



George Edmund Street and Professor Sir Colin Buchanan: Stewkley Heritage Heroes.

Working 100 years apart, two icons in the fields of architecture and town planning were central figures in Stewkley's heritage. The Grapevine relates their contribution to the village, and the link between them.



George Edmund Street

G E Street (1824-1881) was possibly the leading Victorian Gothic Revival architect, responsible for the sympathetic restoration of St Michael's Church in 1862. He trained in the offices of Sir George Gilbert Scott, and by 1862 was Oxford Diocesan architect with his own practice in London. During his career he designed over 100 new Victorian churches and restored more than 400, with his most well-known commission being the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand.

Drawn to Stewkley by the dynamic vicar, the Rev C H Travers, Street's intervention at St Michael's was a pivotal and major restoration, which almost turned out to be more radical. Travers' aim was to increase the congregation space by demolishing the west end of the Nave, and meticulously rebuilding the West Front, stone by stone, more or less on the edge of the present High Street. This raised many objections and was opposed by many antiquarians and by Street himself. It is said that Street's procrastination over saving the antique fabric eventually led to Travers losing patience with the idea. Fortunately the church escaped the ravages of a typical Victorian expansion, and in the end the restoration retained the original Norman proportions...and restored them in the case of the roofs.

The original brief of increasing the seating provision was never met. Instead, in 1865, Travers converted a dwelling in Dunton Road to a chapel-of-ease (now reverted to the home known as Trinity House) to save the legs of South-end worshippers the mile-long walk to St Michael's.



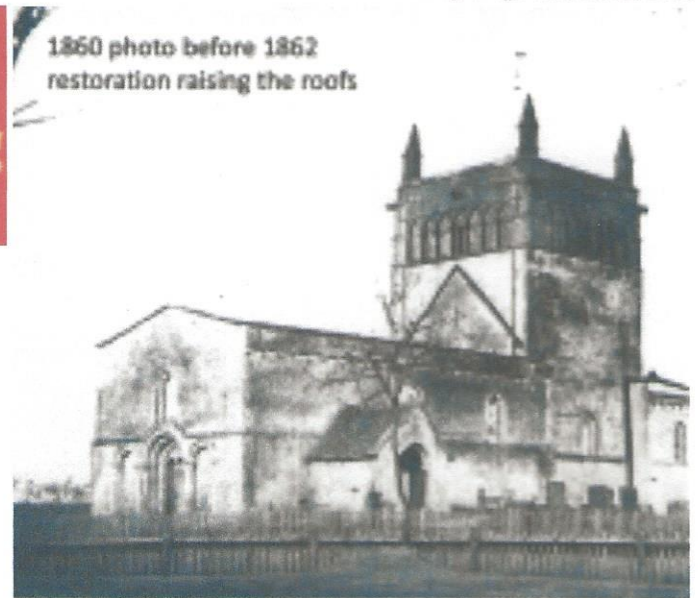
Sir Colin Buchanan

In Stewkley, there is much for which to thank George Street, close alongside the endeavours of Colin Buchanan in the 20th century. His was the dissenting voice on the Roskill Commission's plan to build a third London Airport in Buckinghamshire, which would have flattened Street's restoration of St Michael's Church beneath a runway.

Professor Sir Colin Buchanan (1907-2001) was a civil engineer who came to prominence in 1963 when he led a Transport Ministry group that produced the influential Buchanan Report, published by Penguin as the concise *Traffic in Towns*. It described how Britain's towns and cities would become paralysed by traffic congestion, and it still forms the pivot point for policy proposals on urban traffic issues.

Buchanan went on to chairs of Transport and Planning at Imperial College London and Bristol University, and built a successful consultancy, Colin Buchanan and Partners.

In 1968-70, he was appointed to the Commission for the Third London Airport (the "Roskill Commission") to enquire into the need and timing for a new four-runway airport to serve the London area, and to consider and recommend a site. The economic analysis of the Commission's 1971 Report, recommending that the site of Cublington/Stewkley be developed as London's third airport, was totally rejected, in a minority, by Buchanan, because of the policy need to protect the open countryside north of London. He said, "It is simply



unthinkable that an airport and all it implies should be brought here", and recommended Maplin Sands at Foulness on the Essex coast.

The threat to St Michael's Church became the central theme of a ferocious, two-year local and national campaign to save homes and livelihoods.

The rest as they say is history. Success was won and Stewkley saved, when the recommendation was overturned by the Government in April 1971...and the third London airport remains unbuilt even today. Buchanan's opposition to the Roskill Commission was borne out of the same environmental convictions that influenced *Traffic in Towns*...and many students of architecture and planning since.

Professor Buchanan was knighted in 1972, and passed away quietly at home at the age of 94 in 2001.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE 10 YEARS AGO...

From March 2009, Stewkley Local History Group was appealing for family records and photos of the Stewkley Lads Fallen in the Great War as research began on the memorial book...heavy snowfall and bitter cold in February caused the Tythe House snowman to mysteriously don a Manchester City scarf...Nature Notebook highlighted the challenges and opportunities that the snowscape brought for both man and wildlife...the PC announced that the new wildlife reserve was to be officially opened by Hugh Mellor CBE during the *Celebrating English Village Life* weekend in April...the History Group was also to host a 40th Anniversary presentation by campaign veteran John Flewin, about the Third London Airport battle...and Bletchley Park girl, Betty Faulkner, passed away at the age of 86.

FROM THE GRAPEVINE 20 YEARS AGO...

From March 1999, a Grapevine special edition, *Say No to Wing Airport*, marked the 30th Anniversary of the successful campaign to defeat the Third London Airport...Stewkley FC beat Steeple Claydon 4-1 to face Wingrave in the semi-final of the Oving Cup...Ingram Murray announced the withdrawal of the threatened closure of Stewkley Library...St Michael's Church introduced a new relaxed service of Family Worship every second Sunday...Andrew Beer was holding his *Mad Sale No.3* in aid of the Church Bell Fund...off the court, the Tennis Club team successfully defended their title in the Scouts' Quiz to retain the *Country Life Cup*...and Harveys' Deli and Tea Room was about to open in Les Smith's old butcher's shop.

The campaign against the Third London Airport will be the subject of a village hall presentation by John Flewin on Saturday 30 March to mark the 50th anniversary of the fight to save our heritage in Stewkley.