

Potter Row, Great Missenden

HISTORIC BUILDINGS REPORT / July 2011

Including HS2 high-speed rail line Impact Assessment

**Buckinghamshire
Archaeological
Society**



**SURVEY AND
REPORT:
Yvonne Edwards**

Report number
BAS/2011-04

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Compiled by Yvonne Edwards from her own field survey in July 2011 with residents of Potter Row. This is report number BAS/ 2011-04.

1 THE SITE

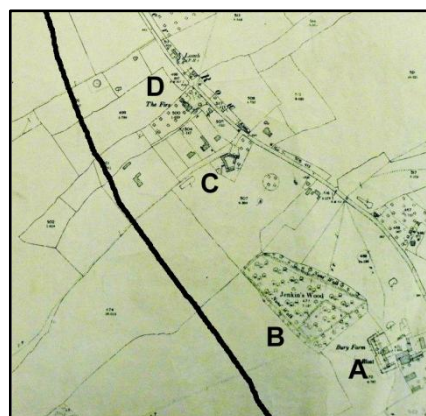
Potter Row is a lane running through the fields and woodland of a Chiltern plateau. The age of the buildings, the field patterns and archaeological finds indicate that people have been living here at least since the 1600s and probably earlier. The landscape includes ancient farms, a medieval manor and early pottery kilns.

Potter Row is connected to the Misbourne Valley by an ancient trackway, Leather Lane, and three designated footpaths, and by road to Great Missenden via South Heath. The National Grid Reference for Bury Farm, at the southern end of the Row, is SP 907021; that for Hammond's Hall Farm at the northern end is SP 898032. The entire length of Potter Row lies within an Archaeological Notification Area.

2 THE SURVEY

The survey was carried out in July 2011 by Yvonne Edwards, with help from residents of Potter Row, to gather information about the farmhouses, cottages, associated buildings and surrounding landscape.

This survey and report is one of a series carried out by members of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society's Historic Buildings Group in advance of a proposal to construct a high-speed railway (HS2) which would cross the hillside of the Misbourne Valley on a line parallel to Potter Row and at a distance of between 200 and 250 metres from the lane – but closer to its historic buildings and earthworks.



The 1898 OS map showing Potter Row, superimposed with the planned HS2 rail line. A is Bury Farm, B Jenkins Wood earthworks, C Park Farm, D The Firs..

3 SUMMARY

Potter Row is a settlement dating back to the Bronze Age which today includes 16th and 17th-century farmhouses and former labourers cottages of significant historic interest, relating to both agriculture and medieval pottery industry. Most recent houses of architectural importance link Potter Row to the Victorian watercolour artist William Callow and the founder of the Liberty design store.

Taken together, these are the essential elements of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty, a heritage asset of nationally recognised environmental and historic value - which Potter Row therefore represents. The Impact Assessment concludes that the historic landscape of Potter Row will be inevitably and irrevocably damaged, and its long-term heritage value lost, if the HS2 high-speed rail line proposals go ahead in their present form.



Two houses on the north side of Potter Row. That on the right is Lamb House, formerly The Lamb public house - and popularly known as 'The Bleeding Lamb'.

4 THE BUILDINGS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

There are 39 houses on Potter Row, including farmhouses and cottages associated with agriculture and the earlier pottery industry. One used to be the local pub. There are a few larger and architecturally important houses.

4.1 Bury Farm and earthworks

4.1.1 Bury Farmhouse

The Bury Farmhouse is a former 17th-century manor house. An earlier field survey identified a medieval moat and fishpond . Two 18th-century timber-framed barns and an 18th-century timber-framed granary are of both historic and architectural merit. An archaeological investigation discovered a post-hole containing pottery that dated from between the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age, indicating early human occupation of the site.¹

HS2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Bury has stood on this site for 400 years or more in a peaceful rural setting. The planned route for HS2 passes within 125-150 metres, cutting through farmland and will change this environment irreversibly.

4.1.2 Jenkins Wood earthworks

Immediately to the north of Bury Farm is the adjacent woodland of Jenkins Wood. Here an earthwork enclosure, measuring 150 x 50 metres, is defined by a bank and external ditch, with the remains of a smaller 80 x 50-metre enclosure lying to the south.² Identified as a medieval moat and bailey, these earthworks are likely to have been associated with the early manorial settlement that preceded the buildings at Bury Farm.³

HS2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The planned route for HS2 passes within 70 metres of these earthworks, cutting through footpaths which provide access. Activities associated with HS2 construction will certainly endanger the preservation of this historic monument.

4.2 Cottages linked to agriculture and the pottery industry

4.2.1 Warren Cottage

The drift deposits on this Chiltern plateau include large amounts of clay, so it is not surprising that Potter Row gained its name from the pottery industry established here in the 13th century. In AD 1311 it was known as *Le Pottererewe*.⁴

The broken sherds of jugs, cooking pots, jars and bowls dating from between the 13th and 15th centuries have been found scattered across several of the Potter Row gardens, along with medieval pottery kiln 'wasters'.⁵

Warren Cottage is particularly notable because a quantity of 17th-century pottery, including distinctive stamped ware and kiln wasters, was found in the garden along with fragments of 17th-century kiln furniture originating from the kiln structures themselves. The absence of pottery at the Warren from before the 17th century suggests that the Potter Row industry was of two phases, medieval and 17th-century.⁶

4.2.2 Beeway cottage

Beeway is a typical example of a fairly basic farm labourer's cottage, with low ceilings and smallish rooms. It would have been built by unskilled workmen, using brick and flint from the fields to produce solid walls but no foundations. It was built with a lean-to coal shed and outdoor privies.

The present owners have carried out improvements and cared for its structure so that the original front doors still open out on to Potter Row. As with many cottages in this area, the cottage was acquired in 1913 by the Liberty family to house tenants working on their estate and was split into two separate dwellings known as 1 and 2 Liberty Cottages.

Part of the garden between Beeway and the adjacent Hedgesparrow Cottage is still designated as allotment, having originally been manorial waste, from which it was converted under the Allotment Act in the 1930s.

A former resident, a farmworker long-retired, related to the current resident how they worked on the fields dawn to dusk and seven days a week with only a barrel of beer and a cheese sandwich. His mother had been involved in the local hat trade using straw platt – and another Potter Row resident, at Hill View, confirmed that straw braiders worked along the lane and that finished hats were sent to Luton. The workers took pleasure on special occasions in retiring to the Bleeding Lamb pub – another of the cottages still standing in Potter Row.

HS2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

These examples are included to emphasise the diverse range of buildings that make up Potter row, their role in the history and structuring of the landscape and the present existence of a local community with an interest and pride in their historic environment. This community is certain to be disrupted and dispersed if the current plan for HS2 is implemented.

4.3 Ancient Farmhouses

4.3.1 Hammonds Hall Farmhouse

This timber-framed farmhouse, which lies at the north-west end of Potter Row, was probably built in the early 17th century, being later cased in brick and some flint.

The main building is two storeys with an old tile roof, half-hipped at the south end and with a large central brick chimney stack. Its age can be confirmed by the position of the door opposite the stack. The building also has a small rear wing of an early date.

The interior is remarkable with the original timbers exposed and a large inglenook exposed in south room. Curved windbraces can be seen in the roof.

4.3.2 Park Farm

A small brick-and-flint two-bedroom dwelling was first constructed on this site around 1600, with a further extension in 1690 which had inner walls of wattle and daub. The roof originally had dormer windows to provide accommodation for workers on the third floor of the house.

On the third floor there is also an enclosed space, perhaps a priest hole, which can only be accessed via the roof space of the 1600 building. This is of interest since after the dissolution of the monasteries this area was a strong supporter of the Catholic faith.

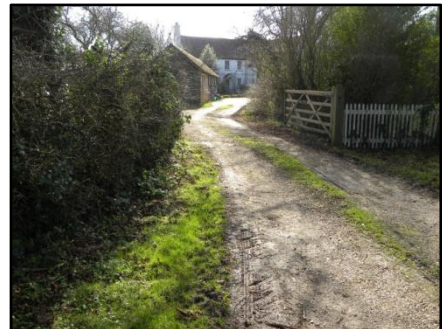
The current family have owned this house since 1949. They have restored the fireplaces to their original construction and note that beams for smoking meat can be seen in the lower chimney stack.

This farmhouse has a system of underground water collection tanks as piped water was not provided to Potter Row until 1933. There is a dew pond in the back field surrounded by oak trees.

The imprint of the main farm buildings adjoining the house appears on a map prior to the Enclosure Act.⁷ The farm field adjacent to Potter Row lane contains the ditch which marked the boundary of common land before the Enclosure Act.



Bury Farm – the high-speed line would pass about 50 metres to the left of this picture.



Park Farm – the original building dates from around 1600.



Beeway Cottage – a typical brick-and-flint labourer's cottage built with materials taken direct from the fields.



The Firs – built by the Victorian watercolour painter William Callow in 1860.

4.4 Houses of significant historic and architectural merit

4.4.1 The Firs

The original cottage which stood on the site of The Firs was bought by the famous watercolour artist William Callow (1812-1908) and his wife Harriet in spring 1855. After five years they decided to demolish their cottage and build a new home on the site. The architect Augustus Frere was engaged and the house was completed in 1860.

William Callow was a regular visitor to Queen Victoria and his visits and sketches are recorded in Queen Victoria's journal. He died in 1908 and was buried in Great Missenden Churchyard.

During the Second World War the house was occupied by 'an important family seeking refuge from London'. After the war the house was used as a printing and book publishing house; amongst others, the first Noddy books were all printed there.

The Firs is a major example of high Victorian architecture with a magnificent, almost cloistered, hall, with the original shutters and architraves still in position. The tranquil setting which so inspired one of Britain's most famous watercolourists remains a major feature of this house today.

4.4.2 Hunts Green Chase

At the west end of Potter Row is another house of considerable note. The house was originally called North Lodge and was built around 1911 by Arthur Lazenby Liberty, of the Liberty store in London, along with a sister house, South Lodge, which is beside the A413 in the Misbourne Valley to the west of Potter Row. The houses were built as lodges at either end of the farm track which runs down to the A413 and was used in earlier days by the Liberty family carriage to take them to Great Missenden station.

This house has very unusual, possibly unique cruciform architecture, as expected from the influence of William Morris and other Liberty designers. Internally the Liberty influence can still be seen in herringbone parquet flooring, tiled fireplaces, unusual oval and leaded-light windows and remnants of William Morris wallpaper. The first tenant of North Lodge was the manager of Liberty stores glove department.

The house is set within attractive gardens and with beautiful views of the Chiltern landscape. The present owners are both musicians, attracted to Potter Row by the peace and quiet they need to work.

HS2 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Each of these early 17th-century farms and houses of significant historic and architectural merit, in their individual structure and history, record the history of the current landscape. All will be seriously impacted if the HS2 plans are permitted to go ahead. The farm track down the hillside from Hunts Green Farm used by the Liberty's carriage will become a construction access road under the HS2 plans.

5 THE IMPACT OF THE PLANNED HS2 HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE

These houses, farmhouse and cottages, and others not mentioned, form part of the attractive and historic environment along and around Potter Row. All fall less than 250 metres of the proposed HS2 route and will experience degradation of the environment and landscape. This will inevitably impinge on their immediate surroundings and the lives of their owners. In many cases buildings are listed and their environmental setting will be lost.

5.1 The land and wildlife

There will also be destruction and division of hill-top agricultural land and woodland. There will be loss of wildlife in the immediate vicinity, with permanent division of the landscape which will prevent and interrupt the natural flow of wildlife. With the imposition of the rail track and associated access routes for construction and maintenance there will be, for the residents and all those who enjoy this part of the Chilterns, the loss of views, essential environmental habitats and landscape.

5.2 The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

There will also be loss of peaceful surroundings which were created centuries ago and have been maintained – in recent times supported by the Chilterns' official status as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These will be replaced by large man-made structures and train noise. Both will create serious problems. Before the HS2 high-speed line is up and running there will be disruption for several years due to construction work. The plan to use the farm track used by the Liberty's carriage as an access road is but one example.

5.3 The historic environment

The historic cohesion of Potter Row will be lost. This cohesion derives from the knowledge and transfer of information between residents, many of whom have lived in Potter Row for years and in some cases for generations. This preserves a sympathy for the historic nature of the landscape and works together to maintain it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- All photographs by Marian Miller.

REFERENCES

1. Buckinghamshire Sites and Monuments Records (hereafter SMR): 0038401000 and 0038400001. SMR records can be accessed on-line via the Bucks County website 'Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past' at <https://ubp.buckscc.gov.uk/>
2. A Pike, 'Earthwork Enclosures in the Buckinghamshire Chilterns' in Holgate, R (editor) **Chiltern Archaeology: A Handbook for the Next Decade** (1995) pages 118-119.
3. SMR: 0523800000; 0054800000).
4. See A Mawer and F Stenton, **The Place names of Buckinghamshire** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1925); J G Jenkins, **The Cartulary of Missenden Abbey**, volume 1 (Bucks Archaeological Society 1938); and H Ashworth, 'Evidence for a Medieval Pottery Industry at Potter Row, Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire' in **Records of Buckinghamshire**, volume 25 (1938) pages 153-159.
5. SMR: 0257704000: 0257701000: 0257702000: 0257703000; 0257702000.
6. SMR: 0234101000.
7. The map is in Aylesbury Reference Library.