



THE PATRIOT

Newsletter of the John Hampden Society

No. 103 - Autumn 2022



The John Hampden Society is a registered charity which exists to bring together people with an interest in John Hampden, and to encourage wider knowledge of this great 17th century Parliamentarian, his life and times

30 YEARS ON!

On 27th October the John Hampden Society celebrated its 30th anniversary

The Society was formed at a ceremony in the Great Hall of Hampden House on that date in 1992, The occasion was attended by invited guests, members of the press and a Guard of Honour from Colonel John Hampden's Regiment of Foote of the English Civil War Society.



Our pictures show the founders (from left to right) Dr Frank Hansford-Miller (*Hon. Treasurer designate*); Professor John Adair (*President designate*); Miles Hobart-Hampden, 10th Earl of Buckinghamshire (*Patron designate*) and Roy Bailey (*Hon. Secretary designate*).

Details of the formation of the Society can be found online in *The Patriot* no. 01 and in the special supplement to issue no. 52.



The Society's anniversary will be celebrated at a special dinner, open to members and non-members alike, to be held at *The Pilot* pub (above) in Chiswick, West London, on Sunday 6th November.

Full details with a menu and booking form are available on the Society's website.



THE SECOND MISTRESS HAMPDEN

I think as a Society we have ignored John Hampden's second wife Letitia Hampden neé Knollys, the Lady Vachell. I write this without wishing in any way to lessen the accepted influence of his first wife, Elizabeth Hampden neé Symeon, for whom John unequivocally expresses his love and admiration on the tablet in St Mary Magdalene church, Great Hampden. Sadly at the moment we can gather no more on this love of the major part of his life. I think it is becoming increasingly likely she was distantly related to the Hampdens; possibly John and she were second cousins – and of course Elizabeth gave birth to all their children.

When Lady Vachell married John she was probably over the age for conceiving children. However she was his wife during momentous years in his life and, as it was likely, there were some years of courtship; her support for John would probably have extended over a long period of his being a widower. Unlike Elizabeth Symeon we do know quite a bit about Letitia Knollys.

One source of information on Letitia is from the letters of Dorothy Osborne, the daughter of the Royalist Governor of Castle Cornet, Guernsey. These letters were written to her husband, Peter Temple, a Parliamentarian. They are delightful and frank, and to anyone reading them full of gentle and amusing innuendos about the duties she expects him to be performing; rather than 'gadding' about the country on official business. Peter Temple was a nephew of Letitia Hampden. The Knollys family, who lived at Reading, took Dorothy under their wing in spite of her Royalist father, and I think her own Royalist leanings. Francis Knollys lived at the Abbey with his two daughters, Mrs Temple and Mrs Hammond, the mother of Colonel Robert Hammond. Now known chiefly as the gaoler of Charles 1, although having had charge of a number of campaigns and holding with his Regiment the centre at Naseby.



Letitia, the other sister, lived mostly at Coley Park outside Reading, an enormous country home left her by her husband Sir Thomas Vachell. However, as is the way with sisters, there were a great many comings and goings between Reading Abbey and Coley. Dorothy Osborne mentions some of them in her letters. There was, although it no longer exists, a building (*above*) in Hosier Street, Reading called Lady Vachell's house.

Lady Letitia Vachell was about as blue blood as they come, being descended from Mary, the sister of Anne Boleyn. It should be remembered that the Boleyns' grandmother was a Queen of England. Letitia's father, Sir Francis Knollys, was a first cousin of Queen Elizabeth and her aunt was the famous Lettice, Countess of Leicester, another cousin of Elizabeth, who was banished from Court after she stole Leicester from Elizabeth.

It will be noted therefore that John was marrying into (not so old) Royalty, and the wedding, which probably took place in St Mary's Reading, would have attracted much attention; the popular leader of the cause of Parliament and the granddaughter of Elizabeth I's aunt. The Stuart party might well have cast a slightly uneasy glance on this alliance. St Mary's is still attached to the Abbey grounds and still has memorials of the Knollys family. The day I visited the light was flooding into the church (nothing to do with me) making the stonework glisten. It would have been a spectacular wedding with all the County people present and their many friends from all over the country. It might make an excellent coach trip for the Society.



The Vachell coat-of-arms

Going back in time a little, a near neighbour of Letitia's father was Sir Thomas Vachell who, having been a widower twice, married Letitia Knollys as his third wife in 1616. He was 48 and she was about 20, although I haven't been able to verify this. She was already wealthy in her own right.

A Sheriff of Berkshire, Sir Thomas Vachell was a strong Parliamentarian, as also was Sir Francis Knollys, Lettice's (or is it Letitia's?) father. Sir Thomas owned Coley Park and Lettice remained mistress of it after he died in 1638 until her own death in 1666. This included the time when the Royalists destroyed much of the interior when occupying Reading, because it was owned by Hampden's wife.

Lettice spent three years in widowhood before marrying Hampden in 1641. There is a question which I cannot resolve at the moment: had the Vachells been friends of John Hampden, even possibly his first wife Elizabeth? It could certainly have been possible since Lettice's mother-in-law was a Lee from Buckinghamshire and we well know the Lee family and the Hampdens were cousins. John we know visited Berkshire. The bells of St Mary Magdalene came from Reading. In fact all in all it would be amazing if two such strong Parliamentary families were not well acquainted with one another. What we can be certain of was that this remarkable woman took over the role of mother for John's children after his death.

Letitia died in 1666 and was buried at Great Hampden alongside John, as she wished.

Robert Hammond

A TRANSATLANTIC TRUSTEE



Richard Howell, who was co-opted onto the Executive Committee in May, is a native of Wilbraham, Hampden County, Massachusetts, and attended Western New England University.

He works as a financial advisor and has a deep interest in both Civil Wars – English and American, having been a historical researcher for over 30 years. Our picture shows him in the costume of a Confederate general.

As well as belonging to a large number of historical organisations in the USA, Rich is also a member of the Magna Carta Trust and the Cromwell Association in the UK.

A valuable addition to the Executive Committee.

ANOTHER CELTIC CROSS



As revealed by Valerie Horne in edition no.100, Lord Chief Justice William Erle (1793-1880) had erected another celtic cross before he installed the Ship Money Monument in Honor Lane, Prestwood. This earlier memorial cross (*pictured*) can be found on Gibbet Hill, five miles from Erle's home at Bramshott near Liphook. The cross commemorates an horrific murder in 1783 and stands close to the spot where three murderers were executed and their corpses left hanging in gibbets.

Three men befriended a sailor in a pub at Thursley. He was walking from London to re-engage with his ship at Portsmouth. They followed him from the pub and murdered him on the lonely turnpike road, stealing all his possessions and clothes. The three murderers were quickly found and tried, and finally hung close to the site of the murder on Gibbet Hill (aka Hindhead Hill). Soon after a stone was erected to mark the spot where the sailor's body had been found.

In 1808 J M W Turner painted a dramatic landscape view of the area around the Devil's Punch Bowl in which the gibbet on Hindhead Hill is clearly visible. Sir William Erle had a commemorative cross erected, in 1851, near where the gibbet had stood. It is said that he did this to allay the superstitious fears of travellers who were concerned that the road was haunted. However, as with the Prestwood cross, no written record survives to explain exactly why he had erected the cross. No inscription is visible on the cross, which is a Grade II listed monument.

Sam Hearn

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DIARY DATES

2022

Thur 27th October.

30th anniversary of the Society's formation .

Sun 6th November. Exploration of the battlefields of Brentford and Turnham Green 1642, commencing at 10.30am.

See: <https://tinyurl.com/24xd4ozv>

Dinner commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Society and the 380th anniversaries of the battles of Brentford and Turnham Green, to be held at The Pilot, 56 Wellesley Road, Chiswick W4 4BZ. 7.15 for 7.30pm

Guest speaker - former Attorney General Dominic Grieve KC PC.

For up-to-date information, see the Diary page on the Society's website at:

www.johnhampden.org/

The Editor writes ...

The Society's 30th anniversary dinner, scheduled for 6th November, should prove to be an occasion for old friends to get together and reminisce, so the committee are hoping for a good response - especially from those who have worked up an appetite from walking the battlefields of Brentford and Turnham Green earlier that day.

Now that the Society's committee are holding their meetings online, physical location - even residence in the UK - is no bar to membership, hence the co-option at the May meeting of Rich Howell of Massachusetts, USA, featured above. Welcome.

As a result of his comments at this year's AGM, I commissioned Bob Hammond to write about John Hampden's second wife, Letitia Vachell. This he has done quite splendidly - see page 2 - and added to the Society's store of knowledge.

Roy Bailey
Editor

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BUCKS LOCAL HISTORY NETWORK CONFERENCE

The John Hampden Society had a well-placed stall near the entrance to the recent BLHN conference, which was held on 1st October in the modern and stylish Oculus Conference Centre (*pictured*) in Aylesbury.



The conference theme was the cottage industries of Buckinghamshire, specifically the production of clay products, lace-making, straw-plaiting for hats, chair-making and needle-making.

With clay as a plentiful local resource, kilns have been excavated across the county. Mike Farley provided a brilliant over-view of the subject reaching as far back as the hand-formed pots of the Neolithic. Brill and Penn were particular centres of expertise, with the latter being famous in the 14th century for its encaustic decorated floor tiles. Penn tiles can still be found in situ at Windsor Castle.

Lace-making was probably introduced to North Bucks by Flemish and Huguenot refugees in the 16th century. ‘Bucks lace’ styles were a combination of Mechlin and Lille patterns. Although by the nineteenth century there was a tradition of lace-making throughout the county, Marion Swindell’s talk did not specifically cover lace-making in South Bucks. We associate lavish lace collars and cuffs with paintings of cavaliers rather than the Puritan gentry, whose collars were plainer. The portrait of Hampden’s friend Arthur Goodwin shows just such a plain white collar. However, the Robert Walker portrait of Hampden shows him sporting an ornate if discreet lace neck piece.

The curator of Wycombe Museum, Catherine Grigg, provided interesting detail about the establishment of chair factories in the 19th century. However, elements of the chair production process long remained dispersed cottage industries, with the weaving of cane and rush seats being outsourced to people working from home. A wood turner or ‘bodger’ was still working in the woods at Great Hampden as late as 1950.

Needle-making started in Long Crendon in the 1590s, so would have been known to the Hampdens. Despite efforts to introduce steam power, needle production and many of the workers and their families moved from Long Crendon to Redditch in the early 19th century. The speaker, Julian Hunt, noted that this is probably why Long Crendon is still only a small village. Many of the current buildings would have looked similar in the mid-17th century when they were needle-makers’ cottages.

Altogether it was a fascinating conference, with interesting speakers and an excellent venue. Thanks are due to Sam Hearn, who provided everything needed for the stall, and to Jim and Libby Rodda for helping out at the very busy lunchtime period. Visitors were keen to take back issues of our wonderful newsletter.

Beth Rogers

THE HOUBRAKEN PORTRAIT



The art world is a difficult place to enter. In 1993 the JHS published a review of the various images of John Hampden in *The Patriot* no. 4 (<https://www.johnhampden.org/1/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Patriot-No.04.pdf>). Portrait no. 3 on page 2 has an engraved image (*left*) of what is said to be of Hampden by Jakob Houbraken. This is inscribed at the bottom, ‘In the possession of Sir Richard Ellys, Bart’. David Appleby, an art historian, wrote that James Granger (1723–1776) stated that ‘Sir Richard is said to have bought an old painting at a stall and called it by his (Hampden’s) name’.

On examination Granger’s alleged statement does not ring true. The implication is that Granger (1723–1776) spoke to Sir Richard (1698–1742) as a young man, not yet nineteen years of age at the time of Ellys’s death; Granger published *A Biographical History of England...* in 1769, twenty-seven years after Sir Richards’s death, which somewhat precludes the apocryphal story.

When the Houbraken engraving is placed alongside the Port Eliot portrait of John Hampden a family resemblance can, in my opinion, be seen.

My argument is that Sir Richard Ellys, who was Hampden’s grandson in the female line and died without issue, willed John Hampden’s portrait to the last of the direct male line.

That John Hampden (d 1754), the last direct male heir, passed the portrait to the grandson of Oliver Cromwell bears credibility, especially as he was his neighbour at Chequers. Over a glass of port after dinner the subject of taking John Hampden’s portrait to Chequers could have been arranged.

Finding the location of the original painting could be a task for members of the John Hampden Society.

Derek Lester

(Editor’s note: The opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily those of the Society’s Executive Committee.)