

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

April 2021



Digging for Denner Hill Stone



Opening of Corn Exchange, 1865



The Eccentric PHJ Baume



A Witchert House at Haddenham

BLHN
Programme of
Lectures and
Excursions

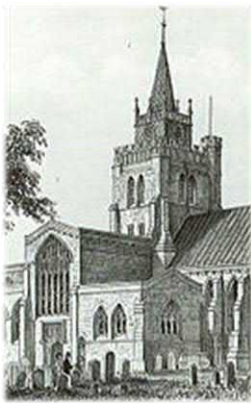
**Knowing Your
Place -
Discovering
Buckinghamshire's
parishes**

**Survey of Members
Officers' Reports
Treasurer's Report and
Accounts**



**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

The Society focuses on all aspects of the historic county, working to protect and record our heritage and historic environment. Historic buildings and ancient churches, documentary research and the landscapes of the past, local history – as well as archaeology and fieldwork – all are within our remit. We are just as concerned about the present as the past: our members are active in assessing the impact that HS2 will have on the county's historic buildings and landscapes. We were formed in 1848, over 170 years ago, our collection is curated by the County Council in the County Museum, Aylesbury, an historic building in shared ownership between the Society and the Council and at the Buckinghamshire Archives.



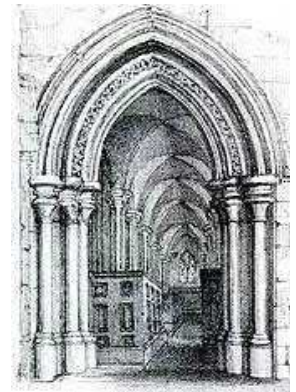
**St Mary's Church
Aylesbury**

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**St Mary's Church
Aylesbury**

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Marian Miller	John Sheldon
Ros Tyrrell	

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Nicholas Crank	<i>Milton Keynes Archaeological Service</i>
Sue Shave	<i>Buckinghamshire County Museum Trust</i>
Michael Ghirelli	<i>Newsletter Editor</i>
Susan Gill	<i>Liberty Trust</i>
Sandy Kidd	John Dodd

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Harry Ball	<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>
Sarah Gray	<i>Hon. Librarian and Lectures Organiser</i>
John Broad	<i>Hon. Joint Editor of Records</i>
Bob Zeepvat	<i>Hon. Joint Editor of Records</i>
Bronwen Lee	<i>Hon. Membership Secretary</i>
Roger Bettridge	<i>Hon. Archivist</i>

BAS Website <http://www.bucksas.org.uk>



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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HERITAGE PORTAL

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REPORT OF THE HONORARY LIBRARIAN AND HONORARY ARCHIVIST

REPORT OF THE HONORARY MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

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The society's journal – **Records of Buckinghamshire** – is published in May every year with reports of discoveries from recent archaeological excavations, history buildings, local and industrial history and all aspects of times past in our county. Every member of the Society receives a free copy. Joint Editors: John Broad, Bob Zeepvat

The BAS Newsletter, The County Museum, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 2QP.

email the editor at michaelghirelli1@gmail.com

The Newsletter is distributed to members electronically and in printed form



FROM A PRINT BY JOHN HASSELL, 1819

PHOTO: OFFICIAL TOURIST WEBSITE FOR
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

TICKFORD BRIDGE NEWPORT PAGNELL CONSTRUCTED 1810



ALONG THE GRAND UNION CANAL 1819



The Reservoir, Marsworth



Three Locks Stoke Hammond



**Near Stantonbury, Milton
Keynes**



Near Wolverton



BAS SATURDAY LECTURES AND OUTINGS

OUTLINE PROGRAMME FOR 2021

It is difficult to predict when we will be able to meet again either for lectures or for outings, so we have planned a virtual, Zoom, programme for this year. This is to include the three outings below – on June 12, July 10 and September 5 when we hope to provide downloadable resources and a video tour. If Covid regulations permit, we will also include real outings and meetings as soon as possible, and keep you regularly updated by email and on the website.

SATURDAY MAY 8 MEMBERS AGM AT 2PM, 2.45PM

John Sheldon : The Building and Conservation of Stewkley Church

The talk will cover the evolution of the building of Stewkley Church from the Normans through to the 19th century, featuring the major, yet conservative, restoration work carried out by eminent Victorian Gothic revival architect G E Street in 1862, concluding with the vital early 21st century external masonry conservation work.

John Sheldon (BAS Council member) was churchwarden at St Michael's throughout the period of the recent conservation work and oversaw the work of the architects and conservers. A booklet which accompanies the talk in more detail has been compiled by John from a number of sources.



SATURDAY MAY 15

The Fourth Bucks HS2 Archaeology Conference Online

Reports will be given by the archaeologists excavating on behalf of HS2 across Buckinghamshire and beyond. Registration in advance of the conference will open soon on the BAS website at <https://bas1.org.uk>

SATURDAY MAY 22, 2.30PM

Sarah Gray: Stone Temples and Purple Dye: the Maltese Islands from the Neolithic to the Phoenicians.

Sarah Gray was formerly the Curator of the County Museum and is the Hon. Librarian of BAS.



SATURDAY JUNE 12, 2.30PM
JULIAN HUNT VIRTUAL OUTING TO LITTLE HORWOOD

**Julian is a well-known author and lecturer,
and the President of BAS.**

Little Horwood once belonged to the Abbot of St Albans, while that part of Whaddon Chase within the parish was called the Abbot's Wood. At one time Little Horwood had a Vicarage and a Rectory, and can now boast two fine 20th century country houses. Julian will take us on a virtual walk around the village, commencing at the Shoulder of Mutton Inn which has recently been purchased by a village committee. Then to the nearby St Nicholas Church, where newly re-cast bells have this year been installed in a brand-new bell-frame (see Chris Pickford's lecture below on June 26).

We will then visit the site of Moat Farm and climb the hill to Little Horwood Manor, built by the financier, George Gee, just before the Second World War. Then to Horwood House, built in 1912 for Frederick Denny, whose wealth came from his sausage factory in Waterford. We will finish at The White House, a half-timbered Arts and Crafts-style residence built for the coaching enthusiast, Alfred Broadwood of Great Missenden.



SATURDAY JULY 10, 2.30PM

Doug Stuckey (BAS Hon Secretary and AAG member) with MK Parks Trust and the Friends of Great Linford Manor A (most probably) virtual outing to Great Linford

Doug will take us, virtually or in person, to St Andrew's church, the Almshouses, Great Linford Manor and the Gardens including the Ha-ha.



SATURDAY JULY 24, 2.30PM

Professor Sir Roderick Floud - Purchasing Paradise: the money that financed the great gardens

Buckinghamshire has many great gardens or the remnants of them - Stowe, Wotton, Waddesdon, Chicheley, Shardeloes among others. Few people, as they enjoy their beauty, pause to consider how much such gardens cost to make or to maintain, nor where the money came from. They and many other parks and gardens across England cost - in modern terms - many millions, employed hundreds of men (and a few women to do the weeding) and are among the most conspicuous results of spending on luxuries in the 17th-19th centuries.



Roderick Floud, who is a BAS member, explores the records which tell their stories and those of the men who created them. The results will surprise even the most devoted of gardeners.

SATURDAY AUGUST 14, 2.30PM

Sarah Gray **Buckinghamshire Artists**

Depictions of the County's people and places from the nationally known – van Dyck for Lord Wharton at Wooburn – to the recent artists who have lived in Buckinghamshire and painted the County's varied portraits and landscapes from more local experience.



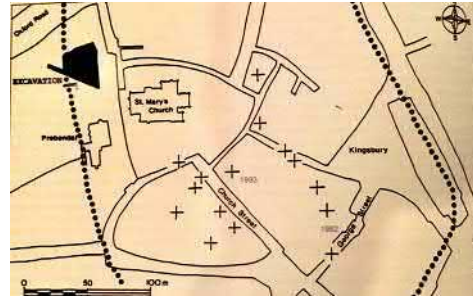
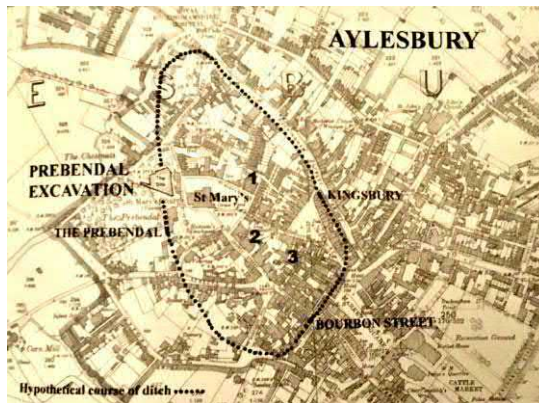
SATURDAY AUGUST 28 2.30PM

Julian Hunt: L.T.C. Rolt, Engineer, Author and Pioneer of Railway and Canal Preservation



SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 5, 2.30PM

Mike Farley and Sarah Gray: a virtual and possibly real outing to Aylesbury hill fort, Museum buildings and St Mary's church



SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 25 2.30PM

Michael Hardy: Stained Glass in Bucks Churches



SATURDAY OCTOBER 9, 2.30PM

Michael Ghirelli, Editor of the BAS Newsletter: From Cuneiform to Codex

The earliest books were written by impressing signs on flat squares of soft clay that were then baked hard under the sun. It took years to learn to write using a complex system of pictures and symbols to represent words, so the ability to read and write was confined to a small male elite. Through thirty centuries, lighter, more flexible materials such as papyrus were used, and words were written phonetically using alphabetic systems, making it easier for people to learn to read and write. The Romans invented the codex; literature, the law, and religion, were increasingly written in books whose construction and appearance – apart from the absence of printing - would be familiar to us today. Though reading and writing remained a minority activity, literacy had spread through society, and included women. A mass reading public had come into being.

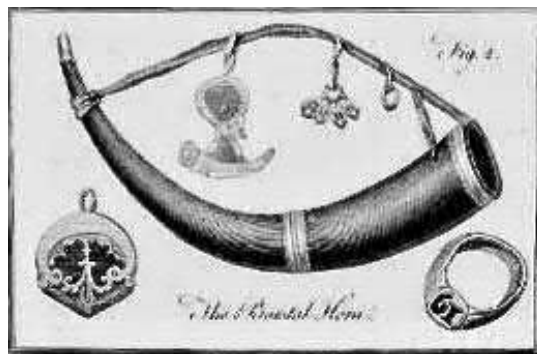


SATURDAY OCTOBER 23

The subject of this year's BLHN Conference will be Shops and Shopping in Bucks. For full details, see – See page 16 of this newsletter

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13 2.30PM

Royal Forest and Forest Law in Bucks: a talk by Andy Ford who is a BAS Council member.



BLHN

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY NETWORK

ONE-DAY CONFERENCE AND LOCAL HISTORY FAIR 2021



Shopping in Buckinghamshire: – from medieval market places to modern retail parks

Saturday 23 October 2021, in High Wycombe and/or on-line

The 2021 BLHN annual conference will go ahead with the subject and speakers who had to be postponed in 2020 because of the Coronavirus epidemic and restrictions. In 2021 we are planning a conference which can be face-to-face and on-line. Final decisions about its form will be made in April. So please watch this space...

This will include sessions on:

- Medieval Markets in Buckinghamshire
- 'Closed for stocktaking': Shops, market stalls and inventories in Winslow
- High Wycombe shopkeepers in the 18th century
- Shopping in Amersham before and after the arrival of the railway
- Changes in shopping in Bucks in living memory

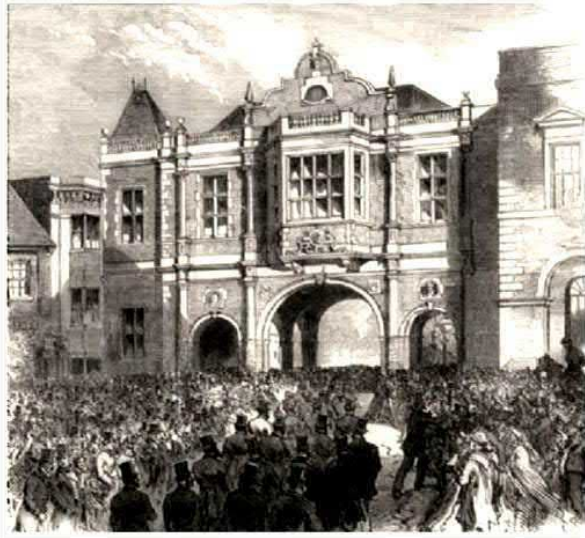
PLUS:

Physical or virtual stands and displays by history, archaeology and heritage societies from across the county.

FULL PROGRAMME AND REGISTRATION WILL OPEN IN APRIL 2021



THE AYLESBURY CORN EXCHANGE



The opening in 1865

A Promising Investment

The new corn Exchange was planned and erected in 1864 by the Aylesbury Market Company, a group of local businessmen, to a design by the architect D Broom. At the time, when excited crowds attended the opening of the exchange in 1865, this seemed a sound investment, for cereal farming was still thriving in the county, both on the Chilterns and in the clay lands of the Vale of Aylesbury.

The Crisis

After 1870, the price of corn plummeted. Railroads were spreading across the broad flat and fertile prairies, of the USA and Canada, where arable farmers, mostly migrants from Europe, were able to produce wheat far more cheaply and in greater bulk than the farmers of Britain. The heavier clay soils of the north of the county were especially ill suited to wheat production. Wheat prices fell, and the passing of the corn laws in the 1840s in the interest of free trade had ensured that British farmers were not protected against cheaper imported wheat. The great agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century drove thousands of Bucks farmers off the land, or forced them to turn over to dairy farming, more especially in Aylesbury Vale.

Local Government Offices

So the Corn Exchange was doomed to failure almost as the last brick was laid. Profits dwindled, and the exchange ceased to be economically viable. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, this fine building was put to a variety of uses, until in 1901 it was sold to Aylesbury Urban District Council, and functioned as the Town Hall. It has remained in local authority ownership to this day and is used by the local council for meetings and conferences.



THE WHEATSHEAF PROJECT

RESTORATION OF 2/3 HIGH STREET, WYCOMBE

AN UPDATE



Front and Rear of 2/3 High Street, Wycombe

An update: I am pleased to report that the Bucks Historic Buildings Trust's project to restore this building is proceeding apace. Thanks to a substantial grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund our specialist conservation contractors, Ward & Co from Ibstone, were able to start work in November 2020. The building is now shrouded in scaffolding and the roof is being repaired. As more of the interior has been stripped out there have been several surprising discoveries and further recording will be done. Watch out for a full report and history in a future *Records of Bucks*! We have an enthusiastic prospective tenant who plans to open the restored building as a cocktail/tapas bar with community use on the upper floors in September 2021. He has a Facebook page "The Wheatsheaf Project".

Marian Miller – a trustee of the Buckinghamshire Historic Buildings Trust



KNOWING YOUR PLACE

DISCOVERING BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S PARISHES



Iron Age hillfort and Medieval parish church at Cholesbury © Mike Farley

Are you a keen historian, local super-sleuth or simply fascinated by your parish's past? Do you belong to a local history society with shared knowledge of your local area? Or perhaps you're new to the area and keen to learn all about the history of your new home and surroundings?

If so, then the Buckinghamshire Council Archaeology Service needs your help with updating its special 'parish summaries'. These give an important potted history of locally significant archaeological sites, landscapes and buildings in each parish and include illustrations and links to other detailed records and photographs.

The call for help follows last summer's launch of the **Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal**, an interactive public-facing website containing vast amounts of data and information about the history of Buckinghamshire.

Included on the portal are the parish summaries, one for each of the county's 163 parishes. While they are fascinating and informative, some of the summaries are now over 10 years old and need updating in light of more recent local parish discoveries. You can check out the current parish summaries. Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member for Culture, Patrick Hogan, said it was really important that local people take part:

"The Heritage Portal is a hugely valuable resource containing thousands of important local references. Brilliant as it is, we can make it even better by tapping into those with invaluable local knowledge

to help us update our parish summary records. We're really keen to invite local historians, societies and interested parties to join in and help us out with this fascinating project".

"Training on using the portal to update the text will be provided, and all assistance will be acknowledged on the relevant parish pages once updated. Of course, additional information, known to the local community but missing from the portal, is very much welcomed."

HELP UPDATE THE PARISH SUMMARIES

For further information and details of how to take part, email her@buckinghamshire.gov.uk with the subject heading 'FAO Lucy Lawrence - Knowing Your Place' and include the following information:

- **name of participant(s)**
- **parish(es) of interest**
- **association to parish(es) of interest**
- **affiliation to local archaeological or historical societies**
- **any particular area of expertise**

We will allocate a volunteer group or individual to each parish on a 'first come first served' basis, although we will be looking for an association with a parish from the participant. This will be a real two-way relationship and we will provide positive support to volunteers.

There is no deadline for expressions of interest, and the volunteers are welcome to take on further parishes if there are any remaining after the first round of applications.

DENNER HILL STONE RECORDING PROJECT – CAN YOU HELP?

Even if you have never heard of Denner Hill Stone, I am sure that you will have seen it in towns and villages throughout the county and beyond, chiefly in the form of paving setts and kerb stones. Found in the Chilterns in the area around Naphill and Walters Ash. It is a very hard sarsen stone, ideal for use in paving, but also found in some buildings and churches, most famously at Wycombe Abbey and Windsor Castle. Digging of the stone ceased in the 20th century. Unfortunately much Denner Hill Stone paving has been ripped up, replaced by non-local materials or covered over with tarmac, thereby eroding the distinctive, historic character of our local area. So we have decided it's time to record what is left and have our findings entered in the Historic Environment Record (HER) This will bring this precious local material to the attention of highway engineers, planners, developers, builders etc. and hopefully help preserve what is left as well as informing future paving schemes.

To make this project work we need your help. We have yet to finalise details with the HER but recording should be a simple process of walking around your chosen location, noting details of any Denner Hill Stone you find, preferably also with a digital camera or smartphone. You could do this alone or with others (COVID rules permitting) and choose as large or as small an area you like. As they say "Every little helps". No prior knowledge is required since training will be given.

If you think you might be interested in helping with this project please email me on marianjanemiller@gmail.com or telephone 01494 563707.



Digging for Denner Stone

The stone was located by probing the ground with long rods called snipers. A pit was dug to expose the stone and here we can see the huge sarsen stone with iron wedges hammered in to crack it. Once extracted a team of stone cutters would get to work cutting and trimming to the desired size. Since the stone was so hard this was back-breaking work and unhealthy too thanks to the stone dust.

Marian Miller

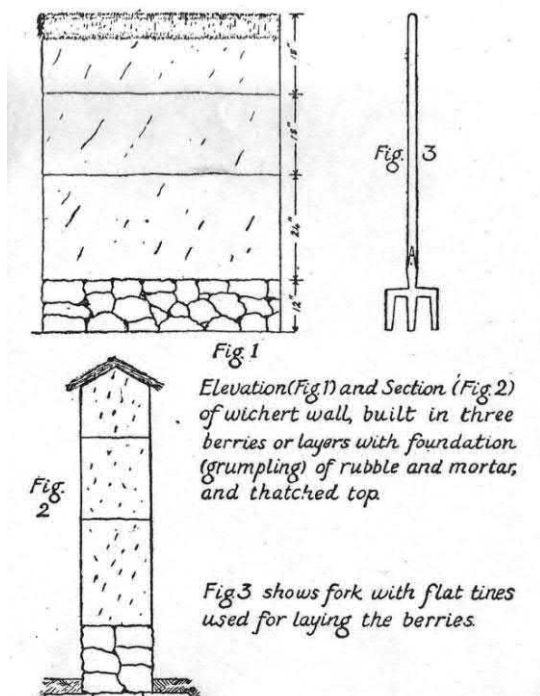


WALLS WITH HATS ON – AND MUD

THE WITCHERT WALLS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Over the years there has been considerable interest in one Buckinghamshire building material, namely witchert, a localised white-clay formation that is occasionally present in the Purbeck formations in mid-Buckinghamshire. It is most obviously present in the walls and buildings of Haddenham and nearby mid-Buckinghamshire villages.

Walter Rose, a well-known Buckinghamshire craftsman and Haddenham resident, includes a brief description of witchert in his books *Good Neighbours* (1942, 34-6) and *The Village Carpenter* (1946, 101). He was the local source of information used earlier by Harman in a fuller description which was included as an Appendix to his book *Buckinghamshire Dialect* (1929). Harman also includes an informative diagram, reproduced here (Figures 1 - 3).



**Figures 1 – 3 from Harman's
Buckinghamshire Dialect**

I couldn't resist also including a picture of a well-maintained Haddenham witchert house (Fig.5, page 25). Incidentally, one such, 'Croft Cottage', that was to be demolished was 'reconstructed' in 2007 at the Chiltern Open-Air Museum, utilising witchert derived from the house itself.

Andrew (1986) includes a distribution map of witchert structures and notes that in Haddenham, witchert can occur only nine inches below the surface. He also notes local wisdom that a witchert wall '... must have a good hat and stout boots otherwise it will wet itself.' This provides the excuse to include the accompanying photographs taken recently in Ford which clearly show 'the boots' and also the fabric of the wall which contains numerous bits of fragmented limestone as well as its clay matrix (Fig. 4), which are often hidden beneath render.

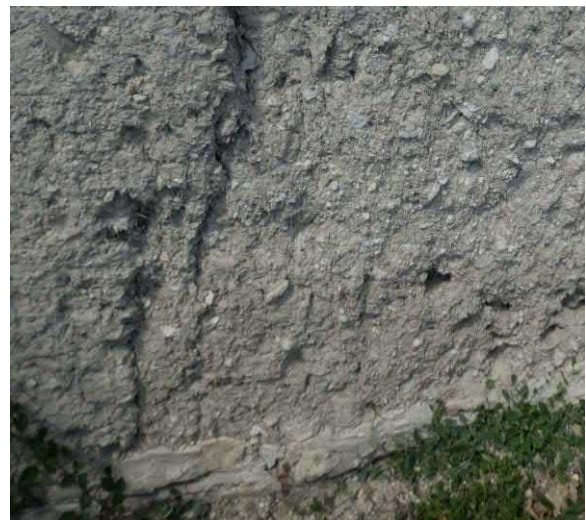




Figure 5: A well- maintained Haddenham witchert house

In a section on building materials in Pevsner's *Buckinghamshire*, Buildings of England series, Roger Evans (1994, 30-31), has a section on witchert but also notes the presence of other 'earth-wall' buildings in areas of Buckinghamshire where no witchert was present; namely Moulsoe, Grendon Underwood and Bledlow. The latter seems to be a rather neglected topic in the county's literature. Clay-walled buildings are often slightly disparagingly referred to in early accounts as 'mud houses' where they are often characterised as either temporary structures or as dwellings of the poor. An example is cited by Miles Green (2007, 42) who notes that in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth centuries when illegal enclosure was taking place on Tylers Green Common, buildings were constructed '... mainly by artisans and agricultural labourers ... who '... started by building mud houses in or close to the clay pits Although such structures may have been regarded as undesirable then, this was not always the case. For instance from Reed (1997)

we learn that in AD 1607 Burnham Vicarage consisted of: '16 baies, the wales are all made of Lome , and the rooffe covered with tyle ..' This was obviously a house of considerable size ...'. However, in contrast, Medmenham's vicarage as described in 1605, must have had a much less wealthy vicar, being tiny in comparison with Marlow's: 'Item the Vicaridge house consisting of 2 baye built with mudd walles and rough cast and covered with tyle, both bayes being chambered over and boarded , porched and a studdy over that ..'. At least we know that it had two storeys.

References:

- Andrew M 1986.** Walls with hats on, *Country Life*, 2/10/1968.
- Green M 2007.** *Mansions and mud houses: the story of Penn and Tylers Green Conservation Area*. Penn and Tylers Green Residents Society [Booklet]
- Reed M 1997.** *Buckinghamshire Glebe Terriers of 1578-1640*. (Buckinghamshire Record Society No30).

Mike Farley



AN ECCENTRIC AND HIS ESTATE

P H J BAUME AND DIBDIN HILL AT CHALFONT ST GILES



Figure 1 PHJ Baume

During the radicalism that occurred in the 1830-50 period, there were rival theories on how to improve the lives of working people. Robert Owen was promoting a co-operative basis on which to move forward, and Fergus O'Connor was leading the Chartist movement aiming for a more socialist but independent life for the individual. But these are only the two most well-known radical thinkers and leaders of the age. Amongst others we find Peter Henry James Baume. (See figure 1).

French by birth in 1797 he became British in 1832 and was a radical and eccentric atheist and was very active in east London promoting radical meetings and discussions on education, the legal system, and living conditions. (See figure 2). Very much the individualist, he did not join any of the major groupings.

Baume thought that giving people without industrial background the opportunity to live in a rural environment with their own plot of land would improve their well-being and overcome the problems of the industrial worker. Conceptually this is very similar to Fergus O'Connor's plan for estates in the country. Both were doomed to failure.

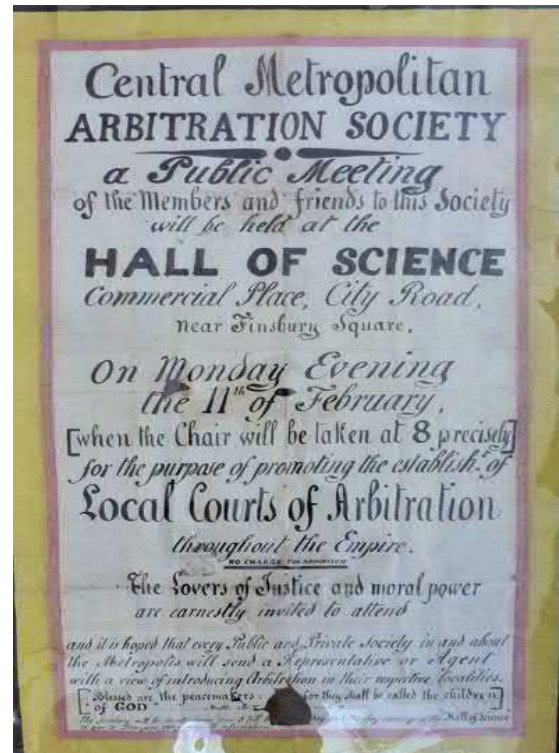


Figure 2 1836

Like O'Connor, Baume was independently wealthy, although the source of his wealth is very suspect. Both set up estates of small cottages on independent plots of land. O'Connor did this on a large scale on a subscription basis via a company, the National Land Company. Baume set his up to be run by himself, charging rent or selling long leases. Baume initially tried a small set of allotments he called his "experimental farm" in Islington. Then he had a scheme at Colney Hatch Farm in Friern Barnet in North London with were larger plots lacking houses. Finally, in 1846 he developed the scheme of cottages and houses with small amount of land at Chalfont St Giles; this was close to O'Connor's Heronsgate at Chorleywood. Although O'Connor was a lawyer his scheme failed because of the complexity of the company and the lack of investors. Baume failed because of his meanness and his distrust of lawyers. They both failed because they were on marginal land and were established at a time when new legislation was improving the lot for the industrial worker and the concept of self-sufficiency was less attractive. Although they failed as concepts many estate houses they built remain to this day.



Figure 3 1875

In 1846 Baume bought an 8 acre field (marked by the arrow) which he developed first, but the next year he bought a further four fields comprising about 30 acres of freehold land which he intended to also develop. All this land was formerly part of Bowstridge Farm. In the first section, he immediately erected a number of dwellings with small plots of ground which he advertised for lease or rent. He also built a house for himself. All of these properties were quickly occupied by workers attracted from London, some from Spitalfields, although only one was let, on a 999 year lease, the remainder were on a weekly rent with no security of tenure. The second other and larger block he had originally planned to develop in the same way, but it never took off. In fact, there was already a turnover of the original tenants in the few cottages he had built in the first block with some of the industrial workers leaving and being replaced by local labourers. Apart from selling the freehold to a 2 acre block, (marked by the site of Narcot House), the rest of the 30 acre block was rented out on an at will basis to local farmers.

Baume only stayed at Dibden Hill for a short time, employing one of his tenants on a commission basis as a rent collector before he moved to Manchester in the early 1850s to participate in the radical activities there. He

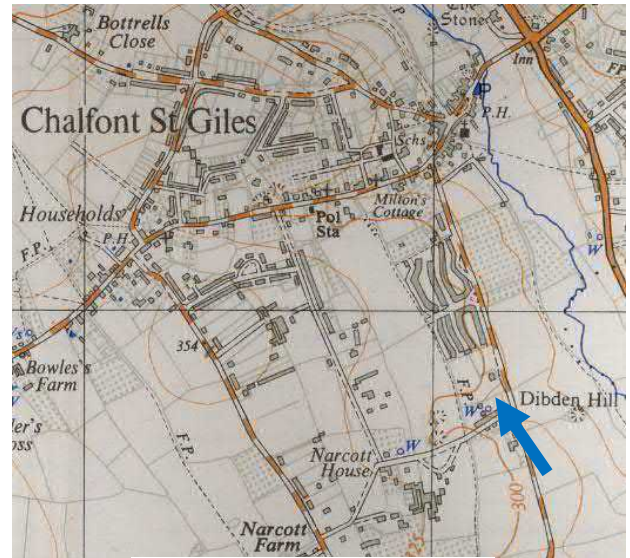


Figure 4 1960

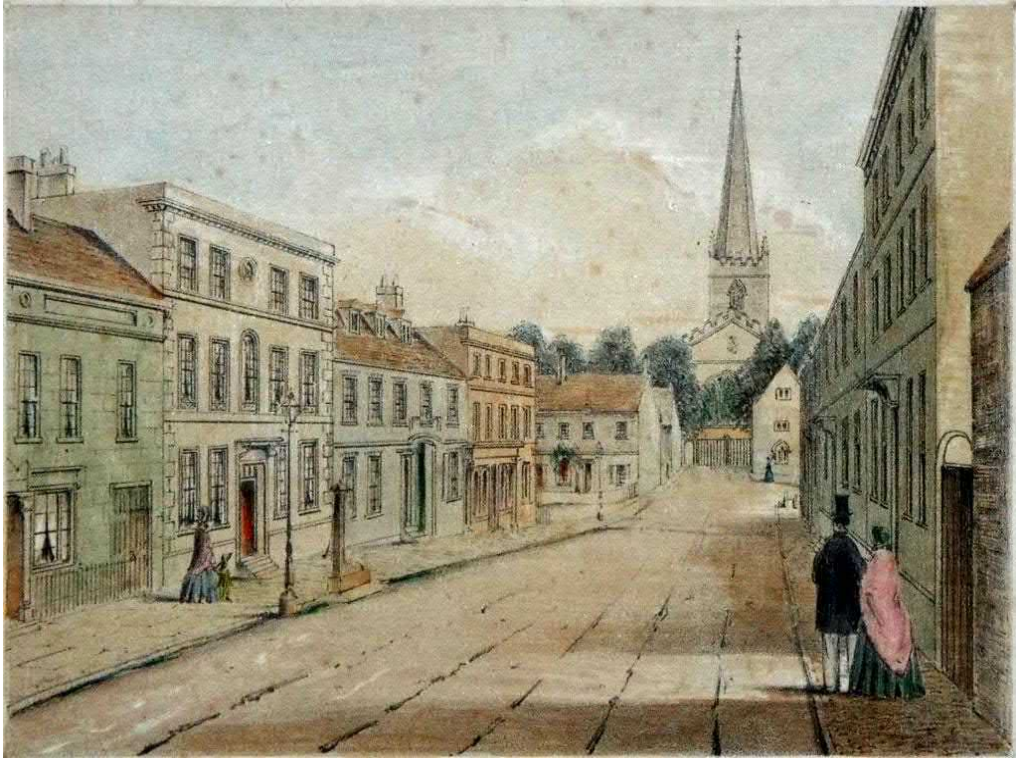
then moved over to the Isle of Man (IOM) permanently. Paranoid by nature, he had moved there because he thought his estate would be better protected and not liable to be taken over by the Crown or by a church-based body. He wanted to ensure his money was used for non-religious charitable purposes.

His will named a number of notable people in the IOM as trustees to whom he left all his estate with the land to be sold and used for charitable purposes in the IOM only. Becoming ever more eccentric and miserly, he died in October 1875, and his will was proven in both the IOM and in England. In spite of being a vocal and ardent atheist he is buried at St George's Church Douglas. Also after his death, the majority of the books he wrote were gathered up by a staunch clergyman and burnt.

The trustees swiftly agreed to distribute one fifth of the proceeds of the sale of the English estates to all his known or assumed relatives but could not agree on which local charities to support. The land was sold by 1880, but the trust was not wound up until the 1980s.

Because he was French by birth and had brought people from Spitalfields; the local myth in Chalfont St Giles even today is that it was a Huguenot settlement where they had dug secret tunnels for escape. Fake News!!

John Dodd



Castle Street, Buckingham

Mid-Nineteenth Century, and 2016

