

## A brief history of Burnham

The Domesday Book of 1086 provides an accessible record of Burnham showing that there were 28 villagers and 7 smallholders with 12 ploughs. The Lord of the Manor had land for a further 3 ploughs, and there were 2 slaves. There was woodland enough for 600 pigs and the whole was valued at £10. The Manor of Burnham was held by Walter Fitz Otho. Subsequently it became divided with part going to the Huntercombe family and part to Richard, Earl of Cornwall (King John's second son) who gave his portion as an endowment to Burnham Abbey which he founded in 1266. Huntercombe Manor and the Abbey lie to the south of the village. In 1271 the Abbess of Burnham Abbey was granted the right to hold a market in the village every Thursday and a Fair on the Festival of St Matthew. After 1539 when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries Burnham Abbey was destroyed, the site reverted to the Crown, was leased out and became a farm. The ruins were restored and re-consecrated in 1916 and continue as the home of nuns of the Society of the Precious Blood.

A sixteenth century Market Hall existed in Church Street until about 1940. Together with the Church dedicated to St Peter of which the oldest part dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this became the nucleus of the village together with the 17<sup>th</sup> century *George PH*, 18<sup>th</sup> century *Five Bells PH* and the 19<sup>th</sup> century School, Fire Station and Mission Hall. Portions of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century cottages still stand in the High Street most notably Swan Cottage. This was the original Swan Inn. The Church contains many old memorials and items of interest.

In 1792 Lord Grenville (Prime Minister 1806 - 7) built his house at Dropmore to the north east of the village and became Lord of the Manor. His name heads the deed written to set up Burnham's first school on The Gore in 1811. This served Burnham, Hitcham and Taplow until 1870 when the school by St Peter's Church was built. The Infant School was started in 1849 on the site of the old Workhouse at the south end of the churchyard. These schools moved to Minnicroft Road in 1963. The Mission Hall (now a fish restaurant) was built by George Hanbury of Hitcham House in 1880 for less formal Anglican Church Services for working people: later there was a boys' club offering boxing and sports facilities.

The first Fire House was built in Church Street to house the manual engine bought with money left in the Will of Henry Sayer of Huntercombe in 1810. A new Fire Station was built in 1908 and the engine and fire crew were a great feature of the village until 1996.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Burnham was a place of business with blacksmiths, harness makers and saddlers, two foundries, seven shoemakers, tailors and dressmakers, nurserymen and seedsmen, three bakers, two grocers and two butchers. Brickmaking was a local industry. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was still a farmhouse and yard at the southern end of the High Street. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century many businesses

closed or moved away, but new ones have taken their place. A regular weekly Market on Wednesdays has been successfully revived.

For many hundreds of years the road to London from the west forded the river at Taplow and followed the line of the present Hitcham Lane and Gore Road to the north of the village and on through Farnham Royal and through the villages to London. Mail coaches took the fast route, along what was called the Bath Road, to Maidenhead and letters arrived in Burnham from there by foot post at 8.00am every morning. The Great Western Railway had reached Taplow by 1838, continuing on westwards over the Thames River Bridge. Burnham did not have a station until 1899 when Burnham Beeches Station was opened, partly to meet the demand created after the City of London purchased Burnham Beeches when it was advertised for sale as part of the Dropmore Estate in 1879. It was dedicated for public use and visitors initially used Slough Station. People walked from the new station at Burnham to the Beeches, although there was some road transport available.

The *George PH* was the venue for Magistrates' meetings though these were later held in the Reading Room built over the Fire Station. This also became Burnham's first library remaining until the purpose built Library in Burnham Park was opened in 1973. This has a Local History Collection. The first village hall was provided by Edward Clifton Brown in Gore Road (now no.25). He came to Burnham in 1902, developed the Burnham Grove Estate and lived at Burnham Grove (now Burnham Beeches Hotel).

The Priory just to the south of the village was built in about 1824 by Walter Jackson, an Engraver from the City of London, on what had been agricultural land. He died in 1834. In 1939 it was sold to Sydney Jones of the Manor Park Construction Company who later exchanged land with the Parish Council for land to the south of the churchyard where he built The Precincts and St Peter's Close, and the first Burnham Park Hall was built on Priory land in 1965. Burnham Park now contains a new replacement building, completed in 2010.

The new building is the meeting place of Burnham Parish Council which held its first meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1894, having taken on the role of local government from the Parish Vestry under the Local Government Act of that year. Vestry Meetings continued solely as part of the Church's administration, having handed over responsibility for appointing constables, road surveyors and lighting among other tasks. The population at that time was about 2700 and the parish covered a larger area than today since Cippenham was included. Hitcham was a separate parish. Parts of Burnham were transferred to Slough in the 1930s, when it was still part of Buckinghamshire.

Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Burnham consisted of the village High Street and outlying farms and cottages, stretching from Farnham Royal in the east to Hitcham in the west; it included Burnham Beeches. Some of Cippenham's farm land was used for the Slough Trading Estate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was a

new concept in the provision of rented industrial buildings whereby planning and services were undertaken by the landlord, leaving companies free to concentrate on developing their products.

In 1920 Eton Rural District Council, with Burnham Parish Council, built the village's first council houses at Orchardville. The early 1950s saw the development of Burnham with the building of the Priory Estate to the south of the village and the Grenville Estate to the north. At the same time the development of a London County Council Estate on what had been Burnham Grove Estate farmland linked the village with Farnham Royal and the Farnham Road. In the 1970s the new Lent Green Estate joined with Lent Rise which was a mainly Victorian development. The old hamlet of Lent centred around Lent Green at the top of the hill, to the west of the village. From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private housing developments grew and building has continue up to the present time, thereby increasing the population to over 12,000.