

1860/61: Established his main works in Strood - where he built his first self-propelled portable engine, known as a farm locomotive (pictured right), based on his 1859 Patent. This was essentially the first traction engine ever produced. Subsequent improvements and innovations were made to the design, with further Patents registered (in 1860), creating a traction engine proper.



1861: Built 34 traction engines in this year.

1861: 36-years-old. Living at 24 High Street in Rochester. Employed 82 men and 14 boys.

1862: Formed a business partnership with Richard Porter and the Aveling & Porter company was born. The following year the company opened an office in London (72 Cannon Street).

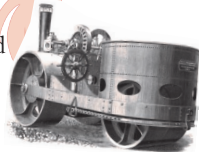
1863: Aveling & Porter had manufactured 97 traction engines by this time - with orders from Prussia and Australia.

1864/65: Using one of his traction engines to pull a heavy roller to assist in road construction in Erith, Kent, gave him the idea of developing a steam-powered roller.

1865: Designed and built a steam-propelled roller. He wasn't the first to invent 'using steam power for rolling roads', but this was the first purpose-built all-in-one engine.

1866: Commenced trials of a purpose-built steam roller in Hyde Park, London.

1867: Following a successful trial - he proceeded to build his first commercial road roller - the famous 'Liverpool Roller' (pictured right).

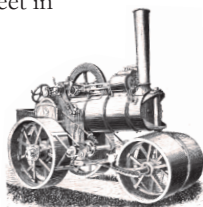


1868/69: Served as Mayor of Rochester. He introduced many improvements, including allowing the public access to the gardens at Rochester Castle and re-designing the layout (little remains of it), spearheaded the construction of both the New Corn Exchange and public swimming bath (this was located on the Esplanade) and implemented improvements at Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School. He represented Strood and Frindsbury Ward on the City of Rochester Corporation and was, politically, an advanced Liberal.

1869/70/71: During these years, Aveling & Porter built 14 rollers for the UK, 7 for the USA, 1 for France and 7 for India - transforming roads around the world. The first roller in the USA created paths and roads in Central Park, New York City.

1871: 45-years-old. Living at St. Margaret's Street in Rochester. Employed 300 men and 13 boys.

1873: Attended The Universal Exhibition in Vienna where he successfully showcased his road roller (pictured right). Following this, he received the Knighthood of the Imperial Order of Franz Joseph by the Emperor of Austria.



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1878: Awarded the Chevalier of the National Order of the Legion of Honour by the French government.

1881: 56-years-old. Living at Boley Hill House in Rochester (previously the home of Richard Porter and his family). Employed 266 men and 61 boys.

7th March 1882 at 12.20pm: Died at Boley Hill House, aged 57, as a result of contracting pneumonia after catching a chill/infection whilst on board his 28 ton yacht 'Sally' at the end of February. He was a keen yachtsman and sailing barge enthusiast.

11th March 1882 at 12pm: Initially consisting of 37 carriages, his funeral cortège travelled from Boley Hill House to St. Werburgh Church in Hoo. 200 employees lined the route and bystanders crowded the streets in Rochester and Strood. The cortège had grown to 54 carriages by the time it had reached Hoo. His plain oak coffin was covered in beautiful wreaths (one of which was purchased by his workforce).

16th August 1882: His Last Will & Testament, dated 27th February 1878 (amended 2nd March 1882), was proved by his wife Sarah Aveling. According to the resworn Will of April 1883, he left the gross amount of £43,315 18s-3d (around £2,866,850.67 in today's money).

Acknowledgements (and source material):

- 'Thomas Aveling, 1824-1882, His Life and Work' by D. A. Rayner.
- 'Aveling & Porter' by J. M. Preston.
- Grace's Guide to British Industrial History.
- Arthur Vidgeon for old photos of Hoo (whitehousefarm.eclipse.co.uk).
- Colin Hutson for historic streetscape drawings of Hoo.
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- Tony Watson and Michael Pearce (Village Voices Publishing) for producing this leaflet.

The Thomas Aveling Society has made every effort to ensure the details contained in the leaflet are correct. However, research is ongoing. Should you possess new/different information, please get in touch using the contact details below.

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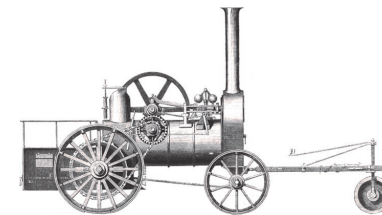


Visiting Hoo:

Hoo is on the Hoo Peninsula, around five miles from the historic City of Rochester. It is located off the A228 and is on a regular bus route (the 191 service). The postcode for the council's car park in central Hoo is ME3 9AJ (see the location map inside this leaflet).

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Thomas Aveling

'Father of the Traction Engine'

Pioneering engineer, inventor and blacksmith.

Co-founder of the world-famous 'Aveling & Porter company of Rochester' (based in Strood).

Former Mayor of Rochester.



Thomas lived in Hoo as a boy, teenager and young man and is buried at St. Werburgh Church.



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11th September 1824: Born in Elm, Cambridgeshire, he was the eldest son in a family of three boys. His father, also named Thomas, died when he was very young.

c1836: Moved to Hoo, Rochester, Kent, where his widow mother Anne (née Hobson) married Rev. John d'Urban, who apparently raised him 'with a Bible in one hand and a birch rod in the other', which Thomas is said to have described as an 'undesirable method of training children'.

1841: 16-years-old. Living with (and working for) local farmer Edward Lake and his family at Abbots Court in Hoo (see B on the enclosed map). His mother and stepfather lived somewhere in 'Hoo Street' (thought to be Stoke Road, Church Street or Main Road).

c1850: Purchased Court Lodge Farm in Ruckinge, Ashford, Kent.

23rd October 1850: Married Sarah Lake, niece of Edward Lake, in the parish of Bridge, Canterbury, Kent.

1850: Opened a small millwrighting and iron foundry business at 27 Edwards Yard in Rochester (where Corporation Street car park is located today) with his father-in-law Robert Lake, for the production and repair of agricultural plant.

1851: 26-years-old. Living at Court Lodge Farm in Ruckinge, Ashford, Kent. Working as a farmer and grazer with 298 acres. Employed 16 men and 6 boys. Pictured right is a memorial 'steam road roller smoke box door' outside Ruckinge Village Hall.



1852: With his two businesses working hand-in-glove in Ruckinge and Rochester, combined with his desire to innovate the world of farming, he began experimenting with steam cultivation. It is likely that he was also starting to think about the future, with regards to improving the movement and efficiency of goods between farms, markets and commercial centres.

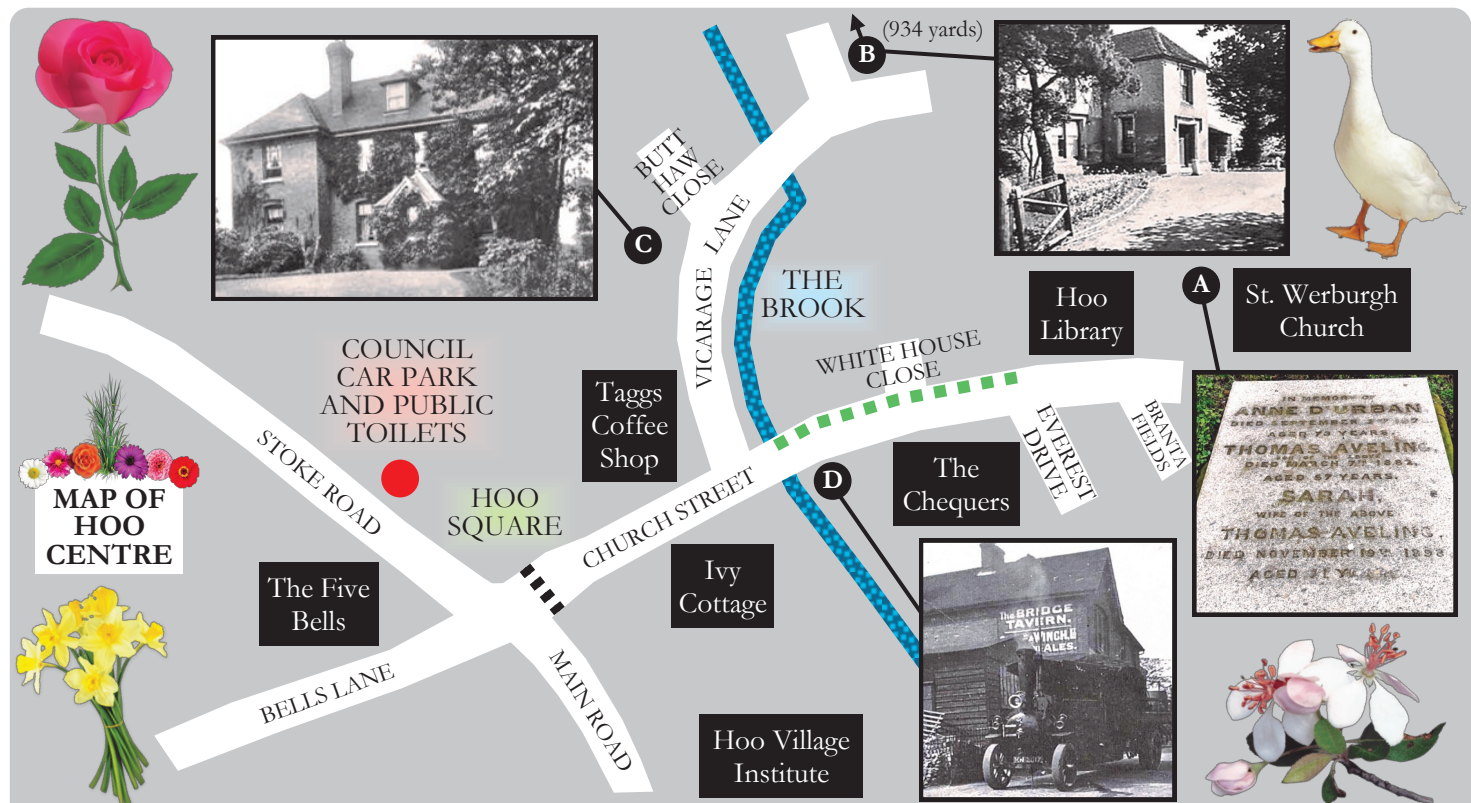
1856: In conjunction with manufacturers John Fowler of Leeds and Messrs. Ransoms & Sims of Ipswich, he introduced a steam plough to the farming community of Kent. Such was its success that in 1858 he was awarded a 'piece of plate' and a purse containing 300 guineas by Kent farmers in recognition of his achievement.

1858: Acquired premises at 24 High Street in Rochester (pictured right) where he moved with his family. He still owned the foundry and workshop at 27 Edwards Yard (Rochester), as well as a small foundry in Strood (on the site where he would later build his Invicta Works).



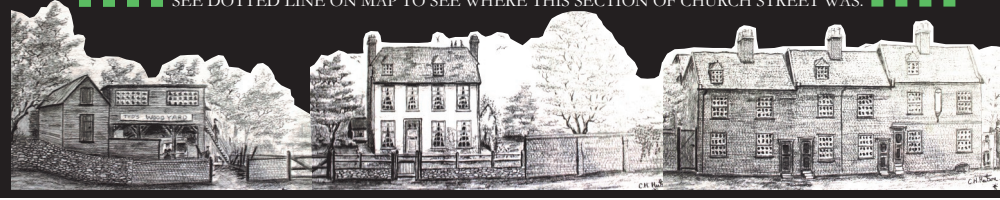
1859: Registered his first Patent, for a self-propelled road locomotive.

1860: Built by Clayton & Shuttleworth (because he had not yet started manufacturing himself), he unveiled an engine (pictured right) based on the design of his first Patent. His expertise was applying his engineering ideas and innovations to improving the capabilities of other people's machines.



(A) Thomas Aveling's grave, (B) Abbots Court (now private dwellings), (C) Site of the old Vicarage and (D) The former Bridge Tavern (now private dwellings).

19th century Hoo Streetscape (Church Street by Colin Hutson):



Thomas moved to Hoo as a boy and remained in the area throughout his teenage years until he was a young man - working for farmer Edward Lake of Abbots Court. This streetscape shows a small section of the centre of Hoo (one side of Church Street). Thomas would have been very familiar with this area.

Legacy in Hoo: The Thomas Aveling Society was formed in 2014 and organises an annual 'birthday celebration' community event on the Saturday closest to 11th September, as well as a small commemoration on 7th March. In 2021/22, roads on a new housing development, built on farmland in Hoo, once worked by Thomas Aveling and the Lake family, were given names associated with Thomas Aveling, including: Thomas Aveling Road, Invicta Drive, Edward Lake Drive, Blacksmith Lane, Harvest Rise, Plough Close and Engine Close. There are stained glass windows dedicated to Thomas, his wife Sarah and mother Anne inside St. Werburgh Church (pictured below).

To mark the centenary of Thomas Aveling's death, in 1982, the Road Roller Association organised a 'Road Run' from Rochester to Hoo (pictured below).

