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Spring 2025 SIGNPOSTS

News and views from Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group
Issue 16

Local Elections, May 2025:

FUTURE GREENWAY CHAMPIONS?



See page 2 for story ...

¹Image: Come 1st May 2025, two of these county councillor candidates will represent aspiring walkers, wheelers and riders of the Haddenham-Thame Greenway in the Haddenham & Stone ward. We shall depend on their influencing skills.



FUTURE GREENWAY CHAMPIONS?

With the local elections fast approaching, we wrote to every candidate standing for

Haddenham and Stone to ask them their views on a number of active travel issues, and in particular what they would do to drive progress on the Haddenham and Thame Greenway.

We received responses from candidates standing for all but one of the parties, and whilst they all expressed support for a safe route connecting us to Thame, they certainly differ in their level of enthusiasm, and their approach to other local issues such as the 20mph village. So please do take the time to read the full responses, which can be found on our section of the Village Society website:

<https://www.villagesociety.org/haddswac/election2025.html>.

Whatever the result on May 1st, you can be sure we will be in touch with our new representatives to ensure they keep pushing for genuine progress on this key piece of infrastructure. And whichever party ends up with control of the council should be in no doubt that we'll be demanding clear communication and action.

Alan Thawley, chair

Haddenham Safe Walking and Cycling group

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT



Now you can shout out for the Greenway: just email Michael (mheybrook@gmail.com) and for £10 you can order a limited-edition classic, in heavy cotton printed back and front.

FOR YOUR DIARY: GREENWAY JUNE



Saturday 14th June: Haddenham Fête is back! Come and meet us at the HaddSWAC stall on Flint Street, as well as enjoying all the other fête activities *and* supporting local community charities.

[Thame Carnival](#) is on the same day and invites you and your family to follow the procession on your bikes on roads closed for the event between Elms Park – leaving there around noon – and Southern Road Recreation Ground.

Our friends in Thame will have a stall at the end of the procession, attracting support for the greenway.

Sunday 15th June: Book now to participate in the [Thame Sportive](#) Family Bike



Ride – a relaxed, safe, family-friendly ride suitable for all ages, designed to encourage participation and cycling confidence. Complete the 13km course and win a hand-crafted slate medal!

More demanding sportive courses (80km and 130km) are also offered.



THE PHENOMENON OF CREEP



Fort End, Haddenham, looking south around 1950

SIGNPOSTS quiz: What is missing? (Answer: see paragraph two)

In 1895 Britain boasted 15. In 1912, 150,000. In 2023, 32.55 million. And counting.

Cars.

Last month I swapped my old for new. Along, probably, with thousands of others. Nationally we now have 1.2 for every household.

In Haddenham in 1931 (when there were a mere 2.3m nationally) local historian Walter Rose wrote: “through-motor-roads ... pass well outside [Haddenham’s] exterior and there is no prospect of any arterial road being made to destroy [Haddenham’s] charm”. Mmmm. Cars got off arterial roads and became resident. Too often with no house-room. Our streets are unrecognisable from the 1930s.

The 2021 Census reveals the scale of the problem. At that time (so, before recent building), there were 1,700 households in Haddenham. 166 with no cars; 693 with one car; 598 with two; 227 with three or more. Conservatively, that’s 2,500 in our village (1.5 per household). Numbers can only increase. Not just because of new homes, but because of the way we all live.

Now, there’s no limit to the cars a household can have. Developers in Bucks are required to provide

parking within a new property’s curtilage: the number of spaces is calculated by bedroom-numbers, with some provision for guest parking.

Street-hogging. Pavement parking. Green encroachment. The invasion isn’t all from outside. And the accumulation’s surreptitious. Tempting though it be, we can’t blame it all on visitors, trade vans, etc. (Though that rival to the car, the railway, has much to answer for with regard to poor old Sheerstock.) No, fundamentally we’re the problem. We love cars. Or access to them. For many of us they’re the second most expensive investment we make (after our homes). Albeit of diminishing value. The car has got under our skin, into our psyches. Who wants to give them up? They’re almost family-members! Yet they create danger, inconvenience and disruption for everyone. Just by being here.

Soon enough Haddenham will be introducing parking restrictions – at the Village Hall and The Pavilion. (After all, what else can a Parish Council do?) But isn’t this just clutter-shuffling?

I love my car. Often I hate everyone else’s. *Is there any way out of this creeping absurdity?* Apply direct to Silver-Bullet Instant Solutions Inc.? Bury our heads in our car-boots?

How about, as a first step, being aware of the size of the problem? And maybe even tossing around some reasonable ideas for saving our streets from being sites of abandonment? See future SIGNPOST issues!

BA



² 1950s photo from Haddenham Museum collection: see post on 25 February 2025 at <https://tinyurl.com/yc5nkmsb>



INTRODUCING LEVEL WAYS ...



Active Travel. A great, even necessary idea for us all. All you do is don your shoes or mount your bike and go. No problem. Or is there?

Aside from the inner tussle anyone might face when starting to exercise, there's a significant part of the village that doesn't find it easy at all. Woodlands has 53 flats and bungalows. It used to be Sheltered Housing, now it isn't – now it's part of an Independent Living Scheme. If you need a home built to wheelchair standards, it's great. When you're indoors. But what if you want to go out and about? Exercise? Breathe fresh air? Get the green grass under your feet (or wheels)? Hear the birds? Reach village amenities?

First off, do we all know where Woodlands is? It's north of Haddenham Junior School, off Butte Furlong. (The question perhaps underlines its seclusion.) That part of our village has the lowest incidence of car ownership and the highest proportion of elderly and less mobile residents (according to the 2021 census).

Residents there are rooting for LEVEL WAYS. It's an initiative of the village for the village. And it's unique

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Surfaces might well meet local-authority standards and still be dangerous and seriously off-putting to those who'd most benefit from using them.

in the UK. Two-thirds of a mile of public footway is to be re-engineered to tackle wheelchair and walking-frame hazards and to keep trip-risk low.

Hang on. Aren't there footpaths and pavements already? Well, yes, but that's the point. Surfaces might well meet local-authority standards and still be dangerous and seriously off-putting to those who'd most benefit from using them. Justifiably, Woodlands can see itself as cut off.

LEVEL WAYS will cost. *Some* Section 106 moneys might/should come to the Project. But it'll need more.

So, Woodlands' residents, the Parish Council and HaddSWAC are at the early stages of promoting the idea. Already the public health faculty of Oxford Brooke's are helping with research and Balfour Beatty are undertaking on-site investigations.

Haddenham pioneers LEVEL WAYS.

BA



POINT-OF-VIEW

BOYS AND GIRLS COME OUT TO PLAY



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Many people think that it is children playing in the street that makes a neighbourhood.

It can only be a churlish few who, walking past a school playground, do not take some pleasure in the hoops and shouts of the children suddenly released from class without guidance or programme. There may be no teaching, but what important discoveries are being made and lessons learnt. How to get on with others of all sorts; the pleasures and perils of friendship; the need to control instinct and think before action; the rewards of compromise, the thrill of groups, the fear of exclusion: all thoughts to strike chords deep in the memory of the passing adult.

And within the noisy hubbub, children are just beginning to find or stumble upon the roles they could be playing in the social order in a few years' time: the leaders, the lieutenants, the team builders, the carers and protectors of the weak, the peacemakers (and their opposite), the compromisers and diplomats, the performers, the traders, the fixers ... The playground is just as important as the classroom in the child's development, and often unfairly squeezed in the ever more crowded school day.

Children's play is equally important in the home environment. The children of your street are your neighbours for years and getting on with them is an essential social skill, as it is for parents. Street play was once a feature of nearly everybody's childhood, but no longer. Cars and fear of strangers have made parents super protective of their children; and now the smartphone, potentially a miracle but, in the absence of direction, a seductive quicksand and the enemy of face-to-face street encounter.

Our council, to its credit, has grasped the problem and created a framework for the occasional closure of minor streets for children's play⁴, but the procedure is cumbersome, top-heavy with safeguarding and, of course, unresponsive to the weather.

Haddenham has many quiet streets and closes where children's play could be encouraged. Risks would be minimal and parents could monitor activity from the kitchen window, controlling the level of boisterousness. Care for property should be assumed and neighbours should look kindly on the merriment, bearing in mind the long-term benefits for us all.

Many people think that it is children playing in the street that makes a neighbourhood. Let that view prevail in Haddenham..

AG

³ Image: courtesy of playingout.net blog

⁴ See <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/news/transform-your-street-into-a-play-street/>



WHO WANTS TO PAY PER MILE?



GPS satellite (image licensed under CC BY-SA-NC)

Not too many of us according to polls. Twenty years ago a proposal was put forward, by Alistair Darling as Transport Secretary, for all motoring taxes to be replaced by payment per mile, but the idea was dropped after 1.8 million angry people signed a petition of protest.

The Darling proposal would have allowed government to charge different prices for different roads at different times of day. Congestion could thus be reduced by rewarding motorists able to travel at quieter times or by different routes. The road network and people's time would be more efficiently used and new construction better targeted. Among the benefits, motorists could be compensated with a discount for the frustration of major road works. The system was offered as an overall public good.

Since then the idea has been desultorily kicked around by economists, usually ending in the 'too difficult' tray, but recent developments are beginning to make the case more compelling. First, government is losing a lot of revenue from fuel tax as drivers convert to electric, and secondly the technology for monitoring and reporting vehicle movements has been leaping

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... recent developments are beginning to make the case more compelling.

ahead. A much more sophisticated system is now feasible.

After the Darling experience, the introduction of the system is likely to be modest: probably limited to conversion of the annual road tax (Vehicle Excise Duty) into a modest payment per mile travelled and possibly applying at first only to electric vehicles.

But, as our roads and streets continue to fill with moving and stationary cars, a second stage, where all motoring taxes are consolidated into a payment per mile, could make many of us reappraise our use of the car. The per mile cost of the short journey to the local shop will add materially to the cost of milk and morning paper, and we may consider walking or cycling. For longer journeys, bargain train fares outside peak hours, already some of the best value in Europe, will become ever more attractive.⁵

In the longer term, as more of us move to alternative modes of travel, like buses, taxis and car clubs, these services will respond with ever more ample provision for the expanding tribe of those liberated from the expense and responsibility of car ownership.

AG

⁵ See <https://www.seat61.com/uk-europe-train-fares-comparison.html>

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED TO AYLESBURY



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So, if you have a bit more time on your hands, ... and don't mind adding a couple more miles, why not take the back roads?

What's the best way to get to Aylesbury? As the old joke goes, 'I wouldn't start from here'. At least not on a bike. But despite the lack of a safe route connecting us to our county town, some still choose to travel under their own steam, rather than adding to the town's ever-increasing traffic by driving or tying themselves to the X20 timetable.

A good place to start is the wonderful Green Lane, the community path that was intended as the start traffic-free route all the way to Aylesbury. On a warm evening, bats flitting overhead, there are few nicer places to be. Until you hit the A418, that is.

From there, the direct route involves mixing with the traffic until you reach the shared-use path through Stone. Although it is busier, cyclists generally prefer the A418 to the Lower Road, as it is also slower (50 mph rather than 60 mph) and wider. Despite this extra width, at least one driver will probably whizz by your elbow far too close.

Another option, after the 200 metre 'missing link', is to ride on the footway beside the road that takes you from Low Lane through to Stone. Obviously, we can't recommend this, as footways are for pedestrians, but

nor can we be too critical of those who choose to avoid the busy A-road. Beware though, years of neglect make for a very bumpy ride!

If you have a bit more time on your hands, though, and don't mind adding a couple more miles, why not take the back roads? From Haddenham, cycle up Churchway, across the A418 (pushing your bike if you don't fancy the staggered junction). Carry on into Cuddington, turn right by the Crown into Aylesbury Road, which takes you out just before Dinton Folly. Here you cross the A418 again and follow the Road into Dinton, where you turn left towards Upton. The road through the village takes you back up to the A418 again, for a short stretch until you reach the shared-use path.

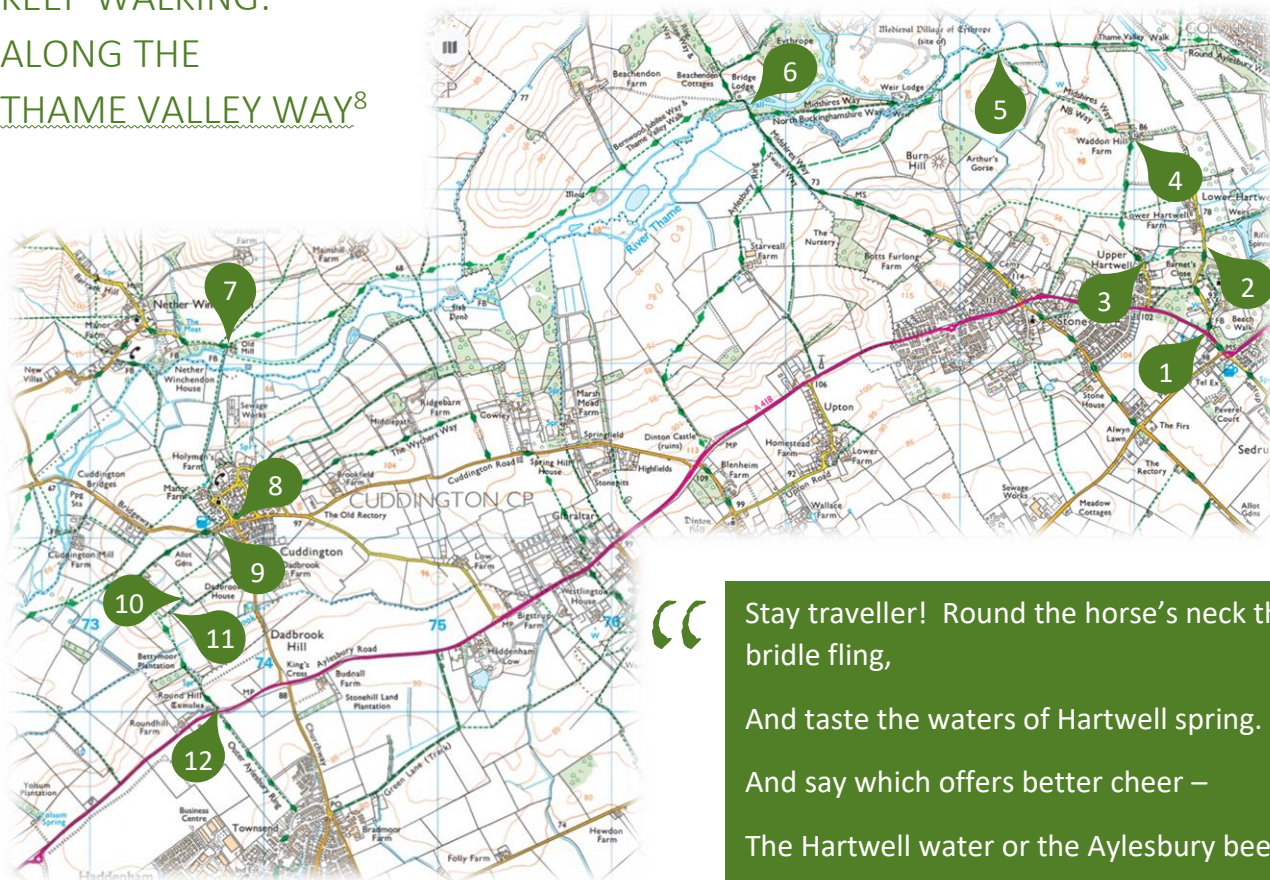
From there, you're protected from the traffic all the way into town. At busy times, you'll whizz past the queuing cars, before crossing the new HS2 bridge with its improved views of Pooley's Palace⁷ and shockingly bumpy surface. Then onwards to wherever Aylesbury's comprehensive if confusing and poorly maintained cycle network takes you.

AT

Image: end of the cycle route out of Aylesbury.

⁷ 200-foot landmark, County Hall, Aylesbury; its nickname (alternatively Pooley's Folly) derives from its architect, Fred Pooley.

KEEP WALKING: ALONG THE THAME VALLEY WAY⁸



“ Stay traveller! Round the horse’s neck the
bridle fling,
And taste the waters of Hartwell spring.
And say which offers better cheer –
The Hartwell water or the Aylesbury beer?”

A departure for SIGNPOSTS, this is a fair-weather walk of about 7.5 miles one-way. Very muddy after rain!

To experience it we recommend taking a bus ([Redline X20 or 120](#)) from Thame or Haddenham, to Hartwell House, just before Aylesbury, then walking back to Haddenham.

DIRECTIONS⁹

Take the bus towards Aylesbury. Get off after the turning for Hartwell House at [The Bugle Horn](#) pub.

Walk back to the Hartwell House turning ①. *Admire ammonites in wall.* Turn right. Don’t take Hartwell-House turn, but continue to Egyptian Well; *Greek inscription means “Water is Best”. Dr John Lee, an evangelical teetotaler, lived at Hartwell House 1829-1866 and commissioned the well. He also wrote the poem quoted under the map (above); yet he still paid*

the local innkeeper to close while he ran Festivals of Peace and Temperance.

Drink from the well at your own risk; Cuddington beer, later.

Take stile on left ② and cross fields. At farm road turn right ③. Pass farm. Go through gate, and straight to farm buildings. Half way round the buildings turn left ④ and follow hedges to River Thames ⑤.

Opposite is Alice Rothschild’s “Old English Tea House”, to which she and friends were rowed. Burn Hill on left

⁸ Map by kind permission: ©Crown copyright 2025 Ordnance Survey. Media 015/25..

⁹ It is walkers’ responsibility to keep to footpaths. Walkers should follow the Countryside Code, which can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/247cfrrn>.

Continued – Walk along Thame Valley Way

is a natural mound used for prehistoric burials (OE byrgen = 'grave').

Pass, on the opposite side of the River, Weir Lodge and proceed past a house onto a concrete road. At the end turn right and cross bridge by waterfall ⑥. Shortly after turn left at Bridge Lodge. Both lodges are Rothschild's.

In the third field pass a moat. Aylesbury Vale has many moats, constructed from 1150 by newly emerging gentry as status symbols...

Follow River to Nether Winchendon Mill ⑦ (coupled with Scotsgrove Mill). Sometime in 1600s to 1830s it milled paper, but following regional machinery riots reverted to corn until the 1920s. One of its last tasks starting in the 1930s was to drive a generator which provided electricity to Nether Winchendon. This hamlet had to wait until 1947 to receive mains electricity.

Pass front of mill. Gently ascend to Cuddington, past Holyman's Farm. Local boy James Holyman became the 2nd Bishop of Bristol (1558).

Pass Twelfth/Thirteenth Century [St Nicholas church](#) to [The Crown](#) pub.

From Pub turn right ⑧ along main road. (There is an illuminated traffic-sign with a solar-panel and windmill generator.) Turn left ⑨ and cross the field to a stile. Admire allotment on left and pass into field. Cross. At hedge cross into next field and go diagonally left to corner. Enter copse and turn right ⑩. On exiting copse turn left across two fields ⑪ and through plantation. Eventually on your right by main road ⑫ are ploughed-out remains of a mound – a Bronze Age barrow or (more likely?) a windmill mound.

Carefully cross A418 and go straight ahead round the Redrow footpath diversion to Rosemary Lane, in northeast Haddenham. Turn left to Churchway (then right to the infamous double roundabout) or right to Townsend (and onwards to [The Rising Sun](#) pub and Thame Road).

BB / BA

LITTER



Hurrah for those kindly people who pick up litter!

Here's an encouraging thought. It is well known that litter generates litter. If there is litter about, the litterer is more likely to drop that beer can or crisp packet. Conversely, if the street or alley is clear and tidy, then they are just a bit more likely to respond with care and respect. It follows that if you pick up litter you are inhibiting the dropping of other litter. So you can pride yourself with a rule of thumb such as: In picking up one crisp packet, in effect I am picking up three. AG

IS ANYONE THERE?



We love to hear from our readers. Adapting Oscar Wilde, ultimately the basis of a community is *conversation*.

As stated on our masthead, SIGNPOSTS brings you news and views. Fact and opinion.

We hope our facts are right, but is there anything we've left out or you think we ought to know?

As for opinion, we know there's scope for other views and we would welcome well-reasoned comment on our articles, which we could air in later issues.

Please write to us at HaddSWAC@gmail.com!

THE FIRST IN AN OCCASIONAL SERIES ON HADDENHAM GEMS



There's nothing to do in Haddenham! If you're under 20 (or a parent of the same), you may agree – one of the reasons a greenway to Thame will be so welcome. But Haddenham has its own treasures. Perhaps you haven't found them all yet?

For example, what activity refers to berms, rollers, table tops, rhythm sections, front- and back-flips, grinds, double flare no handers, and free willies? What pastime can start at four years old, defines "veterans" starting at 30, and has celebrities over 50? Perhaps you know; but did you also know that you can begin to learn skills for the related Olympic sport, first introduced at Beijing in 2008, *in Haddenham*?

All you need is a bike.

Haddenham has one of the earliest "pump tracks" in the UK, established in 1983. The name comes from riders using the undulating and twisting features of a track and moving their bodies up and down, to generate momentum and gain speed without pedalling.

Refurbished in 2017 and now maintained annually, the serpentine circuit in the southwest corner of Woodways Recreation Ground (by Old Mill Close) attracts visitors from well beyond Haddenham.

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Haddenham has one of the earliest "pump tracks" in the UK, established in 1983.

If you get smitten, you can take it to another level with local competitive clubs, like that at Milton Keynes with over 100 active racers. Who knows, the X Games and global fame may beckon you. But most are happy to enjoy the relaxed mixed company, swapping tricks and the sensation of flying that some riders refer to. It's also a good place to develop cycling confidence.

The pastime and sport is "trending" with a new pump track to add variety at Berryfields and another coming soon to Bedgrove (both Aylesbury suburbs). And "BMXercising" is claimed to be the latest fitness craze.

Might keep you and yours out of trouble.

DS

HaddSWAC is very grateful for financial support from Haddenham Village Fête (14th June 2025), The Haddenham Beer Festivals Trust (Summerfest on 25th July 2025) and Thame Cycles.

We welcome news and views to be published in SIGNPOSTS at the editorial committee's discretion.

To subscribe, FREE, simply email your request to HaddSWAC@gmail.com.