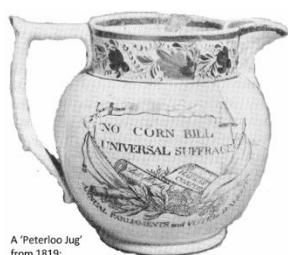
There were just three of us who could remember the first official twinning event: Mr and Mrs L Hubbard and myself. Invited to say a few words, I described the small advert placed by the European Friendship Club over 40 years ago inviting the public to attend a meeting at the Town Hall. Cllr Lesley Clarke also presented a commemorative plaque featuring Pann Mill to the representative from Kelkheim and we heard about new arrangements for local Fairtrade organisations to twin with one another.

As our American cousins are gearing up to celebrate their 250 year anniversary of declaring their independence from us, there has been some interest shown in the Society's recently-published [American Trail](#), notably from our Member of Parliament, Emma Reynolds, who openly invited people to "get out and discover the British influence in America in our own backyard". There have also been some excellent television programmes (see Lucy Worsley investigates the American Revolution – on BBC iPlayer if you missed it!)

JK.

Upcoming Events

BLHN 2026. Tickets for this year's conference of the Buckinghamshire Local History Network are available via the [Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society website](https://www.buckinghamshirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk/).



Political Change in Bucks: from the Civil War to the Suffragettes

Saturday 26th September 2026, 10am-4.30pm
Beaconsfield NFTS (National Film and TV School)

£24 for the day - or £30 including lunch

The main speakers and topics this year will be:

Ian Beckett –The English Civil War in Buckinghamshire

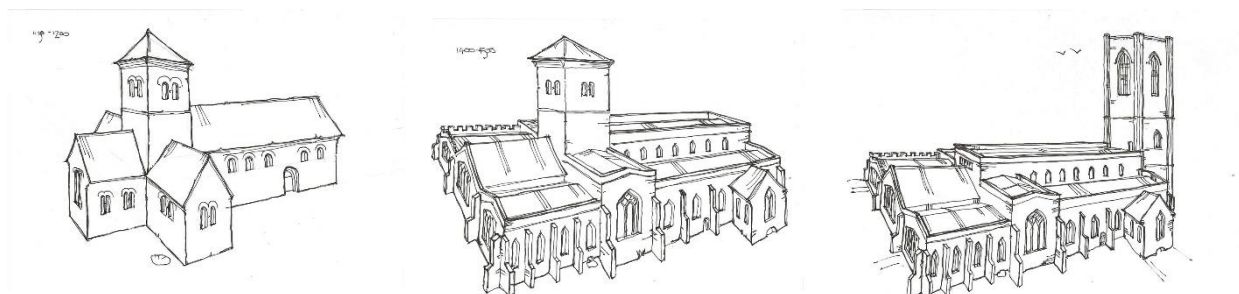
Julian Hunt – Opposing the County's "Rotten Boroughs"

Tony Sargeant – Bribery and Corruption at the 1802 Aylesbury election

and Jane Robinson - The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and Votes for Women

Why the jug? The cries for 'No Corn Bill' and 'Universal Suffrage' echoed through the next 100 years!

The High Wycombe Society will have a stand at the accompanying local history fair and will be exhibiting material of relevance to the theme of the day: Political Change. Ideas for display welcome!



Our Parish Church - from stone circle to today?

Anthony Mealing Dip Arch RIBA AABC Conservation Architect

Thursday 1st October at 7.30pm

Trinity United Reformed Church

The History of the A40

– an afternoon talk by Colin Oakes

**Saturday 7th November 2.30pm Trinity
United Reformed Church**



Notices

New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members:

Peter Bates
Nicolas Blaza
Peter Grimmett
Philippe Lefevre
Philip Lowry
Colin Mulligan
James Nash
Chris Nicholls

Obituaries

We regret to inform members of the death of:
Douglas Fraser

Newsletters: How do you like to get yours?

Did you know that Society members can choose to receive this newsletter either in printed form or via email (or both)? And that you can then change your mind whenever you want (within reason).

Opting to go paperless reduces ongoing printing and postage costs and helps you to do your bit to save the planet. You also get to enjoy the full colour illustrations. If you wish to change how you receive your newsletter then please email: membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk.

We will continue to provide printed copies for members who wish to receive them that way.

Please pass this on! When you've finished with this newsletter, if you know of anyone else who might like to read it, please pass it on.

Talks and events in our programme are open to the public and are FREE to attend unless otherwise noted. Updated programme details can be found on the Society's website.



Society members pay an annual subscription which covers the cost of communications including this Newsletter. Enquiries about membership should be sent to membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk

Are you in good standing?

This is just a reminder for any Society members who may have inadvertently allowed their membership to lapse or in some cases may not have adjusted their standing orders to cover the increased subscription amount due for the year 2026–27 which was set at £10. If you enjoy reading your Newsletter and wish to continue receiving it then please ensure that you have paid the correct amount. If in doubt, contact membership@highwycombesociety.org.uk

Contributions Please.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue of the Newsletter. Please send material for the next edition addressed to me, Jackie Kay, as The Editor at 19 Hepplewhite Close, High Wycombe, Bucks HP13 6BZ (Tel: 01494 534876), or preferably by email to: newslettereditor@highwycombesociety.org.uk

All contributions to the next edition must be received by **20th August 2026**

You can also get in touch with the Editorial Team via the Society's Facebook page.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Put these dates in your diary **now!!!**

2026	
Saturday 18 th July 12noon – 5pm Adams Park	Rotary Community Day – a Rotary Club Centenary Event at which the Society plans to have a stall to promote membership.
Sunday 13 th September 11am – 5pm Pann Mill	Pann Mill Open Day
Saturday 26 th September 10am – 4.30pm Beaconsfield NFTS	“Political Change in Bucks: from the Civil War to the Suffragettes” This year's Bucks Local History Network Conference (See page 11).
Thursday 1 st October 7.30pm – 9pm Trinity URC	“Our Parish Church – from stone circle to today?” – a talk by Tony Mealing (See page 11)
Saturday 7 th November 2.30pm – 4pm Trinity URC	“The History of the A40” a talk by Colin Oakes (See page 11)
Saturday 12 th December 2.30pm – 4pm Trinity URC	A Christmas Social – including pictures, film and a quiz from 30 years ago