

## **Contents**

### **1. Introduction**

<b>1.1 Aim of the report</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Sources used</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.3 Geography</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.4 Geology</b>	<b>2</b>

### **2. An outline of the history and development of the two settlements**

<b>2.1 Prehistory: Palaeolithic to Iron Age (c10,000 BC to 100 BC)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.2 Late Iron Age and Roman (cAD 10 to cAD 450)</b>	<b>3</b>
Wheathampstead	3
Turners Hall Farm and Marshalls Heath	4
Aldwickbury	4
Rothamsted	4
Harpenden	5
The road system	5
<b>2.3 Post-Roman and Saxon (5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2.4 Medieval Wheathampstead</b>	<b>7</b>
Medieval elements of the two villages	7
Surviving late medieval houses in Wheathampstead	10
Surviving late medieval houses in Harpenden	11
<b>2.5 Seventeenth to nineteenth century development</b>	<b>13</b>
Principal residences	14
Gentry houses in Harpenden	14
Brewing and malting	14
Mills	15
Brickmaking	15
Inns in Harpenden	15
Inns in Wheathampstead	16
Surviving 17 <sup>th</sup> -early 19 <sup>th</sup> century Listed Buildings in Harpenden	17
Surviving 17 <sup>th</sup> -18 <sup>th</sup> century Listed Buildings in Wheathampstead	19
Harpenden and Wheathampstead in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	21
The railways	22
18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> century public and religious buildings in Harpenden	22
Utilities	24
Factories	24
18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> century public and religious buildings in Wheathampstead	24
Utilities	25
Factories	25

<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>26</b>
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### **List of Figures**

Fig. 1	Prehistoric activity in the vicinity of Wheathampstead & Harpenden
Fig. 2	Late Iron Age and Roman Wheathampstead and Harpenden
Fig. 3	Saxon Wheathampstead and Harpenden
Fig. 4	The medieval parish of Wheathampstead
Fig. 5	The medieval village of Wheathampstead
Fig. 6	Listed Buildings in Wheathampstead
Fig. 7	Listed Buildings in Harpenden
Fig. 8	Development of Harpenden & Wheathampstead, 1800-1900
Fig. 9	Wheathampstead in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century
Fig. 10	Harpenden in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century



# WHEATHAMPSTEAD AND HARPENDEN

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Aim of the Report

This report has been produced as one of a series of 25 archaeological surveys of historic urban areas in Hertfordshire as part of the English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey Programme. All the places surveyed were either urban districts by 1900, or had urban characteristics in the past. The project is being carried out by Hertfordshire County Council's Archaeology Section in conjunction with English Heritage, who are also funding the project.

The aim of the report is to provide a framework from which decisions can be made about the management of the archaeological resource of Wheathampstead and Harpenden. The report is divided into three parts:

1. A summary of what is known of the archaeological and historical development of the two centres using the evidence from archaeology, buildings, old maps and documents, and surviving physical elements of the historic townscapes such as ancient property boundaries. The evidence is presented as a series of thematic and period maps generated by GIS, accompanied by a brief explanatory text.
2. An assessment of priorities for the management of the archaeological resource of the two centres, including academic research priorities.
3. A strategy which aims to take forward the research and management priorities.

### 1.2 The Sources Used

The evidence for the report has been compiled from the following primary sources:

- The Hertfordshire County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- The Statutory List of Buildings of Historical and Architectural Interest
- Maps and documents held in the Hertfordshire County Record Office
- Archaeological excavation and survey reports held in the SMR

In addition, numerous articles, both published and unpublished, have been used; a bibliography is included at the end of the report.

### 1.3 Geography

The present parishes of Harpenden, Harpenden Rural, and Wheathampstead are modern divisions of the historic parish of Wheathampstead, which covered much of the upper valley of the river Lea between Luton (Bedfordshire) and Welwyn. The

river here is narrow and winding, and runs generally west to east in a steep-sided valley. Wheathampstead, by far the smaller of the two centres, is a village at the crossing of the river by the north-south road from St Albans to Hitchin. Harpenden, today much larger, lies further upstream on the main road from St Albans to Luton. This road follows a dry valley separated from the river Lea to the north-east and the river Ver to the south-west by higher ground.

## 1.4 Geology

The area lies on the dip slope of the Chilterns. The chalk subsoil is overlain with clay with flints on the higher ground, and patches of clay with pebbles. The dry valley in which Harpenden lies is a narrow strip of valley gravel running through the chalk. The Lea valley contains alluvial deposits, and glacial gravels which largely lie on the valley's north slope (Niblett 1995, plan 1). 'The land...produces excellent wheat' (VCH 1908, 294); this is the root of the place name, *wheat - homestead* (Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1938, 55).

## 2.0 AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO SETTLEMENTS

### 2.1 Prehistory: Palaeolithic to Iron Age (c10,000 BC to 100 BC) (Figure 1)

The distribution of finds in Figure 1 probably does not give a true picture of the pattern of prehistoric settlement, as it records areas where fieldwork has been concentrated. The Lea valley has attracted human activity since earliest times, as the map shows, but finds have been recorded scattered across the area. *Palaeolithic* stone tools have been found in the river gravels (SMR 1169, 2884), and handaxes from Kinsbourne Green (SMR 0322) and south of Harpenden (SMR 9086, 9769). *Mesolithic* tools indicate persistent occupation (probably seasonal) along the margins of the river itself (Saunders & Havercroft 1982b; SMR 0430, 6511, 10491). The first *Neolithic* farming communities left greater amounts of evidence over a wider area: flints along the Marford by-pass (SMR 6511; Saunders & Havercroft 1982a); at Cross Farm (SMR 9767; Miles 1995) and Westend Farm (SMR 9771); Kinsbourne Green (SMR 0251, 0323), and a polished axe also at Kinsbourne Green (SMR 0663). Late Mesolithic or early Neolithic flints, with evidence of knapping, have been found on the Harpenden golf course extension (SMR 9953). Cropmarks have been recorded of two possible major ritual sites, a ?long barrow at Wheathampstead (SMR 7959), and a ?henge (which would have been timber) at Amwell (SMR 6008). These last two are not certainly identified, being unexcavated, but the spread and quantity of the worked flints indicate Neolithic settlement over much of the area.

Cropmarks of ring-ditches are usually identified as *Bronze Age* burial sites, and there are several of these on the outskirts of the parish (SMR 2238, 2798, 7918, 7956, 9061, 9761; only 7956 appears on the figure). Not all are certainly Bronze Age, and their distribution tells us little about the contemporary settlement pattern. Worked flint tools of this date have been collected from the Marford by-pass near the river (SMR

6511; Saunders & Havercroft 1982a), and concentrations of them over a large area at Cross Farm, Harpenden (SMR 9767; Miles 1995) and Westend Farm (SMR 9771). In the same vicinity, large numbers of worked and burnt flints, and some pottery, all of Bronze Age date, have been found in Cutts Green Wood (SMR 9974), and two pits containing Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age potsherds were recorded on the Harpenden golf course extension (SMR 9952). The Aldwickbury golf course produced another pit of Middle to Late Bronze Age date, containing large quantities of burnt and struck flints, pottery, and two loomweights (SMR 10492). The eaves drip of a round house which may also be Late Bronze Age was recorded nearby (SMR 10493). These Bronze Age sites will not all have been contemporary, but they do indicate well-established settlement over much of the area of the historic parish of Wheathampstead, particularly along the river in the vicinity of Wheathampstead itself as well as on the higher ground south-east of modern Harpenden.

As in southern Hertfordshire in general, there is little evidence for the earlier *Iron Age*. The gap is certainly more apparent than real, and may be due to the change in burial practice leading to the disappearance of ring-ditches, as well as difficulty in distinguishing the pottery of the period. The sudden abundance of material remains in the late Iron Age in southern Hertfordshire is forecast at Wheathampstead, however, by the construction of the earthwork enclosure (Figure 2) between Devil's Dyke and the Slad (SMR 0048). There is some argument (Hunn 1994) over the nature of the earthworks themselves, which, perhaps significantly, surround the possible 'long barrow'. Very little excavation has taken place within the enclosure, but this is one of the very few sites south of the Lea that has *early* grog-tempered (late Iron Age) pottery (Wheeler 1936; Thompson 1979). This dates to the earlier 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and is linked with major changes in material culture in north Hertfordshire. Until more is known about the occupation here, and when it became established and came to an end, very little more can be said. Nothing has emerged to support Wheeler's conjecture that this was where Caesar defeated Cassivellaunus.

## **2.2 Late Iron Age and Roman (cAD 10 to cAD 450) (Figure 2)**

There is no present evidence for occupation in Wheathampstead for perhaps a hundred years after the early pottery at the Devil's Dyke enclosure. By the early to mid 1<sup>st</sup> century AD a good deal of late Iron Age occupation appears in the area, and since the characteristic grog-tempered pottery overlaps the Roman conquest by some decades, sharing sites with Roman remains, the two periods are here treated as one. The map shows that there was considerably more Roman period settlement than has been thought, but it is doubtful whether it was anything other than more or less wealthy rural occupation. It does not appear to have been urban to any degree. Concentrations are outlined on the map, but in no case is the true extent known.

*Wheathampstead*: some focus of occupation existed around the river crossing(s) here from at least the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and probably some decades earlier. The pottery used was very similar to that of the major settlement established at St Albans (Verlamion/Verulamium) at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and the Wheathampstead area must have been part of its hinterland. Ditches north of the Devil's Dyke enclosure, and along the line of the by-pass, have been partly excavated

and found to be 1<sup>st</sup> century (SMR 2005; Saunders & Havercroft 1980-82). In Wick Avenue, on the slope above the centre of modern Wheathampstead, is a mid-1<sup>st</sup> century enclosure, part of whose surrounding ditch has yielded large quantities of mid-1<sup>st</sup> century pottery and the skeleton of a woman (SMR 9795). The ditch fill indicated that the occupation was deliberately closed down in the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It may have been succeeded by a Roman building close by, as Samian pottery has been found in a Wick Avenue garden (SMR 1596), and parts of two tessellated pavements were seen in the grounds of no.7 The Hill in the 1930s (SMR 1597). One, or possibly two, finds of Roman coins have been made (SMR 2873, Marford; Viatores 1964, 167). Nothing else has to date been located at Wheathampstead itself, but the Wick Avenue ditch, a recent discovery, should indicate that more survives unsuspected. Four Roman coins from the western edge of the Blackbridge Pit may have been a late hoard (SMR 0668).

Rectangular cropmarks SW of Wheathampstead (SMR 6010) have been recorded as a possible Roman building. The marks are not immediately convincing, but may have this interpretation because of their position at the crossing of two putative Roman roads. Neither road has been confirmed as having existed (see below). However, Roman building materials and pottery have recently been found in the same field (Miles 2000).

*Turners Hall Farm and Marshalls Heath:* a substantial Roman masonry building, with surviving cellar and steps, was found by excavation in 1998 close to Turners Hall Farm, Mackerye End, and a large ditch with 1<sup>st</sup> century pottery in its fill was close by on the other side of Marshalls Heath Lane (SMR 9913). The finds from the building indicate occupation throughout the Roman period and into the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Earthworks in Marshalls Heath Wood are of a settlement enclosure of pre-medieval date, and since the wood is documented from 1390 the enclosure is likely to be late Iron Age or Roman (SMR 9950; Zeepvat 1999). Roman coins are known from the field immediately north of the wood (SMR 9956).

*Aldwickbury:* a similar site, of ditches yielding early Roman pottery, is known beneath Piggottshill Wood (SMR 10539). The ditches include a drove road for livestock, and appear to belong to a small rural farmstead. Three Roman ovens have been recorded on the gravel knoll opposite Castle Farm, overlooking the river (SMR 10538). These sites show that occupation of the area was fairly dense, perhaps similar to the many scattered farms and hamlets of the medieval period; although the Roman sites need not, of course, all have existed at the same time, and they were certainly not all of the same status.

*Rothamsted:* a high-status site existed at Rothamsted in the Roman period, although the evidence for it is scattered and fragmentary apart from its burial ground (SMR 0058; SAHAAS *Trans* 1937, 108-14). This was a circular masonry mausoleum within a square enclosure, and should belong to a nearby villa. A ditch beneath it contained late Iron Age pottery, indicating the usual 1<sup>st</sup>-century occupation preceding the Roman. Several fields on the Rothamsted estate have yielded Roman building materials so it is not yet possible to pinpoint the villa's position although it may be in the field near Hatching Green (SMR 0673, 9726, 9727, 9728; WEA 1973b, 20). Pottery has been found in Park Avenue (SMR 0673).

*Harpenden*: fragmentary late Iron Age and Roman finds from the centre of modern Harpenden indicate occupation, although as yet no focus has been located (SMR 0674, potsherds and gaming counter; 0675, potsherds and coin die; 2886, quernstones; 9737, pottery and tile). Cussans (1879-81) noted that foundations of a substantial building were supposed to lie in the churchyard, north of the church. Structures were common in late medieval churchyards, but masonry foundations may imply a Roman building. Three later Roman coins are known from the churchyard (SMR 0665). In the Lea valley, the late Iron Age burial found when Harpenden (East) railway station was built (SMR 0123; Cussans 1879-81, 350) and the Coldharbour Lane Roman barrow (SMR 0667), were high-status burials. A possible late Iron Age cremation burial of a more ordinary kind has been found nearby at Batford (SMR 0676). Domestic occupation has not yet been pinpointed near these burials, although a Roman lamp was found in the railway embankment near Coldharbour (SMR 10556; WEA 1973b, plate 3b), and 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> century pottery, metal fragments and roofing tiles have been found in a pit and gully off Crabtree Lane (SMR 1168). Stonework re-used in the structure of Upper Top Street farmhouse, Crabtree Lane (SMR 2866; VCH Herts 4 (1914), 153-4; Wilson 1977) may have been Roman, but it was brought from elsewhere, and the higher ground between Harpenden High Street and the Lea valley is at present devoid of Roman remains.

A rural Roman cemetery of over 40 cremations, perhaps that of a neighbouring farmstead, has been found at Cross Farm (SMR 9766; Miles 1995, 140-4), and building materials nearby (SMR 9772, 9773). Other rural sites include a pair of Romano-Celtic temples recorded as cropmarks at Annables (SMR 6017; Niblett 1995, fig.5); finds of features, pottery and animal bones at Kinsbourne Green Lane (SMR 9626, 9657) and Annabells Apple Farm (SMR 9627), all between Harpenden and Watling Street; and an enclosure south of Bladder Wood which appears to be a domestic site (SMR 6124).

*The road system*: review of the Roman road network within the District of St Albans indicates that few of the routes proposed by the Viatores (1964) have much basis in archaeological evidence, and some did not exist as roads of any date. One Roman road running close to Wheathampstead has never been lost: route 21A, from St Albans to Welwyn and Braughing via Coleman Green. Most of the others which the Viatores mapped within Wheathampstead and Harpenden must be discarded, as there is nothing to support them, and some, notably that running through the centre of the Devil's Dyke enclosure, are inherently unlikely. This last route is given a very un-Roman sinuous line northwards to meet a known Roman road which runs south-west from Baldock towards St Albans, and which vanishes at Rush Green, west of Stevenage. Presumably it did run to Verulamium. It may have connected with part of route 210, which does have some archaeological and topographical support for its existence, running in a straight line south from Kimpton along the edge of Gustardwood Common, and past Heron's Farm where the road has been sectioned (SMR 9540) and where a Roman coin was found adjacent (SMR 0677). Where did it go south of Heron's Farm? It was not recorded in the pipeline which found the building at Turners Hall Farm, and it has not appeared in aerial photographs. It is possible that it ran south-east from Delaport, along what survives as a footpath into Rose Lane, Wheathampstead, across the river and up The Hill along the modern road

line to connect with route 21A just north of Sandridge. This road is shown on Figure 2 but is conjectural south of Delaport. It is possible that it crossed the river in an entirely different, as yet undiscovered, position.

### 2.3 Post-Roman and Saxon (5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries) (Figure 3)

Discussion continues over the length of time that Romano-British civilisation, centering on Verulamium, persisted in south-west Hertfordshire after the collapse of official Roman rule in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century, but the earliest Saxon immigrations did not reach closer to the area than Luton (Davis 1982). The disappearance of the use of pottery and other material evidence makes it an obscure period, although loomweights found at Turners Hall Farm are 5<sup>th</sup> century. By the later 6<sup>th</sup> century the Romano-British population appears to have suffered a decline, possibly due at least in part to disease or climatic factors. Domesday Book (Morris 1976, map) indicates that by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Hertfordshire south-west of the Lea had a comparatively small population and much woodland and waste, and there is little evidence for continuity of settlement from the late Roman period. Mapping of the earliest Saxon evidence in south-west Hertfordshire shows a gradual re-settling along the rivers and surviving remnants of the Roman road system, from the later 6<sup>th</sup> century (Davis 1982, map 4). Grass-tempered pottery of 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century date has been found in several places in the valley of the river Colne south of St Albans, and it has now been identified in the Lea valley between Wheathampstead and Harpenden (inf. A Turner-Rugg, St Albans Museums). At least one 7<sup>th</sup> century high-status pagan Saxon burial with rich grave-goods was made just north of the river crossing at Wheathampstead (SMR 1637; Davis 1982, 144; Griffith, *Trans SAHAAS* 1903, 34), and the placename Kinsbourne, meaning *Cyne's burial-place* (Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1938, 38-9) indicates another north of Harpenden, on the road from St Albans to Luton.

The name *Harpenden* may also be relevant. The early form is Herpeden(e); the *den* element means valley, and Gover, Mawer & Stenton (1938, 38) prefer to derive the first element from the Old English *herepæd*, referring to the St Albans-Luton road on which Harpenden lies, rather than from the idea that the valley here is 'harp-shaped'. There is no evidence for the St Albans-Luton road being Roman in origin, but it could be Saxon.

By 1066 the new pattern of settlement was apparently well established, having recovered from the Danish incursions, and the Saxon population had been Christian for many generations. Wheathampstead church was already present, and several mid-late Saxon burials with characteristic flint 'pillows' have been recorded in the churchyard (SMR 9730; Saunders & Havercroft 1982b). The main landed estates were also in place before the Norman invasion: when Edward the Confessor granted much of Wheathampstead to the abbey of Westminster in 1060 (Gelling 1979, 91, 92) the Rectory manor already existed (VCH 1908, 309). The lands granted to Westminster included much of the parish of Wheathampstead, and until the mid 19th century this included Harpenden. No mid-late Saxon finds have been made in the Harpenden area, but it is likely that the four watermills on the river Lea, recorded under Wheathampstead in 1086, were late Saxon timber constructions. These were

presumably the Bridge mill at Wheathampstead, and Batford, Pickford, and Hyde mills.

## 2.4 Medieval Wheathampstead (Figures 4, 5)

The pattern of medieval settlement in south-west Hertfordshire is largely one of scattered hamlets and farms, known as Ends and Greens. There were comparatively few nucleated villages. Wheathampstead was one of the few, and Munby (1977, 35-41) notes its position on a border between south-west and north-east Hertfordshire, the two halves of the county displaying differences in population density, settlement pattern, building construction, extent of woodland, and other factors. The river Lea formed part of this border, and the village of Wheathampstead grew up at a crossing of the river. The crossing here was not crucial, as there were several fords in the vicinity, and Leasy Bridge upstream is recorded from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Saxon burials and the watermill noted above, however, indicate an early focus which possibly lay on a surviving Roman road crossing the river at this point.

Domesday Book, in 1086, notes the presence of a priest, and the four watermills. The map of Domesday estates in Hertfordshire (Morris 1976) clearly shows the far greater population density of the county north and east of the river Lea, and the thin scatter of settlement south and west of the river.

The physical layout of the manor house of Wheathampstead Bury close to the church and churchyard is misleading, as this was not a manorial church belonging to the Bury. The manor house was built by the abbey as close to the church as possible, but the church stood on land belonging to the late Saxon estate that became the medieval Rectory manor (Figure 5), and the medieval rectors fiercely defended their independence, including rights over a stretch of the river (VCH 1908, 309; WEA 1975, 90-1).

Canon Davys, the 19<sup>th</sup> century rector who studied the history of Wheathampstead, suggested that a castle stood guarding a crossing of the river at Castle Farm (Davys 1888, 9). All pre-Victorian spellings of the placename, however, are variants of Causewell or Cresswell (the spring where cresses grow: Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1938, 56), and excavation in 1993 (Ver Mus 1993) revealed that the 'mound' is a natural gravel spit. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century watercress beds here had a medieval antecedent, presumably in the pool visible on the earliest maps, and already called *Creswelle* at the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### Medieval elements of the two villages

**The parish church of St Helen's** (SMR 2877): the Saxon graves and the existence of a priest here in 1086 strongly imply that the church was originally built in later Saxon times. During the restoration c1865 it was observed that beneath the 13<sup>th</sup> century chancel were the rubble foundations of an earlier apsidal east end and slightly narrower chancel (Davys 1885, 31-3; 1888, 9-13). It is not certain that this apsidal church was built before 1066, so there may have been an even earlier building. No

certain instance is known of a masonry church predating the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Blair 1996), so the apsidal building is not likely to be earlier than 1000. It may have been a simple two-cell structure; alternatively, it may have had central tower and transepts from the beginning, each part being gradually rebuilt during the medieval period. Parts of the south transept are of different masonry to the rest and include a doorhead and a window, both blocked, which could be Saxon (T P Smith 1973, 34-7; Jeavons 1995, 2). Foundations in unexpected places were seen below the nave in 1991 when the pew plinths were renewed (notes for the visitor). As it stands, the church is built of flint rubble with stone dressings, with an aisled nave, a chancel as long as the nave, a central tower and transepts, and stands within a large churchyard. The present chancel was built from c1238, finishing in 1290 with the rebuilding of the central tower. The nave and transepts were rebuilt during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the nave aisles added.

**Wheathampstead Bury** (SMR 9198-9): a 1758 Survey of the Westminster Abbey estate shows the site of the manor, 200m west of the church (Godfrey-Evans 1994). A moat fed by the river enclosed a platform with a range of buildings in its southern half, and more buildings outside to the south. The survey also named the pound, barn, stables, granary, rickyard and dovehouse. The moat had been largely infilled by 1878, and has now disappeared. A 16<sup>th</sup> century building at the south part of the platform, perhaps a gatehouse (not the medieval manor house), had become the farmhouse apparently during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Godfrey-Evans 1994, 14). This was converted into cottages in 1878, and survives as Bury Farm Cottages. It is timber-framed, of six bays, with the upper floor jettied to both front and rear, and with two timber-mullioned windows. The brick chimney stacks, one in the centre at the ridge and another against the rear wall at the north end, are later, and there are more recent additions. The barn was demolished during construction of the Ash Grove housing estate. It is likely that remains of medieval buildings survive below ground on the platform.

**The Rectory manor** (SMR 9876): there is some evidence to suggest that the medieval rectory, as befitting its manorial function, had a moat, easily formed by digging a watercourse from the adjacent river (on OS 25" plan, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1878). The house, rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, remained the rectory until a fire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A new rectory was then built in Church Street, and after 1860, when Canon Davys became the first resident rector for many years, the old building became his private laundry. It survives as offices, set back from the High Street frontage close to the mill house. It has an intact 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame forming a gable-ended range of two bays with a steep pitched roof, and with a 17<sup>th</sup> century brick chimney stack at the centre of the east side. The frame was encased in red brick during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and given a wrought iron weathervane.

**Bridge Mill** (SMR 5820): presumed to be one of the four watermills recorded in 1086, and the most important of them throughout the medieval period. It stands on the bridge across the river Lea. The Westminster Abbey accounts record repairs to the mill and sluice gates in 1535 (WEA 1973b, 43-4). It was rebuilt in the post-medieval period at least once and nothing earlier survives. The timber framing is of 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century date within the brick casing, added in 1890-95, and with floor divisions and partitions of the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century. The northernmost three bays are a small barn

with a weather-boarded gable end (Pevsner 1977, 404). Johnson (1964) recorded the absence of the water wheel. Milling ended in the 1980s and the building has been converted to four small shops with residential space above. The miller's house at the south end of the mill building is later (below).

It is not known when the bridge itself was first built. It replaced two fords, one alongside the mill and one in the yard of The Bull opposite, and in 1729 was called Tanners Gutter Bridge. It was rebuilt before 1867 at the expense of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, damaged by floods in 1879, and widened in 1895 when the mill was given its brick casing (WEA 1974b, 27-8).

There may have been an attempt to establish a market at Wheathampstead, as the Court Rolls refer to proclamations being made in the church and *in foro*, in the marketplace (VCH 1908, 296). The lack of any other documentary evidence for a market implies that the use of the word here is misleading. Medieval property boundaries survive, long plots running back from the high street, and these have the same appearance as burgage plots. They are not extensive, and it is plain that the medieval nucleus was small.

***Harpendenbury and the chapelry of Harpenden:*** Westminster organised its large holdings in Wheathampstead parish by establishing two chief manors, one at Wheathampstead itself with its manor house at the Bury, and the other, Kinsbourne or Harpenden, at the west end of the parish with its manor house at Harpendenbury (VCH 1908, 297-8; Stern 1999). Harpendenbury is on the river Ver, a long way from Wheathampstead. The land between the demesne lands of each manor was granted out as freehold assarts 'by the 13<sup>th</sup> century if not before', and a survey made just before the Dissolution records 27 such holdings, each of one carucate (120 acres). These included Rothamsted, Mackerys, Herons, Lamer, and Annables or Kinsbournebury. 'The nucleus of Harpenden almost certainly began as just such an assart' (Munby 1977, 111; VCH 1908, 298). The earliest known feature of Harpenden is the wayside chapel built by the abbey in the earlier 12<sup>th</sup> century on the highway from St Albans to Luton.

**The wayside chapel of St Nicholas:** the present church dates largely from 1862, with a 15<sup>th</sup> century west tower. The medieval chapel, however, was originally built during the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Pevsner (1977, 156-7; WEA 1975, 90) records the survival on window ledges of Early Norman capitals from the 12<sup>th</sup> century crossing, with foliage details derived from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Two Buckler watercolours painted in the 1830s record the church, inside and out, and show an early 12<sup>th</sup> century nave and chancel with transepts, and later aisles and south porch. Notes made during rebuilding in 1862 show that before the 15<sup>th</sup> century Harpenden chapel also had a central tower (VCH 1908, 312). The chapel, then, was similar in plan to the parish church at Wheathampstead, although it was not until the early 14<sup>th</sup> century that it took on the functions of a parish church serving the population of the western half of Wheathampstead. The chapel was granted the right to burial, and therefore its own churchyard, in 1319. The font is dated to c1200 by Pevsner, but was acquired only in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century (Jeavons 1995, 13) when St Helen's church was given a new one. The chapel kept 'parish' registers from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Harpenden did not become a separate parish until 1859, but emerged as a distinct place during the medieval period. 'From an early date Harpenden has been a separate district or tithing for civil purposes, and ...had its own constable, beadle, ale-taster, and headborough', and the Court Rolls are for *Wheathampstead cum Harpenden* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century (VCH 1908, 296). Westminster built a barn to receive tithes 'next to the chapel in Harpenden', and treated Harpenden as virtually a third manor, with its own accounts, until it was leased out near the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Stern 1999, 51). The only building which certainly survives from medieval Harpenden is the chapel. Some of the Listed Buildings, however, may be earlier than the 16<sup>th</sup> century in origin. These are described below. It may be presumed that while much of the population was scattered, the area around the chapel and the highway slowly emerged as another small focus.

The earliest surviving buildings in both Wheathampstead and Harpenden, apart from the churches, are dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, although some may be slightly earlier. They belong to the period before and after the Dissolution in 1537. Westminster Abbey, however, was soon reborn as the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, a body which continued as before as lord of the manor. Many of the sub-manors, the 120-acre portions sold by the abbey, were at the same time being bought by new men with wealth and status. These men and the owners of the medieval high street properties in Wheathampstead built new and more substantial houses. Some of these were farmhouses; both villages had farmhouses (not all surviving) in their centres, and some of the inns also had farmland attached.

### ***Surviving late medieval (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century) houses in Wheathampstead (Figure 6)***

*Wheathampstead Place or Place Farm*: a substantial late medieval hall house, timber-framed, formerly with cross wings at both ends but with the north wing now gone. The gabled south wing was heightened during the 16<sup>th</sup> century; it has close studding surviving on the ground floor and on the upper floor on the north side. The main front is partly built of 16<sup>th</sup> century red brick, and re-used timber framing upstairs. It also has a 16<sup>th</sup> century stone fireplace in the hall, and three large 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney stacks. At the rear a red brick wing was added in the early-mid 17<sup>th</sup> century (Listed Building Details), and later in the century the exterior was plastered to imitate ashlar stone blocks. It was an expensive house to build, and the mid-late 17<sup>th</sup> century dogleg staircase, window and door are also grander details than appropriate for an ordinary farmhouse. Who built the house is uncertain but it was probably the 16<sup>th</sup> century home of the Brocket family (whose monuments are in the church). It is now used as offices. The garden walls are mostly Victorian but incorporate some early bricks and a 16<sup>th</sup> century stone arch (SABMS 1988b; Listed Building Details).

*The Old Bakery, Station Road*: for many years this was Ackroyds Bakery, on the north side of the bridge opposite Place Farm. Restoration work during 1997 revealed that this was originally a late medieval open hall house like several others in the village, with a small steep pitched roof and one surviving cross wing which is slightly later (*Herts Countryside* Feb 1998, 28). The three-gabled frontage is at least partly 17<sup>th</sup> century, the centre one taller and later. The exterior has combed pargetting, a

feature more characteristic of north-east than south-west Herts (Munby 1977, 35-41). A rear gabled extension was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century (Listed Building Details).

*23 High Street:* the timber framing is probably 16<sup>th</sup> century, of two storeys, and has a steep pitched roof. The south end has a lower ceiling than the north, implying a former cross wing. The internal north gable end chimney stack and the red brick frontage are both 18<sup>th</sup> century; shop windows were inserted in the frontage by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the building serves as a house and shop (Listed Building Details).

*White Cottage, 41 High Street:* a late medieval hall house with a 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier timber frame and steep pitched roof, part of the hall remaining inside. The ridge chimney stack has been rebuilt, and the plastered front, giving its name, is early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This house belonged to the Sibleys, who were maltsters.

*The Maltings, behind the High Street:* now a restaurant, but for centuries the maltings belonging to the Sibley family who lived at White Cottage on the street frontage. The timber frame is 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century with later red brick infill, of two storeys, and two possibly original window openings on the first floor. At the west end is an 18<sup>th</sup> century restored gable cross wing, and two lateral chimney stacks of the same date. The east end is a gabled 20<sup>th</sup> century extension (Listed Building Details).

*Lattimores, 45 High Street:* the timber frame of the house is 16<sup>th</sup> century and earlier, incorporating the remains of a late medieval hall (Listed Building Details). There is a cross wing at the north side and a truncated south extension, a steep pitched roof, and a large ridge chimney stack of the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. The frontage was given a parapeted red brick facade in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, with three Gothic shaped casement windows.

*Rosewood Cottage, 6a Church Street:* a late medieval hall house, with steep roof, given a ridge chimney stack in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it had a brick frontage and an external chimney stack at the west gable end, and then a plastered single-storey extension with a shop window on the front left, forming an L plan (Listed Building Details).

*The Swan, 56 High Street:* the building now called the Swan is a four-bay open-hall house dating to c1500. It is described further under inns, below, but this building may have begun as a domestic structure. *Town Farm*, demolished in 1971, was also a late medieval timber-framed hall house (Pevsner 1977, 405).

### ***Surviving late medieval (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century) houses in Harpenden (Figure 7)***

*Bowers House, High Street:* a large 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame house, the centre possibly a late medieval hall, but now divided into three inside an 18<sup>th</sup> century red brick casing and hidden behind the High Street frontage by a parade of shops built across its front garden in the 1930s. The original house was in two unequal parts on either side of the main red brick chimney stack, the smaller south end jettied on both sides. A first floor room south of the entrance passage has a good 16<sup>th</sup> century stone fireplace surround, and the staircase is also notable. A second chimney stack was

added at the rear centre in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During the following century the brick casing was gradually added.

*71, 71a & 73 High Street:* built as one house, now offices, probably in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, and extended on the south and west sides to form an L plan in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is of two storeys, timber framed with white-painted brick infill. The red brick chimney stack at the north end was inserted in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the upstairs windows is a twin 17<sup>th</sup> century casement.

*Yew Tree Cottage (15 Leyton Road):* a T-plan house with later 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame and two-bay central range projecting at the rear, with a pair of gabled extensions on its south side which are possibly late 17<sup>th</sup> century. A new front was added in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and a south extension some years later.

*Coach Lane Cottage (39 Leyton Road):* a three-bay house of which the middle bay was possibly a late medieval hall, but while the south end timber frame is 15<sup>th</sup> century and later, with three 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century window openings, the north end is a duplicate dating to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as does the central porch. The house once had a timber-framed chimney stack, replaced by a red brick stack in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

*2 Southdown Road:* a late-medieval timber-framed hall house with cross-wings, of which part of the hall and one cross-wing have disappeared. Originally the surviving cross-wing had only one large room on each floor, with a staircase in the SE corner. An upper floor was inserted into the hall c1600 and the walls embellished with wall-paintings. The cross-wing rooms were divided into two each c1700, and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the house was divided into two cottages, the original chimney stack being replaced (J T Smith 1993, 66).

*Blakesleys (Harpenden Hall):* Blakesleys was the original name of this large house, whose earliest recorded owner was William Cressy (brother of the owner of Rothamsted), d.1559. William Cressy's house was a late medieval timber-framed hall house with jettied cross-wing on the north end of the hall, this cross-wing having two rooms on each floor and a staircase, but no evidence of fireplaces. The wing jetty was underbuilt in brick and flint in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century the upper storey was refronted in brick and a two-storeyed porch added. Smith (1993, 65-6) assumes this was done by Godman Jenkyn, servant of James I and Charles I, who bought the house in 1642. The hall range was rebuilt in brick by his grandson, Godman Jenkyn junior, soon after 1678. The large fireplace and chimney was shared with the kitchen on the east, which may pre-date 1678. New suites of rooms were arranged inside the hall range. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century sash windows were inserted and a large drawing room or library built south of the kitchen. The main chimney stack was reduced in size at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house remained in the hands of Jenkyn's descendants until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1818 to 1840 it was a dissenting grammar school (Read 1821), and subsequently became a private lunatic asylum. It was called Harpenden Hall from 1840 (WEA 1973a, 31).

*Topstreet Farmhouse, 28 Crabtree Lane:* the two-storey house has a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame, with evidence that the original hall range, to the right of the front door, was given a new cross wing and chimney stack on the left during the same century.

The chimney top was given multiple joined shafts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the house was enlarged at the rear to form a double-pile plan, and given a fashionable bracketed hood over the front door. Victorian alterations include the elevations, stuccoed and pargetted, the two-storey window bay, and the built-up chimney.

Photographs of *Home Farm*, which stood on the north corner of High Street and Stakers Lane (Station Road) until its demolition in 1894, show the farmhouse to have been another timber-framed house of 16<sup>th</sup> century or earlier date (Harpenden & District LHS 1980). *Flowton Priory*, facing the Common, dates to c1525 but does not belong to Harpenden; it was brought to its present site from Ipswich in 1928 (Listed Building Details).

Another house may have stood at the north end of the Common, where the Baa-Lamb Trees now form a group on an irregular mound. Freeman (1977) suggests that the name is a corruption of Balaams, a property left by Richard Sheppard to his son Robert in 1653. The grassmark of a circular enclosure appeared around the trees in 1976, but it is not certain that the house stood here.

## **2.5 Seventeenth to nineteenth century development**

After the Dissolution the redistribution of wealth brought about a change of power and influence. Several large estates were built up by new men with connections at Court or in the City of London from the sub-manors parcelled out by the medieval Westminster Abbey. Although the Dean and Chapter of Westminster continued to hold the chief manor as before, Westminster became one among several prominent landowners. By the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century Harpenden 'parish' was effectively managed by the Wittewronges of Rothamsted, and Wheathampstead by the Garrards of Lamer; several local sub-tenants were becoming wealthy yeomen (WEA 1974a, 49-50).

This period shows an increase in the population of both Wheathampstead and Harpenden. In 1563 Wheathampstead had 77 families and Harpenden 62, and by 1603 the increase was just under 60% in both places, with a rather smaller rate of growth through the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By 1673 Wheathampstead had 129 families, of which 61 were wealthy enough to pay hearth tax, and Harpenden had at least 118 families with 65 or 66 paying tax (WEA 1974a, 54). By 1801 the two centres were still almost the same in population size.

In 1637 John Taylor's pamphlet, *The Carrier's Cosmographie*, noted that 'The Carriers of Harding [Harpenden] in Hartfordshire doe lodge at the Cocke in Aldersgate-streete, they come on Tuesdaies, Wednesdaies & Thursdaies' - that is, Harpenden was already considerable in terms of its carrier service to London (*Herts Archaeology* 2 (1970), 115). The highway from Bedford and Luton to St Albans was never a major long-distance coaching route like Watling Street through Redbourn, but one of Harpenden's functions was to serve travellers on this road. In 1743 it became a turnpike, with a toll gate at the foot of Sun Lane, and its importance continued until the arrival of the railway lines in the 1860s. Other roadside services were provided by the inns and the smithies.

### ***Principal residences: Rothamsted***

The Rothamsted estate was bought c1355 by Ralph de Cressy, who already owned other land in Harpenden (Lydekker 1937). On the death of his descendant Edmund Cressy in 1525 Rothamsted went to his daughter Elizabeth, who married Edmund Bardolph. Edward Bardolph mortgaged the estate in 1611 to Jacob Wittewronge, and in 1623 Jacob's widow Anne bought it for her son John (Lydekker 1936). John Wittewronge flourished despite the upheavals of the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, and Rothamsted remained in the hands of his descendants. The medieval manor house was rebuilt by the Bardolphs, and transformed by Sir John Wittewronge into 'the most important mid 17<sup>th</sup> century house in the county' (Smith 1993, 67-9). He encased the Bardolph house in brick with multiple Dutch gables, and added new windows, which survive.

### ***Lamer***

The medieval manor, belonging to the de la Mare family in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, was acquired in 1608 by Sir John Garrard, who built a new house in brick. This was replaced in the 1760s by Sir Benet Garrard by another brick building, stuccoed in 1794 in imitation of Portland stone (Smith 1993, 210-12). This house was demolished in 1949, although the stable block survives. The grounds were landscaped by Repton (Munby 1977, 158).

### ***Mackerye End***

In 1307 the manor was held by the Makery family. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was bought by Thomas Hunsdon, who rebuilt the house in 1665 as a mansion with symmetrical brick front with wings which have pedimented gables and ornamental chimney-stacks (Smith 1992, 1993). In 1681 it was bought by the Garrards and lost its importance, surviving comparatively unaltered as a result.

### ***Gentry houses in Harpenden (Figure 7)***

In 1747 the rector remarked that 'the principal Gentlemen of the Parish' lived at Harpenden, not at Wheathampstead, and he himself went to live at Bowers House from 1764 until his death in 1773 (WEA 1975, 115, 116). The rector's son lived at the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Heathfield Lodge. Other gentry houses included Bennetts, Blakesleys (Harpenden Hall), The Welcombe (Moat House Hotel), and The Dene in Southdown Road. These were joined in time by Wellington House (early 19<sup>th</sup> century), Harpenden Lodge (1803), and Rivers Lodge (c1800). In contrast, Wheathampstead did not acquire such houses. One or two brick houses were built, and new brick facades were added to several of the older timber-framed buildings in an attempt to make them look up to date, but they belonged to families prospering in brewing, malting and other trades.

### ***Industry: brewing and malting***

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century every town and many villages in Hertfordshire had their own brewery. Although the Harpenden Brewery had been founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it remained a small-scale industry in Harpenden until much later, and no maltings were built other than those in outbuildings of inns, for their own use. In contrast Wheathampstead prospered from brewing and malting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1840, when the Harpenden tithe map was drawn up, two breweries stood adjacent on the east side of the High Street. On the street frontage were the brewers' houses, Peacock House and the White House, with the brewery buildings and yards behind them. Both were run by families with strong Wheathampstead connections, the House and Mardall families (Allied Breweries 1988, 5). In 1870 James Mardall demolished the old Peacock House and put up Brewery House, and in 1893 Mardall's bought out what was now Healey's next door and concentrated the works on one site. In 1897 Martha Mardall sold the brewery to Richard Glover, who built the tower seen in many photographs. The brewery closed in 1920. The White House, at the front of Healey's, and of early 19<sup>th</sup> century appearance, was demolished in 1929 when the Methodist Church was built on the site (Brandreth 1996, 34). The brewery cellars remain below the police station car park (Brandreth 1997, 30-1).

At Wheathampstead, the Hope Brewery was built by James Wilkins in 1781 on what then became Brewhouse Hill (below). Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was taken over by the Lattimores, who lived at their house in the High Street, and who built a maltings alongside the brewery.

### ***Mills***

The four watermills on the river Lea recorded in 1086 are likely to have been on the same sites as the medieval and post-medieval mills at Hyde, Pickford, Batford, and Wheathampstead bridge, but all modernised to suit changing practices. During the later medieval period mills were used for fulling cloth as well as grinding flour, and there is some evidence to suggest that a fulling mill stood at Leasey Bridge from the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Gover, Mawer & Stenton 1938, 57; Seller's map of Herts, 1676; WEA, 1978). By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the cloth industry declined, and much grain was malted rather than ground. This led to diversification in the use of the county's mills. Pickford Mill was being used to make paper from at least 1775 until 1849 (Munby 1977).

### ***Brickmaking***

Encroachment on Harpenden Common by a brickmaker at Bamville Wood is recorded in 1724, and the Bamville kilns were recorded on the late 19<sup>th</sup> century OS maps. Another early brickfield was that on Nomansland Common, 'former brick ground' on the 1840 tithe map; there is a record of brick kilns on the common in 1759 (VCH 2 (1908), 295). Several other brickfields are shown on the tithe and OS maps, outside the village centres.

### ***Inns in Harpenden***

Apart from the Bull, these are not necessarily on their original sites; the records indicate frequent interchanging of names which it is impossible to sort out (WEA 1978, 166).

*The Bull* (The Old House, 27 Leyton Road): a private house since the 1860s, but purpose-built as an inn in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, 'a well preserved example of an early inn' (Listed Building Details). It is first recorded in 1586, owned by the Wittewronges of Rothamsted and run by the Catlin family (Scattergood 1935; WEA 1978, 166). It had its own maltings and several acres of attached land. 'The plan... is a remarkable one' (Smith 1992, 171-2): T-plan, the main range timber-framed with

hall and a timber chimney-stack, and a kitchen wing. There were two fireplaces on the ground floor but originally no heating upstairs; the upstairs rooms, originally two on each side of the stack, were reached by a series of staircases. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century a brick chimney-stack was built, the rooms modified and a cellar provided. The entrance hall and bow-fronted parlour are 19<sup>th</sup> century and the kitchen wing has been extended more recently. William Catlyn of The Bull founded the brewery in the High Street in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (WEA 1978, 166).

*The George*: the oldest recorded inn in Harpenden, mentioned in a will of 1507. It had an attached farm which was sometimes leased out by the licensees. The present building, on the large island site in the High Street, is not certainly in the same position as the original George. In the 1870s and 1880s it was held by the Samwells, who were also wheelwrights and kept a carriage works on the premises (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 60).

*The Cock*: first referred to in 1637. This building is mainly 18<sup>th</sup> century and has been known as The Cock since 1790 (the Old Cock since 1906). Earlier references are not certainly to the same building (WEA 1978, 166). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Cock had stabling for 8 horses, a coach house and other outbuildings (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 59).

*The Cross Keys*: the date of its first licence is unknown; it was the White Hart when bought by William Wethered, yeoman, of Harpenden, in 1731. It was the Cross Keys by 1760 (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 59).

*The Old Bell*: it is not known when this building was licenced, although it seems to have been a beerhouse by 1835 (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 59). There is a reference to 'Old Bell Ground' in 1735. The building itself is timber-framed later 17<sup>th</sup> century with a central ridge red brick chimney stack, but altered in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, given a late 19<sup>th</sup> century rear wing (which possibly incorporates an earlier wing), and large recent additions.

*The Silver Cup*, at the north end of Harpenden Common, was built in 1838 by John House, brewer, of Wheathampstead (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 62). It was a beerhouse throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, near the winning post of the racecourse.

### ***Inns in Wheathampstead***

*The Swan* (56 High Street): referred to as an inn from 1665, and owned in the earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century by John House, brewer; at that period it had land and a malthouse, and an attached smithy by 1759 (WEA 1974b, 19; 1978, 166). John House sold it to James Wilkins, brewer, in 1791. The building which is now The Swan dates to c1500, and is of four bays. The middle two were originally an open hall, and the two end bays perhaps of two storeys (Smith 1993, 214). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a chimney-stack and upper floor were added to the hall, and a two-storey bay added at the south end of the building. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century three bay windows were added and the ground floor refronted in brick. It is recorded, however, that the Swan was partly destroyed by fire in 1910 (WEA 1974b, 19), and in 1824 references were made to two buildings,

one 'formerly the Swan Inn'. The 1840 tithe map shows the premises of the Swan and its outhouses and smithy occupying the whole corner site, including the present building. The 1910 fire destroyed the structure on the corner of the High Street and Church Street, which by that date had become a shop (*Herts Countryside* June 1997, 8-9). The present building may incorporate at least part of the two original ones.

*The Bull Inn*: on the river bank just by the bridge, and opposite the mill. One of the fords crossing the river was formerly in the inn yard. The earliest record of the Bull was in 1617, when it had 119 acres of land attached, belonging to the manor of Lamer. From before 1822 until at least the 1850s it was kept by the Hooper family, and in the 1850s William Hooper was the village letter-receiver and then postmaster (Jolliffe & Jones 1995, 169). The main building on the street frontage has a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber frame of six bays on a red brick plinth, the frame exposed and with plaster infill, with a tall 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney stack at the north end. Along the river frontage a long curving facade incorporates two former cottages of apparently later 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century date. The main block has a small two-storey gabled extension, probably of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century; and a large rear cross wing at the south end has another tall red brick chimney stack, of similar date (Listed Building Details).

*The former Bell and Crown* (27 High Street): now a private house, in 1648 this was the Bell, the property of the Sibleys of White Cottage. Francis Sibley's will of 1648 lists the contents (WEA 1974b, 3-4). The earliest part of the building is the rear wing, an open hall of the 17<sup>th</sup> century or earlier, timber-framed but cased in brick. The chimney stacks are 17<sup>th</sup> century; the front block is early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*The former Walnut Tree, Church Street*: has a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame with dormer windows, chimney stack and staircase of the same period, and a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century gabled projection with a wrought iron sign bracket. The frontage has a 20<sup>th</sup> century plastered brick extension with modern shop front on the ground floor.

### **Surviving 17<sup>th</sup>- early 19<sup>th</sup> century Listed Buildings in Harpenden (not outlying farms):**

#### ***17<sup>th</sup> century:***

*69 High Street*: built as a house, now shops and offices. It has a late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed front range and an earlier timber-framed rear wing at the north end. The chimney stack is at the south gable end. Many of the windows are 19<sup>th</sup> century as is the gabled porch. The shop projection is modern.

*'Tollgate Cottage', 65-7 High Street*: earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame with possibly an earlier core, behind a painted brick and plaster front but with some exposed framing in the south gable end. The upstairs windows have 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century mullions, although the ground floor windows are later. It is unlikely that this was the actual toll house, as the gate stood further up the road at the foot of Sun Lane. Another building projecting into the roadway and demolished in 1930 was often called Toll Gate Cottage (although it too was probably a misnomer) (Brandreth 1996, 29).

*72-72a High Street*: now a house and shop, originally a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house apparently without a chimney stack. It now has a 20<sup>th</sup> century shop front and modern rear extensions.

*Church Farm Cottage (7 Leyton Green)*: originally timber framed, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century with a red brick front block of c1830, painted white. At least one of the red brick chimney stacks is 18<sup>th</sup> century.

*18 Leyton Road (The Inn on the Green)*: an L-shaped house, timber-framed with red brick nogging painted white, with exposed timbers in the rear wing. The chimney stack is also 17<sup>th</sup> century. The left front has a 19<sup>th</sup> century gable end and dormer with scalloped bargeboards. The single-storey front extension is modern.

*Bennetts (21 Leyton Road)*: the main range of the house is timber-framed and stuccoed, and has a two-storey projecting gable porch in the centre. There are gabled cross-wings at each end. In the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century a new doorcase, windows and rear extension were added. The property has been called Bennetts since at least 1674 (Scattergood 1935).

*2 Luton Road*: an interesting timber-framed house, probably later 17<sup>th</sup> century, with an upper-cruck roof construction which is unique in Hertfordshire. The exterior has 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century red brick casing and infill. A single-storeyed gabled rear extension is also timber-framed.

### ***18<sup>th</sup> century:***

*Moat House Hotel (Welcombe)*: a large town house of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the large mid-late 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney stack at the left side implies a rebuilding of an earlier house. Three storeys, of red brick with vitrified headers, sash windows and tiled roof. The chimney stack is in darker red brick. The details of the doorcase, staircase, panelling and fireplace are all good. Behind the main block is a two-storey 18<sup>th</sup> century addition, and behind that a late 19<sup>th</sup> century range in mauve brick, with a similar extension on the front.

*The Cedars, 16 Southdown Road*, was Welcombe's coach house, and dates to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a narrow two-storey house in red brick, with gable ends and dentilled brick eaves. The single-storey building now used as the garage is a slightly later addition with two wide openings.

*The Dene, 15 Southdown Road*: a late 18<sup>th</sup> century red brick house, three storeys high under a hipped plain tile roof. It has three stone steps up to the central door, with narrow full height canted bay windows on either side, and two-storey gabled rear projections. The front garden wall, with its gates and ironwork, is early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Early 19<sup>th</sup> century gentry houses:***

*Rivers Lodge, West Common:* a red brick house built c1800, two storeys under a slate hipped roof. It has six stone steps between railings up to the central front door, a doorcase with pilasters, entablature and pediment, and fanlight; sash windows on either side and a round-headed central window above with Gothic glazing bars. The frontage is enclosed by wall and railings with vase finials on the piers, and a central gate. At the rear of the house are late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century extensions. It was at one time a dower house for Rothamsted, and is used by the Experimental Station as offices.

*Harpenden Lodge, 12 Luton Road:* another red brick house, built in 1803 for General Haddon, and later the property of the Lydekker family. It has two storeys and attics under a slate hipped roof, a moulded brick cornice and parapet, and later extensions including a glazed verandah.

*Wellington House, Leyton Green:* built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, in brick now roughcast and painted. It has two storeys over a cellar, attic, and slate hipped roof behind a parapet. On either side of the front door (arch-headed with fanlight) are two-storeyed bow windows, and over the door is an arched stair window.

Other 19<sup>th</sup> century Listed Buildings in Harpenden are not described here. It should be noted that one or two of them (12 and 25 High Street, for example) have probably earlier but undated internal structures.

## **Surviving 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century Listed Buildings in Wheathampstead**

### ***17<sup>th</sup> century:***

*Corn Mill House, 2 High Street:* the miller's house, now a shop, at the south end of the mill itself but facing south down the High Street. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century (a smarter building than its timber-framed contemporaries in the village), in mauve brick with blue brick banding, with panelled wooden eaves on brackets carved with shell motifs. The Georgian style shop window is 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*4 High Street:* a house and shop with 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame, the south-end bay possibly originally a cross-wing, and a part weatherboarded rear projection which is probably contemporary. The windows are 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*8-10 High Street:* a house and shop with exposed timber frame, partly painted brick infill; the frame of no.10 is probably earlier than 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has a large chimney stack at the rear centre, a gabled cross wing at the right front and on the end of this a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-frame outshut with a modern shop window.

*Gable Cottage, Church Street:* a house with 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame given a painted brick front in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Behind the front is a steep pitched roof with a tall 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney stack.

*1 & 2 Bury Green:* a pair of cottages, later 17<sup>th</sup> century timber frame with large 17<sup>th</sup> century red brick oven chimney stack at the west gable end and a similar 18<sup>th</sup> century

stack at the east end. Behind is a weatherboarded 18<sup>th</sup> century rear extension with catslide roof. The small west extension is modern.

*The Laurels (7 The Hill)*: the timber frame is later 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century, with 18<sup>th</sup> century chimney stack and early 19<sup>th</sup> century front; now house and office.

*Dolphins (11 The Hill)*: a small mid-late 17<sup>th</sup> century house with exposed timber frame and white-painted brick nogging and a large red brick chimney stack at the south gable end.

*Four Limes (17 The Hill)*: the timber frame of this house is possibly earlier than the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the ridge chimney-stack is early-mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has an 18<sup>th</sup> century painted brick front and early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century details and gabled extension at the north end.

*76a & 76b The Hill*: a pair of cottages now one house, timber-framed with later brick front, painted. It has three gabled dormers, two of them probably 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **18<sup>th</sup> century:**

*1 Church Street*: timber-framed, but possibly the same date as the 1746 vitrified red brick front with red brick dressings. Two storeys under plain tile roof, and with a 19<sup>th</sup> century panelled door in an 18<sup>th</sup> century pegged oak frame, and inscribed brick above. The purple brick extension to the right, with ground-floor shop, dates to c1870.

*Jessamine Cottages (17 High Street)*: a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century house of red brick, partly chequered, with internal chimney-stack on the north. The windows and rear extension are 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*29 High Street*: a house and shop which is mainly mid 18<sup>th</sup> century but with an earlier timber frame within. The elevations are roughcast and brick, with an external oven chimney-stack at the rear, and 20<sup>th</sup> century projecting ground floor shop.

*Barn behind 45 High Street*: a single storey timber-framed and weatherboarded barn, probably of this century.

*Hill House (19-19a The Hill)*: a mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century house, two storeys, in vitrified brick with red brick banding, and late 19<sup>th</sup> century extensions and porch in purple brick.

*Barton House (13-19 Brewhouse Hill)*: the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century exterior of this building hides a probably earlier timber-framed interior, transformed with the establishment of the Hope Brewery in 1781. The lower half of the block is red brick, the upper half, rising up the hill, stucco; two storeys and attics. In the end elevation of the lower half is a segmental-arched cart entrance to a cellar, which ran back into the chalk of the hill.

## **Harpenden and Wheathampstead in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figures 8-9)**

In 1800 there was little difference in size between the two villages, although as outlined above there was already some difference in character. By 1900 Wheathampstead had hardly grown, apart from a block of terraced housing at New Marford built in the 1870s and 1880s; it continued to provide good quality local services for the residents in the village and the wealthy estates along the river valley (Coburn 1992). Harpenden, in contrast, was much the larger and growing. The two main catalysts for change coincided in 1860. The first was the death of the pluralist rector, Rev G T Pretzman, in 1859 after an incumbency of half a century largely spent elsewhere. On his death Harpenden at last became an official parish, and the split from Wheathampstead was complete. New rectors in both Harpenden and Wheathampstead brought new initiatives. Wheathampstead church was restored, and Harpenden church rebuilt apart from the tower. At the same time the Hatfield, Luton & Dunstable Railway was opened, in 1860. The line ran along the Lea valley, with a station at the north end of Wheathampstead village, and another, later known as Harpenden (East), between Batford and Pickford Mills. In 1868 the Midland Railway main line from St Pancras to Luton and Bedford opened with a station in Harpenden itself. This became a junction in 1888 when the branch line from Luton to Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead was altered to start from Harpenden (Woodward & Woodward 1996). By the end of the century new churches, schools, and other facilities were clustered between the High Street and the station.

In 1860 Limbrick Hall, a farm at the Bowling Alley, was sold to the Freehold Land Society, which cut it up into small building lots (Cussans 1879-81, 350). New villa residences appeared in the village centre in the 1870s (Grey 1934). Following the opening of the railway lines the farmland and still extensive common land between the two Harpenden stations began to be sold for housing. A major part of this land was the Pym and Packe estate, which was sold off in the 1880s and 1890s (Munby 1977, 216; OS 25" plan, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1897). In 1895 fields west of the old village centre were also sold for building, as the St Nicholas estate. By 1897 only some of the new roads were laid out, and the OS map shows that almost no houses had yet been built. From 1898 onwards, however, the new Harpenden Urban District Council encouraged development (see Munby 1977, 225-9).

Harpenden was ready to grow, although the pace of growth was slow at first and public utilities were not in place until late in the century or later. It was the meeting place for two annual events, the fair and the races, which brought people to Harpenden. The fair, by the 1860s a pleasure fair only, and held on Church Green (Grey 1934), was not a descendant of a chartered medieval fair; it was known as the 'Statty', in other words a hiring fair resulting from the 1677 statute endorsing annual contracts made between farmers and workers (Hey 1996, 218). Occasional horse races were held on the Common during the 1830s and 1840s, and were an annual event from 1848 to 1914, attracting many thousands of spectators who arrived by train. The winning post was opposite the Silver Cup at the north end of the Common (Brandreth 1981).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century transformation of Rothamsted from principal local residence to a centre for advancement in farming techniques of world-wide fame was another factor

in Harpenden's growth. The world's first experimental farm began on a small scale in 1834, and from 1843 Sir John Bennet Lawes, descendant of the Wittewronges, set it on a systematic footing (VCH Herts 2 (1908), 295). He was a major benefactor in Harpenden, providing work for good wages as well as new facilities such as the British School and the Allotment Club, and cottages (Grey 1934). In 1853 a Testimonial Laboratory was built as a tribute to him, paid for by grateful farmers from many countries (Cussans 1879-81, 352-3). This building, rebuilt in 1913 (Harpenden & District LHS 1980), stands facing the Common. In 1889 Sir John set up a trust fund for the continuation of the work, and as a result the Rothamsted estate remains intact apart from 53 acres sold to the UDC in 1938 for public access. The gates, drive, and lime avenue leading from beside Park Hall date from 1880; previously the main drive had run from Hatching Green (Harpenden & District LHS 1980). This one local landowner had a major impact on Harpenden; and in 1888 proposed the setting up of Harpenden Common Preservation Committee to take on the policing of the annual races, amongst other functions (Munby 1977, 188).

The principal residences close to Wheathampstead, Lamer and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wheathampstead House (as well as the outlying prosperous estates such as The Grove and Piggotts Hill) employed local servants and tradesmen, but did not influence the village to the same extent, or serve as catalysts for change.

### **The railways**

Both Wheathampstead and Harpenden benefited from the service provided by the Hatfield, Luton & Dunstable Railway, which opened in 1860. Wheathampstead station sent watercress to London and hats to Luton, and the arrival of incomers (including railway workers) can be seen in a comparison of the 1851 and 1881 censuses (Coburn 1992). The line did not, however, provide much of a commuter service to attract new people, although from the 1870s the local straw plait makers and others were commuting to Luton and St Albans to work in the hat factories and other trades (Grey 1934). Both Wheathampstead and Harpenden East stations have been demolished and built over since the line closed in the 1960s. The main Midland line through Harpenden, on the other hand, was to become a factor in the rapid growth of the town in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Public and Religious Buildings in Harpenden***

*The almshouses:* 'Harden Town House for the Poor' is mentioned in the vestry minutes in 1714, although its position is unknown. In 1774 six cottages were built on the east side of the churchyard (WEA 1978, 152), apparently six one-room 'Church Houses' for elderly widows. They are visible in the Buckler watercolour of 1839 (WEA 1973a, 8, 24) as a block with six tall chimneys, behind the lock-up (below).

Building of the *parish workhouse* began in 1756, according to the vestry minutes. It was a white-painted timber building south-west of the church, and prominent on the west side of Church Green. It closed in 1834 on the opening of the Union workhouse in St Albans, and was subsequently used by a ropemaker, whose ropewalk ran across both Church Green and the highway (WEA 1978, 152; 1973a). The building is 'Old Poor House' on the 1840 tithe map. It continued to be used in part as the Sunday

School and a private day school until the foundation of the National School in 1858 (below).

In 1826 the parish agreed to ‘erect a building 34ft high, 12ft wide in the clear... and to have a sleeping room over the same for the use of the Poor of the Workhouse’ (WEA 1978, 157). This was to be beside the churchyard, and to serve on the ground floor as a *parish lock-up*. The upper room was to provide extra accommodation for the workhouse itself. It was rebuilt in the 1850s as a cottage, a small gabled building on the end of the row facing south onto Church Green, and has been used as a shop since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (WEA 1973a, 7; Curl 1982, 6).

The *British School* (Park Hall) was built in 1850 as the first day school in Harpenden, on land given by Sir John Bennet Lawes of Rothamsted (WEA 1976, 239-41). It was supported by both Nonconformists and Anglicans, in order to provide primary education for ‘the greatest number of villagers’ (Skinner 1990). In 1897 the school moved to new buildings in Victoria Road, and in 1898 Park Hall became Council offices.

The *National School* opened in 1858 in the old white cottage which had been the parish workhouse, south-west of the churchyard and already used by the Sunday School (WEA 1976, 241-2). In 1864 this building was replaced by the Victorian school which still stands (Vaughan 1904).

The *Independent Chapel*, Amenbury Lane, is a rectangular red brick box, recognisably a 19<sup>th</sup> century chapel. It was built in 1840 by Harpenden Independent meeting, who had previously used a small building in the grounds of Harpenden Hall. The new chapel had one main room with a schoolroom behind, and was used until the larger Congregational church was built in Vaughan Road in 1896 (Skinner 1990). The old chapel now has shop windows in its ground-floor frontage.

A *Wesleyan Chapel* was built in Leyton Road in 1838 and rebuilt in 1886 (WEA 1973a, 26). The 1838 chapel replaced two cottages at Chapel Row, West Common, which had been used for Methodist services from 1792 (WEA 1975, 109; Brandreth 1996, 64). The second Leyton Road building became a cinema in 1929, when the present Methodist church was built in the High Street with a handsome late Arts & Crafts stone facade. The Leyton Road site is now occupied by the supermarket.

*The Institute* in Southdown Road was the premises of the Harpenden Lecture Institute and Reading Club. This body, founded in 1858, had used a room above a shop, and on the expiry of the lease a new building was paid for by Henry Tylston Hodgson of Welcombe. This opened in January 1887, its hall providing a useful meeting place for the village. The Society folded in 1912; in 1933 the Institute was bought from the Welcombe estate by the Society of Friends (Brandreth 1985).

### **Utilities**

The *Harpenden Gas Company* was set up in 1864 at the Bowling Alley, but produced gas only for domestic use until the first street lights were erected in 1887 (Grey 1934; WEA 1973a, 17; Brandreth 1997, 34). Later gas was only stored here, at what is now the Southdown Industrial Estate; the retort house of c1900 survives (SMR 5842). The

*Harpenden Water Company* was formed in 1885 (Brandreth 1997, 68), to supply the houses on the new Park View estate. Most houses in Harpenden continued to rely on well water, and the well borer was in business until 1915 (Harpenden & District LHS 1980).

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century residents of Harpenden used cesspools for sewage. Most of these leaked, although as the seepage filtered through the natural chalk this does not seem to have seriously affected the water supply. The sewage works in Piggotts Hill Lane were not opened until 1914 (SMR 5708), although a small area marked 'Sewage Beds' is on the OS 1898 25-inch plan, within a copse at Green Lane (SMR 10490), and survives as a green area between Aldwick Road and Grove Avenue.

Other services included the Fire Brigade (below), from 1880; and a bank, Marten, Part & Co (later Barclays), from 1887 (Harpenden & District LHS 1980).

### **Factories**

The 1840 tithe award lists only the two breweries in Harpenden as well as the beer shops, inns, blacksmiths, brickyards, wheelwright, butcher, baker and chemist. By the 1860s a hat factory was operating in Heathfield Lodge, close to the north end of the Common (Grey 1934; Brandreth 1997, 42). It made use of some of the local straw plait made in all the cottages, and diversified to use felt as well as straw by 1878 (OS 6" map). In 1883 it moved to Bowling Alley (Gregory 1981), and Heathfield Lodge became Abbott, Anderson & Abbott's oilskin clothing factory. On the 1897 OS 25" plan it is the Heathfield waterproofing works. It burnt down in 1916, and was rebuilt (Brandreth 1996, 114). The factory siren was used to summon firemen to their premises next to Park Hall (Gregory 1981, 10-11), in a building which had been put up in 1858 for the British School infants; a Fire Brigade to replace the old parish engine was first organised by local committee after a fire at Samwell's furniture workshop behind the George in 1880 (*Harpenden & District LHS Newsletter* 51 (Feb 1990), 4-5, 14; WEA 1991, 228). The factory site is now occupied by the new fire station.

### ***18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Century Public and Religious Buildings in Wheathampstead***

The *parish workhouse* was built adjacent to the churchyard in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, and like that at Harpenden closed in 1834 on the opening of the Union workhouse in St Albans. The building was converted into private dwellings; in the 1881 census Workhouse Yard dominated the west side of the High Street. In the 1930s it was replaced by Bank Chambers (WEA 1978, 152; Coburn 1992).

An *Independent Chapel* was built in 1815 at the foot of Brewhouse Hill, almost within sight of the parish churchyard. In 1847 it had three services each Sunday, and ran a Sunday School and a lending library (Burg 1995, 84-5). The building is shown on the 1840 tithe map with an attached Yard. In 1877 the larger church which survives today was opened, and the old chapel used as a hall (WEA 1975, 137, pl.12c). The 1897 OS 25-inch plan shows the Congregational Chapel, with its own burial ground in the yard. The old chapel was demolished in the early 1970s and the yard is partly occupied by modern housing.

A *Wesleyan Chapel* was put up in 1840 on the waste at the edge of the road at the top of The Hill, on the southern outskirts of the village. In 1847-8 it was described as 'not efficient' (Burg 1995, 84-5), although it struggled on until 1939. The building survived as a factory (WEA 1975, 135).

One of the earliest *National Schools* in the country was built in 1815 on roadside waste on The Hill, on the other side of the road from the Wesleyan chapel and closer to the village (WEA 1976, 237-9). The little schoolhouse is visible on the 1840 tithe map. Canon Davys described it as a two-roomed building 36ft by 15ft, with shabby fittings and brick floors, and intended for a hundred cottagers' children (*Wheathampstead Pump* 38 (1990), 8-9). The much larger structure now known as the '*Old School*' in Church Street was built to replace it by the architect Edward Browning in 1862, at the instigation of Canon Davys, and during the restoration of the dilapidated old parish church by the same architect. The building is in a polychrome Decorated Gothic style with knapped flint walls with zig-zag bands of yellow brick. It opened in January 1863 (Cussans 1879-81; WEA 1974b, 8-9). It is now used as offices.

The Hill itself was regraded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century into a cutting to reduce the gradient. Part of the old steeper road still forms the footpath outside the houses on the east side.

### **Utilities**

Wheathampstead had its own sewage works from 1873, a primitive arrangement with a horse-powered pump in a field at the end of East Lane. This was replaced by up-to-date equipment in the early 1920s and has since been modernised again (Coburn 1992). The village had no other public utilities until much later; it was forced to accept piped water in 1926 (WEA 1991, 231).

### **Factories**

Apart from brewing and malting, and watercress-growing for the London market along the river, little industry was established at Wheathampstead. Services such as high-class carriage repairs were provided instead, for the Lamer estate and elsewhere (Coburn 1992). There was little in this to attract a growth in population. From the 1890s to the 1920s there was a hat factory, Osborne's, out on the Lower Luton Road. This was in a workshop behind the general store at The Folly. 'The hats were wheeled to the station twice daily and sent by train to Luton' (WEA 1974b, 39). A St Albans firm, E Day, makers of cork helmets, took over the Brewhouse Hill maltings by 1917 and in c1926 moved all its operations to Wheathampstead as Helmets Ltd (Fookes 1997, 16-17). The firm still produces safety headgear, with its offices in the old Rectory.

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