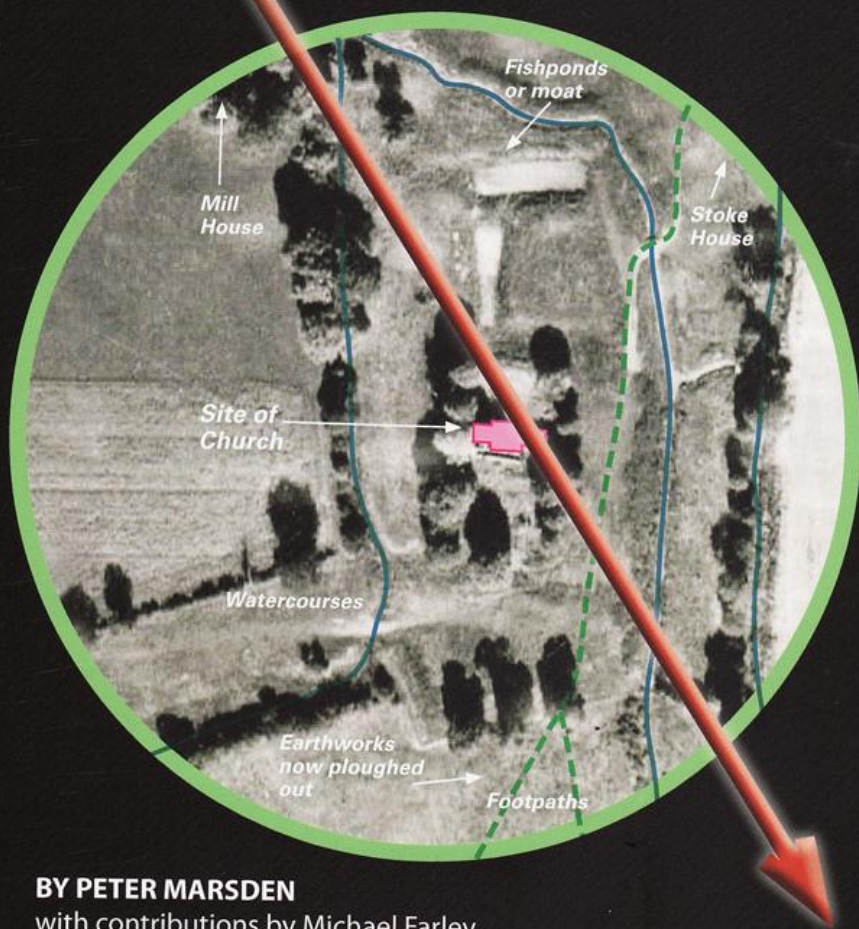


# Last chance for Stoke Mandeville's deserted village?

IN THE PATH OF THE HS2 HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE



**BY PETER MARSDEN**

with contributions by Michael Farley,  
Richard Gem, Marian Miller and Bill Willett

**Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society**



## **The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society**

has members throughout the historic county of Buckinghamshire, including Milton Keynes. Their interests, despite the society's name, range across the spectrum of history, archaeology, natural history and historic buildings.

The society supports the research, understanding and preservation of the county's historic assets, publishes the annual journal *Records of Buckinghamshire*, books and papers, and runs a variety of lectures and outings on historic subjects.

To learn more about the society's activities, see our website at [www.bucksas.org.uk](http://www.bucksas.org.uk) or visit our Library in the County Museum in Aylesbury. If you would like to join the society, see membership details inside the back cover of this publication.

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COVER DRAWING  
by Bill Willett based on  
aerial photograph RAF  
F21 53/RAF/2081 of  
the deserted village site  
(11 January 1957)

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Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

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## **ACCESS TO THE DESERTED VILLAGE SITE: AN IMPORTANT NOTE**

Access to the site of the deserted church and village is along a public  
footpath which leaves the A4010 half a mile south of the present  
Stoke Mandeville village centre. This crosses land that belongs to  
local farms. Visitors to the site are asked please to respect the  
surrounding land and not to remove anything from the deserted  
church ruins or surrounding fields.

## 1:

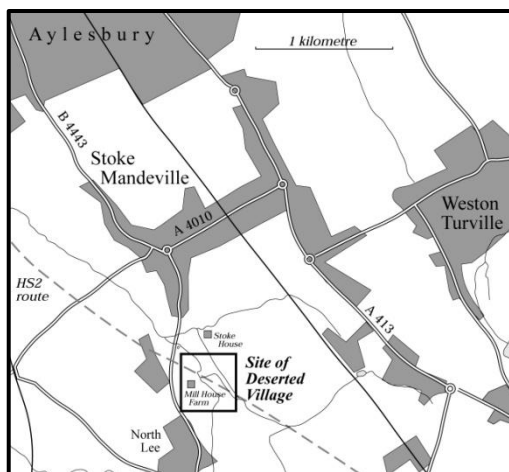
### In the path of HS2...

If you take a public footpath south from Stoke Mandeville village, pass to the west of the 18th-century Stoke House then cross a field, you will come to a roughly rectangular enclosure surrounded by an iron railing. Open the metal gate and go inside. Here you will find a large untidy mound of broken stones, partly obscured by undergrowth and in places up to nine feet high. Look carefully and among the broken brick and flint you will find carved mouldings.

For 800 years this was the Church of St Mary the Virgin, whose chancel dated from the 12th century. Until 150 years ago it was the parish church of Stoke Mandeville. It is still surrounded by headstones, some standing, some fallen. The latest carries the date 15 June 1905.

The village of Stoke Mandeville was not always where it is today. In the fields around what remains of its 12th-century church you will still see earthbanks, watercourses and silted-up ponds – showing where once were buildings, mill races and fishponds, perhaps a moat. Today the original village site is deserted, in the midst of fields, its churchyard marked by lines of overgrown chestnut trees.

Not much is known about the original village, though it was there before the Normans invaded England in 1066. Its site has never been excavated, nor even surveyed in detail. It lies unprotected amongst its fields, unnoticed by most who pass by.



It was certainly not noticed in 2011 by

The site of the deserted village – in the fields to the south of Stoke Mandeville.

the planners of the HS2 high-speed rail line, which if built would cross Buckinghamshire on its way from London to Birmingham. When the planners looked at the section where HS2 trains would sweep out of the Chilterns and west of Aylesbury, they drew a line on the map, the shortest line between two places.

If HS2 goes ahead as it is currently planned – and the government says it will – then what remains of the Saxon and Norman village will be swept away by the bulldozers. Because HS2's 'line on the map' goes through the old church and its quiet, deserted churchyard.

## **2: The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society and HS2**

The Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society is not a political body. The Society has not sought, like the County Council and the Chiltern Society, to oppose the HS2 high-speed rail line plans on economic or legal grounds. But the society does exist to protect the county's historic assets. One of its primary objects is 'the protection and the preservation, as far as possible, of buildings, sites or objects of public, local, antiquarian or historic interest...'

Buckinghamshire has, perhaps, fewer assets than other counties. It has no great industries like the Midlands and the North, no financial centre like London, no ports like Hampshire or Essex. But Buckinghamshire does have a natural and historic environment going back thousands of years – in which you can still, today, read the history of how people have lived here through the changing centuries. These are riches indeed.

The archaeological society is not alone in believing that this heritage is an asset worth defending. Every year hundreds of thousands of people come to Buckinghamshire to enjoy its historic Chiltern landscapes, its great houses such as Cliveden, Waddesdon and Stowe, its medieval churches and villages. These are nationally valued historic assets – and the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society makes no apologies for being partisan in their defence.

### **3:**

## **The effects of HS2 across Buckinghamshire**

If current plans go ahead the HS2 high-speed rail line will cross Buckinghamshire from end to end, affecting the historic landscapes of the Chilterns, the Vale of Aylesbury and North Bucks villages.

The line will enter the county near Denham in the south-west, and, after crossing the valley of the River Colne, will run in a 7.5-mile tunnel under the south Chilterns. Emerging north of Amersham, it will cross the Misbourne Valley on a viaduct to enter the Vale of Aylesbury by running alongside the existing Chiltern Rail line between Wendover and Coombe Hill.

From there its route passes west of Stoke Mandeville, then between Hartwell House and Aylesbury to join the route of the former Great Central line near Quainton Railway Centre. The line then passes close to the villages of Twyford and Chetwode before crossing into Oxfordshire.

The plans show that the line will cut through a range of historic sites and buildings in Buckinghamshire, including a section of the prehistoric Grim's Ditch, sites of known Roman interest and medieval farms. Many more, though not destroyed by the line itself, will be substantially affected by the introduction of a 250mph rail line into their historic environment.

The work of constructing HS2 is an even greater concern. The route itself is known: a strip up to 100 yards wide across the county. But what is not yet known is the impact on the surrounding landscape of the huge construction works that will be necessary to build the line: the access roads for thousands of trucks, the contractors' encampments, equipment stores, spoil dumps, road diversions and so on.

And there are other unknowns too.

Listed buildings and scheduled archaeological sites are marked on the HS2 planning maps. These are protected by legislation, so we can be sure that these will be taken into account by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is to be published by the government in spring 2013.

But the deserted village site south of Stoke Mandeville is neither listed nor scheduled, so it is legally unprotected. And it is not the only historic building or site along the HS2 line that has not yet been officially recognised. The landscape of Buckinghamshire bears the traces of human occupation going back nearly 10,000 years to the end of the last Ice Age. There's hardly a field that doesn't have a story to tell. Across all this HS2 will plough its huge furrow.

#### 4:

#### **'Last chance to see...'**

The old village site at Stoke Mandeville stands in the path of HS2. On the rail planners' maps the line is shown crossing its shallow valley on a low embankment, cutting through the corner of the church ruins and its surrounding graveyard and obliterating the remains of various watercourses and millponds.

We know enough about the old village site to understand that it played an important role in the history of Buckinghamshire. But we *don't* know enough to understand the details – because most of what is left lies hidden under the fields and church ruins.

The few years that are left before the construction of HS2 may be the 'last chance to see' the deserted village of old Stoke Mandeville.



Stoke Mandeville on the first-edition Ordnance Survey map of 1830. The church and old village are to the south of 'Stoke Farm', with the later village to the north.



## 5:

### Old Stoke Mandeville

#### – what we know from the documents

The village we know today as Stoke Mandeville is mentioned in Domesday Book simply as ‘Stoke’.<sup>1</sup> It didn’t acquire the ‘Mandeville’ until the 13th century, when it came into the hands of one Geoffrey de Mandeville.<sup>2</sup>

Domesday Book records that in 1086, the year when it was compiled, Stoke’s lord of the manor was Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln. Stoke was the bishop’s primary landholding in Buckinghamshire. He also held Buckland nearby.

The great royal manor of Aylesbury was held by the king, William I, but the Domesday entry for Aylesbury specifies that ‘the bishop of Lincoln holds the church of this manor’. The lordship of Aylesbury, however, was the king’s, so when supplies were needed for the church and its clergy – and for the bishop and his retinue when he visited – these would have come from his two nearby manors at Stoke and Buckland.

The Domesday survey tells us that in 1086 the village of Stoke had at least 24 families (‘20 villeins and 4 bordars’), and three slaves. The survey counted only able-bodied male workers, so once women, children, the old and infirm were added there would have been around 125 people in all. The village’s cultivated open fields were assessed at ‘8 hides’ (roughly 960 acres) and were sufficient to keep 21 ploughs busy; there was woodland for 30 pigs and meadow land equivalent to three further ‘ploughlands’. There was also a mill, valued at 10 shillings.

But the village of Stoke goes back further than 1086 and the Normans. Domesday records that before the Norman conquest of 1066 the manor had been held by the Anglo-Saxon Bishop Wulfwig of Dorchester on Thames. Stoke ‘lies with the church of Aylesbury’, the survey says, and was held ‘with the church’ by Bishop Wulfwig. Buckland was held by Wulfwig’s brother, Godric.

Sadly there are no surviving Anglo-Saxon boundary charters for Stoke, so in the absence of excavation we do not know how early the

settlement there existed – though there is increasing evidence that some parish boundaries may date back to Roman times or even earlier.

But we do know from Domesday Book that there is something unusual about Stoke. The entries for most villages are restricted to survey details about the land, what it is worth, and who holds it. That for Stoke goes on to say:

‘For the eight hundreds which lie in the circuit of Aylesbury, each Freeman who has one hide or more pays one load of corn to this church. Furthermore from each Freeman one acre of corn or four pence was paid over to this church before 1066, but after the coming of King William it was not paid.’<sup>3</sup>

The ‘church’ is St Mary’s in Aylesbury. But why has this note been added to the entry for *Stoke*?

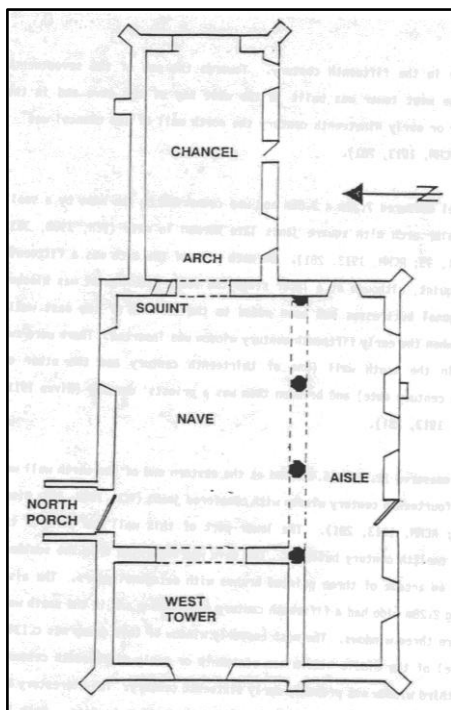
The royal connections of the estate of Aylesbury and church of St Mary seem to go back to the mid Anglo-Saxon period, when Aylesbury lay in the kingdom of Mercia. Whether royal ownership continued under the rule of the West Saxon dynasty over a united kingdom of England is not demonstrable; though there was certainly a royal connection in 971, when the ealdorman Aelfheah bequeathed land at Aylesbury to King Edgar.

Uncertain again is when the church of St Mary was given to the bishops of the diocese in which Aylesbury lay. Under Mercia the bishop’s seat would have been at Leicester, but they retreated to Dorchester on Thames when faced with the Danish settlement of midland England in the latter half of the 9th century. But what is certain from the Domesday Book evidence is that in 1066 the church of Aylesbury was held by Bishop Wulfwig (1053-1067).

The church of St Mary and the clergy serving it would have been supported by the revenues due in the form of tithes, burial fees and such like from the people living within its extensive parish, even when later local people may have had their own chapel to attend. A separate stream of income would have come from the estate at Stoke, particularly from the bishop’s own holding there (the ‘demesne’ land) which according to Domesday amounted to around 360 acres.

But how are we to understand the payment of corn from the Freeman of the eight surrounding 'hundreds'? How much corn did this levy raise? What was it worth? How was the corn collected? Where was it stored and where was it milled?

Might the Domesday surveyor's inclusion of information about the corn levy in his entry for Stoke imply that Stoke was its collection point? That Stoke was where the corn was stored and that the corn was ground at Stoke's mill?



A plan of the original church of St Mary the Virgin made before its demolition. The chancel (top) was 12th-century – was this originally the bishop's chapel?

That the mill at Stoke may have served no more than the immediate 18-plough Stoke estate is suggested by Keith

Bailey's estimate that in Buckinghamshire there was a ratio of one mill for roughly every 15 ploughs;<sup>4</sup> but, against this, we have no idea of the actual size of the Stoke mill.

Under the Normans and over succeeding centuries this direct connection between the bishops, Aylesbury and Stoke became weakened.

The Anglo-Saxon Bishop Wulfwig was removed in 1067 and replaced by Remigius, who moved his diocesan seat from nearby Dorchester to the more distant Lincoln. The revenues from Aylesbury were assigned first to the chapter of the new cathedral in Lincoln, then, in the 13th century, to one of its canons. In the papal *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291 the value of Aylesbury and its chapelries

was given as 185 marks (nearly £124);<sup>5</sup> so the income from them was considerable.

A significant change for the parishioners of Aylesbury came in the late 13th century, when the chapelries of Stoke, Bierton, Buckland and Quarrendon were separated from Aylesbury to create a new vicarage of Bierton.

The manor of Stoke, on the other hand, remained with the bishops of Lincoln, who by the middle of the 12th century had divided it, creating two manors, sub-let by the bishop to the families of Mandeville and Eynsford. A document dated 1535 refers to the chapelry of 'Stoke Mandeville with Stoke Halling'.<sup>6</sup> The precise locations of the sites of these two manors are today uncertain, though one may be the house known today as 'Hall End' and the other may be near the old church ruins.

## 6:

### A site of national importance

The historical evidence summarised above suggests that the site of the old church and manor of Stoke Mandeville is *a site of national importance*. As we will see, this is supported by the archaeological evidence. This national importance hinges on three facts:

Firstly, as an Anglo-Saxon episcopal manor the site is potentially comparable with the important excavated sites at North Elmham in Norfolk and Bishopstone in Sussex. So far in the south-east midlands of England there are no comparable excavated sites.

Secondly this is known to have been the site of an Anglo-Saxon watermill recorded in Domesday Book, whose position may have been related to the processing of the large quantities of grain due to the bishop from the surrounding areas.

Thirdly, this was the supporting estate of the royal minster church of St Mary in Aylesbury, whose history goes back to the 7th century, and which was in the late Anglo-Saxon period in the top rank of minster churches, immediately below those that were cathedrals.<sup>7</sup>

## **7: What we know from the archaeology**

Although there has never been an archaeological investigation of the deserted village site and what remains of its church, let alone excavation, some details can be deduced from observations both past and present. The old parish church of St Mary the Virgin, which was in full use until 1866 and where churchyard burials continued until 1908, was recorded at various stages before its final demolition in 1966.<sup>8</sup> Around it, various earthbanks and watercourses offer clues to what may lie beneath the fields.

The old church ceased to serve the parish in 1866, by which time the village centre had migrated to its present position at the road junction further north, where the parish church newly built in that year stands today. We do not know why the village moved, but the old site is low-lying, with several watercourses – so may at some time have proved damp and unhealthy.

The turnpike road extension from Terrick towards Aylesbury, built just after 1822,<sup>9</sup> avoided the old village site by holding to the higher ground to the west – as it still does today in its new guise as the A4010. The road builders' choice of this route probably indicates that the village site, except for the church itself, was mostly already deserted by the end of the 18th century. Bryant's map of the county in 1824 shows the old church in the fields.<sup>10</sup>

The old church, progressively abandoned after 1866, gradually fell first into disrepair, then into ruin. The remaining walls and arches became dangerous and these were finally demolished, at the request of the Parochial Church Council, in January 1966 by a troop of Royal Engineers.<sup>11</sup>

All that remains on the site today is the mound of broken stone, the tops of several walls visible within it. However several items from the old church found their way to the new: these included five bells from the old church tower, the 15th-century font, the pulpit (later moved to Little Kimble church), the parochial church chest, the Royal Coat of Arms and the Brudenell Monument.<sup>12</sup>

The monument is to three children of Edmund Brudenell, whose family were lords of the manor from 1409 to 1639.<sup>13</sup> The marble

figures, 16th-century by their costume, appear to have been given a later classical setting – though the changes must have been made before it was moved from the old church.

The architecture of the church itself was recorded before its final demolition, including a report by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in 1913.<sup>14</sup> W Niven examined the disused building in 1911 for the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, and reported:

‘The chancel must date from the early Norman time, if not prior to it, judging by the very small semi-circular chancel arch of plain square section... The width of chancel being 12ft, that of the arch is only 5ft 10in. ... The piscina [basin], and a lancet [window], widely splayed inside, above it, are of the 13th century. There is a priest’s door on the south side, only 1ft 10in between the stone jambs. ...

‘The nave, about 38ft x 18ft, ...is separated from its aisle by quite a good 14th-century arcade of three bays carried upon plain and robust octagonal piers with well-moulded capitals. The south doorway is also of the 14th century ... [and] the north doorway...’

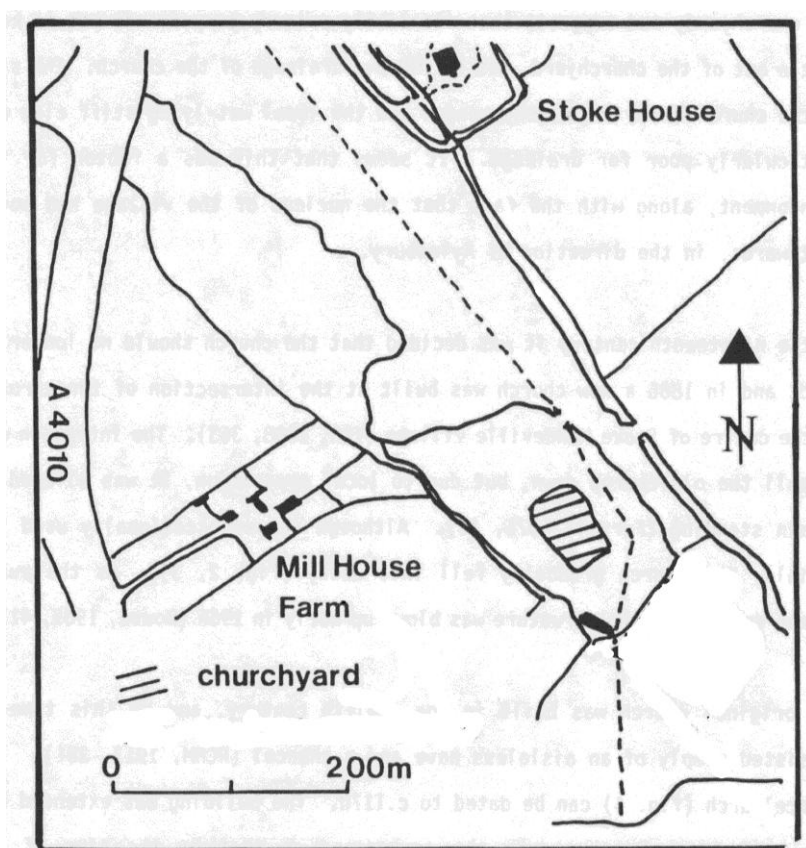
Niven also mentions ‘a brick tower, meanly built, apparently in the 17th century, within the nave, the west, north and arcade walls being utilised [to support it], and a thin arch built within the nave to carry its eastern wall.’ He concluded by recommending various works to preserve the building – none of which were carried out.<sup>15</sup>

The roughly rectangular churchyard is in a shallow valley. It is surrounded by a low bank which is today topped by an iron railing.

Even to the untutored eye it is clear that this is a man-made landscape. From the church mound three watercourses are visible – one to the south-west and two north-east. They run parallel to each other and at right angles to the church. All three are fed by streams from further up the valley, but all have been at some time diverted and embanked. Immediately south of the churchyard, a 10ft-high bank turns one stream through 90 degrees and into a deep cutting in the hillside. To the north another watercourse runs in a straight line for 500 metres, raised 10 metres above the valley floor.

Two of these are former mill leats, which once provided the water to drive mills. The most recent, that to the north, ends in a large ornamental pond to the side of Stoke House. Behind the house, among several ranges of farm buildings, a deep pit can still be seen which contains the rusting remains of an iron millwheel. It was last used in the 1930s.

On the opposite side of the valley, 200 metres from the church site, is a scatter of buildings with a significant name: 'Mill House Farm' (though it has had other names in its time). The modern farm is built on higher ground, but not far from the western leat. There is no sign of a mill there today.



A plan of the deserted village site drawn in 1990 for a report done by the County Museum on the church and churchyard.

The third watercourse runs to the east of the church site and is probably the oldest. Today it is simply a stream – though a very straight one – taking the overflow from the later leat that leads to Stoke House Farm. It may once have served the earliest mill on the site. At one time it fed three rectangular ponds to the north of the church site which are visible today only as shallow, silted-up depressions in a grassy field, but within local memory one was used as a watercress bed. They show clearly on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map. They were clearly man-made and may have been fishponds or even, before that, a moat around a manor house or grange.

How old are the three leats? An archaeological investigation might tell us. Did one of these leats turn the mill mentioned in Domesday Book? We do not know. But one thing is certain: the presence of three parallel leats shows how important the mill must have been to the economy of old Stoke Mandeville, right back from the 1930s to the Domesday survey of 1086 and beyond.

An aerial photograph taken in 1957 shows that the churchyard stands at the centre of a larger area bounded east and west by two of the leats, to the north by the former ponds and to the south by a low bank. There are bridges over the leats to the south-west, leading up towards Terrick and the road to Chequers and Great Missenden, and to the north-west towards Stoke House and today's Stoke Mandeville village.<sup>16</sup>

The modern Ordnance Survey map even today also shows earthworks in the field immediately to the south<sup>17</sup> – though if you look for these today the field has been ploughed flat and there is no sign of earthworks. In 1990 a site survey and report by the County Museum suggested that this was formerly the site of a moated manor house.<sup>18</sup>

Both of the county's 19th-century historians noted 'moats and ditches'. J Sheahan mentions distinct traces of a moat and fishpond, and says that foundations of buildings had been found during the widening of a stream in the field next to the church.<sup>19</sup>

E R Matthaei, a resident of Stoke Mandeville, wrote in 1955 that 'in the lower ground near the old church... the remains of various buildings can be traced.'<sup>20</sup> Again, these traces are no longer visible



today, though in the 1970s more than 50 sherds of medieval pottery were collected when fields to the north of the churchyard were ploughed.<sup>21</sup> These are now in the County Museum in Aylesbury.

## 8:

### What we don't know

The lack of an archaeological excavation or even a detailed survey at old Stoke Mandeville leaves important questions unanswered:

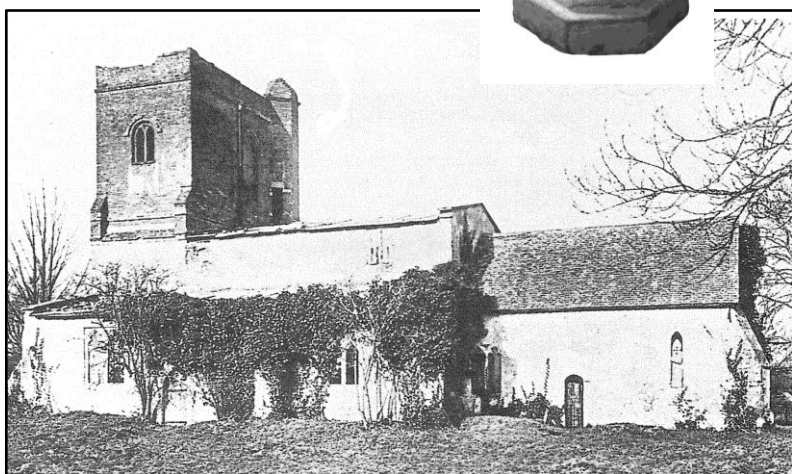
- Was the 12th-century church of St Mary the Virgin the first on this site? Or does the mound of rubble that it is today hide the foundations of an earlier building which may date back to Anglo-Saxon times? If the church's 12th-century chancel was the first chapel on the site, this would suggest that it was established as part of the development of the manor by the Mandeville family. If it replaced an earlier structure, this might be the bishop's chapel. Only archaeological excavation could establish this.
- The church sits within a burial ground: when was this established? What can the probably large number of burials here tell us about the population of Stoke Mandeville through the middle ages and into modern times?
- Did the site include a manor house, with or without a moat? If so, this would suggest that the chapel developed as part of a manorial complex. Again, the relationship of chapel to the rest of the site could only be investigated archaeologically: by geophysical survey in the first instance, followed by excavation if the results justify this.
- Where was the water mill? Or indeed mills, because this was clearly an important site for the milling of corn for a thousand years or more until the waterwheel at Stoke House fell silent less than a hundred years ago. The whole lie of the land suggests that the site may have been selected originally to take advantage of one or other of these streams, and that the Anglo-Saxon bishop's mill recorded in Domesday may lie somewhere close at hand. A detailed study of the watercourses and their

development over the centuries might help to refine the question.

- How were the elements of the village surveyed in Domesday Book – the mill, the dwellings for 24 or more families, perhaps a barn, perhaps a manor house – set out around the church? One hypothesis that should be tested is that the old village site might originate from a late Anglo-Saxon episcopal manor, with the importance of its mill reflecting the processing of the corn rendered to the bishop by the Freemen of the eight hundreds. The plan of the village might answer this question.
- Finally, when did the old village become deserted and why? Was this a gradual process? Or the result of an epidemic resulting perhaps from its damp, low-lying and potentially unhealthy situation?

RIGHT: The 15th-century font, which was moved to the new parish church in 1866.

BELOW: The abandoned church in the early 20th century: the ivy is taking over, but the roof has not yet collapsed.



## 9:

### What needs to be done

The evidence summarised here shows that this is a site of national importance. HS2 should therefore be re-routed to avoid it altogether. This should be the first priority.

When the first route maps for HS2 were released in 2011, the line passed 30 metres north-east of the church ruins. Too close for comfort, but not necessarily destructive. Then new maps issued in January 2012 showed that the line had been moved to the south-west so that it passed directly through the ruined chancel, probably the oldest part of the church.<sup>22</sup>

Why the change? Ostensibly to reduce the impact on Stoke Mandeville and Aylesbury. But it seems that as far as HS2 Limited is concerned, Stoke Mandeville's deserted village is not even on the map because the amended route passes right through the deserted village site without noticing it.

The problem facing old Stoke Mandeville is that its site has not been officially recognised. It is not designated as a scheduled ancient monument, so is unprotected by legislation. The official HS2 route maps mark listed buildings and scheduled monuments – but ignore anything not officially designated. The official 'Appraisal of Sustainability' for the HS2 consultation last year was sketchy on what it called 'cultural heritage'.

However this does not mean that the deserted village site is officially invisible. The evidence summarised here supports the argument that the site is of national importance, and therefore should be regarded as of similar significance to a scheduled 'ancient monument'. This is in accordance with the government's National Planning Policy Framework,<sup>23</sup> which states that, for planning purposes, sites of equivalent archaeological significance to scheduled monuments should be treated as though designated.

The Historic Environment Record for Buckinghamshire, which is maintained by the county council's Archaeology Service,<sup>24</sup> includes a dozen separate entries for the deserted village site. The consultation documentation on the scoping of the HS2

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) states that: ‘Undesignated assets are heritage assets formally identified by local authorities and recognised through their inclusion in the Historic Environment Record – HER.’<sup>25</sup> The EIA’s scoping document does recognise ‘undesignated historic and archaeological assets’ as long as these can be shown to be ‘of schedulable quality and importance’.<sup>26</sup>

In response to this, the county’s Archaeology Service is already working to bring known HER records for Stoke Mandeville’s deserted village and other ‘undesignated assets’ along the route of HS2 to the attention of those who will conduct the government’s EIA. The Society has every confidence that the Bucks Archaeology Service will ensure that the value of both designated and undesignated heritage assets is recognised by the HS2 planners – but the signs are that this will be an uphill task, with reduced resources as a result of cuts in public spending. This pamphlet is intended as an offer to put our shoulders to the wheel too.

The aim of this short account has been to establish the historic importance of Stoke Mandeville’s deserted church and village – that it is a historic asset that should be valued, not swept away.

HS2 should avoid this nationally important site. An early evaluation of its extent and significance is essential before the line of HS2 is finalised and its loss becomes irrevocable. A geophysical survey should be carried out in the fields around to discover the actual extent of the village, whose boundary is still uncertain. Then detailed planning will be needed to ensure that not only the line itself can be kept clear of the deserted village site, but also the construction contractors’ access routes and ancillary sites such as equipment stores and spoil heaps.

If any section of the site cannot be avoided, then, well before any construction starts, what remains of the church beneath the mounds of broken stone and the village beneath the fields around it must be archaeologically investigated to discover what old Stoke Mandeville can tell about its history, and the role it played in the history of the county and country; to preserve what is found, wherever possible; and to record what is learned.

But with a site as important as this, the first priority should be its preservation intact, by moving the HS2 line.

## 10:

### Investigating along the route of HS2

Stoke Mandeville's deserted village is certainly not the only heritage asset that has so far passed unnoticed along the route of HS2 through Buckinghamshire or its neighbouring counties.

During the first half of 2011 the government ran a 'Public Consultation' on the HS2 high-speed rail proposal, requesting submissions from interested and affected parties along the planned route. In order to respond to this, members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society launched the HS2 Historic Impact Assessment project, whose aim is to draw attention to the likely impact of HS2 on the historic buildings, villages and other sites along the proposed line.

The project's aim is to focus on gathering evidence for the impact of the line on the county's historic environment. Whether this evidence would add to arguments for changes to the HS2 plan in order to preserve historic sites, or be used to enable 'rescue' work before its construction, it is clear that without such evidence the historic value of what might be lost might never be known.

The project therefore aims to:

- Identify sites, buildings and environments at risk.
- Survey key places along the route where the historical impact is likely to be high.
- Correct inaccuracies in the 'sustainability' case being made by HS2 Limited.
- Complement the environmental assessment being done by the county's Archaeology Service
- Submit a report to the HS2 Consultation Process.

In 2011 the project completed six impact assessment reports. Four of these focused on Twyford, where the line was routed to pass within 150 metres of the Grade I listed parish church and the Grade II listed former vicarage, St Mary's House.

The six reports were:

- Chetwode's Historic Landscape
- Potter Row, Great Missenden
- Twyford village and old cottages
- Twyford's medieval earthworks
- St Mary's House, Twyford
- Portway Farm and Barn, Twyford

These reports were preliminary studies, produced quickly in order to form part of the Society's submission to the HS2 Public Consultation in July 2011.<sup>27</sup> Six months later, in January 2012, the government announced that HS2 would go ahead, with a variety of minor amendments but no major changes to the route.

This investigation into Stoke Mandeville's deserted village site, the subject of this pamphlet, is the first survey of 2012 carried out by members of the Society's HS2 Historical Impact Assessment project group. Other surveys will follow.<sup>28</sup>

## **11: Experience from HS1**

Only one high-speed rail line has been built before in the UK: HS1, running through Kent to link London with the Channel Tunnel. One account of how HS1 construction handled the heritage assets that stood in its path raises both hopes and concerns for what will happen with HS2.<sup>29</sup>

With HS1, archaeologists were integrated into the design team from the start, working closely with the engineers. With HS2, only now, it seems, after several years of planning by the engineering teams and with the detailed route already determined, are archaeologists and other experts being consulted for the EIA.

The account of HS1 makes the point that in Kent there was constant pressure on heritage conservation issues from local authority conservation professionals, county archaeologists and those of English Heritage. It concludes that this 'diligent scrutiny' was essential to ensure that the protection of heritage assets was given due weight in the design process and throughout construction.

With HS2, cuts in local government services at both county and district levels must raise concerns whether Buckinghamshire's archaeologists and conservation officers will have the resources to scrutinise a design and construction process which will be both on a huge scale and spread out over many years.

Will the councils put extra funding in place for this work? Will the government permit this when local government spending is capped at austerity levels?

On the positive side, the HS1 account reports that 'archaeological mitigation' along the line 'resulted in a lasting legacy of valuable research data'. Will the resources be available to ensure this outcome for heritage assets affected by HS2?

## **12:**

### **What happens next?**

In Spring 2012 the government set about 'scoping' its Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the future construction of the HS2 line. The EIA will assess the impact of the line's construction on both environmental and historic assets – and decide how this impact might be reduced.

The initial scoping exercise will determine what will be included in the EIA and what will not. The evidence presented here is the case for the inclusion of the Stoke Mandeville site as a heritage asset of high significance with a high impact rating, since, as the proposals stand, we believe the significance of the asset will be totally altered or destroyed.

The construction of HS2 will not take place in a vacuum. As any business leader will tell you, HS2, like any project, will bring both costs and benefits. It is important for our understanding of our history that the complete loss of the deserted village of Stoke Mandeville is not one of the costs.

There will be few enough benefits to be had from a high-speed rail line whose trains will not stop anywhere in the county. Perhaps the preservation and investigation of Stoke Mandeville's deserted village could bring Buckinghamshire one benefit at least.

## A NOTE ON SOURCES

The account given here does not set out to be academically comprehensive and fully referenced. Its intention is rather to draw attention to the unfortunate conjunction of the planned route of the HS2 high-speed rail line with the historically significant site of the deserted village.

If the reader would like to know more about the history of Stoke Mandeville, the references and sources given here will provide a starting point. Much greater knowledge will be gained, however, if the deserted village site can be preserved intact.

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4. **Records of Buckinghamshire**, volume 39 (Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, Aylesbury 1997) page 69.
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7. Recent archaeological research throws new light on the development and context of St Mary's, Aylesbury. See Michael Farley and Gillian Jones, **Iron Age Ritual, a Hillfort and Evidence for a Minster at Aylesbury** (Oxbow Books, Oxford 2012).
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14. **Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Buckinghamshire**, volume 1 (1913) pages 281-2.
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20. E R Matthaei, **Stoke Mandeville** (Stoke Mandeville 1955) page 8.
21. Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Record, record ID 0093800001.
22. **HS2 Feasibility Study** (ARUP) Drawing numbers HS2-ARP-07-DR-RW-03109 and HS2-ARP-00-DR-RW-05009.
23. **National Planning Policy Framework** (2012), paragraph 139.
24. The Bucks HER database is on-line at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/Historic\\_environment\\_record.page](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/archaeology/Historic_environment_record.page)
25. **HS2 London to West Midlands EIA Scope and Methodology Report**, Draft Condition A (ARUP/URS 30 March 2012).
26. 'Factors for assessing the significance/value of heritage assets', in **HS2 London to West Midlands EIA Scope and Methodology Report** (ARUP/URS) page 63, table 7.
27. The six survey reports may be downloaded from the BAS website at [www.bucksas.org.uk/hbgprojects/HS2consultationresponse.html](http://www.bucksas.org.uk/hbgprojects/HS2consultationresponse.html). This page also includes a copy of the society's letter to the HS2 Consultation.
28. For further information about the society's HS2 project and current activities, eMail the project coordinator at [hs2@bucksas.org.uk](mailto:hs2@bucksas.org.uk).
29. Paul Booth and others, **On Track: The Archaeology of High Speed 1 Section 1 in Kent** (Oxbow Books, Oxford 2011).

# In the path of HS2

## The HS2 historical impact assessment project by members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

A series of survey reports on historic buildings and archaeological sites that stand on or close to the projected line, with assessments of the impact that the line will have.

### **St Mary's House, Twyford**

Historic Building Report by Peter Marsden and Marian Miller  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/2011-01

### **Twyford Village Earthworks**

Historic Landscape Report by Michael Farley  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/2011-02

### **Portway Farm, Twyford**

Historic Buildings Report by Sue Fox and John Brushe  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/2011-03

### **Potter Row, Great Missenden**

Historic Buildings Report by Yvonne Edwards  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/ 2011-04

### **Chetwode**

Historic Landscape Report by Karen Pepler  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/2011-05

### **Twyford Village, Buckinghamshire**

Historic Environment Appraisal by Marian Miller  
REPORT NUMBER BAS/2011-06

- These reports can all be read or downloaded, free, from the Society's website at [www.bucksas.org.uk](http://www.bucksas.org.uk) – where future activities relating to HS2 and Buckinghamshire will also appear.

# Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society

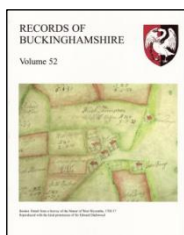


## MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

Members receive the annual *Records of Buckinghamshire* free every year, have the use of the society's Library and a range of activities including lectures, outings, project groups, day schools and research.

Single membership £12 a year, family £16, junior £8. Contact the Membership Secretary at BAS, County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury HP20 2QP

## RECORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



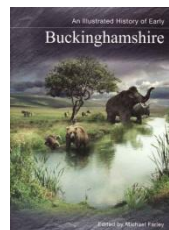
The Society's annual journal, *Records of Buckinghamshire*, publishes reports of archaeological excavations, historic buildings, local and industrial history, natural history and all aspects of times past in Bucks. It is published in May every year.

For the latest issue, send a cheque for £16 made out to 'Bucks Archaeological Society', to Records of Bucks, County Museum, Church Street, Aylesbury HP20 2QP

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If the HS2 high-speed rail line goes ahead as planned – and the government says it will – then what remains of the Saxon and Norman village of Stoke Mandeville will be swept away by bulldozers. Because its route goes through the old church ruins and their quiet, deserted churchyard.

This pamphlet outlines what we know of the original Stoke Mandeville, and what will be lost if current plans go ahead unchanged. It sets out the evidence that this deserted village is in fact a site of national importance.

This is an appeal, not just for the protection of Stoke Mandeville's deserted village, but on behalf of all historic buildings and sites along the route of HS2 as it crosses Buckinghamshire from end to end.

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