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## HISTORY IN LITTLE MISSENDEN PARISH

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**A collection of informative descriptions of  
the history and development of Little  
Missenden Parish**

**May 2025**

This document comprises a selection of historical summaries collected as part of the Little Missenden Neighbourhood Plan work. It is not a technical background document to the Neighbourhood Plan.

## History of Little Kingshill by Gill Perceval

The origins of the village date back to around 900 AD when a monastery was founded where Ashwell Farm (Kingshall) now stands. William the Conqueror gave a Manor and lands to a Saxon nobleman, the Earl of Aufrics, but the lands reverted back to the Crown after the Earl's death. The road through the village was used by drovers of cattle being taken to market in London in medieval times and soldiers protected their progress and had barracks here. As well as Ashwell Farm there is a Tudor house, The Grange, next to the Common, Aufrics Farm of Elizabethan period, and Boot Farm dating back to 1660.

The coming of the Railway through Great Missenden at the end of the 19th century was a turning point, as people were able to go to business in London, and country houses began to be built for them. The village school was built in 1887 and is still in use for pre-school children.

## Cherry Orchards

The country around was famous for its cherry orchards and older residents will remember the guns banging off and wooden clappers clattering at dawn 'bird scaring'.

The Bucks black cherries are dark and small and perfectly delicious especially when cooked in cherry turnovers, the local specialty. Many people went cherry picking and casual labour

was employed. Nearly all the orchards have now been cut down to make room for the explosion of new houses built since the Second World War.



## The Coronation Willow Tree

Occupying a small area of land next to the entrance of Ashwell Court on Windsor Lane, (opposite the park), a willow tree stands proud. The tree was planted in 1953 by the 1<sup>st</sup> Kingshill Brownie Pack to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

In 2013, Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee year, a plaque was placed on the wall near the willow tree it reads: 'This willow tree



was planted in 1953 by the 1st Kingshill Brownie Pack to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

The area where the willow tree now stands used to be the village pond. The pond was filled in at an unknown date. This image shows a horse stopping to take a drink. Ashwell Farm can be seen in the background to the left, Ashwell Court is on the right behind the trees.



## War Memorial History

The village of Little Kingshill paid a heavy price in the First World War, and eleven men lost their lives in action. After the war a Thanksgiving Fund was established, and a considerable amount of money raised from local residents. The Trustees built the first Memorial Hall, the predecessor of the present Village Hall, and also built a war memorial on Windsor Lane.

The upper section of the War Memorial reads:

‘IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE MEN OF LITTLE KINGSHILL, WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR ENGLAND  
IN THE GREATWAR 1914 – 1919

Sgt F. Adams, Sgt R. Adams, Tpr J. Batchelor, Pte C. Hawes, Sgt E. Hill, Pte  
P. Langston, Cpl G. Long, Pte J. Manley, Gnr H. A. Sprake, Pte H. H. Ware and Pte W. Ware.

The lower section reads:

‘AND IN THE WORLD WAR 1939-1945’

Gnr F. G. Bedford, L/Bdr F. Leah, Capt P. E. Randall, L/Cpl C. Thompson, Lt/Comdr M. Willmott  
D.S.O.



On the north side of Windsor Lane, road boundary to the recreation ground, 11 trees were planted, one for each of the fallen.

Photo: Stuart King

Eleven maple trees were planted along the roadside of the Common in memory of the eleven servicemen who had died. Three of these trees have recently been replaced by a whitebeam, rowan and hornbeam, but the number of eleven trees remains as a permanent living memorial of those brave men.

## Remembrance.

I have been a resident in Little Kingshill for nearly 40 years, but it was not until I started gathering information from so many sources, that I realised the significance of the trees planted along the road boundary of The Common. 11 trees planted, one for each of the fallen.

Dr Ian Mackey of Little Kingshill, felt compelled to research those that had fallen. Diligently researching military records, census records and press reports of those listed on the War Memorial.

‘The Great War Fallen of Little Kingshill’ has been produced by Dr Ian Mackey. A booklet to honour those fallen and a reminder for us, of the great sacrifices made by so many. Copies of The Great War Fallen of Little Kingshill are still available and can be requested by email to [ian.mackey@yahoo.com](mailto:ian.mackey@yahoo.com).

## ‘Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red’

‘Blood, Swept Lands and Seas of Red’ was a work of art, installed at the moat of the Tower of London between July and November 2014, commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. Created by artists Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, it consisted of 888,246 ceramic



red poppies, each poppy represented a British military fatality during the war.

This view below of the ceramic poppies at the Tower of London with flowers flowing from the 'weeping window' one of three design elements of the installation.



<https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/#gs.dky5vd>

11 of the 888,246 ceramic poppies that featured in the artwork were purchased by Little Kingshill Baptist Church and remain an important reminder of those from the village that gave their life.

## Listed Buildings within Little Kingshill



Little Kingshill has 6 Listed Buildings within the village.

List Entry Name	List Entry Number	Heritage Category	Grade
1. Little Kingshill War Memorial	1446212	Listing	II
2. Little Kingshill Grange Windsor Lane	1332438	Listing	II
3. Barn and Cowsheds to West of Little Kingshill Grange	1309821	Listing	II
4. Ashwell Court	1309811	Listing	II
5. Ashwell's Farmhouse Windsor Lane	1309805	Listing	II
6. Barn to North of Ashwell's Farmhouse Windsor Lane	1124964	Listing	II

### Little Kingshill War Memorial Listing 1446212 Grade II:

Is located on the south side of Windsor Lane, Listed with Historic England as on 'Church Road', it was unveiled in 1920 as 'an eloquent witness to the tragic impact of world events' on this local community, and the sacrifice it had made in the conflicts of the C20. It is noted as a 'modest yet

poignant brick monument, designed with Architectural detail and in good quality materials.

**History:** The aftermath of the First World War saw the biggest single wave of public commemoration ever with tens of thousands of memorials erected across England. This was the result of both the huge impact on communities of the loss of three quarters of a million British lives, and also the official policy of not repatriating the dead: therefore, the memorials provided the main focus of the grief felt at this great loss. One such memorial was raised at Little Kingshill as a permanent testament to the sacrifice made by 11 members of the local community who lost their lives in the First World War. Unveiled on 8 February 1920, the memorial bears the Latin inscription PRO PATRIA, which translates as 'for one's country'.

After the Second World War the names of the fallen from that conflict were added, including Lieutenant Commander Michael Willmott, Distinguished Service Order (DSO) who was captain of the Royal Navy submarine HMS Talisman. He was awarded the DSO for completing five Mediterranean missions, but he and the crew of Talisman were lost to Italian mines off Sicily, on the 17 September 1942.

**Materials:** constructed using mixed stock brick, stone, black knapped flint, and clay tiles.

**Description:** Little Kingshill War Memorial is located on the south side of Windsor Lane, Little Kingshill. It comprises a decorative brick pillar, topped by a gablet which faces north-east. The brick work is laid in a Sussex bond and on the front face lighter and darker bricks are laid alternatively to create a regular pattern. Within the black knapped flint apex of the gablet there is a decorative terracotta roundel which has the Latin motto PRO PATRIA, in relief. At mid-height level and at the base, there is a chamfered- brick string course which encircle the monument. The top of the monument has a single-pitched tiled roof with rounded tiles on the ridgeline. The front face has two rectangular stone tablets which are incised with the names of the fallen. Beneath this tablet there is a cross inset of black knapped flint.



The upper reads:

IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE MEN OF LITTLE  
KINGSHILL, WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR  
ENGLAND IN THE GREATWAR 1914 – 1919

Sgt F. Adams,  
Sgt R. Adams,  
Tpt J. Batchelor,  
Pte C. Hawes,  
Sgt E. Hill,

Pte P. Langston,  
Cpl G. Long,

Pte J. Manley,  
Gnr H. Sprake,  
Pte H. Ware Pte  
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Lt/Comdr M. Willmott D.S.O.



## Little Kingshill Grange, Windsor Lane Listing 1332438 Grade II

Situated north of Windsor Lane, this building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

**Description:** C17 timber framed house of 3 bays and 2 storeys. Brick cased to front and flanks, now roughcast. Old tile roof. Modern casements. C17 end stack to right bays. Lobby entry in front of C17 stack between left hand bays. Porch. Left hand C19 stack.

## Barn and Cowsheds to west of Little Kingshill Grange as above, Listing 1309821 Grade II

Situated north of Windsor Lane, this barn, and cowsheds to west of Little Kingshill Grange are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

**Description:** C18 timber framed, and weather boarded barn. Five bays. Off centre wagon entry. Brick and flint plinth. Old tile roof. Queen strut trusses. Curved braces to tie beams. Range of weather boarded and timber framed cowsheds at right angles and with end bay open into barn.

## Ashwell Court, Windsor Lane, Listing 1309811 Grade II

Situated south of Windsor Lane, this building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

**Description:** Ashwell Court was built about 1906, reputedly from a late Medieval French timber framed manor house imported by a Canadian millionaire. Four bays with jettied right hand wing, and jettied lefthand wing with carriageway under. Plastered infill. Two storeys. Decorative bracing.

## Ashwell Farmhouse, Windsor Lane, Listing 1309805 Grade II

Situated south of Windsor Lane, this building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

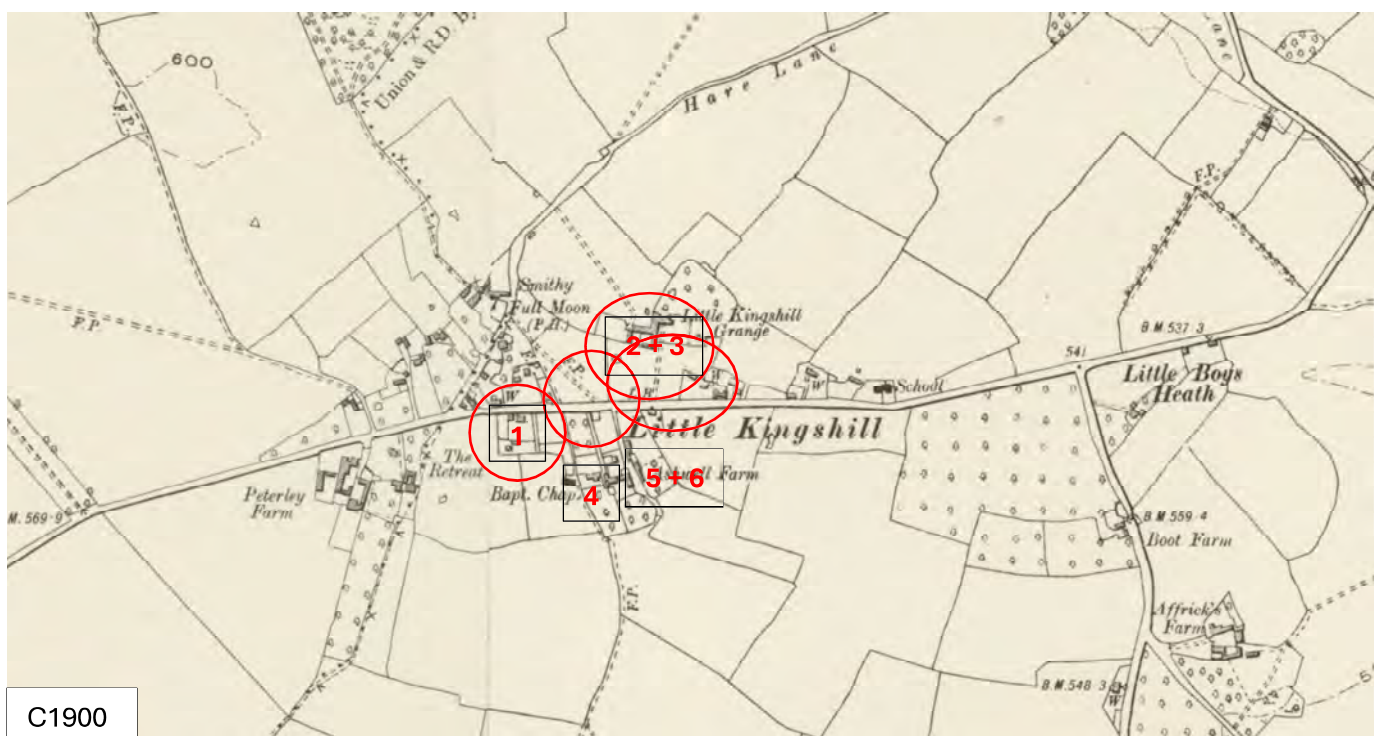
**Description:** Ashwell's Farmhouse is C15, timber framed hall house of 2 bays with arch braced hall truss and smoke blackening in roof space.

Original 2 storey bay to right. Re-cased C18 and extended to left and at right angles, on right. C17 or late C16 inserted floor in hall and large double sided inglenook fireplace in hall bay. Plain spine beam and joists to early 2 storey bay, chamfered and stopped to inserted floor. Flint front with brick dressings and band course. Modern windows. Former lobby entry in front of stack. Three bays and 2 storeys. Old tile roofs. North-West range one and a half storeys with one dormer, south-east range one and a half storeys.

## Barn to north of Ashwell's Farmhouse, Listing 1124964 Grade II

Situated south of Windsor Lane and north of Ashwell's Farmhouse, this building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

**Description:** C18 timber-framed barn with plaster infill. Five bays. Central wagon entry. Some studs replaced by later framing. Old tile roof. Queen strut trusses with curved braces. Single purlin roof. 'Aisled' lean-to to rear.



## Non-designated buildings of note in Little Kingshill

With limited information on the following privately owned properties of character within Little Kingshill and with no formal process of assessment conducted, the following properties are listed as 'of note' being some of the original properties of built form in the development of the village.

Deerhaddnn	Hare Lane
Dil Kushi (formerly Greengarths)	Hare Lane
Pine Cottage	Hare Lane
Manchester House	Hare Lane
The Old Dairy	Hare Lane
Harewood	Hare Lane
St Bennedits (formerly The Fermoy)	Hare Lane
Sonamarg	Windsor Road
Bramley Farm	Heath End Road
Flint Cottage	Windsor Road
The Manse	Windsor Lane
Dairy Cottage	Windsor Lane

This report on historical buildings of Little Kingshill, is proposing to nominate for designation, only those buildings of character which are used by the community.

The Baptist Church and Cemetery, South of Windsor Lane (is included on the Buckinghamshire Council Heritage List),  
Full Moon Public House, Hare Lane,  
Little Kingshill Nursery School, North side of Windsor Lane.

In addition, the following private dwellings are listed on the Buckinghamshire Council Heritage List, so have already been formally nominated and included.

Thornhay, Hare Lane,  
Swinton, New Road,



## Bramleys, Heath End Road.

Two further buildings are listed as 'Work in Progress' on the Buckinghamshire Council Heritage List, have been noted as this, but not nominated.

Affricks Farm, Watchet Lane,

Bois Heath Farm, Watchet Lane.

## The Kingshill Baptist Church and Cemetery.

Situated on the south side of Windsor Lane, set far back from the road behind the Kingshill Baptist Hall, there is a burial ground attached to the chapel with a Cemetery (18th Century - 1700 AD to 1799 AD) to the front. Founded as a Baptist Church by Thomas Jordan in 1814, it is the only church in Little and Great Kingshill. built in 1812.

The church nearly closed about 30 years ago, having been reduced to only 4 active members. However, that small group dared to imagine that God hadn't finished with the church in Little Kingshill, and the congregation steadily grew. The building was completely refurbished in 1988.

**Description:** Flint with brick dressings. Much altered and extended at ends.

Photo: Stuart King.



<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire/asset/11885>

## Little Kingshill Nursery School.

Situated on the corner of Windsor Lane and Meadow Cottages. The Little Kingshill Nursery School is held in the original village school building, built in 1887 and just across the road from the Combined School.

**Description:** Red brick construction under a slate tiled roof.



Photo: Stuart King.



## The Full Moon Public House.

The 1872 The Beer House Register shows registration of three public houses in the near vicinity.

1830-The Full Moon situated in Hare Lane. It continues to be a thriving traditional public house with many popular events, the pub hosts an annual beer festival in July and accommodates Little Kingshill Village Society (at present dormant) holding their 'Christmas Carols at the Full Moon' prior to Christmas.

Always well attended.



1838-Royal Oak on A413, now known as Deep Mill Diner, which closed in approx. 2020

1840-Prince of Wales was situated on the corner of Windsor Lane and Hare Lane. Closed its doors in 2009. The site is now occupied by two detached brick/flint/waney edged boarding houses.





**Thornhay**, Hare Lane, Little Kingshill is a private dwelling and is listed on the Bucks Heritage List (Last Updated 11 Sep 2023) which has been formally nominated and agreed. Information and photos accessed from: <https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire/asset/11461>



Photo Taken from Hare Lane.

## Description, Age and Rarity

Classic example of an 'Arts & Crafts' house, dating to 1911 & surviving in relatively unaltered form, published in the architectural press of the time & set within a complimentary garden of about an acre also laid out in 1911. A building of Local Note within Little Kingshill, a nice example that hasn't been unsympathetically enlarged or altered & retains plot of about an acre. A couple of other good examples in the locality, have both been redeveloped.

## Architectural and Artistic Interest

Delightful composition, predominantly over 2 floors with a couple of single storey projections & an attic space with window. Constructed of brick, finished with roughcast to the ground-floor & tile-hanging to first floor & gables above. Pitched roof, with original clay tiles. Footprint 'L-shaped'.

Original storerooms to single-storey projection to left-hand side converted, along with infilling of little courtyard, to habitable accommodation. Aside from that, only addition is a conservatory. Predominant feature of facade is projecting gable to right-hand side. Good proportions, with roofline extending down to left to create additional ground-accommodation plus the porch. All original, including second-floor window to attic. Front door set into side of this, which is original, as are windows & hung tiles. Tiles, both roof & hung, are hand-made. 3 original chimneys visible, all roughcast except for artisan brick & tile capping.

Architects were Horace Field & Simmons, London. Builder was George H. Gibson, High Wycombe.

## Historic Interest and Landmark Status

Published in a book on then contemporary architecture, having been completed. Prominent spot, albeit on a very quiet road.

## Swinton

Swinton, New Road, Little Kingshill is a private dwelling and is listed on the Bucks Heritage List (Last Updated 19 Nov 2023).

Information and photos accessed from:

<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire/asset/11459>



### Architectural and Artistic Interest

Two-storey brick built dwelling, with first-floor

accommodation partially set into roof slope. Cottage influenced appearance, particularly with dormer windows to first-floor. Tiled roof (clay tiles) & original chimneys. In relation to the road, deep yet not particularly wide. Has been extended. Hipped & pitched roof, with sides extending for visual effect.

Likewise, artisan use of brickwork in chimneys. Original lych-gate remains, to front boundary. Also appears to be an old well of similar design, located within the front garden, which is keeping stylistically with the dwelling & complimentary garden.

### Historic Interest and Landmark Status

Ernest George Theakston became a significant member of the community in Wendover, after settling there about 1915, but did retain links to the Great Missenden area after that, including designing the War Memorial.

Swinton is one of his early houses in Buckinghamshire. He would also

design the post-WWI social housing in Little Kingshill. The Landmark Status of Swinton is low due to New Road being private, but at the same time, one of the 'stand-out' houses in the road.

## Description, Age and Rarity

Swinton is a modestly sized house designed by architect Ernest George Theakston around 1912, with a delightful lych-gate & subsequent extension.

E. G. Theakston lived for a short period on the Great Missenden/Little Kingshill border before settling in Wendover. During this time, he designed a very small number of houses in Little Kingshill of which Swinton is one.





## Brambles

Brambles, Heath End Road is a private dwelling and is listed on the Bucks Heritage List (Last Updated 19 Nov 2023). Information and photos accessed from:

<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire/asset/11462>

### Description, Age and Rarity

Brambles is an old Chiltern Farmhouse purchased by architect Ernest Willmott (also known as Ernest Sloper) upon his return from South Africa, where he had been working in partnership with Herbert Baker. Accompanying garden designed in 'Arts & Crafts' style, to compliment the redesign, much influenced by Gertrude Jekyll. It must be at least early C19th with significant alterations by Ernest Willmott around 1910, as well as more recent ones.



Typical of a traditional Chiltern Farmhouse, yet early C20th 'Arts & Crafts' additions created something comparable to the 'Surrey Style' in Buckinghamshire.

### Architectural and Artistic Interest

Use of traditional building materials for the area, particularly clay bricks + clay tiles, used both for the structural construction of the buildings, as well as for appearance to the finish. Having been used in both the original house, as well as Ernest Willmott's work, creates a very appealing result.

Additional 'Arts & Crafts' touches, added during his tenure. Externally, garden designed to match setting & style of house, very much in the Gertrude Jekyll taste, whom the architect had worked with on other projects around the same time.

## Historical Aspects of Little Kingshill.

### Houses and Population.

The table below shows the figures for both housing and population over a seventy year period 1841-1911. It can be noted that occupations listed on the Census Returns reflected changing times.

Year	Number of Houses	Population
1841	38	186
1851	51	242
1861	49	235
1871	53	244
1881	71	251
1891	55	263
1901	69	291
1911	82	278

### Census Records

During the 19th Century the development of housing and the growth in population saw the village community of Little Kingshill evolve.

In **1841**, occupations were mainly for farming and essential community work. Drover, farm labourer, baker, shop keeper, lace maker, minister, and publican. **1851** showed an increase in paupers, some having been farmers previously. Skilled workers were noted as brick layer, carpenter, straw plaiter and saddle maker. Other occupations included milliner and charwoman. More cottage industries were starting.

By **1861** occupations included, carter, cow man, dress maker, watch maker, housekeeper, servants, gardener. These reflected basic need for

food and shelter but with the development of larger houses and wealth came those that could afford and those that served.

A decrease in both houses and population in 1861 could be explained by P A Graham in *The Rural Exodus, The Problem of the Village, and the Town* [1892]. It notes, numbers of rural population declined from the mid- nineteenth century. Population in many rural areas was decreasing while all were suffering heavy losses by migration. Graham (1892) noted 'The country parishes are doing more ... than merely sending their surplus inhabitants to town, they are being depleted', and also commented that 'the movement is confined to no one locality but is to be observed in every agricultural district which lies remote from towns'.

**1881** showed that over the previous twenty years, 22 houses were built, and education was being established with the 1870 Education Act. A teacher was noted as an occupation along with grocer, auctioneer, blacksmith, and nurse. In **1891** with the building of the railway and the founding of Little Kingshill School, railway navies, railway workers and excavators were noted as occupations as well as School Master.

In addition, an occupation in the 1891 Census was Bead Worker. (Tambour Beading being a skilled craft renowned in the area).

In **1901** the census shows 69 dwellings with the highest population of the decade with 291 residents. Occupations included Braid worker and lace maker.

By **1911** with a population of 278 and 82 dwellings there was a change in the nature of village employment. Large houses such as Hillside, Whitefield, Sonamarg etc were being built. Professional occupations were listed, Accountants, antique furniture dealer, mechanical engineer, solicitor etc with service occupations of chauffeur, coachman, child's maid. **Timeline of Events**

1898                      Founding of Little Kingshill Cricket Club. The field is owned by Peterley House.

1903                      Sub Post office – Frederick Spencer (source: Kelly's Directories).  
Letters from Great Missenden.

1906                      Building of Ashwell Court House.

1913                      Suffragettes. Mrs Pilley used her car to pick up the Courtauld sisters and together they joined the NUWSS pilgrimage into London.

1914                      Little Kingshill WI. During the first World War a small band of village women met weekly for knitting and sewing at Sonamarg in Windsor Lane, which was the home of Mrs Pilley who, in fact, designed and planned the house. At some of these gatherings their work involved sewing sandbags for the 1914-1918 War.

1915                      New large houses – such as Deerhaddnn, Greengarths, Pine Cottage, were built

down Hare Lane. Thomas Priest lived in Harewood and created the Arboretum.

1917 Thomas Priest began planting in the former orchard and kitchen garden acquired after the sale of Harewood Estate. Priestfield Arboretum takes its name from its founder. The Arboretum seems to have been a labour of love to him, and he planted over 400 trees, mostly conifers, before his death in 1942. The following year it was sold to Marcel Porn and remains in the ownership of his family today.

1918 Little Kingshill WI started. It was the second group in Bucks. 1914-1919 11 local men lost their lives in the Great War.

1919 Thanksgiving fund was raised in Little Kingshill by the villagers in order to commemorate those who had lost their lives in battle and to give thanks for those who returned alive. The fund was called "Little Kingshill Memorial & Thanksgiving Fund". Land was also donated which amounted to three acres, plus the cricket field, which was 7.9 acres.

1920s There was a laundry, bakery, sub post office.

1920s Memorial Hall behind the old school. The memorial hall was a First World War Army Hut and was erected at the corner of the land donated to the Memorial Fund.

1920s The War Memorial was built adjacent to Heather Stores (long gone) and between it and the Baptist Chapel.

1925 New Road was in existence.

1928 The Prince of Wales (now gone) also had a garage, run by John Henry Clarke and Son.

1939 Pre-war – Influx of Evacuees to the school, and village. Scottish Dancing at the weekends and magic lantern shows. Evacuees were allocated depending on the number of spare rooms people had. Cherry Trees all around, and they also used to pick hips for rosehip syrup.

1940-1945 5 local men died in second World War.

1940-1943 Chiltern Hospital, previously a War Time Prep School.

1945 Little Kingshill Thanksgiving Fund for the Second World War set up.

1940s Edward Long ran The Old Dairy in Hare Lane and owned over 500 battery hens, free range hens and turkeys.

1951 St Christophers School closed down and became the Windsor Lodge Hotel.

1956 Building of new village hall & new school.

1962 Little Kingshill Village Society was found with a membership of just 30. By 1972 membership had increased to 153. By 2013 membership is at 470 households. Since the start of the pandemic, the Little Kingshill Village Society has been dormant with only an active email.

1963 Formation of the New Road Frontages association.

1970s Building of The Lincolns, prior to this the land on which they are built was the village

general store called "Spicer Store" and sub post office. They were on a good acre of land with many out houses, bakery and a two storey flint cottage, the Miles owned them for many years and Mrs Minnie Miles worked in the store.

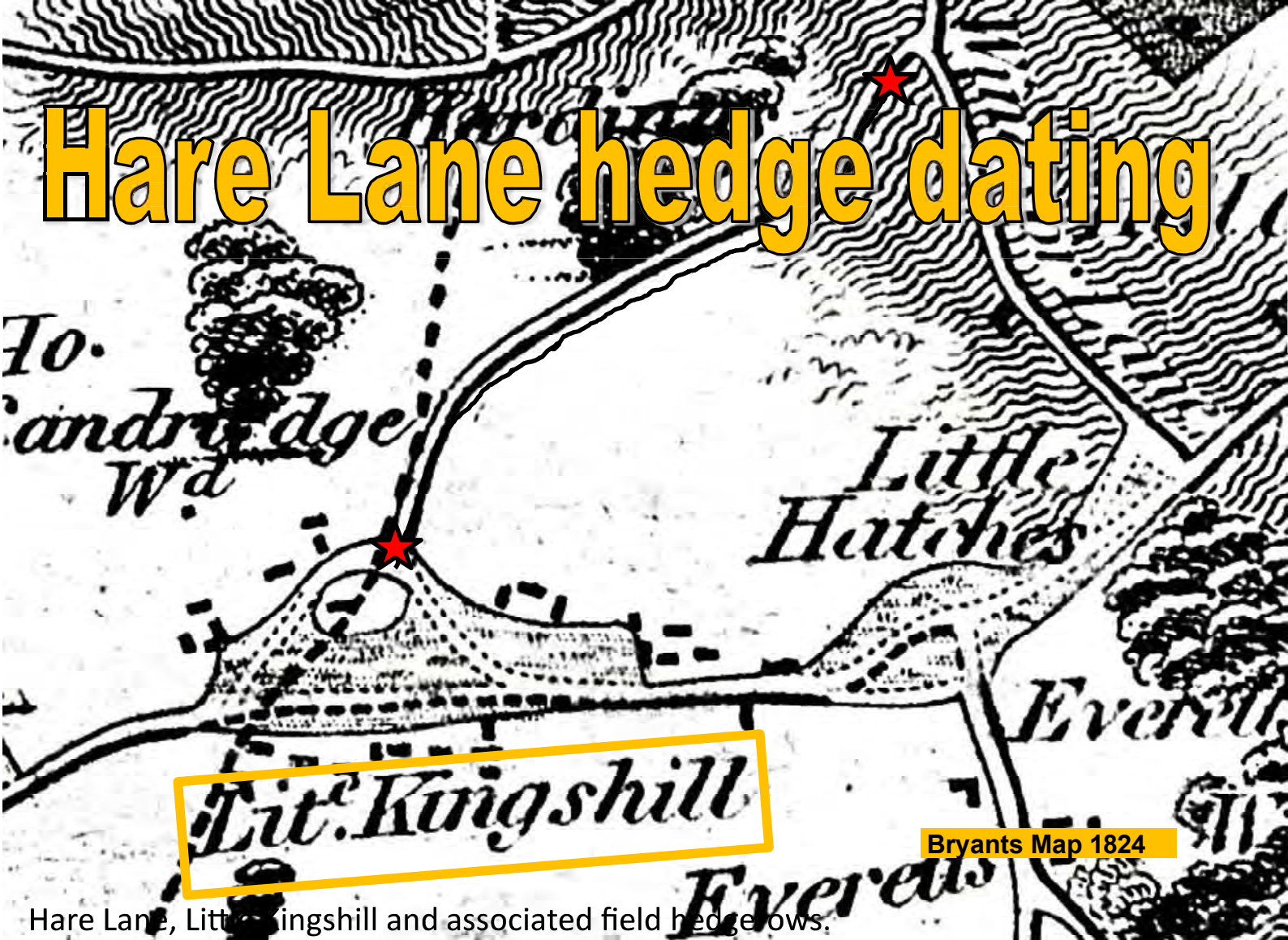
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|-----------|--|
| 1970s     | The post office, store and the Windsor Lodge Hotel, closed. 1970s<br>Start of the Scout Movement in Little Kingshill.  |
| 1973      | In 1973 the post office, and old bread ovens, were pulled down to make way for the new houses around "The Lincolns".   |
| 1973      | Main drains laid in Little Kingshill.  |
| 1974      | Harold Wilson preferring to live in Little Kingshill rather than Chequers.   |
| 1970s     | Nuclear bunkers at Grange Farm. There was always a policeman on the gate when Harold Wilson was at home.   |
| 1970s     | Nursery which sold Christmas Trees and other plants, and sweets! Down the track from the Scout Hut. Closed in the early 80s.   |
| 1977      | Queens Silver Jubilee School Event.  |
| 1980      | Little Kingshill Morning WI started.   |
| 1980s     | Bus services stopped going through village.  |
| 1980      | The Carters leased the land for the Scout Hut.   |
| 1983      | Friends of Priestfield Arboretum was formed. Prior to this the Arboretum had fallen into disrepair but then a massive scrub clearance took place by the Chilterns Small Woodlands Group.   |
| 1984-1994 | Development continued.   |
| 2009      | Closure of Prince of Wales Public House 2011<br>Introduction of village carol singing.   |
| 2013      | Little Kingshill Cricket Club joined with Amersham C C. In order to keep cricket being played at Little Kingshill. Cricket has been played for 115 years and continues with all 3rd & 4th XI home games played at Little Kingshill ground. |
| 2014      | Church celebrates 200 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary.   |
| 2014      | 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of brownies & commemorative plaque near the Coronation Willow Tree.   |
| 2020      | During the Pandemic. April – June 2020. Scrub Making in the local villages.  |
| 2023      | Coronation of King Charles Picnic in the park. This Park bench was funded by Little Missenden Parish Council, positioned on west side boundary of The Common to commemorate the Coronation of King Charles.                                |







# Hare Lane hedge dating



Hare Lane, Little Kingshill and associated field hedge rows.

Anyone traveling along Hare Lane cannot fail to notice that this quintessential narrow English lane must have ancient origins. Jeffreys 1777 map depicts it clearly, as does Brants map dated 1824, but the lane is much more ancient than this. For most of its length it is still barely wider than the original cart track that it would have originated as.

There are signs in places that it was a hollow way with a bank on the northwestern side to c120 cm in height. Linear development to the eastern edge has eliminated any evidence of an original hedge bank. To achieve an approximation of age I walked the length of the remaining narrow lane from assessing the number of tree and woody shrub species that form the uninterrupted length of the hedge on the western side. This is a mature hedgerow interspaced with significant well established single trees including oak, ash, beech, hornbeam, holly and one rare and large specimen of Huntingdon elm.

Tree Dating was based using 'Hoopers rule'. The survey was taken mid-august 2024 between grid ref SU8941799298 to SU8994999532.

**Professor Max Hooper.** While you might not have heard of the man, you might just have heard of Hooper's Rule. This is the idea that there is relationship between the number of different woody plant species found in a particular length of hedge, and the age of the hedge. Hooper formulated this idea in 1965 as he investigated the disappearance of hedges across the country with the growth of intensive agriculture.

The rule is: Age of Hedge (in years) = Number of woody plant species in a 30-yard section x 110.

The Times is quoted that this was considered so reliable that it became part of the Hedgerow Regulations (1997), Hooper himself was prone to note that the rule wasn't reliable on hedges more than a thousand years old!





New Road

Hare Lane



Hare Lane



Huntingdon Elm





**Established trees in Hare Lane;** *Oak*, *Ash*, *Hazel* (one mature specimen with many more contributing as hedging), *Field Maple* (both mature and as hedgerow), *Hornbeam* (with evidence of traditional layering), *Beech*, *Horse Chestnut*, *Cherry*, *Huntingdon Elm*, *Sycamore*, *Holly* (some mature trees and as hedging), *Dog Rose*, *Blackthorn*, *Dogwood*, (total 14).

Note; The large Huntingdon Elm is an enigma. *Ulmus*  $\times$  *hollandica* 'Vegeta', sometimes known as the Huntingdon Elm is an old English hybrid cultivar raised at Brampton, near Huntingdon, by nurserymen Wood & Ingram in 1746, allegedly from seed collected at Hinchbrook Park. The tree grows rapidly and is a rare species in the Chilterns.



The large Huntingdon Elm from the field side



Method used to determine the height of the hedge bank





This is an astonishing number of trees and woody shrubs in a single hedgerow. The results suggest a hedge over 1000 years old and quite likely a Saxon period trackway leading from Great Missenden to the high heathland to the south.

I am confident that the data below provides unequivocal assurance that Hare Lane is indeed extremely ancient and should be protected as part of Little Kingshill's heritage and the wider heritage of the Chilterns. It would be worthwhile to attempt to get this entire section of ancient hedgerow listed as an ancient monument for its protection in the future.

**Note;** Should future development of the abutting fields become a threat, a very wide margin/ buffer zone should be considered an essential priority, both to protect this historical hedgerow and it's ecosystem plus the visual heritage aspect of the area.



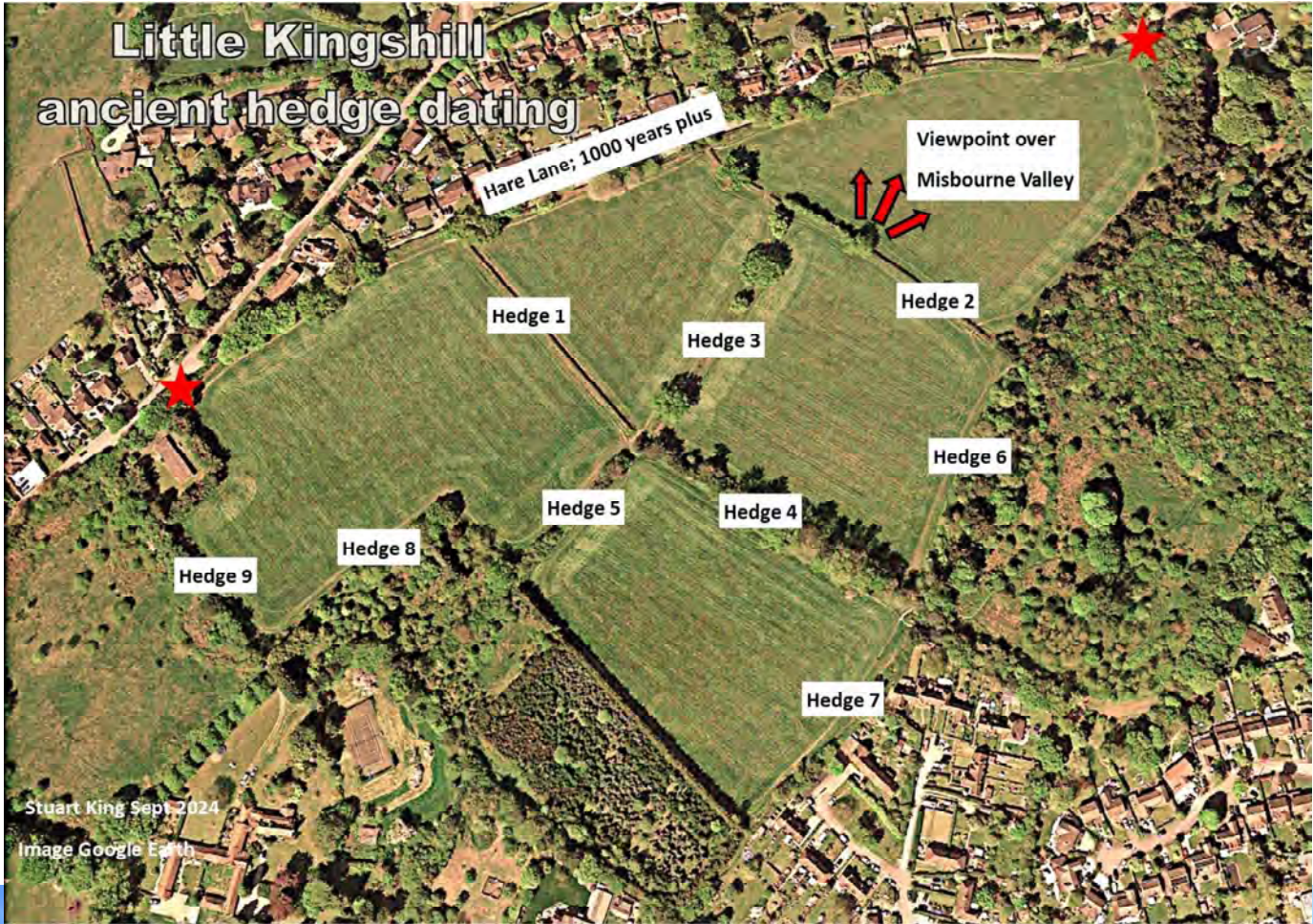
**Hare lane from the abutting fields**





## Hedgerow dating of field hedges abutting Hare Lane

These five fields are divided by ancient hedgerows and abut Hare Lane to the southeast, they provide a natural, long-established ancient buffer between the two Little Kingshill village communities. The whole area was grassland pasture at the time of this survey with a network of well-used and well-worn footpaths providing an important recreational area for local people.





## Survey result.

### Hedge 1.

*Hawthorn, Cherry, Elder, Hazel, Blackthorne, Dogrose*, (total 6). Note; Hawthorn predominates in this hedgerow suggesting a later infilling of gaps.

### Hedge 2.

*Hazel, Holly, Oak, Hawthorn, Field Maple (dead), Dog Rose, Blackthorn, Elder*, (total 8) Hedge 3.

*Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly, Oak, Dog Rose, Field Maple, Elder*, (total 7). A very dense hedge. Hedge 4.

*Oak, Ash, Holly, Elder, Yew, Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Cherry, Dog Rose*, total (9). Note;

This hedge contains several mature Scots Pine that appear to be deliberately planted, possibly at the same time that the close-by arboretum was established in 1917. I have not included these trees for dating purposes. The Yew tree noted is immature and the only example of this species recorded overall, I have included it in the tree count.





Hedge 5.

*Oak, Elder, Holly, Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn*, (total 6).

Hedge 6.

*Ash, Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn, Oak, Elder, Cherry*, (total 7). Note; This hedge is on the curtilage of the arboretum and contained some shrubby examples of *American Birch*, possibly linked the adjacent specimen tree collection and is not included for dating purposes. I might be seen as surprising that this appears to be the single variety that could have influenced the hedge count due to the proximity of the arboretum.

Hedge 7.

*Sycamore, Hazell, Holly, Blackthorn, Elder*, (total 5). Note; This hedge abuts residential housing. An interesting observation for this low tree count could be the influence of human interaction (back garden management!)

Hedge 8.

*Sycamore, Hazel, Holly, Blackthorn, Elder*, (total 5). Hedge 9.

*Oak, Hazel, Hawthorn, Elder, Rowen, Ash*, (total 6). Note; This is a semi derelict hedge.

### General observations.

Most of the tree species in these hedgerows are common in southern England. Many of the oak trees are fine mature specimens. Only one *Rowen tree* was recorded. Many of the hedges have thick undergrowth with bramble predominating affording a summer food source and protective cover for wildlife. Hazel is present in abundance in all but one hedge section. This is often an indicator of former woodland and the great age of a hedge. *Hazel* also offers a vital habitat for the endangered 'Hazel Dormouse'. Hazel nuts provide a useful animal winter food source.

*Field Maple* will only colonize a hedge if there are already 'four' or more existing species, it occurs in three of the hedges in this survey.

Although 'hedge layering' was noted in the Hare Lane section none was noticed elsewhere

*Ulmus* × *hollandica* 'Vegeta', sometimes known as the Huntingdon Elm is an old English [hybrid cultivar](#) raised at [Brampton](#), near [Huntingdon](#), by nurserymen Wood & Ingram in 1746, allegedly from seed collected at nearby [Hinchingsbrooke](#) Park.

There is a distinct drop in ground level noticeable where the footpath crosses through the hedge section to the northwest in hedge no 2. This is likely to be the result of centuries of plowing which slowly creates the migration of soil downwards and up to a hedge line. Similarly, plowing from the other side of the hedge creates soil migration on the downslope away from the hedge. These two actions over a long period create a sharp difference in ground level on sloping land indicating centuries of continuous arable farming.



Hedge 2—Drop in hedge level



As previously noted, this open space is crisscrossed with well-worn footpaths providing a quiet and safe environment for local inhabitants to exercise and relax. There are no signs, except to the arboretum indicating permissive access only. Local residents are prudently seeking to apply to have all currently used field paths added to the definitive map to preserve community access for the future.



## Conclusion.

There is great consistency of tree species constituting these hedgerows leading to a high likelihood that they are of very similar/same date. The individual species count ranges from 5 to 9 providing a mean figure close to 750 years putting this landscape well into the medieval period. It is possible that this figure is an underestimate when we include the data for the Hare Lane hedgerow, which appears to be more than 1000 years old and indicating a possible Saxon origin!

This is obviously an ancient landscape that is worthy of protection as part of the Chilterns landscape and amenity area.

Stuart King Aug 2024



## Holmer Green, *Stuart King*

**The cottage grouping** opposite and including the Earl Howe pub, Methodist Church and old smithy/wheelwrights should be recommended for conservation area status.

### Traditional brick and flint cottages, Earl Howe Road



**Bat and Ball pub.** Graffiti carved into the North side brickwork by young men early 19<sup>th</sup> cent using penknives on the north wall. To be protected and preserved.



### General

Historical landscape features such as ancient hedgerows, ancient woodland, special trees, old orchards, trackways, holloways, footpaths, boundary markers, ancient banks and ditches, road names and ponds, including road-side horse ponds should be recognized as defining local village features. Such items should be noted for future protection.



Ancient Woodland. Ancient woodland is defined as woodland that has been in continuous existence since 1600. The Chiltern Hills has some of the most ancient woodland in Europe, Holmer Green and the wider little Missenden Parish is rich in this historical, ecological, and landscape asset. The broad-leaf trees that make up these woodlands, beech, ash, oak, cherry, hornbeam, elm and the smaller understory species such as hazel have all played a significant economic role over the centuries. Ancient woodland also contains many well-preserved archaeological features. The woodlands covering Holmer Green are rich in such archaeological features that should be identified and protected. These woodlands contain huge 'dells' (quarries) of medieval origins, saw-pits, linear banks and ditches and enclosures, some prehistoric.

Ancient Hornbeam Trees. Although these extremely old historic survivors go mostly unnoticed Hornbeam trees were used as boundary markers and hedge- rows as far back as the Saxon period, although the majority in Holmer Green will date from Medieval to c. Tudor times. They are particularly prevalent to the North and Northeast of the village as this area still retains its ancient wood- banks topped with Hornbeams.

Wood-bank Hornbeams were invariably 'layered' in antiquity to provide a stock -proof hedge, either to prevent animals escaping the woodland (sheep, cattle or pigs if managed as woodland pasture) or maybe to keep them out (Deer will destroy self- regeneration of young trees through grazing, still a problem

today). Excellent examples of this form of wood-bank can be observed around the perimeter of

Hale Acre Wood,  
Colemans Wood, Bluebell  
Valley,

Beamond Wood,  
Long Wood, Langley wood and  
many others.



**The ancient Hornbeam hedge in parish Piece.** The best-preserved section fronting the youth club with other hornbeam sections remaining towards the school. This is shown as the 'Old Bank' on the estate Map of the manor of Holmer dated 1742. It was old then and could be an ancient boundary of medieval or even Saxon origin.



TPOs on remaining Hornbeams in Parish Piece recommended.

**Hedgerows.** There are many centuries old hedges, especially along track ways, hollow-ways and Lanes, that require protection.

As well as containing ancient Hornbeams that are so characteristic of this general area of the Chilterns. Such hedgerows help define the general area and are tangible historic features in their own right. The farmland hedgerows North of Holmer Green common require recording and preserving as part of the historical (probably medieval) landscape of medium to small irregular shaped farmed areas/enclosures.





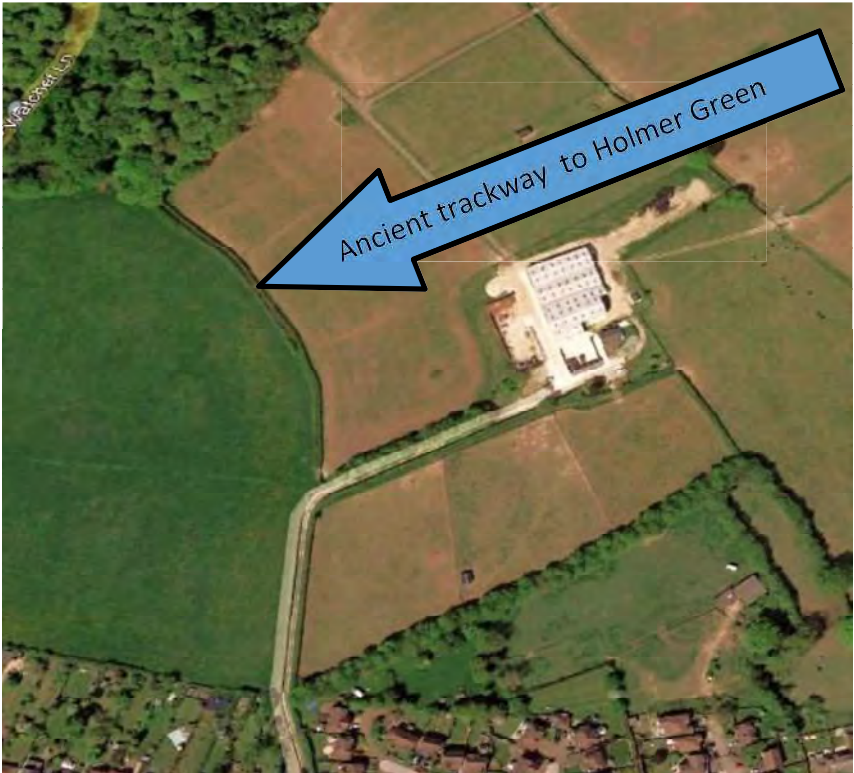


Medieval Fields and hedgerows, Holmer Green

**Ancient trackways, Holloways and footpaths.**

Featherbed Lane and Kings Street Lanes are both extremely important as ancient trackways/drovers routes. King Street Lane connects the old Wycombe Heath to the Misbourne Valley and could well be prehistoric in origin, passing close as it does, to an Iron age enclosure c 50BC.

**Langley Farm trackway.** The route from little Kingshill to Holmer Green ran through Langley Wood and crossed over what is now Beech Tree Road to Holmer Pond. This is clearly shown on the 1742 map, it was made redundant as part of the enclosure award of 1854 but is still in existence today as an over-grown 'double hedge'. This ancient feature requires protection via scheduling.





**Holly trees.** Old examples of Holly trees are a significant feature of the village and should be protected, many are clipped in 'dome' form. Referred to in ancient times as 'Holm, an obsolete British dialect word for Holly that may be the early origin 'HOLM'er Green.



This could be broken down as Holm-(Holly) Mere (pond)- 'the pond surrounded by holly'. Some examples of very old holly trees can be found in Sheepcote dell road, Penfold lane, Parish Piece, the Common, Beech Tree Road and New Pond Road, TPOs recommended. Holly trees occur in abundance in the local ancient woodland. For the above historical reasons, as well as its landscape value, social, environmental, and ecological importance, Holmer Pond should be protected, maybe as a conservation area.

**Fruit orchards,** Holmer Green has a very long history of fruit Growing along with nearby villages, mainly cherries. The

first recorded evidence for orchards is depicted on the 1742 'Map of the Manor of Holmer'.

Commercial growing and harvesting ceased in the 1960s. Many of these large orchards have been developed for housing but there are a few



that still exist. These should be identified and scheduled for protection via TPOs and new planting of heritage cherry varieties as continuity for these important heritage assets.





**Polidoris Lane**, history of. Preservation of the remaining short section of this old trackway across the village (Wycombe Heath) off New Pond Road.

**The Sheep Wash/Sheep Dip**, Watchet Lane. This is the small pond close to the First School. Referred to as 'Woodcocks Swilly' (Anglo Saxon for water) on the 1742 map of the Manor of Holmer. Sheep rearing in the local area was big business during the medieval period and post medieval era, this is still reflected in local place names, e.g. Sheepcote Dell Road, Mutton Bottom, Penfold (pinfold) Lane, (a pinder was a sheep herder/tender and animal pounder). Sheep dipping/ washing was an important process in sheep rearing. This sheep dip pond is a significant piece of local heritage along with the adjoining ancient hornbeam hedged 'sheep pound' fronting Watchet Lane. These two complementary historical landscape features including the attendant hornbeam hedging require permanent protection against damage or encroachment.

### Dipping sheep



**Archaeology;** Holmer Green; There are known sites and features dating back to at least the Iron age, this is particularly significant within the ancient wood- lands. There is good evidence of prehistoric activity, much of this is surface finds of lithic tools and bronze age artifacts.

There are also pre-Roman earthworks and associated ceramic and bronze finds from secured archaeological contexts. Roman artifacts post conquest (43AD) from secured archaeological contexts including a wide range of ceramics. Ro- man coins and ceramics from the early conquest period, some of high status, would be connected to Roman activity in the close-by Misbourne Vally (little Missenden, Great Missenden and Amersham).

Iron smelting: This activity can be traced back to the Romano-British period (approximately 50BC) through to the early medieval period. Evidence for this comes from local archaeological excavations including the recorded discovery of a ‘medieval’ bloomery, (a clay-built structure for smelting iron).



Iron smelting ‘bloomery’ (medieval), Holmer Green

Extract local historical details held by bucks HER records

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/monuments/search>





Holmer Green has long been associated with its many orchards, mainly cherry orchards. The first historic reference is the estate map of the Manor of Holmer created in 1742. Here, in the centre of the village close to Holmer Pond is clearly depicted and described, 'Holmer Orchard'. Although our village is on a high plateau and prone to more late frosts than the close-by valley villages, the heavy clay soil appears to suit the growing of cherries in particular.



Many other close-by hilltop communities including Little Kingshill, Cryers Hill, Prestwood, Seer Green and Hazlemere enjoyed the same fruit growing success to the extent that in a productive year, picking the fruit harvest was a very important addition to the local economy.

There were a number of cherry varieties and were grouped as earlies, middle and lates, and when grown in succession would spread the picking season to make harvesting more efficient and prevent a glut of any one variety.



It should be said that the southern Chilterns produced a great deal of fruit, as one travels north from

Holmer Green so the fruit varieties change, some apples and pears, but mostly to plums, from Victoria's at Weston Turville to damsons and prunes to the north of Aylesbury







Cherry Picking Gangs Holmer



Another tradition was that each orchard owner would employ the same picking gang every year, this would be led by the 'gang leader' who's task it was organize the six to ten local men. Many of the pickers took time off from their normal occupation, usually that of chairmaking or chair bodging (chair leg turners). The men were always local, there was never the need to hire outsiders. Good money was to be made from a good crop, picking from dawn till dusk, using very tall, locally made ladders with wide splayed feet, filling their willow picking baskets and being paid per each full receptacle.



Cherry Picking Gangs Holmer



The 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries were the heydays of this seasonal industry to the extent that a specific tradition evolved to celebrate the harvest by-way of 'cherry pie Sundays'. These events always revolved around the Chapels, in Holmer Green the Baptist Chapel led the way, in Cryers Hill it was the Methodist. In a way this was a hangover from the earlier 'Harvest Homes' traditionally held by farmers for their employees as thanks for their hard work during the year and as a celebration of a successful harvest.

The cherries were then packed into another willow container called a sieve, a straight sided basket without a handle, and then (mostly) sent to London by train in the evening, often via Great Missenden or Amersham railway station.

Many of the willow picking baskets and sieves made during the first half of the 20th century were created by members of the Burrows family of Tylers Green.



After the local trees were picked many gangs had regular picking arrangements with orchard owners from far-away villages such as Middle Green, Langley and Harmondsworth to pick the 'latter fruit', mostly apples and Pears. This arrangement extended their 'holiday' by several weeks, for many of the men this would be their only holiday away from the village. There was great camaraderie between the groups, they would cook their 'fry-up' meals on a campfire and after dark would decamp to a local pub.



Holmer green cherry pie Sundays were very much a communal event with the men gathering the 'little black' cherries and the women folk creating triangular cherry pies (or cherry Bumpers), many of which were baked free by the local baker. An afternoon service was held in the overflowing chapel with the impatient children ready to sample these homemade delights. The late Bertha Lacy once explained to me that the test of a 'good one' was, after a corner had been devoured, was that the violet juice would run down your arm and drip off your elbow! These events were very much aimed towards the children.

During the 1920s and 30s the Holmer Green cherry orchards in blossom was so famous that people from far away would drive though the village or take the bus from High Wycombe to Amersham just to view the spectacle. The orchards declined rapidly during WW2 with no men to maintain the trees or to pick the fruit, by the mid-1960s this centuries old business, this local tradition was dead. With the ever-increasing demand for homes the ancient orchards were ripe for housing development, something that has slowly changed much of Holmer Green's distinctive character.

***Cherry orchards have helped define our local landscape for over 350 years and it is important to retain the vestiges of what remains, even encourage the planting of new orchards with heritage varieties to provide continuation of this rich history***



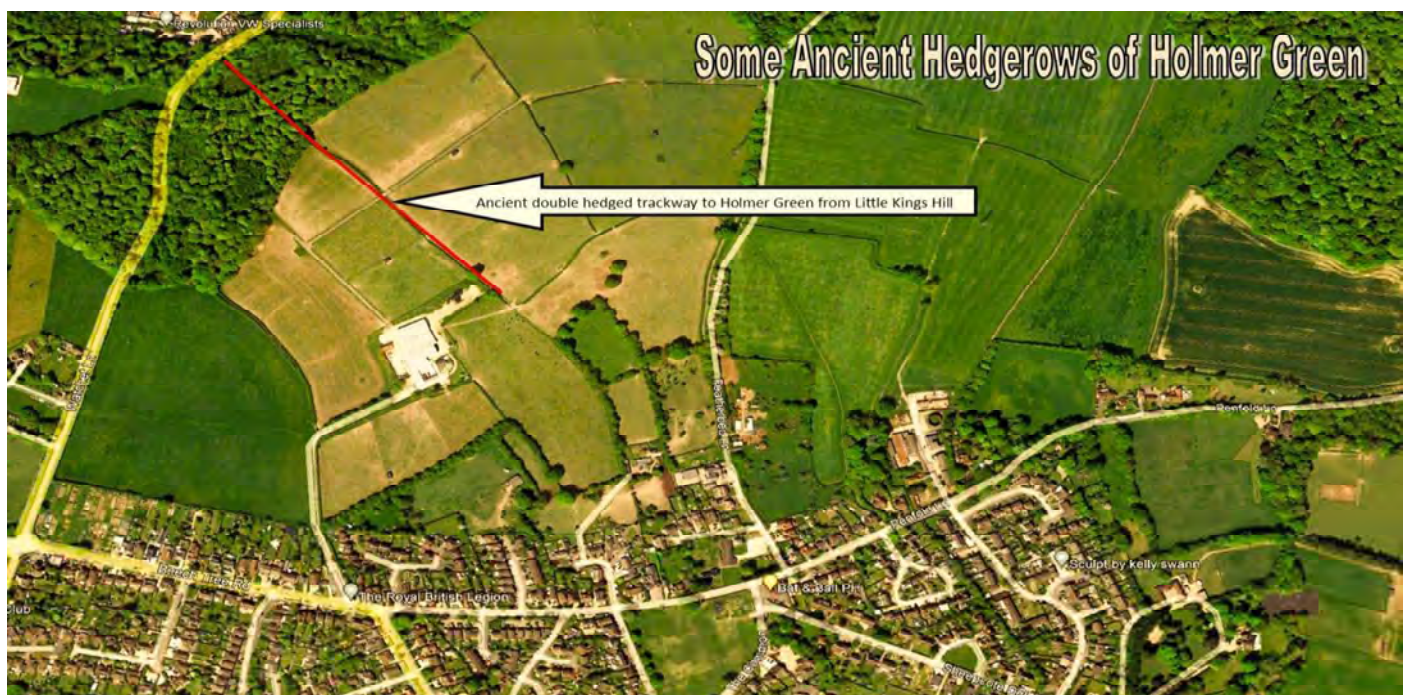


# Ancient Hedgerows of Holmer Green



## Ancient Hedgerows of Holmer Green

It is easy to take our countryside and landscape features for granted, fields, woodland and hedgerows, tracks and footpaths, they have always been there. Well, not quite, our wonderful Chiltern landscape including that of our own village is manmade, but its creation began several thousand years ago. We can read many of the changes, some subtle, some drastic, like a book if we are aware of the clues to look for. Most changes over time relate to the use of natural resources such as the requirement for timber from the woodland, the extraction of minerals (e.g., Clay for pottery) and the control of farm animals. Hedgerows have an important role to play here. They mark boundaries between properties, can in some cases provide small renewable round-wood material, divide areas with different usage and when 'layered', provide a stock-proof barrier to retain farm animals or indeed to keep out unwanted wildlife.





The Holmer Green landscape north of the Common towards the Misbourne valley is one of medieval origin or earlier. The ancient patchwork of irregular farmland fields large and small help to define what is special about

our area. Another form of ancient hedging are the 'wood-banks' that define the boundaries of our broad leaf woodlands. These take the form of a ditch and a raised bank traditionally topped with long lived hornbeams. These hornbeams were 'layered' using the axe, slasher and billhook to provide a sustainable impregnable barrier both to sometimes keep out deer, or to retain the

autumn tradition of pannage, letting pigs roam free to feed on beech nuts and acorns.



**Medieval wood-bank with hornbeam hedge, King Street Lane**

These hornbeam wood-banks are a special landscape feature in this part of the Chilterns, and most have survived in reasonable condition for well over half a millennium. These relics of nature's antiquity can date to the Saxon period although those in Holmer green and surrounding villages will be mostly Medieval, post the Norman invasion. It was the layering process that extended the exceptional longevity of these hornbeams, this tradition mostly died out in the nineteenth century and has resulted in what was a hedge, are now large mature trees. This has resulted with top heavy trees with unstable roots due to them growing on a narrow, raised bank, many are becoming unstable, indeed we have lost some prime examples in Featherbed Lane in recent years. The solution to this problem is to reduce the height and therefore reducing the weight and the surface area exposed to the wind. Both Featherbed Lane and King Street Lane have some fine examples of hornbeam 'wood banks' with many old trees still exhibiting the gnarled and twisted result of layering close to ground level.



**Medieval wood-bank with hornbeam hedge, King Street Lane**



Hornbeam was also used along many early trackways and roads and some very fine examples still exist and are the oldest surviving living things in our community, now there's a thought! Most of these veterans will outdate even the most ancient local buildings by hundreds of years, yet we pass them regularly without any appreciative acknowledgement, their heritage value cannot be overstated. Some of the finest local examples to be seen from a public vantage point can be viewed on each side along Featherbed Lane Holloway, and King Street Lane from where the woodland starts and leads down to little Missenden. These are fine examples of ancient wood banks.



Medieval wood-bank with hornbeam hedge, Featherbed Lane



Medieval wood-bank with hornbeam hedge, King Street Lane

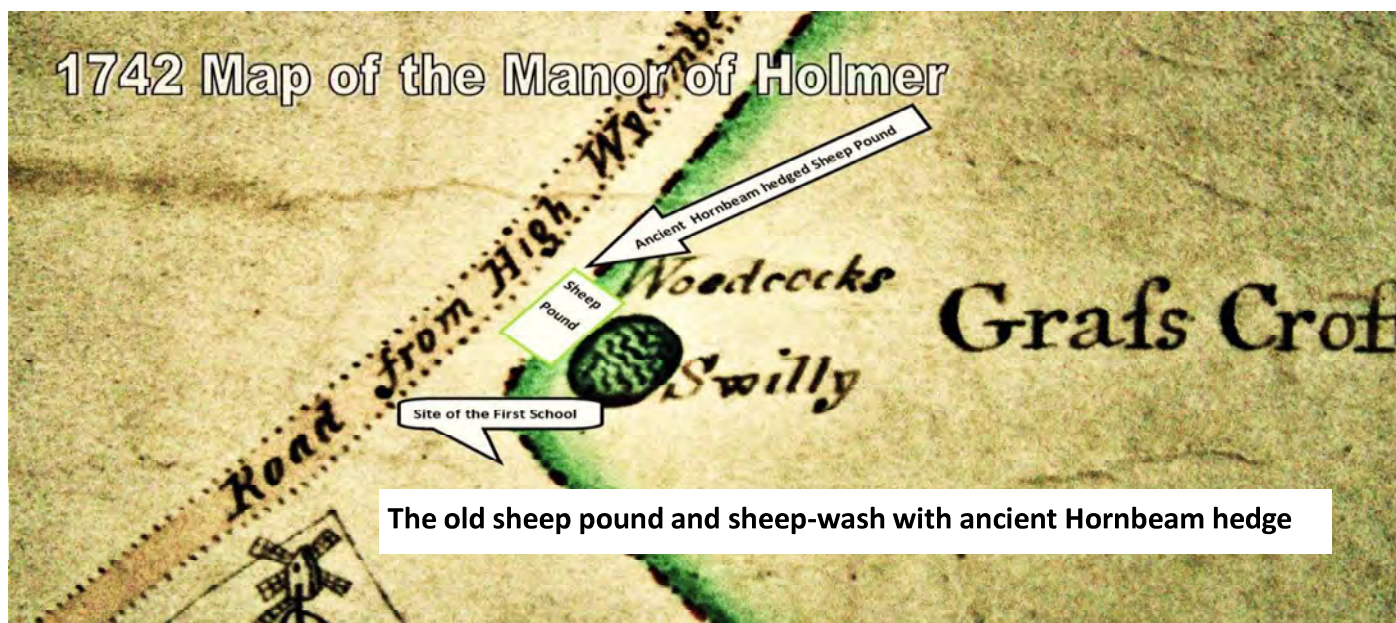
Although these hornbeam wood banks tend to be the most ancient boundaries in Holmer Green, there are mixed-variety hedgerows many centuries old in the Village and the wider area covered by Little Missenden Parish Council. These hedges are mostly connected to farmland and associated track ways and epitomize the rural England of times past, our farming heritage, and much of it still exists.



There are two notable historic exceptions that require noting, the 'Old Bank' in parish Piece and Woodcock Swilly off Watchet lane. The ancient Hornbeam hedge in Parish Piece. The best preserved section is fronting the youth club with other hornbeam sections remaining towards the school on the right-hand side of hedges fronting the houses. This is shown as the 'Old Bank' on the estate Map of the Manor of Holmer dated 1742. It was old then and could be an ancient boundary of medieval or even Saxon origin. TPOs on remaining Hornbeams in Parish Piece are recommended.

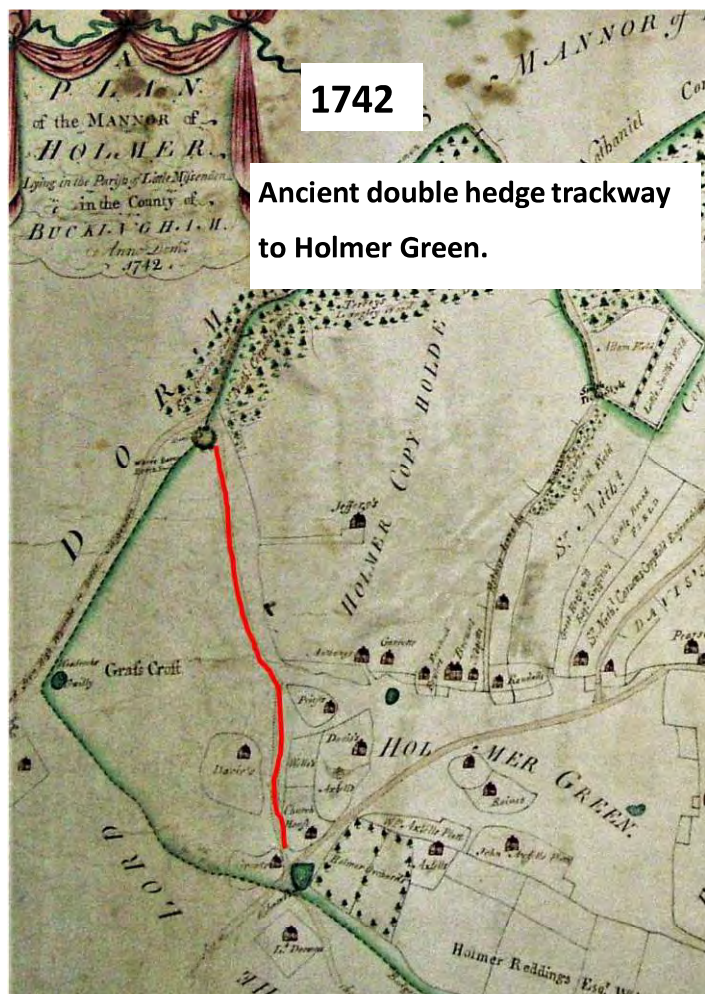


Woodcocks Swilly/The Sheep Wash/Sheep dip and associated 'sheep pound' is another important village heritage site. Overlooked until now, this is a rare survivor from the medieval period when rearing sheep was very profitable. The hornbeam hedged enclosure facing Watchet Lane was the old sheep pound, where sheep were held prior to being 'dipped' in the Sheep Wash, the pond beyond the pond close-by to the first school. Preserving this hedge should be a priority as should the remaining associated hornbeam hedge and mature trees fronting the school property. This site is first recorded in 1742 on the estate map of the 'Manor of Holmer. But it is almost certain to be much older.





On the same map is depicted an ancient narrow double hedged trackway leading off Watchet Lane through a corner of Langley Wood across the fields of Langley Farm and exiting by the side of the British Legion and originally leading to Holmer Pond. This would have been a major route into the village (hamlet in 1742) from little Kingshill, it was made redundant as part of the enclosure award of 1854 but is still in existence today as an over- grown ‘double hedge’. This hedge should be afforded protection against damage.



Not only are our hedgerows a quintessential aspect of our identity they will often contain tree and plant varieties that require protection as rare or endangered species. We have a very rich flora and fauna that relies on the protection of hedges, they also provide essential wildlife corridors offering shelter and protection and safe passage whilst on the move.



There are many holly trees dotted around the village, mostly in hedgerows, they are also a defining feature of our local landscape. Holly is slow growing, we have some very mature trees in the village that must be well over 100 years old, there are some examples that were obviously ancient when photographed around the common c.1920 and are still there today. Many of our Hollies have been cut to resemble huge umbrellas; there are still some good examples in Common Road, New pond Road, Sheepcote Dell road and Penfold Lane. It is likely that Holmer Green derives its name from ‘Holm’, an early name for holly.





Old Holly trees in Holmer Green





The southern area of the village including the Common was mostly open heathland (part of the much larger 'Wycombe Heath') and contained fewer hedges. This changed somewhat due to the parliamentary enclosure award of 1854 when much of the heath/common land was allotted to various individuals and boundary marked and protected by planting a 'quick (hawthorn) hedge'.

The Common, originally designated the 'Recreation Ground' is a good example of being enclosed with a quick hedge and still survives today. Another example of this treatment can be observed along Spurlands End Road.



**Holmer Green Common**

Examples of ancient hedgerows exist from behind the Common northwards covering Little Missenden, Hyde Heath and then towards Chesham. Observable ancient hedgerows to the public can be seen at Holmer Green end of King Street lane (in excess of 500 years) and Featherbed Lane (In excess of 600 years). This dating is achieved by using 'Hoopers Therum' where woody species are counted along a 30-yard stretch and allotted a hundred years for each variety to provide an approximate age.



**600 years plus hedge destroyed in Featherbed Lane**



## Hyde Heath Historic Overview by Catherine Atkins

Hyde Heath is a small village on the upper eastern flank of the Misbourne Valley just as it reaches the plateau. Predominantly the settlement is of post-medieval origin with the majority of buildings of 20th century origin. It is linked by Hyde Heath Lane, Keepers Lane, Chalk Lane and Weedon Hill to Little Missenden in the south and to Chesham to the north. There are several buildings of 19th century origin close to the present-day village green on the north-west side of the modern settlement and another focus just north-east of Hyde Heath Farm. The village green itself is of very recent origin, having previously been an area of scrub and gorse. In fact, it appears more as rough ground on the 1st Edition OS mapping (1870s - 80s). The two focal areas do, however, comprise the earliest parts of the village. The three Grade II listed buildings, Hyde Heath Farm, the Plough public house and a Baptist chapel are all depicted on the OS 1st Edition (1870s - 80s). The existing farm buildings at Hyde Heath Farm and those at Weedon Hill Farm are likely to represent farmsteads established at or post Enclosure. The cottages are typical of the vernacular style and are commonly of brick and flint. The settlement's immediate setting comprises the modern farm complexes on the eastern and western edges of the village and the modern village green with its surrounding cottages, public house and other buildings. The surrounding rural, agricultural landscape along with woodlands to the north, south and north-west makes a contribution to the settlement's value. This asset group is considered to be of some aesthetic, historical, architectural and archaeological interest.

Hyde Heath is a thriving diverse community that supports a village pub, school, pre-school nursery and shop. Local businesses such as a nursing home, two garages and the haulage/recycling yard offer local employment. There is a mixture of housing in the village from Arts and Crafts houses, 1930's detached properties, traditional bungalows, social housing and the two housing estates built in the 1970's on the old fruit orchards. Some of the original brick and flint properties of local farm workers have been extended sympathetically to retain their original features.

The advent of the Metropolitan railway made the village an attractive location for those choosing to live in the countryside and commute easily to London.



Village Hall and Shop

Village School and Church

The Plough

### Hyde Heath listed buildings:

Brays Farmhouse, Keepers Lane, a 17th century timber-framed building

Weedon Hill Cottages a pair of 18th century cottages

7 The Green a former pair of 18th century cottages, now a single house



### Archaeology:

**Brays Wood:** An ancient woodland comprising a mix of ancient and semi-natural and ancient replanted woodland. The woodland is a probable remnant of more extensive forest and part of the mosaic of other stands of surviving ancient woodland in the surrounding landscape. Its value lies in its potential for well-preserved archaeological remains of woodland management and industries typical of woodland such as wood banks, saw pits, quarries and small settlements.



Ancient Woodland can also preserve features of earlier periods. Bray's Wood contains typical examples of woodland archaeological features such as wood banks and ditches. It also includes remains of Bray's Wood medieval settlement, called Bray Green. This was probably a medieval farmstead with enclosing bank and house platforms. The value of the surviving archaeological remains lies in the evidential interest inherent in the buried archaeology and earthwork remains which it contains. This part of the woodland is identified by Buckinghamshire County Council as an Archaeological Notification Area. The 1st Edition OS map (1870s - 1880s) depicts a chalk pit on the southwestern edge of the woodland. Buckinghamshire County Council considers these earthworks and associated moated sites to be of schedulable quality.



### **World War II activity:**

During WW 2 trees were felled in **Pipers Wood** to accommodate corrugated iron Nissen huts, there were erected to accommodate His Majesty's Armed Forces. At various times Pipers Wood housed the Royal Bucks & Oxon Regiment, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, and the famous Highland Division.

These huts housed some of our Armed Forces including the Royal Bucks & Oxon Regiment, the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Highland Division. In the months leading up to D-Day Pipers Wood was home to American service men. After the war the Nissen huts in the Pipers wood camp were occupied by repatriated Polish soldiers, then subsequently by local squatters looking for affordable homes, they were eventually rehouse and the huts demolished.

**Bullbaiters Lane** was the location for a Searchlight Battery. The battery was operational by January 1939. This site is considered to be of some historical and archaeological interest.

**Queen Elizabeth** the late Queen Mother visited Hyde Heath to see what was being produced on the Home Front by the WI. A canning factory had been set up in the village by Dr Sybil Welsh and the Queen Mother visited to see the orchards and the process to can the fruit

**Castle Tower:** The remains of a motte and bailey castle 100m north of Hill House. Possible furrows in the field may be associated though they are very poorly defined and any relationship is unclear. Castle Tower motte and bailey is unusual in its diminutive size and though reduced by past ploughing it survives well as a very complete example of this class of monument. The monument also contains environmental evidence relating to the landscape in which it was constructed and the economy of its inhabitants. Such evidence will survive in the land surfaces sealed beneath the motte and in buried features within the bailey.



The asset's value lies in its rarity as one of a restricted range of recognised early post-Conquest monuments particularly important for the study of post Norman Conquest Britain and the development of the feudal system. Although many were occupied for only a short period of time, motte castles continued to be built and occupied from the 11th to the 13th centuries, after which they were superseded by other types of castle. The site is identified by Buckinghamshire County Council as an Archaeological Notification Area. The immediate setting of the scheduled monument comprises grassy meadow, bordered by mature woodland to the west, Chalk Lane to the south and residential housing along Chalk Lane to the east. The scheduled monument remains survive as a low earthen mound or motte in the field. Any other potential earthwork remains in the field are currently obscured by vegetation. Castle Tower's wider setting comprises a mixture of woodland and pasture to the north, west and south. To the east the site is bordered by residential development extending from Hyde Heath and other larger, individual houses have been built off Chalk Lane immediately to the south and south-west.



**Mantles Farm:** Historic record of medieval Mantell's Manor, the reputed manor held in 1086 by Turstin Mantel. The existing farm may also incorporate the remains of a former medieval manor in the form of either surviving buried archaeological remains or re-used stonework. The existing farm buildings, however, are likely to represent a farmstead established at or post enclosure. The existing farm buildings represent a typical Chilterns farmstead established at or post Enclosure. Mantle's Farm and its surrounding farm buildings, yards and gardens form a vernacular farming complex dating from at least the 19th century. The complex remains closely associated with its agricultural surroundings such that its wider rural, agricultural setting and proximity to Mantle's Wood ancient woodland makes a contribution to its value.

### **Modern History:**

**De Fontenay Pyrenean Mountain Dogs:** In approximately 1935 Madame Jeanne Harper Trois-Fontaines started her de Fontenay Kennels at her house in Chalk Lane where she bred her Pyrenean Mountain Dogs. All dogs descended from these kennels bear the name de Fontenay which is highly prized.



**Queen Elizabeth the late Queen Mother** visited Hyde Heath to see what was being produced on the Home Front by the WWI.

# History of Little Missenden, also known as Missenden Parva

By Mary Anne Stewart

Little Missenden Church, from S.E. photograph of drawing



I have used several sources for this information which include most importantly some of the long-term residents of Little Missenden who we are lucky enough to have as a source of living history. As well as people we have used books, documents, maps and some online resources which will be referenced at the end.

I have spent time talking to some of the village's residents who have spent most of their lives here and /or are second generation residents. People have been most generous with their time and lent materials and photographs. The history of the village is most interesting but has also thrown up more and more information some of which is fact

and some conjecture with many contradictions. It is by no means simple which must indeed represent many villages. It is definite opening a door for further research to be undertaken.

## Early history

Little Missenden is situated in a valley which has the river Misbourne running through it. The river Misbourne rises in Mobwell – just North of Great Missenden. The valley has been the site of many settlements from as long ago as the time the earliest humans came to Britain.

The name Missenden is believed to have been derived from 'den' an Anglo- Saxon word for valley and 'Missen' a colloquial pronunciation of 'middle'. Little Missenden means the small end of the middle valley. The Misbourne being the river which passes through this valley and we are between the Chess valley and the Hughenden valley. The subsoil of Little Missenden is chalk and the surface clay or chalk. It is at 500 feet except where it is in the valley where it is between 300 and 400 feet.

## Ice Age.

Millions of years ago, glaciers would have covered the area. From this period fossils of various sea creatures including brachiopods have been found in the village. The glacier meltwater deposited 'erratic' stone conglomerates from the north known as Pudding stone.

There are 2 of these at the base of the church tower and one at Missenden House. The large stone outside The White House is a sarsen stone – local sarsen stones which are also known by the place of origin, Denner Hill stone.

There are numerous fossils which have been gathered from local fields some villagers have made collections of these.

## Palaeolithic , Mesolithic, Neolithic, bronze age and iron age

There have been a number of archaeological finds within our parish. The earliest humans in Britain were in the



Palaeolithic period. A palaeolithic hand axe was found near the church and river, Mesolithic flint blades were found in the fields adjacent to the village, along with various flint flakes, blades and scrapers. The neolithic times are the times when stone henge was built on the Salisbury Plain.

Metal detecting has found bronze age artifacts. A bronze age arrowhead which was barbed and tanged was found in these woods. A bronze age timber circle was recently excavated near Wendover. A late iron age earthwork enclosure has been found within Colemans wood. A coin from a previously unknown Celtic tribe was also found in the village. There is an iron age fort a few miles away off Frith Hill, another at the village of Cholesbury which contains the village church and another situated on Pulpit Hill overlooking the Aylesbury Plain. Another man-made feature which dates from pre-historic times is Grim's 's Ditch which is an earthwork stretching from Bradenham to Berkhamsted.

The 'oldest road in Britain', the Icknield Way which extends from Norfolk to the Dorset coast passes through area to the North of here. This is made up of prehistoric pathways the longest is the Ridgway which passes through the Chilterns following the chalk ridge. It is in regular use today as a path which affords some of the best views of the Chilterns! The name of the road is said to originate from the Celtic tribe Iceni. The road may have been used by the Celts to enable trade across the country.

**Early Medieval /Pre Conquest.** The village grew up around agriculture with the farm workers living in small cottages which each had strips of land to provide space for the workers to cultivate their own crops to feed their families or sell in a market.

It is likely the site of the church was a religious site long before it became a church.

There are several finds which have been officially recorded and many more which of less significance have not.

When the Romans invaded Britain, they would have farmed in the valley and evidence of their presence locally has been found in the form of Roman coins found in the village; one of Emperor Nero was found a few months ago. Other local evidence has been found in the form of shards of Roman pottery and a Roman lamp. There had also been some finds as a result of HS2 archaeological digs. No evidence has been found of a local building within the village despite several investigations. The existence of a local Roman building in the vicinity of the church is evidenced as the church contains Roman bricks and tiles in its fabric which are visible within the arches which are on either side of the entrance to the chancel.

There was a thriving Saxon settlement next to the river surrounded by abundant fertile soil which would grow crops and support grazing. Alwin the Saxon was a landowner in and around Little Missenden pre conquest. The land was held by the King who then granted the land to tenants-in-chief who were in return to offer him homage and military service.

The tenants in chief then granted it to their sub tenants in return for services rendered to them such as working the land which belonged to them. During these Saxon times the land was grouped and held in hundreds each of which consisted of 100 hides. A hide was a measurement of area which was supposed to represent the area which could be ploughed by a team of eight oxen in a year. This was very approximately 120 acres.

Little Missenden lay predominantly in the Chiltern Hundreds or Stone hundred. The hide was a unit of measurement which was not based on size alone the range was between 60-180 acres. The Normans were keen to standardise using 120 acres.

Little Missenden parish lies on the borders of 3 historic hundreds the Stone hundred is where 90% of the parish sits, the Burnham hundred which is south of LM and covers Penn wood and the Desborough Hundred which covers Hazelmere and Widmer End. The effect of these Saxon borders is still in evidence today. For example, Holmer Green's separation from Hazelmere and Penn i.e. not geographically but administratively e.g. as part of the parish of Little Missenden.

There were many battles between the Vikings and the Saxons during the Anglo- Saxon period also known as the early medieval period. There were several battles which took place near Reading 871 at Englefield possibly there is some truth in folklore which relates that there was a battle between the Danes and the Saxons which took place at the boundary of these 3 hundreds.

### **Post the Norman Conquest**

In the Domesday book there were 26 villages in the hundred of Stone. The largest 2 villages were Haddenham and Hartwell which had 75 and 54 households respectively. These historical boundaries are still reflected in the way that land is administered up until today.

After conquering what we now know as England the king William the Conqueror set about recording all the annual value of all landed property and to its Lord and the resources of land, labour and livestock for the population for the purposes of taxation. He sent agents to survey every shire in the land. Only the productive land was recorded.

The book which came to be known as the Domesday book(a reference to the fact that the decisions were unalterable) is now available to consult online. The name Domesday which only came into use later use

There are 3 entries in the Domesday book which relate to land in Little Missenden which is held by 3 different tenants in chief who effectively were the landowners. All land under the feudal system only the King was the true 'owner' of the land. The tenants only held land under contract. Holdings of the bishops followed, then abbey and religious houses then lay tenants-in-chief then king's serjeants and thegns. The towns were also included in the book as there were ancient dues which were owed to the king. It should be noted that only actively used land was taxable.



## Owners

1086 Tenant in chief Count Robert of Mortain – half brother of William the Conqueror

1086 Lord was Wigot

1066 Previous Overlord Sired son of Sibbi Lord in 1066 Alwin

## Land of Hugh of Bolbec

1086 Tenant in Chief Hugh of Bolbec 1086 Lord

## Wulfgeat

1066 Overlord Bishop of Lincoln 1066 Lord

## Wulfgeat

1086 Land of Turstin Mantle 1086 Lord

## Turstin Mantle 1066 Overlord Sired

1066 Lord Saeric, Sired's man

The values of the land are recorded for taxation purposes.



The parish of Little Missenden appears to have records of 4 manors during the Medieval period which are Holmer, Beamond, Mantell's and Affricks.

The hide held by the Manor of Holmer appears to be with the hide held in Missenden pre conquest by Alwin, a man of Syed son of Sybi. After 1086 the land formed part of the land of Robert, Count of Mortain, William the Conqueror's half-brother and the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest landowner in the land after the King William (II). After Robert's death his second son another William inherited this land. He was taken prisoner by Henry I at a battle and his land was forfeited to the Crown.

The Manor of Holmer did not emerge until between 1150 and 1200. It is mentioned in the Missenden Abbey Cartulary. It appears to have been identical to the hide held pre conquest by Alwin. Eventually it came into the hands of convent at Burnham where it remained until the dissolution and became annexed to Windsor Castle. Town Farm is believed to be the estate of Holmer Manor. The boundary is marked by a double hedge of King Street Lane, and banks. Penfold Lane was probably created to move livestock to new pastures created when clearing the forests which surrounded Little Missenden. There is archaeological clues to suggest that possibly the Manor of Holmer was possibly sited in Coleman's wood surrounded by ditch. The Manor was transferred to Thomas Basset the grandson of a Norman. One of his son was Gilbert Basset was his heir. The other sons of Thomas another Thomas and Alan Basset were both signatories to the Magna Carta in 1215. King John was a reputed visitor to the parish going between the castle on Chalk Lane and Ashwell Farm for hunting. The heir of the manor was Gilbert's daughter Eustacia who married Richard de Camvill. There are some sources containing more detailed accounts of the manorial history and the list of the kings, families and also Churches who inherited or acquired the manor.

It has not proved easy to actually connect the land of the manor to the Little Missenden Manor – the best evidence I have found that indeed the manor did not at that point contain extensive lands was the Map of 1742 when according to accounts the Manor of Holmer was held by John Davies (who had purchased it in 1737/8. According to the map the land held by John Davies was the garden of the Manor House and some meadows besides the river on the other side but these did not extend as far as Suffolk Bridge which is the bridge on the road West out of the village towards Great Missenden to the now A413.

Beamond Manor was probably part of the Mortain lands in Little Missenden. It was granted together with Little Missenden church by Gilbert Basset to the monastery at Bicester in 1182. It remained with that abbey until the dissolution

in 1536. In 1541 Post reformation it was given by Henry VIII to Sybil wife of David Penn in consideration of the services in nurture and education of Prince Edward. It remains in the Penn family until eventually it becomes part of the Curzon family by marriage of Sarah Penn to Sir Nathaniel Curzon. Thus becoming part of the Penn House Estate – the present Earl Howe is Lord of this manor.

Mantel's Manor is held by Turstin Mantel post conquest. The ruling Mantle was the king's Naperer. He handed the King his napkin during his meal and handkerchiefs when the need arose. King John while prince held the land briefly and donated 2 bells to the church. He stayed at Ashwell Farm, Little Kingshill which was a hunting lodge for the royal party from Windsor Castle. King Street Lane was named after its use to access the castle and the hunting lodge. It descended through the Mantell family until inherited by John Mantell of Hartwell. Due to a lack of heirs it became into the possession of John Hampden in 1424. It was then purchased by Thomas Woodmancy. He predeceased his widow who a Simon Watson in 1520-1. It passed through several different hands. In 1632 it became part of the state of William Drake of Shardloes and Amersham. The manor eventually becomes part of the Shardloes estate of the Drake family.

The road to Mantells is shown on the 1742 map beside the road leading from Taylor's Lane towards Chesham.

Affrick's Manor (Auffrykkes) was in possession of the Godstowe nunnery until the reformation after which it was given together with the Manor of Beamond to Sybil Penn. Affricks Manor which was named after a Saxon tenant was a grange as it belonged to Godstowe nunnery which was on the banks of the Thames near Oxford. After the dissolution of the manor it too was given to Sybil and David Penn in 1541.

The half hide was held in the time of Edward the Confessor by Wulfwig, Bishop of Dorchester. The sub tenant of Little Missenden half hide land prior to the Norman conquest Ulviet who was still in possession in 1086. The pre conquest Saxon tenants sometimes remained with their tenant farmers post conquest as in this case.



In 1086 it formed part of the lands of Hugh of Bolbec. He had 2 sons and a daughter was the remaining heir. On coming of age she married Robert de Vere, third Earl of Oxford and the Bolbec estate became part of his estates. There are no complete records of the subtenants of this portion of the estate.

### **St John Baptist Church**

The church is the oldest building in the village which was built as a smaller Saxon church between 950 and 1000. The church was granted by Gilbert Basset and Eglina his wife to the Monastery of Bicester. It was enlarged over the following by the monks of Bicester under the instructions of the Bishop of Dorchester (on Thames) near Oxford. The church owned all the land in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. This was pre the founding of Missenden Abbey by the Augustinians who came from France about 1133. It remained in the hands of the Bicester Monastery until the reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries.

The site of the church was probably the site of ancient worship. It was also possibly the site or close to the site of a Roman building as shown by the Roman bricks incorporated into the fabric of the church. The church was expanded in the Norman period in common with other churches.

The walls of the church were decorated with all paintings which were uncovered in 1931 under the vicar Rev. W.H. Davies. The first painting was dated to 1200, a dado foliated scroll ornament in yellow ochre. Subjects of other paintings dating from this time are The Betrayal with St Peter cutting off the ear of Malchus, a Crucifixion. The Nave was fully painted at this time.

The figure of St Christopher bearing the Christ child and a series of paintings of the life of St Catherine of Syria are painted on the North Wall at about 1300. The feet of St Christopher are shown in water containing fish and an eel. The painting re dates the height of popularity of St Christopher in the fifteenth century. The figure has been remarkably preserved.

The life of St Catherine is told in a series of small paintings depicting her life and her torture and eventual death as a martyr showing the hand of God.

On the East wall above the chancel dating to around 1400 is a representation of the last judgement.

In the arch above a tomb set into the South Wall is a painting depicting Christ in judgement flanked by 2 angels with their wings outspread.

The church has also many stained-glass windows which mostly date from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. St Christopher again is one of the subjects of a large window.

The oldest of the bells dates back to 1340 cast in London, the next dates to a century later also cast in London and then the third in 1603 in Reading , and fourth 1663 also from Reading , a fifth from London in 1881. The final bell was cast in London in 1948 to celebrate the end of the second world.

The various graves sited in the church and the dedication of some of the stain glass windows give some insight into the families who lived in the village and surrounding villages over the centuries.

In 2017/2018 the church was successful in its application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant which enabled some conservation work and following some in depth research some of the paintings have been recreated using light projections onto the original paintings.

The next oldest and oldest domestic building which remains in Little Missenden is Tobys Farm which lies adjacent to Tobys Lane which is an ancient footpath. It is likely to be one of the regularly spaced paths which lead from the valley to the plateau where possibly the animals were grazed.

Prior to the Norman invasion the land was farmed and for crop growing and animal grazing. It was the feudal

system which operated as the peasants worked the land belonging to the tenant in chief and in return for their labour they were granted land which was divided into strips.

The land cultivated by the peasants was divided into strips which might be distributed randomly around and not grouped together. In practice for the land belonging to the manor might be the best of the land available. The poorer land to be granted to the peasants. This resulted in inefficiencies as for example boundaries might be vague and encroachment of adjoining land or access to a strip might involve crossing and potentially damaging neighbouring land. The land of Little Missenden would have been farmed in this way. The only way to increase the yield would be cooperation between peasant farmers. The vagueness of the boundaries marked by trees, hedges, stones etc was an issue which caused many disputes between peasants. A court for resolving disputes was a requirement.

After this time those farming in this area and all over the country expanded the land under cultivation and grazing land by clearing woods and creating enclosures.

The population of England in 1086 was about 2.25 million, by 1215 the population was between 3.5 and 5 million. This increases the pressure on the land and a search for additional land to be put under cultivation. Thus people migrated from the valleys to the surrounding woodland and hills.

The Magna Carta was a treaty signed in a place called Runnymede. King John was unpopular and a group of barons wanted to curb the powers of the king with respect to church protection, taxes, and illegal imprisonment

The Manor of Holmer again was inherited by a daughter, Ildene who married William Longspere (Earl of Salisbury) came into the family of the Longspere in 1236. First by Sir William Longspere and subsequently by his namesake son. The land was documented in detail but without reference to placenames. William's daughter Ela married back into the family of her ancestors the Bassets but the Manor was inherited by his William in 1250. The second William had only one daughter Margaret married to Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. When he died, he left the manor to his daughter, Alice whose second husband was Eubold L'Estrange made a payment to the estate for the privilege of the title and Land of Lord of the Manor in 1326. He died in 1335 without issue and the land was no longer described as a manor. However, due to the intervention of a kinsman of L'Estrange and the manor was conveyed to the Convent of Burnham. The land to the south of this was a part of the original Saxon Burnham hundred. There are no surviving records for the period after the black death – those of Burnham Abbey were destroyed centuries ago.

In 1522 the Muster list lists the major landowners of the Parish as The Abbess of Burnham

The Prior of Bicester Thomas Raye

Clarke Vicar

It is said that in the absence of a strong manorial seat the site of the Manor House was at one time the rectory. An earlier Manor house could have been sited where the Old Vicarage. Evidence for this exists in that the Court House for



the Manor of Holmer was located in the Rectory grounds. The Court house became 2 then 3 cottages and was eventually became reintegrated with the manor house in 1906 but were demolished by 1914. In 1925 the road was widened, and part of the land came from the cottages. There is no archaeological evidence for this theory however prior to their demolition in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the cottages were known as the court cottages.

Photograph of St John Baptist Church and the Manor House together with Court Cottages situated on the corner adjacent to The Old Vicarage

The house currently known as the Little Missenden Manor House was constructed **within seven years of**



the dissolution of the monasteries. It is possible that the Manor was built for the Penn family who were by this time in possession of the Manor of Beamond End. In 1557 a second lease was of the Manor of Holmer was granted to David and Sybil Penn. The Penn's association with the Manor was short lived as further lease was granted to Reuben Sherwood.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Manor House and the Manor became very separate institutions and ownership followed different paths. The Manor followed the decendents of the original Penn family who were related by marriage to the Curzon family and thus to the family of Earl Howe.

Henry VIII reign required raising taxes to support wars with France, Ireland and Scotland. Surnames included in a list reflect some which are to be found locally to this day. It is possible that the shift to Protestantism was welcomed in this lollard stronghold area.

It is during this period that the house now known as Little Missenden Manor House was converted from a Hall House.

The Black Death spread over the whole country wiping out between a third and a half of the population. The economics of the previous manors were totally overturned. The power reverted to the peasants who could demand more land and wages.

It was believed at this time that many Manors fell into disrepair due to lack of money and manpower to maintain the manor.

The wealth and power of the peasants was multiplied as the land holdings were held by fewer peasants. The farmers became more autonomous and were able to negotiate their terms for farming the lands held by the lords of the manor.

The degree of autonomy lead to increased efficiency as they were able to keep more of the fruits of their labour.

In effect serfdom was ended and there was a rise of a new class the yeoman farmer. The yeoman farmer was

able to take advantage of opportunities which had been created to negotiate leases and manage several demesne farms. Thus, power was taken away from the Lords of the Manor. The Honor family of Little Missenden managed the Town Farm estate.

Attempts to revert to a more feudal system were unsuccessful and when a poll tax was introduced this led to the Peasants Revolt. The revolt was the background to the rise in alternative beliefs led by John Wyclif an Oxford graduate a theologian, philosopher and church reformer who believed that the church should relinquish its worldly possessions. One of the main ideas was the translation of the bible into English. The movement was known as Lollard was about questioning the abuse of power in ecclesiastical circles and the manner in which the word of god was preached. It spread even more rapidly following the death of John Wyclif in 1384. The lollards encouraged small groups which questioned and denounced the church establishment. There appears to have been a particular stronghold of Lollardy around the Manor of Holmer.

The lollards were also believed to be supported by the Cheyne family of Chesham Bois who had family connection with the lollards in the West Country.

The Tudor dynasty starts in 1485 following the defeat of Richard III at the battle of Bosworth Field.

There are some records of local lollards who were executed and many more suffered penances such as carrying faggots and lighting the fires for the execution.

1506 29<sup>th</sup> December William Tylsworth was burnt at the stake with his daughter compelled to light the fire.

1506 30<sup>th</sup> December A miller from Little Missenden was burnt in Buckingham – Robert Cosin otherwise known as Father Robert or Robert the Miller.

1506 30<sup>th</sup> December Thomas Barnard and James Morden were both burned together in Amersham.

In 1536 the reformation was underway and the dissolution of the monasteries. This may have been welcomed by the inhabitants of this parish. The monastery of Bicester would have at this time lost its possession of Little Missenden Church and the Nunnery of Godstowe lost control of Affricks Manor.

1606 January 30<sup>th</sup> Sir Everard Digby, a landowner in Little Missenden was executed together with, Thomas Winter one his baliffs in Little Missenden due to his involvement in the gunpowder plot.

1619 20<sup>th</sup> September Master John Dunton, Vicar of Little Missenden who was Cambridge educated in astrology and physic. He is described as a person of great 'abstinence,innocence and piety'. When consulted in astrology he had 'converse with Angel Raphael'.

It was said 'Doctor Dunton's knees were very horny with frequent prayer'.

The Style family were principal residents of Little Missenden they were connected by marriage to the Penn family of Penn.

1613 death of John Style

1603-1679 Sarah Style wife of Robert Style

There was also a Thomas Style who may have been the landowner of the land between the Mill at Mill End Mill and either Taylors Lane or Suffolk bridge. The land was believed to be acquired in 1625 and bequeathed to his sons in 1639 who sold it before 1694 to Henry Harris. This is the land on which was constructed Missenden House.

Francis Style husband of Elizabeth Penn daughter John Penn who had 2 daughters Elizabeth and Mary Died 1646 aged 24 years



William Beale (1670-1677)

In the church there is a gravestone marking the burial of Thomas Axtell 1729 – 12 weeks 4 days. Mr Axtell acquired land and the premises of the Red Lion and the adjacent barns which were all used for his tannery business having moved from Uxbridge. Water was a main requirement for the processing the animal skins.

At this point there are several possibilities for employment within Little Missenden or the adjacent villages. There was farming the land, working on one of the farms or on the nearby estates Shardloes or Penn.

There were watercress beds planted which I would suggest might have started after the railway was brought to first Amersham and then later extended to Great Missenden and as far as Aylesbury. The railway was built by the Metropolitan railway company and only subsequently were mainline trains run using the same tracks but terminating in Marylebone with the other Buckinghamshire lines.

### **The English Civil war**

1645 The parliamentary troops were stationed at Missenden on January 1<sup>st</sup>.

1757 Diary of a miller John Larkin begins writing his diary. This diary is unique record of his life. He was educated at the Grammar school in Amersham – this level of education is reflected in the style and structure of his writing. The original of the diary is in the hands of a descendent of the final mill owners of Deep Mill the Clark family.

1779 January 14<sup>th</sup> John Wenslow of Little Missenden has been publicly whipped for body snatching.

1779 February 4<sup>th</sup> John Hamilton Mortimer the artist and Royal Academician, friend of Dr Bates of Little Missenden Manor.

1790 March 16<sup>th</sup> The floods have been so bad around Amersham and Missenden that corn will not grow. The farmers from Hyde Heath have been to London to demand flour and an appeal has been made by the Mayor of Wycombe to set up a fund to relieve the starving of Wendover.

1794 March 1<sup>st</sup> Loftus Lovel Badock esquire of Little Missenden is appointed Hugh Sheriff of Buckinghamshire. He was Lt Colonel of the Bucks Militia.

1828 May 12<sup>th</sup> Dr Benjamin Bates died at the age of 92.

The Mill which was originally called Little Missenden Mill was situated at Deep Mill and was originally recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. It was demolished in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century /early 20<sup>th</sup> Century after the building of the Metropolitan railway which was extended from Amersham to Great Missenden and beyond.

The mill known as Mill End Mill was able to keep going much longer than the mill at Deep Mill as it had steam power installed. The Mill known more lately as Deep Mill Mill but previously known as Little Missenden Mill dates its origins back to 1220. At the dissolution it belonged to Missenden Abbey. It eventually became associated with the Manor of Great Misenden. It is likely that Edward Nash and John Darvell (both at Little Misenden in 1694) were at Deep Mill. The names Nash and Darvell are local families to this day. A member of the Nash family lived at Mill End Mill when it was sold in 1988 to the Bowman family. The Clarke family rented and then eventually owned Deep Mill. The Clarke family became the custodian of a diary 'The Diary of a Miller' by a mill worker, John Larkin. The diary in the care of Amersham Museum. However, when the building of the railway embankment in 1891 dissected the Mill Pond the then tenant James Nash went to Wycombe Heath Mill. this point the river was diverted. The mill was demolished after 1930s and nothing remains except the site where now sit a few buildings and an old petrol station. It largely became unusable when a pumping station was installed thus reducing the flow of the river in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The building known as The Deep Mill Diner was originally a public house 'The Fox and Hounds'.

The Mill at Mill End and the cottages known as Mill End Cottages appear to have all belonged to the Shardloes estate can only be dated as far as 1600 AD. The house which stands at a right angle to the road and the Mill is of a later origin.

The Miller in 1692 was John Davell. On the map dated 1742 which is shown below the Mill and the adjacent field which was called Holmer Moor is marked as Esquire Drake's Moor. The other side of the road past Mill End Cottages is Marked Mr Gregorys Estate.

Wall Paintings which were discovered in Mill End Cottages.



In 1798 Joseph Sibley had become miller and it remained in the family until after the World War I. A steam engine was installed which extended the working life of the Mill after the reduction in the flow of the river. There are a number of documents related to the Mill which are held in the Mill including some bills for the repair of the machinery and letters and a will pertaining to the Sibley family. It is believed that before Little Missenden school was built the children of the village attended lessons held the other days it is said that they are engaged in straw plaiting for hat manufacture.at this mill for 3 days a week.

Photograph of the Mill Pond besides Mill End Cottages – the Mill is in the background.





The machinery of the mill is still almost complete some careful restoration having been undergoing restoration. A spring exists just close to the Mill Pond on the side of Mill End Cottages which must have provided fresh water for the villagers.



The main road between London and Wendover passed through Amersham, Little Missenden and Great Missenden. The Crown and The Red Lion would have been coaching inns. It is likely that Shakespeare passed through Little Missenden on his journey to London from Stratford upon Avon.

It has been established through some research undertaken by Richard Gammage of Amersham Museum that Shakespeare had other ties to the area through his patron, Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton to whom he dedicated whose grandmother was born a Cheyne in Chesham Bois.

Cymbeline's Castle is located in the woods to the North East of Great Kimble is featured in his play Cymbeline about a Celtic king based on legends. It seems very likely therefore that Shakespeare would have passed through Little Missenden en route North towards Stratford. One of the most famous residents of Little Missenden was a Dr Benjamin Bates. He was a member of the Hellfire club when it was first located in Medmenham. He was a notable art collector who had Sir Joshua Reynolds as a friend. He was a generous benefactor to the village.

Other notable residents were the occupants of Missenden House which was built in 1729 for Jonas Deacon a prosperous East India Merchant. It was extended about 1749. Jonas Deacon's widow lived in the house until 1764. The

house eventually came to a Captain Jonathon Cuffe who owned land in Ireland. It was then home to his son John Otway Cuffe who retired on half pension following Boer War in which he saw action.

The Dumas family a partner in a Lloyds underwriting firm moved into Missenden House. The Dumas offered up Missenden House during the second world war.

The Dumas family moving into the gardeners' cottage. Missenden House was used as a convalescent home for ARP wardens run by the hospitality scheme an independent body within the Red Cross to recuperate from ailments including shock and wounds. There are several photos of the house being used as a convalescent home. It contained 50 beds 25 for women and 25 for men. The home was visited by Queen Mary an event also recorded on a photograph.

The family are also remembered as donating the land which became the recreation ground where it remains to this day.

There have been many interesting, colourful and some famous residents some of which have become known to us in the process of undertaking this short history.

Mary Henrietta Dering Curtois (1854-1928) an artist of some repute, also a lecturer and an active debater. She joined the campaign

for Women's Suffrage who has been the subject of some research by Alison Bailey of Amersham Museum. She was frequently painting the children of Little Missenden. She joined the Mid Bucks Suffrage Society and spoke at the local meetings and went on a caravan tour to raise awareness of the cause. In her will she left 5 paintings of Little Missenden to the Village Hall but currently we cannot trace them.

Map of Little Missenden dated 1742, this shows the names of the fields possibly indicating their usage and their owners' names.







Little Missenden taken from the air 1960 and 1988

### **Little Missenden Festival**

The Little Missenden Festival was started in 1959 by resident Pat Harrison. It began as a festival of music, poetry and art of the highest quality presented in a village setting in the ancient church. 2024 marks the 64<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the festival. It was one of the first of the festivals and the most enduring.

Pat Harrison was born in Little Missenden in 1905 – her parents lived between Missenden House, Little Missenden and London. Pat studied music both in the UK and abroad in Florence and Geneva. When her parents sold Missenden House she moved to Dering Cottage where she taught music. She had met through her sons Mark and Richard a composer Richard Drakeford and a cello prodigy Rohan de Saram. Rohan suggested to her that she should start a festival in the village and that he was willing to come and play.

She managed to gather a committee which included a former director of the Arts Council together with Richard Drakeford and Rohan de Saram, a local composer Dr Neil Saunders and the then owner of Missenden, Geraint Jones who had formed a group of singers and an orchestra.

The festival relies on a series of volunteers and through a genuine love of music and dedication to find the best up and coming talent the festival has gone from strength to strength. It has hosted some of the best talents from both the UK and abroad in music, visual arts and drama. There has been an annual lecture on a arts topic by many eminent experts. The festival has always included workshops for the children of Little Missenden School and the children have even performed as part of a Celtic Requiem by Tavener. The committee has always sought out new talent and the programme has cleverly woven together themes.

The range of music showcased has covered many different genres, eras including such as 20<sup>th</sup> Century composed music with the composers invited to hear their works performed usually with a variety of other pieces which are complimentary or related in some way. The festival has also commissioned work from the foremost composers of the day. The most illustrious possibly being John Tavener whose long association with the festival began when he was a young composer. He even composed a special commemorative piece for Pat 'The Bridal Chamber' in 1998. The year 1995 featured Gamelan music from Java.

The festival has kept a complete archive of its history.

To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the queen's ascension to the throne the village held a Platinum Jubilee Party. Village Road was closed to traffic just by the village green and tables and chairs were brought from the village hall and erected on the road. The village celebrated the jubilee with a great village party with tea and cakes and tea or bring your own alternative beverages. There were a series of games designed for all to participate.

On the coronation of King Charles III a village party in the centre of the village was held. It was a lunch and tea party with cakes to celebrate baked by the villagers. There was a band for Scottish dancing. There were activities for the children including arts and crafts and games in the recreation ground for all to participate.



Celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023

And Coronation celebrations in May 2023





## **Village Show Annual Event**

The village show is held annually organised by a special Village Show Committee. There are categories in a wide range of areas to showcase horticultural, culinary and artistic skills.

## **Misfits Cricket Club**

The cricket club is situated on a large piece of land situated behind Highmore Cottages access from the corner of Penfold Lane beside the stables. It is maintained by members of the club and is open to all villagers.



Typical village vernacular architecture





# Little Missenden Water Meadow

A Rare Chalk Stream  
Biodiverse landscape  
environment



Stuart King



## Little Missenden Water Meadow; SU 9182099140

This is a very special place, a very rare Chiltern wildlife habitat and historic land- scape. The meadow seamlessly complements the special environment of the whole village. Little Missenden is a national treasure.



The river Misbourne, a rare, natural, chalk stream that rises to the west at Mob Well Pond close by at Great Missenden and runs the entire length of the village as it travels eastward towards the ancient market town of Old Amersham. It is the Misbourne that has influenced the nature of the village probably more than any other feature.







Some water meadows were organized to provide controlled irrigation to increase agricultural production during the post medieval period whilst in other cases geology creates widespread natural wetlands. There is evidence via random finds of at least some minor agriculture activity during the medieval and later period. These include medieval horseshoes, ox shoes and a plow share.



This activity was probably minimal as there appears to be little damage to the archaeological features, many of which are visible on the Lidar image (above) commissioned by the Chiltern Conservation Board as part of their recent 'Beacons of the Past' project'.



Historic artifacts discovered in Little Missenden



As with the Misbourne valley in general we can trace human activity in the Little Missenden area to at least the Neolithic period (a flint hand axe was found in the water meadow recently). There are Iron Age settlements very close by and plenty of evidence of early Roman occupation along the river valley. Roman bricks are incorporated in little Missenden church's Saxon (established AD975) interior fabric and many roman coins have been recovered locally including from the water meadow.



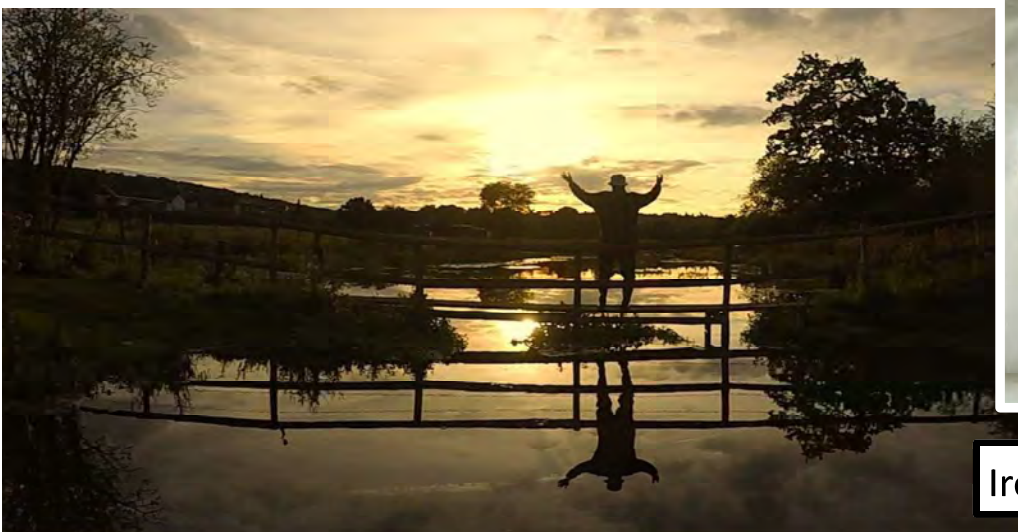




Not only is the water meadow an historic time capsule but the whole area is an important wetland habitat for both flora and fauna, a rare place in the Chilterns. There are seasonal geese and established herons, white egrets and visiting flocks of lapwings with the more common water birds in attendance. Snipe are regularly seen as are red kites, buzzards and kestrels. Significant are kingfishers, a good indicator of water quality. The bird species are too numerous to list here. There is a small area of ancient woodland within the meadow adding to the diverse nature of bird and bat habitat.

Along the riverbank and within the woodland are some exceedingly old trees, in particular some ash trees that by estimation must be in excess of two hundred years old. There is an early man-made bank in the woodland lined with some very ancient hazel trees, with possible evidence of early layering or coppicing.

In addition to the above it should be noted that chalk streams are globally very rare, they are some of the planet's rarest habitats and 85% of them are found in England. Of the 260 true chalk streams on Earth, 224 of them run through the English countryside.



Iron Age Storage Jar

Stuart King