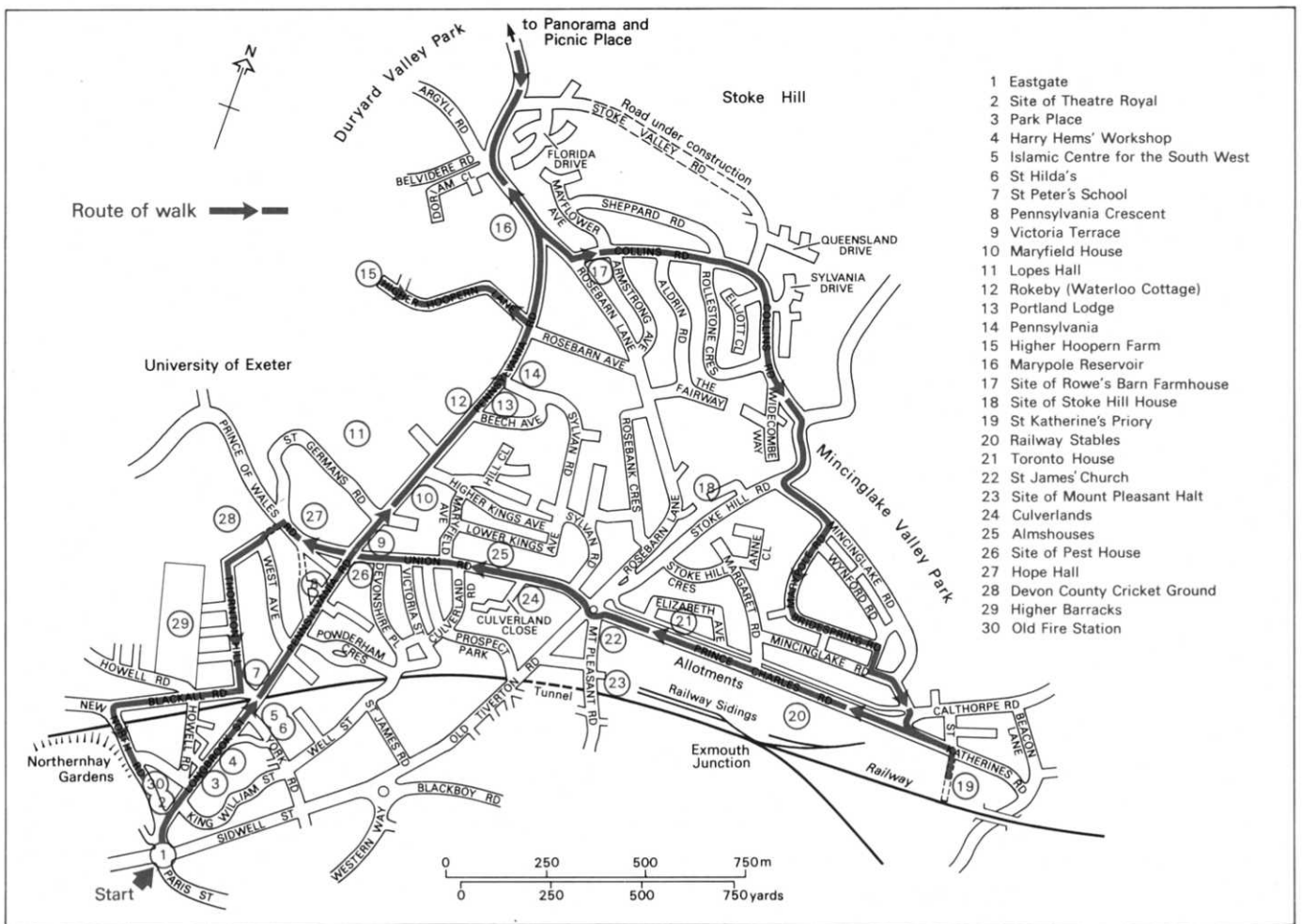


Discovering Exeter 4/Pennsylvania





Exeter Civic Society 1984

Foreword

Pennsylvania

by Hazel Harvey

Note of series

Discovering Exeter:

- 1 *St David's*, by Joyce Greenaway
- 2 *St Leonard's*, by Gilbert Venn
- 3 *Heavitree*, by Trevor Falla
- 4 *Pennsylvania*, by Hazel Harvey

Up the hill from most of Exeter's other suburbs, Pennsylvania has a character especially its own, derived both from its topography and its history. This booklet, the fourth in the series 'Discovering Exeter', follows the usual pattern of an historical introduction, followed by a walking guide to enable the reader to appreciate as much of the suburb as possible.

Large numbers of new settlements in the Americas were named from towns and cities in 'the Old Country' - Exeter, New Hampshire, is a good example - so it is interesting to find a reverse example where a community was named after the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, USA, by a Quaker admirer of William Penn's experiment across the Appalachians.

As at Exwick, steep slopes have put constraints on new development in the area but, undaunted, builders have over the years found ways of fitting houses into the topography. The reason for the steep slopes is geological, with grey shale ('shillet') and sandstone of the Culm Measures forming the hills rather than the softer red sandstone and marl of the lower parts of Exeter. As residents of Bonhay Road know, these slopes can become unstable during a wet winter season. And gardeners are aware that the heavy soils are not so kindly as the rich red loam of the rest of Exeter.

The inspiration and much of the success of this series of booklets came from Harold Trump, Chairman of the Society from 1975 to 1982 and subsequently the mainspring of the Publications Sub-Committee. It is with much regret that we record his sudden death in July 1984.

Front cover *Print of Pennsylvania Buildings* by George Rowe
 Back cover *Stoke Hill House, east front, Sanders' family residence.*

D J C Laming
 Chairman Exeter Civic Society

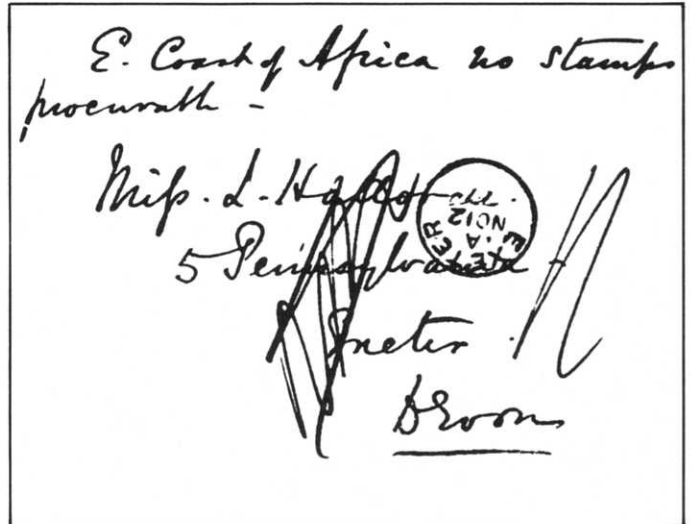
Historical Introduction

The name Pennsylvania originally applied only to the terrace of six white houses on the hillside, which are clearly visible from most parts of Exeter. They were commissioned in 1818 by a Quaker banker who chose to honour William Penn by naming them after his American colony, which was founded on principles of justice and religious toleration. Perhaps it is appropriate that whereas the earlier booklets in this series have each dealt with an Exeter parish, 'Pennsylvania' is not a parish but a residential area. Its boundaries are primarily of interest to estate agents, who like to refer to ever wider areas below Union Road as 'Lower Pennsylvania', and the new estates to the north as 'Higher Pennsylvania' and even 'Sylvania'. Further development past Stoke Woods may yet bring us an Exeter 'Transylvania'.

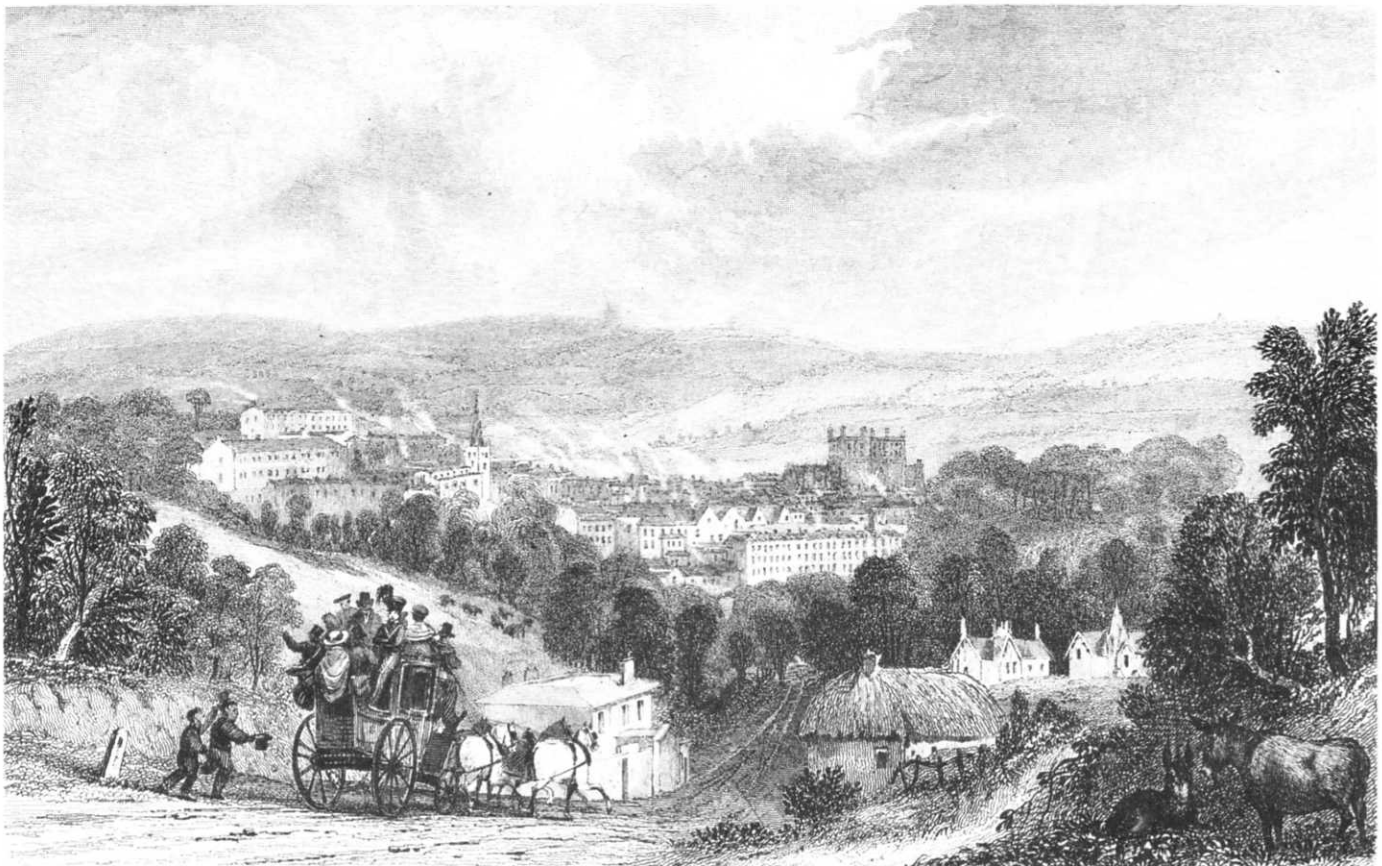
Even nearly sixty years later, '5 Pennsylvania, Exeter' was sufficient address to reach Mrs. Halloran's school for young ladies at the terrace, although 'Pennsylvania' had begun to be used for the whole desirable district by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, the hill itself, which provided such salubrious air, such unrivalled vistas, and such inspiration to the composers of the estate agents' advertisements, existed long before it received this name.

An Iron Age camp stood on the summit above Stoke Woods, before there was any settlement on the city's spur. A network of ancient paths converged on Higher Hoopern Farm and led down the Taddiforde Valley to the Exe. Another ancient route ran along the line of present-day Rosebarn Lane, Mount Pleasant and Polsloe Road. It was crossed by the old route to Tiverton over Stoke Hill. Wheeled traffic was almost unknown in Devon until 1750. Men on foot or riding ponies and leading pack-animals chose the high, dry ways.

2



Geoffrey of Monmouth reports, albeit unreliably, that when Vespasian besieged the city 'in 49 A.D.' its Celtic name was *Kaerpenhuelgoit*, meaning 'town on the hill under the high wood'. Pennsylvania Road lies on the route that Roman messengers took from the legionary fortress guarding the river-crossing to the signal-station and look-out 600 feet above sea-level. In the 19th century a Roman signet-ring of iron was found under the road, and also the upper third of an amphora.



Exeter from Pennsylvania Hill, 1832

