



The Obelisk

The stone monument stands on the lane to Dunford, over-looking Cocking Causeway. It was put up by Henry Court, a tenant farmer, as a memorial to Cobden. The revenue from the land around it funded Court's Charity for apprenticing poor boys and educating natives of Midhurst at the Grammar School. It is inscribed:

FREE TRADE PEACE
GOODWILL AMONG NATIONS

The Cobden Club, Heyshott

Across the road from the Church is a cottage presented by Jane Cobden to the village in 1880 which she had converted to form a club with library, common room and kitchen, with a field for croquet behind. It was a temperance club, known for a time as The Coffee Tavern, to which members paid one penny a week. Inside the cottage, on the massive tie-beam, is carved the inscription:

This Cobden Club and Village Room

The Gift of Jane Cobden to Heyshott 1880 In Trust

and an emblem of corn sheaves and sickles commemorating her father's achievement. The club has now moved to the former village school nearby and the cottage is a private house.

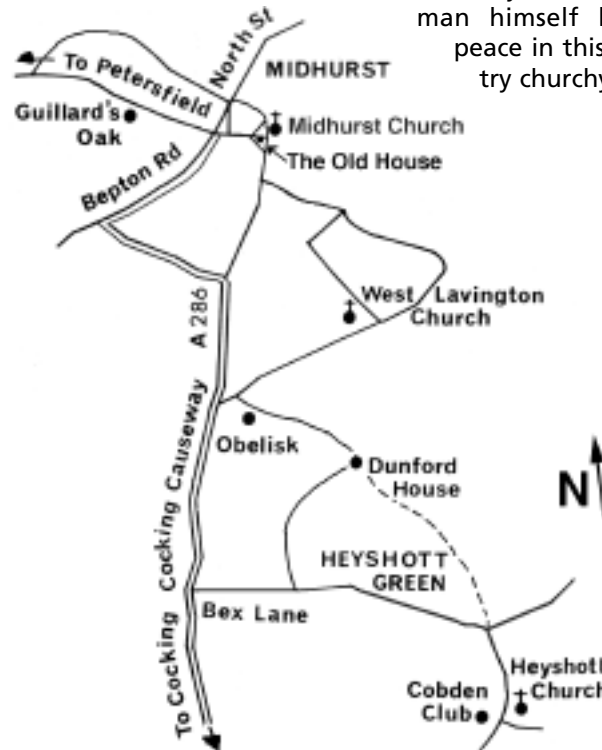
Heyshott Church (St James)

Richard Cobden and his brothers and sisters were baptised here, and he brought his own family to worship, walking from Dunford. Jane relates that in their childhood there was no resident vicar in the village. The parson came from Stedham on horseback and used to take up the youngest Cobden to ride in front of him. Cobden's pew is marked by a plaque. A memorial tablet (designed by Graily Hewitt, a distinguished calligraphic artist who worked with William Morris) was placed there by his daughters Ellen and Jane on July 3rd 1896.

Ecclesiastical parish boundaries were changed during Cobden's lifetime, and the family grave is not in Heyshott but in West Lavington, then a newly-created parish.

West Lavington Church

The Cobden family grave is still here, but the church itself is now closed. Richard was given a funeral in Westminster Abbey, but had wished to be buried at home, close to his beloved South Downs and beside his son. The service was attended by over 3,000 people who had travelled from all over England and from Europe. Pall-bearers included Gladstone, John Bright and other leading parliamentarians. A bust of Cobden was later placed in the Abbey. Others are in the National Portrait Gallery and Dunford House and a fourth was sent to the French Emperor, Napoleon III, with whom he had negotiated the 1860 Commercial Treaty. The great man himself lies in peace in this country churchyard.



RICHARD COBDEN



Richard Cobden (1804-65), the great Reformer, statesman and idealist, was born on his grandfather's farm at Dunford, not far from Midhurst, and is buried at nearby West Lavington.

In Britain we remember him for his success in getting the unjust Corn Laws repealed; this reduced the price of bread. His belief that free trade would bring international co-operation and peace influenced public life for 100 years, and his passionate diplomacy steered Europe into a 'common market' long before the European Union. A true internationalist, he has inspired successive generations of politicians and economists.

 **The Midhurst Society**, promoting new ideas and supporting our heritage to help Midhurst become a better place to live, work and enjoy. *Like to know more?*

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RICHARD COBDEN'S CAREER

When Richard's grandfather died in 1809 Dunford was sold and Richard's father moved his family to Guillard's Oak farm in Midhurst. This had to be abandoned in 1814 and, in order to survive, the children were split up, with young Richard going to his uncle's to learn the textile trade. He started his own factory in Lancashire in 1831 and prospered.

Entering politics without the benefit of influence in that age of patronage he became MP for Stockport (1841-46), the West Riding (1847-57) and for Rochdale (1859 until his death in 1865). With John Bright, his fellow MP and great orator, Cobden formed and led the Anti-Corn Law League, whose purpose was the abolition of taxes on imports of foreign corn. He campaigned for eight years throughout Britain and finally convinced the Government to repeal the Laws in 1846, amidst national rejoicing.

He travelled widely and was influential in promoting his economic and political theories in other countries, and successfully negotiated the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1860. He consistently opposed aggressive foreign policies and was a leading proponent of good relations with America. He was one of the Commissioners of the Great Exhibition of 1851, which promoted international trade as well as displaying scientific and artistic splendours.

For all his political eminence, Cobden remained unshakeably modest and unaffected, refusing a cabinet post and a knighthood. He had the faculty of making friends in all walks of life and in all countries. With his beloved wife Kate, he moved amongst rulers at home and abroad, working strenuously and incessantly, but he loved nothing better than to escape to family life. In 1847 he bought back Dunford farm, making it their Sussex home; he was beloved of the local villagers with whom he mixed as easily as with the well-to-do.

A great family tragedy was the sudden death of his young son at school in Germany in 1856. The body was brought home and buried in West Lavington churchyard, the funeral procession followed by all Heyshott, grieving for the son of a great father. Nine years later Richard himself died and was buried, amid national mourning, beside his son.

FAMILY RESIDENCES & MEMORIALS

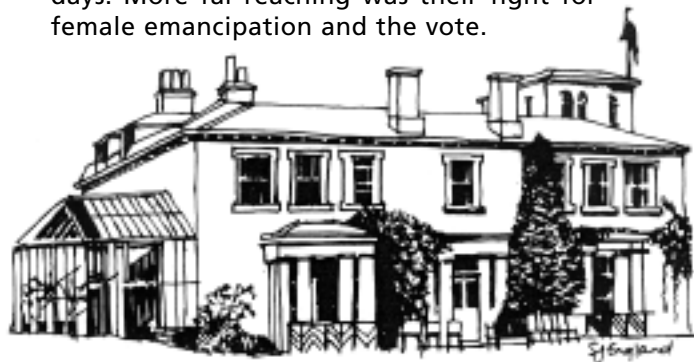
Midhurst Old Town

The ancient red brick, timber-framed house at the top of South Street was bought in 1639 by a former Richard Cobden. It was the family home for 150 years until the grandfather of our Richard Cobden inherited Dunford. In 1890 it became The Midhurst Coffee Tavern, a name commemorated by the Cobden Club at Heyshott, described below. It is now part of the Spread Eagle Hotel.

In the nearby parish church a notice tells us that the tenor bell, hung in 1765, carries the name of that grandfather, also Richard, then an Overseer of the parish.

Dunford House

The present Dunford House is substantially the family residence built by Richard Cobden round the nucleus of the old farmhouse where he was born. When he bought it back in 1847 it had been divided into two cottages. Rebuilding was completed in 1853 and he enthusiastically farmed about 132 acres of fields, coppice and plantations. Here his children grew up in a happy family circle and in a liberal, cultured and intellectual atmosphere which formed the characters of his remarkable daughters. Their inherited talents were encouraged by their early introduction to politics and the arts both at home and through Cobden's wide national and international connections. Ellen, Jane and Anne were notable in their own right and took after him in undertaking such public service as was possible for women in those days. More far-reaching was their fight for female emancipation and the vote.



After Cobden's death and after various changes by tenants, Jane and her husband (Thomas Fisher-Unwin) leased Dunford to the London School of Economics in 1920. Eight years later, she donated it to the Cobden Memorial Association which used it, with the help of Carnegie endowments, for other educational and international purposes; eventually, in 1952, it was transferred to the YMCA. It is now a residential training and conference centre specialising in education, peace and international relations, carrying on the ideals of its great owner. It maintains his spirit of friendship and hospitality, and preserves many personal memorials of the Cobden family.

Guillard's Oak



The present Guillard's Oak housing development was formerly the smaller family property of the Cobdens to which Richard's father William took his family in 1809 when Dunford was sold. As Guillard's Oak it appears on the Midhurst Tithe Map of 1841, when it consisted of 20 acres of arable and meadow garden and orchard, with names like Apple Pie Field, Hilly Field and Fir Tree Field. The land lay between the Petersfield Road (then Butt Lane) and Midhurst Common. The buildings included a malt house, brew house, wagon house, dairy and stables. The last of these has been converted into a private house. The Georgian building at the entrance to the estate was the farmhouse. Its spacious interior is now divided into three.

As a small boy Richard kept his father's sheep and attended a dame school in Midhurst on the corner of Bepton and Petersfield Roads. The farm did not prosper and the Cobdens (less Richard) moved again in 1814 to West Meon, Hampshire.