

### **BAS visit to Colnbrook, 6 June 2015**

Colnbrook, in the extreme south east of Buckinghamshire, was one of the busiest thoroughfares in the country, much-frequented by well-to-do travellers on the Bath Road. It had at least six coaching inns, one of which is still a public house, another is a restaurant and four more survive as private houses or flats. We visited the town (the locals now call it a village) on the day that the residents were celebrating the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta at nearby Runnymede. We felt somewhat out of place as most people were in fancy dress.

We first visited the *Ostrich*, a 16<sup>th</sup> century inn, still with its heavy doors to the inn yard, a sumptuous assembly room on the first floor, and very tall carved balusters to the staircase. Similar balusters were observed in the inn yard where they must once have supported a walkway giving access to the first-floor bedrooms. The *Ostrich*, now a well-run restaurant, is on the south side of the Bath Road and was originally in Horton Parish. We next inspected the *George Inn*, which is still a public house; it is on the north side of the Bath Road in that part of the town once forming a detached part of Langley Marish. Behind its 18<sup>th</sup> century brick facade, it is a timber framed structure as old as the *Ostrich*. Again it has heavy doors to the inn yard. We next crossed the bridge into that part of the town formerly in Stanwell, Middlesex. Here, on the north side of the street, were three coaching inns in a row, the *Cross Keys*, the *Catherine Wheel* and the *White Hart*, each of them having frontages of over 30 yards to the road. They are all now divided into several houses and flats.

On the opposite side of the street we visited perhaps the oldest of the coaching inns, now called 'King John's Palace'. It is timber framed with four bay windows ring up to the first floor and a central coach entrance reaching up through both stories. It is now divided into several dwellings. Alongside 'King John's Palace' is the present day *Star and Garter* public house, with an early 18<sup>th</sup> century brick facade. This was detached from the main part of the inn and sold to a brewery in 1793. We heard that it is soon to become a Costa Coffee shop.

We next visited the site of Colnbrook Mill and met the owner of nearby Tan House Farm, where there is an amazing medieval barn of prodigious dimensions. We completed our walk by visiting the church, built to replace an earlier chapel in 1859. Here a garden party was in full swing and we were served with afternoon tea by locals, most of whom were in fancy dress.

**Julian Hunt**