

WRAYSBURY, ANKERWYCKE

AND

MAGNA CARTA

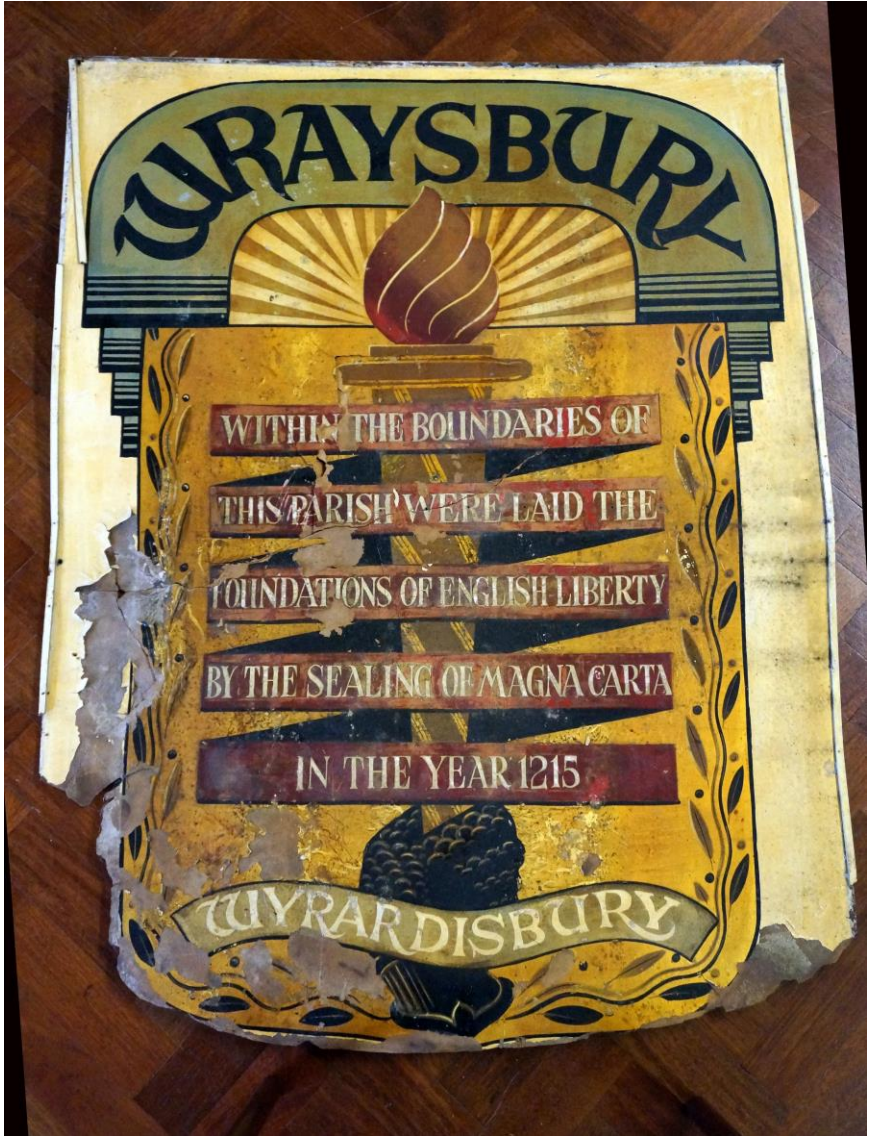


WRITTEN IN CELEBRATION OF 800 YEARS

SINCE THE SEALING OF MAGNA CARTA

COMMISSIONED BY THE MAGNA CARTA COMMITTEE

OF THE WRAYSBURY PARISH COUNCIL



This old Wrayisbury sign was on a post by the railings on The Green. It is now in the Archives.

Photo taken by Denise Steele

FOREWORD

Eight hundred years ago the medieval residents of Wraysbury must have watched with amazement as a number of obviously important people came to their village and Parish. These were the English barons, the Archbishop of Canterbury and King John. As a result of this gathering, the Magna Carta was sealed.

This Charter is important and its sealing deserves to be celebrated not only in Wraysbury, but across the UK and the Commonwealth because it marks the beginning of the 'Rule of Law' and that the King was not above the Law. A few years later Parliament came into being and gradually the democracy we have today.

We are not alone in valuing Magna Carta, as every American child learns about Magna Carta and its importance.

Here in Wraysbury, with our ancient yew, the ruins of Ankerwycke Priory and St Andrew's church which were all witness to the events in June 1215, culminating in the King appending his seal to the charter, we will be at the centre of the national/international celebration. This booklet is intended to give everyone in the village the historical background and some indication of what life was like in 1215. We are also listing the planned events which we hope you all will enjoy and take part in.

At the heart of this commemoration is a Charter which aimed to guarantee equality before the Law and that the King had to accept limits on his power. There are uncomfortable clauses given the time when it was devised but that does not diminish the significance of this document in our history.

Margaret Lenton (Chairman of Wraysbury Parish Council)



INTRODUCTION



Many eminent historians have written accounts of what really happened at the sealing of Magna Carta in 1215 and the events and causes that lead up to the final agreement on the 15th June, so this modest contribution, written to commemorate Wroaysbury's part in this great event now celebrating 800 years, will not add any startling new information or challenge the accuracy of accounts by established scholars.

However as stated in the publication "Magna Carta" by G. C. R. Davis and published by the British Library in 1963 "narratives offered by the Monastic chroniclers (some contemporary) are often of questionable reliability" and goes on "many gaps in the evidence can be filled only by conjecture, and no account of what took place can claim to be entirely satisfactory".

The important thing on this 800th Anniversary is to celebrate and appreciate the significance and subsequent value to Britain and the World of this Great Charter and its influence on our lives and history for all time.

HOW WAS WRAYSBURY INVOLVED?

- 1.) Wraysbury and Egham share the same section of the River Thames at Runnymede and Ankerwycke Priory.
- 2.) King John and his supporters were encamped on the northern bank of the Thames within the Parish of Wraysbury.
- 3.) Ankerwycke Priory in Wraysbury provided a religious sanctuary for King John who felt threatened and in fear of kidnap or even assassination.
- 4.) At the time of the sealing of Magna Carta the Yew tree at Ankerwycke was already probably at least 1500 years old. Long before the coming of the Normans and even the introduction of Christianity this Yew tree had been a tribal and religious meeting place where Leaders and their followers discussed and made important decisions.
- 5.) One of the Barons present was Richard Montfichet, Lord of the Manor of Wraysbury and Stansted Mountfichet in Essex. He was just 22 years old. His ancestor Gilbert Montfichet, Knight and also Lord of Wraysbury had founded Ankerwycke Priory in 1154.
- 6.) The part played by George Simon Harcourt, Lord of the Manor in Wraysbury in the 19th Century and who lived in Ankerwycke House and owned the Priory.

MAGNA CARTA BEFORE AND AFTER

King John had upset everybody. He had engaged in a series of fruitless foreign wars. To pay for these almost endless military actions and defeats a punitive taxation had been imposed not only on the Barons but other landowners, merchants and burghers,

In addition to this, because King John had initially refused to appoint Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury, he had been excommunicated by the Pope, Innocent III. As a result of this the whole of England had, since 1208, lain under papal interdict by which no service could be held in any church.

King John found himself faced with a rebellious barony, a disgruntled citizenry and a hostile Church. Reprisals against those unwilling or unable to pay their taxes were ruthless and brutal. According to Roger of Wendover the proposal to secure a Charter of Liberties from King John was first put forward in the late summer of 1213.

The King agreed to accept Langton as Archbishop, reinstate the Clergy and to compensate the Church for property and revenues he had taken from it.

Stephen Langton quickly assumed the position of political leader traditionally held by Archbishops of Canterbury. He studied an old contract already in existence dating from Henry I. He worked upon it, enlarged and strengthened it and created a new document which he presented for approval before a great assembly of people, powerful Barons, justices and leading citizens at St. Paul's in London.

To these demands King John deferred an answer at a meeting at Northampton on 26th April 1215. The malcontent Barons came together in Stamford in Lincolnshire and made their way south to Brackley, where they repeated a more forceful and specific set of terms, delivering them to the King's representatives including Langton and the Earl of Pembroke. In this form the renewed demands appear to have been brought to the King at Wallingford, but he rejected the Barons' proposals as tantamount to the surrender of his kingdoms. The Barons renounced their loyalty to the King and obedience to him and laid siege to the nearest royal castle at Northampton.

There followed further proposals and rejections on both sides and on 17th May the Barons captured London.

While all this was going on Stephen Langton and William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, were acting as intermediaries. It is to their negotiations and influence that the final version of Magna Carta changed from a mere settling of Baronial grievances to the document of much more far reaching significance that it was in the event to become.

By the 10th June both sides had come together to meet and negotiate at a field called Runnymede by the Thames between King John's castle at Windsor and the Barons' camp at Staines. There it was finally agreed and sealed in the presence of 25 Barons, King and Bishops on 15th June 1215.

But this was not the end. Four days later the Barons reaffirmed their allegiance to the King and took the loyal oath, possibly at the Ankerwycke Yew Tree. Eight days after the articles had been sealed the meeting at Runnymede came to an end on 23rd June.

Of the four copies of the original Carta to survive, two are in the British Library; one is at Salisbury Cathedral and one at Lincoln Castle.

Two months later King John appealed to the Pope. Innocent III declared the Charter to be null and void because the King had been compelled to agree through force and fear. The Pope's solemn Bulls claimed the Charter was unjust and unlawful and to be base and shameful. Stephen Langton visited Rome and was suspended from office for not carrying out the Pope's instructions to take action against the Barons.

There was still a threat of Civil War in England. However the next year in 1216 the King, nicknamed John Lackland, died at the age of 49 from dysentery caused, it was rumoured, by consuming an excess of peaches and raw cider.

Under John's son Henry III and later Edward I the Charta was, with some modifications, confirmed. It was placed on the Statute Roll and reaffirmed by later kings.

After the second Barons' Revolt there came the summoning of the first Great Parliament by Simon de Montfort in 1265. This was a small beginning which later was to grow into our modern House of Parliament.

The Great Charter remains the nearest thing the British have to a Bill of Rights. The Magna Carta has also formed the basis of the Constitutions of many other countries including the United States of America.



King John's seal

ANKERWYCKE PRIORY

Gilbert De Montfichet, Knight and Lord of Wraysbury, founded Ankerwycke Priory around 1160 ad, possibly in 1154 in the reign of Henry II. It was of the Benedictine Order and dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene.

The Priory must then have been built when the Yew Tree was already a venerable age, perhaps as much as 1500 years. It is likely that, as has been the case with so many other Christian buildings, that Ankerwycke was chosen for the site of a religious house precisely because it was already a sacred place. The Yew Tree had already been a place of worship for the Druids and followers of earlier religions before Christianity was introduced about 630 ad. The word "Ankerwycke" suggests an early hermitage or anchorage and a place of retreat. Quite possibly a hermit or Holy man may have used the Yew Tree, already hollow, as a shelter and cell.

In 1215 King John was in fear of his life, perhaps kidnap for ransom or even assassination. The whole of Ankerwycke was itself an island and being a Holy place would have given him some measure of protection and sanctuary. Gordon Gyll and A.L. Rowse both state that King John was resident at Windsor Castle from 10th to the 26th June and commuted each day to the discussions at Runnymede and joined his own supporters encamped on the North bank of the Thames at Ankerwycke within the Parish of Wraysbury.

Tinsey Mede, once an island although on what is now the Surrey side of the river Thames, was in the county of Buckinghamshire, a fact which indicates that at some remote period, but after the formation of the English counties, the river Thames has altered course. Some parts of the Parish of Wraysbury were not declared to be in Surrey until 1974.

It must have been with some trepidation that the nuns of Ankerwycke watched the Barons and their men assembling on Runnymede in June 1215. The young Richard Montfichet, Lord of the Manor of Wraysbury and patron of Ankerwycke Priory was in the Baronial camp. Just 22 years old, he doubtless saw to it that the nuns were protected from insult or injury by the men of opposing camps. However it is recorded that large quantities of convent ale were demanded from the Priory's home brewery. Richard Montfichet was chosen as one of the twenty five Barons appointed to supervise the carrying out of the articles of Magna Carta. He outlived all the other twenty four Barons.

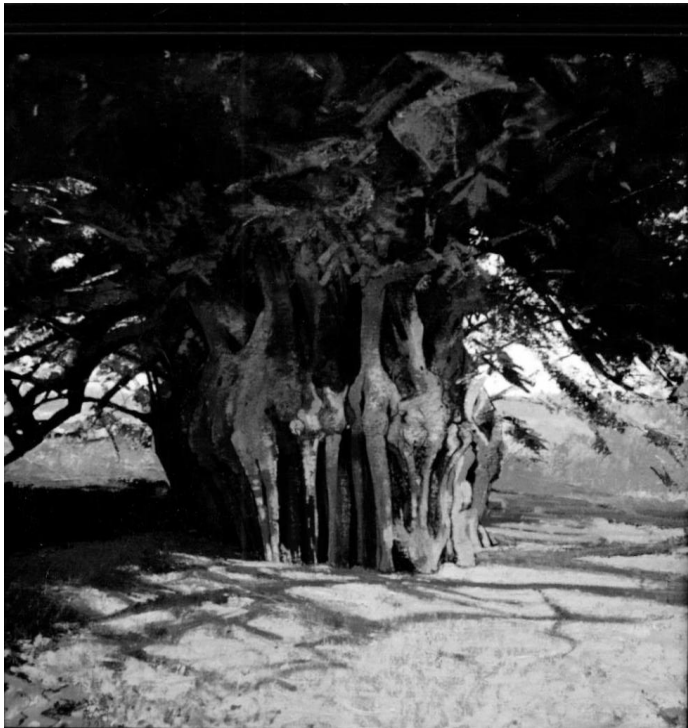


Photo of a painting of the Ankerwycke Yew

by Alan Bennett from a collection in Brunel University

THE RIVER THAMES IN HISTORY

Evidence for the river Thames altering course over a period of many years is still currently accumulating. There are no large scale detailed maps of this part of the Thames before about 1604. It has been suggested by historical geographers that at an earlier time a channel of the Thames flowed further south, departing the present channel near to the foot of Priest Hill and flowing along the base of Coopers Hill, including Langham Pond and then eastward adjacent to the current A30. This theory does add considerable evidence to the notion that Magna Carta was sealed on an island since both Runnymede and Long Mede would have been in the middle of the two water courses.

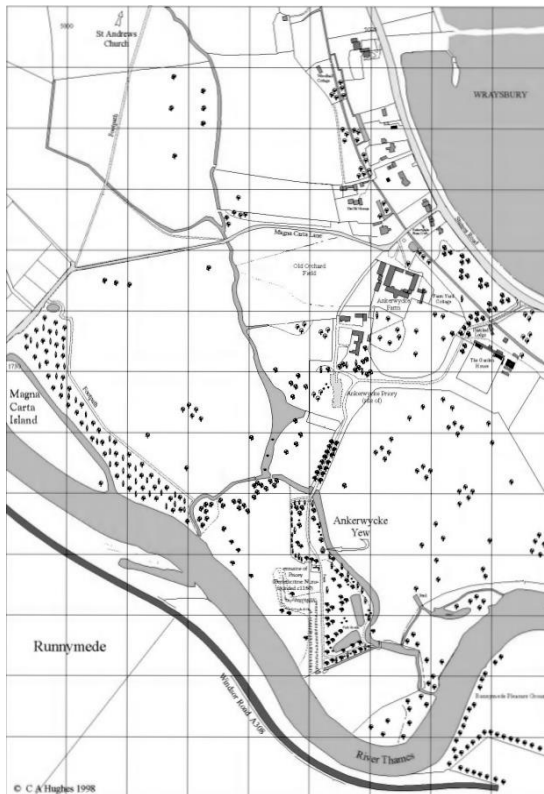
The Thames has changed course several times since the 13th century. Runnymede and Ankerwycke are in the present day on opposite sides of the navigable Thames as we know it today, with locks, weirs and definable, reinforced banks on either side, but in history they may well have been one united area.

Dr. Andrew Brookes, a geomorphologist from the National Rivers Authority, supports this theory. He writes "Ten thousand years ago the Thames flowed around a series of islands. It had a braided pattern and only in the last 400 years or so has its main channel been centralized, widened and deepened for the needs of navigation. One old course of the Thames can clearly be seen at the base of Coopers Hill and local historians point out that Langham Ponds were once part of the old river course".

In the 13th century a Benedictine monk, Matthew Paris, wrote in his historical chronicles of England that Magna Carta was sealed "propre villam de Stanes juxta flumen Thamesis in quadam insula", indicating "on an island in the river Thames near Staines". Matthew Paris, although not present at the sealing of Magna Carta, was alive and writing his chronicles at this time.

A modern translation of the text of Magna Carta clearly states “given by our hand in the meadow that is called Runnymede between Windsor and Staines”.

Runnymede was a special meeting place long before 1215. It was known at various times as “the meadow of the runes or magical charms”; “the field of mystery” and “the field of council”, according to Wraysbury’s Gordon Gyll. In Saxon times it was known as “Rune Mead”, a place where a Council would consult the Runes or magic stones to help in their decision making in matters of religion, politics, leadership or government. The Saxon monarch of that time would have his seat nearby at the Saxon Palace at Old Windsor.



SEALED OR SIGNED?

Examination of surviving copies of Magna Carta reveals that the document bears no signatures. It was never signed but carries the Royal Seal of King John as well as the seals of the attending Barons. The Royal Seal was the normal way that the King would authorise legislation. The King, on such occasions, would be accompanied by his Keeper of the Royal Seal.

Examination of the British Library's Charter copies shows a large wax seal just under 4 inches in diameter.

Sydney Jones in his "Thames Triumphant", 1943, writes "sealed by King John but not signed, because His Majesty could not write. There are other accounts published which declare that King John was illiterate, but this is not so. He produced his own writings in his native tongue and also in Latin.

But where exactly the Seal was applied we do not know and will probably never know. If it was an island as seems more likely than not you can take your choice.

- 1.) Runnymede itself was quite likely at that time an island.
- 2.) The whole of Ankerwycke was probably an island.
- 3.) The Ankerwycke Yew Tree was on an island.
- 4.) The island on the Ordnance Survey map that was claimed by some as the actual site of the signing or sealing of Magna Carta, which brings us to George Simon Harcourt.

MAGNA CARTA ISLAND

Generations of Wraysbury school children have been taught that Magna Carta was signed or sealed within the Parish boundaries of the village, on Magna Carta Island, an area of between 2 and 3 acres lying to the south of the Ankerwycke Priory estate bordering the river Thames.

Some 50 years ago in the middle of the 20th Century a village sign in Windsor Road, Wraysbury proudly stated this claim. Reference to a modern map will show this area so named to be directly opposite the Magna Carta and JFK memorials on the Surrey side at Runnymede below the slopes up to Cooper's Hill.

Research has found no reference to this claim before 1834 and Magna Carta Island does not appear on the Enclosure Award map of 1800 displayed in the Wraysbury Parish Archive room.

When Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II visited Wraysbury on October 18th 1974, during her Royal Progress of the Thames villages within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, she progressed by boat and landed at Magna Carta Island accompanied by Sir Christopher Aston, a Wraysbury resident who was also Mayor at that time. Before moving on to the village centre she graciously consented to plant a walnut tree on the island.

Both George Lipscomb and Gordon Gyll make reference in their writings to the four very ancient walnut trees on the island and evidence of a further two walnut trees below the water of the Thames at the riverside, making a circular pattern of planting. They also both refer to a number of very old British coins found in the earth here at various times.

Both local historians write that the stone, on which later an inscription was engraved, was found in the river nearby and was originally kept at the first Ankerwycke House which was built nearer the river in the reign of Elizabeth I.

All of the forgoing is largely the result of the efforts made by George Simon Harcourt in the 19th century. This Victorian landowner, M.P. for the County of Buckinghamshire, Lord of the Wraysbury Manor, Deputy Lieutenant of the County, acquired the property of the Manor of Ankerwycke in 1829. He continued to make improvements to the House and estate begun by John Blagrove in 1803. Earlier Harcourts had acquired Ankerwycke from the Lee family in 1725 through marriage.

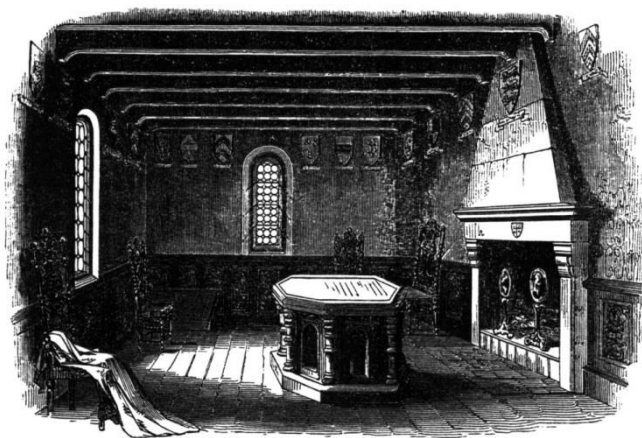
As Stuart Burgess, a previous National Trust Warden amusingly writes: “the Harcourts sold the cow for some magic beans and 25 years later reaped the benefits thereof. Furthermore George Simon undertook something that changed the history books forever. Among the changes wrought in 1834 he redeveloped an old fisherman’s cottage and made a Gothic looking house around which he dug a ditch, in effect cutting it off from the mainland and creating an island. Inside the house, the main hexangular room contained various themes associated with Magna Carta. He had mounted 25 shields on the walls and a large oak table inset with a stone inscribed ‘Be it remembered that on this Island 25 June 1215 John, King of England signed Magna Carta and in the year 1834 this building was erected in commemoration of that event by George Simon Harcourt Esq. Lord of this Manor and then High Sheriff’.

He then charged a penny for the Ferry crossing from Runnymede in order for locals and tourists to view all this. George Simon makes the same mistake as many others and claims the Charter was “signed” but also gets the date wrong, recording the signing on 25th of June, by which time King John and the Barons had gone home.

Further to this coincidentally the Ordnance Survey was busy preparing new maps, so when an officer visited the area to chart the main features he noticed the new island and confirmed on his revised map that this is the island where King John signed the Magna Carta. The Ordnance Survey continued to print this as an historic site for many years thus perpetuating the claim.

However Harcourt's efforts to enhance the status of the Parish in history and truly put it on the map must not detract from the enormous benefits he, along with William Thomas Buckland, founder of the Baptist Chapel and community, brought to Wraysbury during this period. Between them they rebuilt roads and bridges, looked after the poor, introduced early education for the village children long before the 1870 Education Act and endowed money for our village charities from which we all still benefit today. Harcourt and Buckland did not like each other and Buckland would not vote for Harcourt at elections. However together they were a team for improvement and good in our Parish.

This does not reduce Wraysbury's significance geographically and historically and the important part it played in this milestone event in British history.



Interior of Fisherman's Cottage.

CONCLUSION

When the 750th Anniversary of Magna Carta was celebrated in 1965 it was a relatively low key affair.

It was sponsored by the Society for Individual Freedom and staged at Runnymede by permission of the National Trust. A modest brochure was produced of 10 pages and costing two shilling. The Bishop of Lincoln was invited but could not attend, although he wrote a forward to the publication. The Lord Chancellor of England, speaking on that occasion, said “that the Government shall be a government of laws and not of men”. Finally it was Parliament, broadly representing all classes of people in Britain which came to make and watch over those laws.



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LIVING IN WRAYSBURY IN 1215

At the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066, life for the native Saxons in Wraysbury would have been very hard indeed. The conquering Normans took away all their property, possessions and lands. There were severe punishments for disobedience and resistance, leaving the common people without the means of self-support so they were left to starve. It was not 'Merry England'.

But 150 years later the army of occupation had become anglicised. Norman men had married Saxon women. A new Anglo-Norman language was evolving. Living conditions were improved for the average Wraysbury villager. Some were allowed to own land and become freeholders. Most of the remainder were given strips of land to grow their own food. They were allowed to own a few animals and given a small plot of land on which they could build their own simple wooden-framed houses. All this was in return for working some of the time in the lord's fields and paying allegiance to him. Since the Domesday Survey in 1086 the population of Wraysbury had steadily increased, perhaps to about 400 souls.

There was common land where all could graze their animals and collect firewood, hedgerow fruit and nuts. There was mead or meadowland by the river where the inhabitants could fish and collect willow for baskets and rushes for simple rush lights. There was woodland where the lord of the manor would allow villagers to cut down some limited timber to build their houses and put out their pigs to search for acorns.

The lord's manor land was known as demesne. The church land was called glebe. The village people who were feudal tenants were called villeins. A poorer class of villager with less land and a simpler one-roomed house was known as a cottager. He was poorer but worked less time for the land perhaps because of old age and infirmity.

Some villagers worked in specialised occupations such as shepherds, cowherds, goose girls, blacksmith, millers, bee keeper and ale brewer.

Children were expected to work from a very early age, starting as bird scarers but going on to working on the land and tending animals.

It was the custom to give the lord eggs at Christmas and perhaps a lamb at Easter. Villagers also paid tithes, meaning one tenth, to the rector of St Andrew's Church, usually in kind such as corn, hens and other produce.

Villagers built their own houses with the help of neighbours. They had no bricks or stone but the lord allowed them to go into the woods and cut down trees to make a simple wooden frame. The gaps between were filled with thinner wood, perhaps willow and covered with daub. This was a mixture of mud, dung and chopped straw. The roof was thatch leaving a smoke hole. Beneath this was a flat stone for a fire. Cooking was only done indoors in winter. There were two rooms, one for people to live and sleep in and a second division for animals, tools and stores. Clothes and bedding were kept in the family chest. Food was kept in baskets and drink in clay pots or jugs. There were bellows to blow up the fire. Smoked fish and bacon were hung up in the roof for winter eating and a brine tub for pickling. Their tools were a hoe, a spade, a sickle, an axe and a bow and arrows. A wooden bucket was for collection of water from the well or nearby river. Women and children wove baskets from willow and also made simple textiles by spinning and weaving.

The most substantial buildings in the village would have been the manor house, St Andrew's Church and a rectory. The lord employed a bailiff to oversee the management of the manor lands and animals. He, too, may have lived in a larger permanent house. Ankerwycke Priory had stood since 1154 AD, some of which was built of stone brought down the river Thames. There were only a small number of nuns living there, perhaps 15 to 20, but they had a chapel dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, a refectory, living accommodation, a kitchen and a home brewery. It is written that at the time of Magna Carta, Richard de Montfichet, our Wraysbury Lord, took great pains to stop the soldiers, who had gathered, troubling the nuns and stealing their ale.

St Andrew's church at that time was smaller, but the Normans had rebuilt it with stone, timber and some glass. A simple Saxon church had stood on the site since about 680 AD when Christian missionaries from Rome brought Christianity to the Thames valley. This earlier building would have been built in wood and thatched. The rector in charge had some land of his own and a few animals.

There was the manor house belonging to the lord, probably a substantial farm house, maybe in the area of the Old Windsor Ferry.

Economically the two mills were important, also the fishing weirs on the Thames. All these are listed in the Domesday Book entry for 'Wirecesberie'.

What did they wear? Most clothes were made in the village from homespun materials. Men wore tunics down to mid-thigh with hose and boots, made from soft pliable leather for working but they went bare foot much of the time. Their head gear was a cloth hood under a felt hat. A woman's dress was of wool worn with a tied girdle round her waist and on her head a linen cloth called a wimple. In the hard winters people wore several layers to keep out the cold. Some men wore rabbit skin hats with the fur inside. They often had to sleep out of doors if they looked after animals. In summer many wore straw hats and went bare-footed.

There were usually two meals a day. Everyone got up when the sun rose. Nearly all were up by six or before in the summer. They then turned out their animals, yoked the oxen and went off to work in the fields. At around 10 a.m. they returned and had their first meal called dinner. In summer they had fresh meat, bread, cheese, butter and ale. There were no forks or spoons, just a knife to cut off pieces of food to eat with their fingers. They had wooden plates and mugs. On Fridays and in all of Lent they ate fish, caught mainly from rivers and ponds. There were eels, crayfish, mussels, carp, pike and tench. Wraysbury's fish weirs on the Thames are mentioned in the Domesday Book. Both fresh and salted fish would have been available from neighbouring markets. In winter food was scarce. Villagers could not feed all of

their animals, so many were killed off. They ate salted meat, bacon and fish. If the corn ran out for bread, they made coarse brown bread from rye, oats, peas or beans. There may be cabbage, onions and parsley from the garden. After dinner they all go back to work again until 4.00 p.m. when it is supper time. Supper is again usually bacon, bread, cheese and ale, sometimes pottage which is soup with vegetables.

As soon as it is dark they all go to bed. Rush lights give a very feeble light and are precious. Mother and father sleep in the box bed and the children pull out straw mattresses on to the floor and get blankets and covers from the family chest. The animals sleep in the other adjacent room space and help to keep the cottage warm.

Such was the pattern of hard and simple life for Wraysbury people in the thirteenth century. The delights of aircraft noise, extra runways, gravel extraction, the M25, Council tax and fuel bills were yet to come.

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Wraysbury Parish Archives. The Village Hall, The Green, Wraysbury.

Dennis Pitt

April 2014

Please ask permission to use articles.

EVENTS FOR THE CELEBRATIONS OF MAGNA CARTA 2015

The following websites can be viewed for details about events:

The Magna Carta 800th website which contains details of the national events <http://magnacarta800th.com/>

The Royal Borough (RBWM) website
[http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/museum magna carta.htm](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/museum_magna_carta.htm)

Royal Holloway College have events <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk>

For more information contact Margaret Lenton: tel 01784 482001

Email: margaret-lenton@btconnect.com

Pre Events

Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum are holding an event at Furze Platt School on Saturday 9th June.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

A **Schools' event** has been organised, with a private viewing of the art work in the cloisters of St George' Chapel on 19th March by kind permission of the Dean and Chapter. The exhibition will remain open over Easter until 12th April.

Primary children up to year 5 are devising a shield for their schools and children of the years above (5-13) are writing a Magna Carta for today.

The **River Flotilla** is taking place over the weekend of 13th to 14th June, going from Hurley to Runnymede. The plan is for 200 boats to take part but they cannot use power to negotiate the course. Powered boats would come from Spelthorne. They will overnight at the Oakley Court Hotel Windsor and continue on to Runnymede/Ankerwycke on 14th June. This is being organised by Thames Alive. Gloriana, the Queen's Row Barge will take the lead.

Eton is to hold a medieval fair on the Brocas and a Liber Tea in the main street on 13th/14th June at 3.00pm.

The Borough Museums and galleries will have displays and activities.

Liber Teas are planned across the Royal Borough, in West Windsor in the Park and at a site in Windsor. It is 750 years since the first parliament was called by Simon de Montfort and to celebrate this and Magna Carta, Parliament wants picnics to be held. There will be a Liber Tea at the Victoria Gardens on 14th June at 3.00 p.m.

There are plans for a **medieval fair and re-enactment** on the Windsor Racecourse from 12th to the 15th June which is followed by a race meeting which has a Magna Carta theme on the evening of 15th.

Wraysbury

A fanfare has been composed by a Ph. D student at the Royal Academy – Robert Peate and will be first performed on 14th March and used during other events.

Diana Hughes has created a set of **coats of arms of the 25 guarantor barons**. These are superb and available to be used at functions.

A quarter **peal of bells** will be rung on 14th June at 3.00 p.m. to join in peals being rung across the country at key venues associated with Magna Carta. The bells will also be rung during the flower festival on 7th June.

Flower festival 5th - 7th June at St Andrew's Church. Organisations and youth groups have been invited to take part. The church path will be decked with displays of flowers made by children.

Embroidery A wall hanging has been worked showing King John sealing the Magna Carta together with the coats of arms of the barons involved. This will be unveiled during the Flower Festival.

Denise Steele has written a book intended for children which will be published this year. There will be a reading in St. Andrew's and at the Baptist Church on the afternoon of 7th June.

Wraysbury School has a Magna Carta day on Friday 12th June.

An archery contest will be held on 6th June in the afternoon when the Barons of England will compete. The event is scheduled for the grounds of the Windsor Bowmen in Home Park as archery is not a spectator sport for health and safety reasons. Visitors are being given permission to camp on the memorial ground overnight on 5th/6th June and to bring caravettes onto the Village Hall carpark. They will be travelling from across England. It is hoped they can process through Wraysbury on 6th and visit Ankerwycke. After the contest they will march through Windsor and go to Evensong in the Castle.

Wraysbury Players will perform a play on Thursday evening 11th June in the Village Hall, which would be primarily for the villagers of Horton and Wraysbury and include details about Magna Carta and medieval music from Lumina Music. Tickets are £5 to be donated to the Wraysbury Players.

The Wraysbury Fair on 13th June. This will reflect the medieval theme and everyone including stall holders will be appropriately costumed. There will be manpowered floats, archery, falconry, Morris dancing and jousting on Shetland ponies.

The village will be decorated with streamers from lamp posts and hanging baskets in the red and gold colours of King John's badge.

A Liber Tea will be held at the Grange at 4.00 p.m. on Sunday 14th June by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Glyn Larcombe, with music from Lumina, entertainment from the Wraysbury Players and a jazz band followed at 5 30 pm by **Songs of Praise** attended by dignitaries.

Slough

Slough are intending to celebrate on 8th June with a relay carrying Magna Carta around the town, with a march through the town in the afternoon focussing on the flags of the Commonwealth and a dinner in the evening at the Copthorne Hotel.

On 15th June 2015 the Queen is to unveil an art-work commissioned by Surrey County Council in the morning.

WRAYSBURY COAT OF ARMS

The Coat-of-Arms on the front cover has been especially designed by Carl Hughes to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta at Wraysbury. Christopher Vane, Portcullis Pursuivant at the College of Arms, to whom we sent a copy, seemed quite impressed with Carl's knowledge of heraldry. When finances allow we hope to have the full coat of arms produced by the College of Arms which can stand as a powerful statement of our local identity.

Wraysbury was part of Runnymede at the time of the sealing of the Magna Carta but during the last 400 years the Thames has changed its course, separating Wraysbury from Runnymede water-meadows.

According to Professor Anthony Musson, Professor of Legal History at the University of Exeter and a barrister of the Middle Temple, the twelfth-century Benedictine Priory would have been a suitable place for oath-taking and solemnization of the Charter. The National Trust have found the outlines of a large building, which could have been the original Priory, some way from the ruins of the so-called priory at present on the site at Ankerwycke, which was probably erected by the Victorians as a folly.

The heraldic arms show the red and yellow chevron background from the arms of Montfitchet, Lord of the Manor of Wraysbury, who endowed the original priory and who was a witness at the sealing of the Magna Carta.

The main area is occupied by the traditional White Swan of Buckingham, which is common to the arms of the County Council and the former Borough of Buckingham in which Wraysbury used to lie. In the former's arms the swan has a gold ducal crown about the neck, with a gold chain attached, (though in the Buckingham arms recorded at the Visitations, the crown has no chain). Here the swan's neck is encircled by the gold Saxon crown from the County crest referring to the fact that Wraysbury was once the home of the Saxon Kings' hunting lodge.

The white and blue waves represent the River Thames in its course across the county's southerly parts. The whole shield thus indicates the historic nature of Wraysbury once in the southernmost part of Buckinghamshire and watered by the Thames. The colours of the wreath indicate the green of the forests with the oak representing the Royal Forests of Windsor. The word Wyrardisbury in the motto is the old spelling of our village.

Diana Hughes January 2015

The Magna Carta Barons



William d'Albini
Belvoir



Hugh Bigod
Framlingham



Roger Bigod
Framlingham



Henry de Bohun
Trowbridge



Gilbert de Clare
Clare



Richard de Clare
Clare



John FitzRobert
Warkworth



Robert FitzWalter
Little Dunmow



William de Forz
Skipton



William Harel
Mayor of London



William de Huntingfield
Huntingfield



John de Lacy
Pontefract



William de Lanvlei
Walkern



William Malet
Curry Mallet



Geoffrey de Mandeville
Pleshey



William Marshal
Long Crendon



Roger de Montbegon
Hornby



William de Mowbray
Thirsk



Richard de Montfichet
Stansted Mountfichet



Richard de Percy
Topcliffe



Saer de Quincey
Leicester



Robert de Ros
Helmsley



Geoffrey de Say
West Greenwich



Richard de Vere
Castle Hedingham



Eustace de Vesci
Alnwick

