

Hylands House

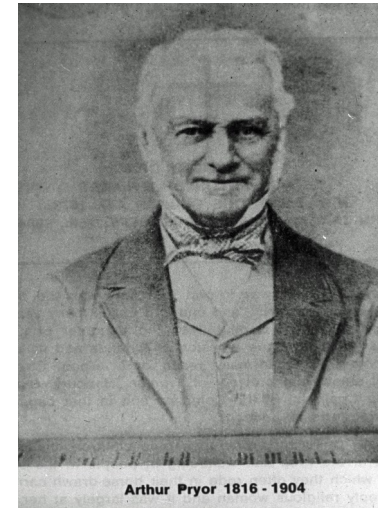
The Grade 2* House has now been fully restored for nearly two decades and is open to the public for booking and free open days. It may well be that a new generation of residents have little idea of its history and the restoration process that brought it back to life. Nick Wickenden was the Manager of Chelmsford Museum and closely involved with the restoration, liaising with architects, conservators and builders from the early 1990s until the mid 2000s. In 2022, he wrote the current guide book on Hylands House. Nick has kindly written a few words regarding his forthcoming talk on 13th November:

The talk will look at the origins of the House, and the ten owners that owned the House, some fleetingly, before Chelmsford Borough Council became the 11th owner in 1966. It will particularly concentrate on those owners that made substantial changes to the architecture and gardens. Owners and visitors have included royalty, MPs, judges, brewers, merchant bankers, slave traders, explorers, landscape gardeners, aviators, war heroes, scoundrels, and possibly a future President of America. Grand weddings have always featured and continue to do so. The talk will also dispel one or two local false beliefs about what happened!

The Borough Council debated for decades about what to do with Hylands House. Proposals included full or partial demolition, a golf course, museums and bijou apartments. Events included a public enquiry, a country house auction of contents, and a fire. The restoration begun in the mid-1980s, and continued over several phases into the 2000s, ultimately with National Lottery support.

Several important rules of engagement emerged including using first class specialists and conservators. This was made easier, ironically, by the disastrous fire at Windsor Castle when several conservators were employed in that restoration. The other important rule was that any work carried out had to be based on evidence, whether photographic, surviving fragments, archaeological, or otherwise. Pastiche was not an option.

Nick Wickenden.



Arthur of Hylands 'Squire Pryor', as he was known to many, was born in 1816, the third son of Vickris Pryor of Baldock, Hertfordshire and came to Essex many years after his marriage to Miss Elizabeth Sophia Dew. It would seem that he bought the mansion of Hylands and its park of 596 acres in order to live within easy reach of Liverpool Street station where he was Chairman of the nearby brewery of Truman, Hanbury, Buxton & Co.

Living happily at Hylands with their nine children, the couple took a great interest in the lives and wellbeing of people in the surrounding district through which they often rode in their horse-drawn carriage. Mrs Pryor was a deeply religious woman and it was largely at her instigation that in 1862 her wealthy husband financed the erection of the Church of St Mary, Widford, on the site of an earlier building.

The spiritual needs of the people of Galleywood were at that time being met by services either in the chapel-at-ease in the church school at The Eagle crossroads or in the small Methodist church in Well Lane. Influenced by his wife, Mr Pryor soon put in hand a scheme to build a church high on Galleywood common and visible for many miles around. He laid the foundation stone on 21st June 1872 and was among 750 people who attended the consecration ceremony on 29th September 1873. As there was no Diocese of Chelmsford until 1914, the service was conducted by the Bishop of Rochester.

Alas, any hopes that Mrs Pryor had cherished of attending Sunday services with her husband and family at Galleywood were quickly abandoned. According to a relative any such plans were laid aside after the very first Sunday service before the incumbent had commenced duty. The visiting clergyman allegedly preached a sermon mildly in favour of purgatory and so horrified Mr Pryor, to whom 'popery' was anathema, that he could never be persuaded to attend another service in the church on which he had spent £6,300 - £575,600 in today's money. Arthur Pryor lived to the ripe age of 88 years. His public engagements included laying the foundation stone of the Chelmsford and Essex hospital in 1882. He lived a full and useful life and was honoured in Galleywood in the 1970s when Pryors Road was named after him.

Extract from *Glimpses of Galleywood*, 3rd edition. £6.50.

Galleywood Heritage Centre – forthcoming event

Remembrance Exhibition Sunday - 17th November 10:00am until 3.30pm

Contact - susan.wilson@galleywoodheritagecentre.org.uk or 07780 763127.

Past Times

From 2025 you will receive your copy of **Past Times** by email. Printed copies will be available at our talks. If you would like to join our committee and help out please email the Chairman, Graham Mundy: grahamundy1948@hotmail.com

Chairman: Graham Mundy *Treasurer, Membership and Editor:* Geraldine Willden. *Secretary & Programme Director:* Gillian Parker. *Committee:* Stephanie Troop, Pat Stuart and John Turkentine. *Comments and contributions to the newsletter are welcomed by the Editor.* Email: Geraldine.willden@hotmail.co.uk
Please note our new website address: www.e-voice.org.uk/ghs/

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Introduction

We say a fond farewell to Gillian Parker who has been our Secretary since 2012 and Programme Director for many years. Gillian moved to Galleywood with her family in early 2000. She got involved in many local activities including The Environmental Group (TEG) and later the Heritage Centre. She was actively involved in the publication *Galleywood Village Design Statement* which was published in 2005. Gillian moved to Chelmer Village in 2011 but has kept an interest in Galleywood activities. Gillian is a keen Rambler and we wish her well for the future. Thank you, Gillian, for all your hard work.

Our next talk will be at our AGM on Wednesday 13th November. We aim to keep the AGM business as short as possible as we will be keen to hear our speaker, Nick Wickenden, tell us about the restoration and owners of Hylands House.

