

**EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
FOR
BEDFORDSHIRE
AMPTHILL ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background to the Project*

English Heritage has initiated a national series of Extensive Urban Surveys. This report is an archaeological assessment of Ampthill and forms the first part of the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) for Bedfordshire. This survey of the 12 historic towns of Bedfordshire is funded by English Heritage (EH) and managed by the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council (BCC). The survey is being jointly undertaken by staff of Albion Archaeology (formerly Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service) and the Heritage and Environment Group of BCC.

The EUS comprises three stages, Data Compilation, Assessment and Strategy. The first stage, Data Compilation, draws together the accessible history of the town, known archaeological sites, and historic buildings data. The Assessment presents this evidence in the form of a report which provides a history of the town, an account of its buried and standing archaeology, together with an assessment of archaeological potential. The Strategy stage will draw on the Assessment to develop a strategic framework for the management of the archaeological and historic resource for each town. It is hoped that the proposed strategy for each town will be adopted as supplementary guidance notes for the relevant District plans.

The chronological framework used in the Assessment reports to describe each town's development (normally section 5) reflects the periodisation used in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). Any broad dating system of this kind has limitations in the face of the mass of detailed evidence that exists for each town. It has, therefore, occasionally (e.g. Bedford in the Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods, or Luton in the early industrial period) been necessary to use slightly different chronological divisions. In addition, the town of Sandy is exceptional in its own right because only the Roman town has been included in the Bedfordshire EUS.

1.2 *Structure of this Document*

This report has been compiled using a number of sources including the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS) and the Albion Archaeology project database. No evidence for previously unknown archaeological remains has been discovered during the Data Compilation stage.

Following this introductory section, the location and topography of Ampthill is described in Section 2. The nature of the sources is discussed in Section 3 and a historical summary presented in Section 4. The archaeological and historical development of the town is described by chronological period in Section 5, while Section 6 gives an assessment of Ampthill's character, importance and potential. Locations of historic buildings, schematic representations of town development and areas of archaeological potential are also depicted in plan form. Figures are bound at the end of this report.



2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Amphill is in Mid Bedfordshire District. It is located c.12km to the south of Bedford and 18km to the north of Dunstable, at TL03343761 (Fig 1). The historic towns of Shefford and Woburn lie to the east and south-west respectively.

The town is located at the junction of four roads. The road to Shefford (known as Church Street), Woburn Street, Dunstable Street and the road to Bedford. The three streets were certainly known as such from at least the 15th century (Page, 1912). The modern limits of the town are delineated by three late medieval parks (Fig 3); Houghton Park to the north east, Amphill Great Park to the north-west and west, and Little Park to the west (Kennet, 1991).

Amphill is situated on the Greensand Ridge. The underlying drift geology comprises Lower Greensand with Amphill Clay and Kimmeridge Clay occurring in places.

The Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales, Sheet 147, shows the area of the town to be predominantly in urban use with the park to the west primarily in non-agricultural use. The agricultural land on three sides of the town is classed as Grade III while to the south and south-east the land is classified as Grade II.



3. THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

3.1 *Previous Archaeological Investigations*

There have been few opportunities for archaeological activity within the town (Fig 4). Ampthill and District Archaeological and Historical Society have undertaken two projects. In 1975 salvage recording during refurbishment of the floors of St Andrew's Church (HER 859), confirmed the presence of an earlier, probably Romanesque, structure (Fadden 1976a). In 1974, a watching brief at 45 Woburn Street, an early 19th century building, revealed rows of ox *tibiae* driven into the ground alongside the foundations for an earlier building. A quantity of 17th century pottery and bone pins, possibly used for producing pillow lace, were found amongst the foundations (Fadden 1976b).

Bedfordshire County Archaeology Service (now Albion Archaeology) has carried out four watching briefs. A watching brief (WB169) during digging of foundation trenches for an extension to St Andrew's Church offices in 1992 revealed undated foundation features and some undated human remains. In 1993, a watching brief during construction work in a semi-derelict plot on Church Street (WB184) uncovered only 19th century brick footings.

In 1997, a watching brief (WB470) during underpinning work along part of the northern wall of the Feoffee Almshouses, on the periphery of the neighbouring churchyard, revealed part of the stone foundations of the almshouses. A single undated human skeleton was encountered in the base of the trench and a collection of human bone, post-medieval pottery and clay pipe fragments was found in the upcast.

A watching brief (WB407) during groundworks for an extension to Katherine House, on the west side of Dunstable Street in 1996, produced a small quantity of medieval pottery and some animal bone, including a canine skeleton. The pottery assemblage dates from the 12th-14th century and probably derived from rubbish pits located behind former buildings fronting on to the street.

3.2 *Historical Evidence*

Volume III of the VCH, published in 1912, includes a history of the hundred of Redbornestoke, which includes Ampthill. The other main sources for the history of Ampthill are Andrew Underwood's books, "Home Rule for Ampthill" and "Ampthill - A Goodly Heritage" (Underwood 1974 and 1976, respectively). Annette Edwards produced a Town Survey for Bedfordshire County Council at about the same time as these two books were published (Edwards 1974). More recently, the Heritage Group of Bedfordshire County Planning Department produced "Ampthill's Historic Environment" (BCC, 1996). Joyce Godber's 'History of Bedfordshire' (Godber 1969) also provides useful background.

Although a map of Ampthill Warren dated 1580 exists (BLARS X1/77) no detail of the town is shown. The earliest useful map is a Plan of Ampthill (BLARS R1/1), dated to 1743, which shows closely packed buildings fronting long-side onto the four main streets. Although the Moot Hall is shown in the market place,



and all of the buildings are drawn in perspective, the buildings appear to be representative, rather than an accurate depiction. The Feoffee Almshouses (HER2825), to the south of the Church, are not shown and the triangular 18th century Gazebo (HER6181) on the west side of Dunstable Street is not portrayed accurately. Two further 18th century maps, surveyed by J Davis also portray parts of the Russell Estate. The surveyor Thomas Evans, produced at least five maps of Ampthill between 1796 and 1825. The maps, mainly depicting the estates belonging to John Morris with neighbouring landholdings shown in outline, appear to be accurate and may have been produced from a single overall plan. The Inclosure Map of 1808 (BLARS MA95/1-2) which accompanies the Inclosure Award adds little detail to Evans' maps.

The Historic Environment Record maintained by Bedfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Section lists over 100 historic buildings ranging in date from the 14th century church to the early 20th century (these are itemised, by period, in Tables 1 to 5). However, many of these dates have been assigned by listed buildings surveyors working on external evidence only. Internal inspection is likely to reveal structural features of earlier date. Thus the summary of buildings evidence given in this report is mainly a resume of assigned dates, as listed in the Bedfordshire HER. Further work would be required to produce more accurate listings.

The annual CBA newsletters and the Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal were scanned for references to Ampthill. Transcripts of Parish Registers held in BLARS were consulted. So too were secondary references to historical documents, but no attempt was made to look at primary historical sources.



4. HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Amphill is mentioned in Domesday Book and is therefore likely to be of at least late Saxon origin, though its roots are most probably in the middle Saxon period. The place-name probably derives from Old English *aemethyll*, which means either ant hill or ant-infested hill (Mawer and Stenton 1926).

At the time of the Domesday survey Amphill, or 'Ammetelle', was within Redbornestoke Hundred. The land was farmed by bailiffs appointed by the Crown. Following the Conquest, Nigel d'Albini held Amphill from the King (Morris 1977, 214b).

In the 13th century the d'Albini estate was sub-divided between three daughters. In 1219, Henry III granted the manor of Amphill a Charter for a weekly market and in 1242 the king also granted the right to an annual fair. Amphill manor was reunited under Almaric St Amand in 1336 and in the 15th century Amphill was purchased from the St Amand family by Sir John Cornwall who constructed a 'castle', actually a mansion, and created Amphill Park to enclose it. Following his death, the Amphill estate was purchased by Lord Grey (Underwood 1976, 3-8; Page 1912, 271-2).

In the early 16th century, Lord Grey's grandson forfeited the manor of Amphill to Henry VII in default of a loan payment. Henry VIII stayed at Amphill on numerous occasions and in 1533 he placed Amphill at the disposal of Katherine of Aragon while he awaited his divorce from her. In 1542 Henry VIII elevated Amphill to an Honour, attaching to it Royal manors, lands and sites of Bedfordshire monasteries, as well as others in Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire. Following the death of Henry VIII Amphill Castle fell into disrepair. King James I abandoned plans to rebuild the castle and settled the Honour of Amphill on the Prince of Wales, the future king Charles I. During the English Civil War, the Steward of the Royal Estates at Amphill, Lord Elgin, was persuaded by his wife not to actively support the Royal cause. In 1650, the Honour and Manor of Amphill were purchased by the Parliamentary Colonel, John Okey, one of the signatories of the death warrant of Charles I. Okey was executed for treason in 1662 (Underwood 1976, 2-32).

At the Restoration, Amphill passed to John Ashburnham and subsequently passed through several owners until the mid eighteenth century when it became the property of the 1st Earl of Upper Ossory (Page 1912, 272). In 1771, the 2nd Earl of Upper Ossory, employed Capability Brown to landscape the Great Park. Following Parliamentary Inclosure in 1808 Lord Ossory's successor, Lord Holland, laid out The Alameda, a tree-lined promenade, which was presented to the people of Amphill in 1825. The Amphill estate was acquired by the Duke of Bedford in 1842 and in 1893 Amphill was designated an Urban District.



5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Prehistoric Period (c10,000BC - AD43)

There are no known prehistoric sites within the town itself. Flint objects found in Ampthill Park (HER 7468, 7485, 7486, 9812 and 14741) reflect prehistoric activity on the Greensand Ridge to the north-west of the town.

5.2 The Roman Period (AD43 - AD410)

There are no known Roman sites within the town itself. A group of pottery kilns (HER6743) was discovered during construction of the Ampthill bypass to the south of the town. The kilns dated from the late Iron Age but pottery production appears to have continued into the early Roman period (Simco 1984). A ditch (HER 4448) containing Roman pottery of a similar date was found to the west of the town during construction of the bypass. Surface scatters of Roman pottery (HER 1429 and 9810) have been recovered by fieldwalking to the east of the town (Fadden 1975).

An extensive Iron Age and Romano-British settlement near Ruxox Farm in the adjacent parish of Flitwick, to the south, was first investigated in the 1950s. Further fieldwork in the 1960s and 1970s produced a rich assemblage of finds suggesting that there may be a villa or possibly even a shrine in the area (Fadden 1970 and Simco 1984).

Both the Victoria County History and the Viatores have suggested the possibility of a Roman road passing close to or through the town, based on Ampthill's position relative to other known sites. There is no evidence of a Roman road extending from the Icknield Way at Dunstable and leading to Houghton Regis via Toddington and Ampthill (Page 1912). A possible 'agger' (HER5158) has been identified to the north of the town while a stretch of Roman road at Streatley, heading northwards towards Ruxox is known to the south of the town (Simco 1984).

5.3 The Anglo-Saxon Period (AD410 - AD1066)

There are no known Saxon sites within the town of Ampthill. It seems likely that the earliest settlement would be concentrated around the Parish Church of St Andrew on the eastern edge of the town (BCC 1996, 2).

5.4 The Medieval Period (AD1066 - AD1550)

At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086 Ampthill, or 'Ammetelle', was within Redbornestoke Hundred. In 1066, Ampthill was held by seven 'sokemen' and was valued at £2. In 1086, there were six villeins, two bordars and one serf. The value of Ampthill had risen by this time to £4. It has been suggested that this would have been its estimated value prior to the Conquest and that the fall in value was the result of marauding Normans heading north (Underwood 1976, 3).



With the exception of the church (see below), there are no known early medieval remains within the town itself. A watching brief (WB407) on the east side of Dunstable Street recovered pottery dating from the 12th - 14th centuries.

5.4.1 Motte-and-Bailey Castle (possible remains of)

Underwood has suggested that an earthwork adjacent to Hazelwood Lane to the north of the town is the remains of a motte-and-bailey castle (Underwood 1976, pl. 1). However, its detached position above the town seems an unlikely location for a Norman castle. Christopher Taylor, formerly with the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments, visited the site in 1984 and interpreted it as the remains of quarrying. Angela Simco, however, interpreted the site as a landscape garden feature, possibly a small knoll artificially heightened for tree-planting (HER 2808).

5.4.2 St Andrew's Church (HER859)

Following the Conquest, Nigel d'Albini held Ampthill from the King. His grandson Henry made various gifts to St Alban's Abbey, c.1140, including the parish church of St Andrew at Ampthill. In 1219, the church was worth about 100s and the vicarage 5 marks, about 53s 4d (Underwood 1976, 6). The earliest recorded priest is Martin in 1238. The *taxatio* of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291 lists Ampthill among the four poorest endowments in the county (Page 1908, 324). The Norman Church was rebuilt in about 1330 although only the pillars of the nave are still visible from this period (Underwood 1976, 6 - 7). In 1429, Lord Fanhope acquired Ampthill church and initiated a programme of reconstruction that continued into the early 16th century. The walls of the nave were heightened and clerestory windows added. New low pitched roofs with parapets were built over the nave and the aisles. The aisles may also have been widened and heightened. The south porch was also added. Reconstruction of the tower was completed in 1505 following endowments from two of the parishioners (Underwood 1976, 12). Despite refurbishments to the main body of the church, the Chancel was reported to be 'ruinous' in 1518 and 'almost down to the ground' by 1556.

5.4.3 Market

In 1219 the under-tenant of Ampthill, Nicholas Poinz and his wife Joan, paid the king 5 marks for holding a weekly market on Thursdays. However, it is likely that the Thursday market was already established by then. The market developed around a hollow at the west end of Church Street, now the meeting point of the four main streets of the town, but it has been suggested that this would have been an open area at the edge of Ampthill Warren at this time (BCC 1976, 2). Permanent shops were established along the northern and south-eastern sides of Church Street with the triangular market place at its west end. In 1242, Henry III confirmed the right to hold a weekly market and also granted the right to a fair around the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, 21st-23rd July. The settlement expanded to the north and south of the market place along the eastern side of Bedford Street to the north and Dunstable Street to the south. Gradual encroachment onto Ampthill Warren on the western side of these two streets would have required manorial approval and probably occurred later. A market cross stood in the middle of the market square in 1542.



5.4.4 Streets

Church Street, with the Church of St Andrew, and presumably the earliest focus of settlement at its east end, and the market place at its west end, is clearly the earliest street in the town. Buildings abutting Church Street to the south-east of the Church are also recorded in an account of Lord Grey's lands dated 1485. It seems likely that Dunstable Street and Bedford Street, were not defined until the expansion of the town associated with the development of the market and fair. Possible rubbish pits found during a watching brief (WB407) dated from the 12th-14th century and suggest that buildings were established on the east side of Dunstable Street by that date. Documentary evidence indicates that, by the 15th century, Bedford Street and Dunstable Street had developed significantly. Deeds of 1434 refer to cottages and a *messuage*, or dwelling house, in "Dunstaplestret" demonstrating that the street and the current name were well established by that time. An account of Henry VIII's property in Ampthill, prepared in 1542, refers to tenements and *messuages* spread along Bedford Street. There were fewer royal properties along Dunstable Street and Church Street, which was referred to as High Street at that time. The differential distribution of royal properties probably reflects social divisions within the town with wealthier freeholders ranged along the oldest established streets and manorial tenants whose properties probably originated as encroachments on the Warren (BCC 1996, 3). The fact that Church Street was referred to as High Street gives an indication of its status as the town's main street. In 1542, Woburn Street was a minor thoroughfare known as "Myllestrete" as it led to a horse mill (BCC 1996, 3). The "Swanne Inn", later the King's Head (HER6143), was already there - although the HER sheet dates the current buildings to the 17th century. Otherwise the street remained relatively undeveloped. The "Bell", the "Crowne" and "the Herte" were established in Dunstable Street by this time.

5.4.5 Buildings

There are a few surviving medieval buildings within the town (see Table 1).

The earliest reference to the Feoffee Almshouses (HER2825) in Church Square dates to 1485 although the HER sheet dates the current buildings to the 16th century. The term *feoffee* is the original name for the Trustees appointed to administer charitable bequests made by residents of the town for the care of the needy (Underwood 1976, 23). On the south side of Church Street, Nos. 27-29 (HER6135) are timber framed structures with a "medieval roof dating to c.1500, and traces of possible wall painting" (J Edis HER Record Sheet). On the east side of Dunstable Street, to the south of the Market Square, Nos. 113 (HER6198), and 115-117 (HER6199) are all timber-framed buildings which were originally assigned a 17th century date but re-interpreted as probably dating to the 16th century (J Edis HER Record Sheet). Immediately to the north, No. 119 (HER6200), is described as a 17th century alteration of a medieval building (J Edis HER Record Sheet). The "Swanne Inn", later the King's Head (HER6143) was established in Woburn Street, "Myllestrete" at that time, by 1542 although the HER sheet dates the current buildings to the 17th century (Fig 5).



The Moot Hall, occasionally referred to as the ‘*Yeldehall*’ was originally built for the manorial lords in an isolated position on the western edge of the market place accessible from all sides. Its upper floor was used for the manorial courts from at least as early as 1467 and its lower floor was available for tradesmen. A workshop was recorded there in 1542 and shops and stalls are also recorded (BCC 1996, 4). The original Moot Hall was demolished in 1851 (see below).

HER	Address	Comments
2825	Feoffee Almshouses	Earliest reference 1485
6135	27-29 Church Street	Timber roof dating to c.1500
6198	113 Dunstable Street	Timber-framed, possibly 16 th century
6199	115-117 Dunstable Street	Timber-framed, possibly 16 th century
6200	119 Dunstable Street	17 th century alteration of medieval building

Table 1. Medieval buildings in Ampthill (as listed in HER)

5.4.6 Trades

By the early 14th century, there were at least two merchants, two smiths, one tinker, one iron worker, four drapers, two butchers, two pelters and three tanners established in the town (BCC 1996, 3). Meat and hide preparation are clearly important in the town at an early date. Monuments in St Andrew’s Church to William Hicchecok *wolman* merchant of the Staple of Calais, dated 1450, and to John Barnard, chapman, dated 1506 attest the increasing importance of the cloth industry in the 15th century. In 1436, five Flemish men, reputedly weavers, were allowed to settle in the town (Underwood 1976, 15). Tenter Close on Bedford Street probably refers to the manufacture and dyeing of cloth. Clay pits are recorded in Ampthill as early as 1467 and an account of Lord Grey’s lands in 1503 refers to a tile kiln in Church Street (BCC 1996, 3). A glover and shoemakers are also referred to. Manorial court Rolls of the later 15th and early 16th centuries refer to bakers, butchers, fishmongers, chandlers and tanners. This is hardly likely to be a representative list however as these were the main trades subject to manorial control (BCC 1996, 4). Warreners, are recorded at least as early as 1542 but were presumably controlling the Warren before that. The horse mill on Woburn Street, “*Myllestrete*” at that time, was used by ropemakers (Underwood 1976, 21). Two hemplands are recorded along Bedford Street and there were other hemplands elsewhere in the town, notably Dunstable Street (BCC 1996). Hemp fibres were used to produce canvas, coarse cloth and rope.

5.4.7 Oxflod

A pond known as the Oxflod, was located to the north of the market place and the south-east side of Bedford Street, by the late 15th century. In 1498, four individuals found guilty of polluting the pond were ordered by the manorial court to ‘emend and scour’ the pond on pain of a 12d fine if they were found guilty again. In 1503, Robert Russell was also stated to have “a sewer running from his privy running into Oxeflode” (BCC 1996, 4).

5.4.8 Ampthill Castle

In the 15th century Ampthill was purchased by Sir John Cornwall, later Lord Fanhope. He constructed Ampthill Castle to the north-west of the town (Fig 3). The “castle” was actually a quadrangular house, described by John Leland in



1544 as a sumptuous building. Although more of a mansion of than a castle, the Duke of Orleans who was captured at Agincourt, was held prisoner there in 1432, and, a century later, Katherine of Aragon was housed there whilst awaiting divorce from Henry VIII. Although Henry VIII was a frequent visitor to Ampthill, following his reign the castle went out of use and by the end of the 16th century it had fallen in to decay. A survey of the ruinous buildings made in c.1567 was published in the History of the Kings Works vol. 4 (Kennet, 1987). Plans to rebuild the castle were drawn up in 1606 but never carried out. It was eventually robbed out for building materials. The site is now marked by Katherine's Cross (HER14350) and earthworks which appear to correspond to the 16th century survey of the ruins.

5.4.9 Ampthill Park

Lord Fanhope created Ampthill Park to enclose his new "castle". Following his death, the Ampthill estate was eventually purchased by Lord Edmund Grey. Two parks, Great Park and Little Park, are listed amongst an account of Lord Grey's lands in 1467-8. Great Park was located to the north west of the town while Little Park was located to the south of Woburn Street.

5.4.10 The Warren

The Warren, an open heathland which surrounded the town on three sides, to the north, west and south is mentioned in the account of Lord Grey's lands in 1467-8 as an area where rabbits were bred and managed for the Lord's table.

5.5 The Post-Medieval Period (AD1550 - AD1850)

Although outwardly Ampthill probably changed little in the 17th century, during the 18th century the town acquired much of its present character. The HER lists numerous surviving buildings of 17th and 18th century date. Ampthill continued to grow in the early 19th century, although its population increased by only 36% between 1801 and 1836 compared to an average increase for towns in the county of 50% (Godber 1969).

5.5.1 Market

By 1616, fourteen market stalls were permanently established in the market place alongside the Moot Hall and a butcher's shambles. The market cross recorded in 1542 was still there in 1619. Fourteen market stalls and a butcher's shambles were also mentioned in manorial records of 1752. A map of Ampthill drawn up in 1743 (BLARS: R1/1) shows the market house occupying a prominent position in the market place. This building was demolished in 1781 and replaced by the 18th century covered market (HER6112) which occupies an advanced position on the north side of Church Street. Lord Ossory provided a stone obelisk to encase the town pump in the market square (HER990) and £20 towards sinking a new well to feed the pump. In the 18th century there were two annual fairs, on 4th May and on St Andrew's Day, 30th November.

5.5.2 Streets

The road to Bedford (HER11525) was turnpiked in 1777. The Russell Estate Map of 1743 (BLARS: R1/1) shows buildings ranged along the frontage of the four main streets with no detail of property boundaries to the rear (Fig 6). A



meandering path leading from Church Court to Wolmans Hill, to the north of the town and a street leading south-west from Bedford Street are shown but not named. The former is now known as Rectory Lane at its eastern end, close to the church and a footpath leads to Church Hill. The latter is possibly Brewery Lane, although the alignment appears inaccurate. A crescentic street shown on the north side of Woburn Street probably represents the current Park Hill and Chapel Lane. A broader, crescentic street on the south side of Woburn Street is probably Claridge's Lane in the area known as Slut's End (see below). A Survey of the Honour of Ampthill (BLARS: R1/3) dated 1773 shows very little detail of the town. Brewery Lane is shown but not marked, although the buildings at Sluts End are shown in great detail, as are the buildings on the north side of Woburn Road. Two additional roads are shown leading across the Warren. The first leads from Dunstable Street on the edge of the Warren to the south of the town and heads roughly NNW meeting Woburn Street to the west of Slut's End. This road is partially preserved as a footpath between Station Road and The Alameda. The road then continues northwards to rejoin Bedford Street on the northern edge of the Warren. This road is partially preserved as a track leading from Woburn Street to Russet's Lodge and possibly as a footpath through Laurel Wood. A second road extends NNE from Woburn Street and leads along the western edge of the Warren. The line of this road is only preserved by field boundaries.

An estate map of 1804 (BLARS X21/571) shows parts of the town in great detail, in particular the area to the north and east of Church Street and Bedford Street, respectively. A lane is shown leading northwards from buildings to the rear of Bedford Street to join with the green lane which runs parallel to Church Street. The path is preserved today as an access road and the green lane is partially preserved within the gardens to the rear of Church Street. Brewery Lane, marked "Hog Hill", is shown leading west from the west side of Bedford Street. The current pattern of streets at the west end of Brewery Lane, now known as Park Hill, and the lane leading from Woburn Road, now known as Chapel Lane, are also shown. The "Footway leading from Ampthill Park" is preserved as a path. The map (BLARS MA95/1-2) which accompanies the Parliamentary Inclosure Award of 1808 shows more detail of the property boundaries to the rear of the street frontages, in particular the area around Slut's End to the south of Woburn Street, but no streets are named (Fig 6). A broad curving track, now Alameda Road, leading south-west from Woburn Street forms an oval with a narrower track, now known as Claridge's Lane. The "oval" is sub-divided by a forked track which still exists. A street, now known as Oliver Street extends from the east side of Dunstable Street.

5.5.3 Slut's End

The irregular pattern of enclosures and buildings on the higher ground at the western end of Woburn Street, clearly evident on the 18th century estate maps, indicates that they originated as piecemeal encroachments onto the Warren. This area, known as Slut's End, was served by Nip's Well or Pump. Documentary references to well established dwellings at Slut's End are known from the early 18th century and references to cottages built on the waste from 1615 also probably refer to Slut's End. The fact that all of the properties at Slut's End are shown on the estate maps indicates that they were manorial holdings and that the



piecemeal encroachment must have had manorial approval. The rents from these properties would have provided a valuable source of income. By 1804 there were 30 messuages at Slut's End (BCC 1996, 6).

5.5.4 Oxflood

Although the Oxflood is mentioned in manorial records of 1750 (Underwood 1976, 76) and in 1775 there were complaints that it was “ a great nuisance for want of being cleaned” (BCC 1996, 4) the town pond is not shown on either of the 18th century estate maps (BLARS R1/1 and R1/3). Nor is it shown on either the early 19th century estate map (BLARS X21/571) or the 1808 Inclosure map (BLARS MA95/1).

5.5.5 Buildings

A number of surviving 17th century buildings are evenly distributed throughout the town (Fig 5, Table 2). Several have been altered considerably in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Swanne Inn, subsequently The Old Kings Head (HER6143) in Woburn Street is assigned a 17th century date in the HER, although an inn was known on the site from the 16th century.

HER	Address	Comments
6102	44 Bedford Street	19th century alterations
6203	2 Brewery Lane	19th century alterations
6143	'The Old Kings Head' 1-3 Woburn Street	17th century or possibly earlier
6149	'The Old George Inn' 23 Woburn Street	Timber framed
6153	31-35 Woburn Street	late 17th or possibly early 18th century
6117	22-24 Church Street	17th century
6118	26 Church Street	refaced in the 18th century
6141	41 Church Street	17th century
6142	rear of 41 Church Street	half-timbered barn converted to a house
6136	31-33 Church Street	19th century alterations
13873	35a Church Street	rear of 31 - 33 Church Street
6133	23 Church Street	17th century
6134	25 Church Street	17th century
4365	17 Church Street	19th century alterations
4289	15 Church Street	19th century alterations
4288	13 Church Street	19th century alterations
6127	1 Church Street	late 17th or early 18th century
6129	7 Church Street	late 17th or early 18th century
6193	93-95 Dunstable Street	
6191	85 Dunstable Street	dated 1750 but believed to be 17th century
6190	81 Dunstable Street	19th century alterations
15343	67 Dunstable Street	
4318	108 Dunstable Street	late 17th century
6157	2 Woburn Street	late 17th century
6158	4 Woburn Street	late 17th century
6159	6 Woburn Street	late 17th or early 18th century, 19th century alterations
6165	Easter Cottage, 22 Woburn Street	17th or possibly 18th century
6171	18 Claridge's Lane	late 17th or early 18th century
6170	12 Claridge's Lane	late 17th or early 18th century

Table 2. 17th century buildings in Ampthill (as listed in HER)

A large number of the historic buildings in the town date to the 18th century (Table 3). Among the notable buildings are Dynevor House (HER6122), on the south-west corner



of Church Court, which was built for Sir Simon Urlin in 1725. Avenue House (HER6114) on the north side of Church Street was built for the brewery owner, William Morris by the architect Henry Holland in 1780 and was enlarged in 1792. Henry Holland also designed the adjacent property, 18 Church Street (HER6113). Queen Katherine's Summer House (HER6181) on the west side of Dunstable Street is shown as the north-west corner feature of a large garden associated with a house on a plan surveyed by Thomas Evans in 1796 (BLARS SF 1/221/1). The house and garden originally belonged to John Findlay who was Lord Ashburnham's gardener in 1700 but went on to own several properties in Dunstable Street (Underwood 1976, 69).

HER	Address	Comments
6104	Prince of Wales Inn, 24 Bedford Street,	18th century
6202	1 Brewery Lane	18th century
6204	3 Brewery Lane	18th century
4364	Steps Cottage, 6 Brewery Lane	19th century alterations
4317	8-10 Church Street	18th century
4362	12-16 Church Street	early 18th century
6112	Covered Market, 6 Church Street	18th century
6113	18 Church Street	late 18th century
6114	Avenue House, 20 Church Street	late 18th century
4331	Gates House, 28 Church Street	late 18th century
6121	Roseberry Villa, 32 Church Street	restored late 18th century
6122	Dynevor House, 34 Church Street	early 18th century
6123	Little Dynevor, Church Street	18th century
6125	38 Church Street	late 18th century
6126	40 Church Street	18th century
6140	39 Church Street	late 18th century
6139	Coach house abutting 37 Church Street	18th century
6138	Foulislea	early 18th century
6132	19-21 Church Street	early 18th century
6131	11 Church Street	late 18th century
6130	9 Church Street	early 18th century, former King's Arms
6128	3-5 Church Street	late 18th century
6201	Dunstable Street	18th century
4361	105 Dunstable Street	18th century
6196	99 Dunstable Street	mid 18th century
6194	97-97a Dunstable Street	early 18th century
6189	65 Dunstable Street	mid 18th century
6188	63 Dunstable Street	late 18th century
6187	61 Dunstable Street	late 18th century
6186	Amphill Hall, Dunstable Street	mid 18th century
6182	46 Dunstable Street	restored late 18th century
6181	Queen Katherine's Summer House, Dunstable Street	early 18th century gazebo converted to a workshop
6179	97 Dunstable Street	18th century
6161	10-12 Dunstable Street	late 18th early 19th century
6162	Hill View, 14 Woburn Street	mid 18th century
6163	16-18 Woburn Street	early 18th century
6164	The Queen's Head, 20 Woburn Street	late 18th century
6156	56 Woburn Street	18th century
6154	37 Woburn Street	late 18th early 19th century
6205	1 Chapel Lane	early 18th century
6151	27 Woburn Street	late 18th century
6150	25 Woburn Street	late 18th century
6148	21 & 21a Woburn Street	early 18th century
6147	13-15 Woburn Street	mid 18th century



6166	9 Alameda Road	18th century
6167	11-13 Alameda Road	18th century
4296	1-5 Alameda Road	18th century

Table 3. 18th century buildings in Ampthill (as listed in HER)

There are a number of buildings in the town dating to the early 19th century (1800-1840) -see Table 4. In addition, numerous 17th and 18th century buildings were altered in the 19th century. Notable buildings include cottages built for the Duke of Bedford's Estate (HER4314 - 4316) on the north side of Woburn Street, the Baptist Chapel (6185) and The Cedars (HER5486), formerly the Union Workhouse.

HER	Address	Comments
6105	20-22 Bedford Street	early 19th century
4311	41-43 Woburn Street	early 19th century
4312	45 Woburn Street	early 19th century
4313	47 Woburn Street	early 19th century
4314	49-51 Woburn Street	1816
4315	53 Woburn Street	1815
4316	55 Woburn Street	1816
6160	8 Woburn Street	early 19th century
6168	15-19 Alameda Road	
4363	101 Dunstable Street	early 19th century
6221	89-91 Dunstable Street	early 19th century
6180	88 Dunstable Street	early 19th century
6217	52-58 Dunstable Street	early 19th century
6185	Baptist Chapel, Dunstable Street	1822
6192	The Old Sun Inn, 87 Dunstable Street	early 19th century
5486	Poor Law Institution, The Cedars, Dunstable Street	1835
6216	7 Arthur Street	early 19th century
15523	Saunder's Piece	

Table 4. Early 19th century (pre-1840) buildings in Ampthill (as listed in HER)

5.5.6 Baptist Chapel

Nonconformists were meeting in Ampthill from about the turn of the 18th century. In 1758 a house in Cow Fair End, at the southern end of Dunstable Street, was licensed as a meeting place for dissenters and in 1797, 83 Dunstable Street was licensed as a chapel. In 1822, the Union Chapel (HER6185) was built on the west side of Dunstable Street.

5.5.7 Union Workhouse

In the early 18th century the workhouse was situated in Slut's End to the rear of 6 Woburn Street. This was subsequently replaced in 1795 by a larger building in Cow Fair End, at the southern end of Woburn Street, which was in turn replaced by the House of Industry which was built on Park Hill in 1810. The Poor Law Act of 1834, set up Unions of parishes to administer the Poor Law and in 1835 the new Union Workhouse, or Poor Law Institution (HER5486) was built in Dunstable Street.



5.5.8 The Alameda

The Alameda, a public promenade planted with a double row of lime trees, was laid out to the west of Slut's End in 1821 and completed in 1825. Wrought-iron gates with brick flanking walls marked the entrance. It was modelled on the tree-lined alamedas of Spain and presented to the people of Ampthill by the second Lord Holland (BCC 1996, 7).

5.5.9 Trades

By the mid- to late 16th century a butcher, a draper, a warriner, a tilemaker, a Chandler, and a maltster are all recorded amongst burials in the town but this is clearly a selective list. Ampthill Parish Registers for 1653 - 1657 includes the professions of everyone mentioned (Emmison 1938). In addition to the above, professions include husbandman, labourer, 'tayller', carpenter, 'bricmaker', 'woolwynder', shearman, shoemaker, bricklayer, miller, baker, chapman, gardener, saddler, innholder, turner, 'limner', weaver, poulterer and a 'lattis maker'. An apothecary and a 'coallyer', manufacturer of wood charcoal, are also recorded in the 17th century. Among the occupational names, Fletcher, Sawyer, Coper, Stringer, Wright, Buccher and the ubiquitous Smyth all feature.

By the 18th century the list of trades has grown even longer. Amongst the occupations recorded in the parish register for the first time are a number relating to medicine including : doctor, physician, surgeon, apothecary and 'a poor barber'. Other indications of genteel trades include attorney-at-law, clerk, scrivener, exciseman, and in 1734 the first recorded Schoolmaster. A late bellman, who combined the rolls of nightwatchman and town crier and was employed by the manorial court (Underwood 1976, 75), is also listed. As well as the butcher and baker other retailers include grocer, higler (fishmonger), dairyman, and even a tobacconist '*tobackowness*'. A hawker & peddler and a traveller are also recorded. Another indication of Ampthill's increasing prosperity is the number of references to innkeeper, victualler, alekeeper or ale-draper. As well as the glover, numerous references to shoemaker, cobbler and cordwainer or cord-winder, and draper, there are also a linen-draper, collarmaker and milliner. Ampthill was even able to support two clockmakers. As well as the sawyer other trades associated with construction include joiner, carpenter, glazier, 'plaisterer', plumber and stonemason. A 'poor house painter' is also recorded. The ubiquitous 'smyth' has been replaced by the blacksmith, silversmith and locksmith. A brazier (brass worker) and tin man are also recorded. As well as the saddler there is now also a wheelwright. A pipe maker, upholsterer and wicker man (basket maker) are all recorded for the first time while turner is now referred to more specifically as dish-turner.

Ampthill's traditional trades of miller, tanner, weaver, brickmaker, cooper and maltster are all recorded. In addition, a currier or dyer of leather, a dyer, woadman, ropemaker, staymaker and hempdresser are all listed. The influence of local landowners may be seen in the occupations of bailiff, cook and gardener. Warrener or 'worner' is also recorded. Independent occupations may include soldier, farmer and labourer which probably refers to a smallholder working for himself rather than someone else (Emmison 1938).



By the early to mid-19th century the professions recorded in the Parish Register reflect Ampthill's continued prosperity (Underwood 1962). As well as an attorney at law, a banker, banker's clerk, broker, dealer, and surveyor are recorded. An appraiser and an auctioneer are also listed. Ampthill's increasing importance as a coaching town is reflected not only by the records of innkeepers but also by the references to coachman, groom, ostler and farrier. Horse doctor, an alternative role of the farrier and veterinary surgeon are listed separately. A letter carrier is also listed. The numerous inns would have been well served by the brewer, wine merchant and brandy merchant. A printer and a stationer are also recorded. General tradesmen such as merchant, salesman and shopkeeper are listed as well as more specifically corn factor, corn merchant and ironmonger. Elsewhere within the town as well as a joiner there was also a cabinet maker, as well as a tailor there was also a breeches maker and as well as a baker there was also a gingerbread baker. The town was also able to support a hairdresser. In addition to a blacksmith, a whitesmith and a wheelwright there was also a millwright, mechanic and engineer. The miller was joined by a mealman and thatcher is listed among the trades associated with construction. Of Ampthill's traditional trades only the maltster is listed, there are no weavers or tanners although there is a wool stapler. Other traditional trades include the lace dealer, the netmaker, the straw plait dealer, the straw plaiter and the lapidary and beadmaker. The rural nature of the town's surroundings is reflected in the husbandman and grazier. There is no warrener listed although there is a gamekeeper and also a hollow drainer. As well as a soldier there is also a marine. A tinker, a strolling player and a vagrant are also recorded.

5.5.10 Ampthill Brewery

William Morris, a Quaker blacksmith, owned a rambling property on the north side of Church Street comprising house, smith's shop, brewhouse, barns and outbuildings. The Morris family continued as blacksmiths and ironmongers but William's grandson, John Morris took up brewing (Underwood 1976, 73). The brewery on the east side of Bedford Road was established in the 1770s (BCC 1996); it was demolished in 1937. The site of the brewery (HER7846) is now occupied by a petrol filling station.

5.5.11 George Allen and Company

A manufacturing chemists and druggists establishment was established to the rear of Church Street in the 1820s by Samuel May and his son Charles. The factory incorporated a steam engine and the chimney to the rear of 3-5 Church Street was considered a nuisance. Harvesting of the lavender and other herbs grown locally provided employment for many Ampthill people, including women and children. George Allen acquired the firm in 1850, although he had been running the firm for about 10 years by that time. Following his death in 1893 the Ampthill works were closed in 1902 (Underwood 1976, 133).

5.5.12 Straw Plaiting

Another trade carried out in the 19th century is straw plaiting. Girls and boys were taught to make straw plait at the workhouse. There were also a number of plait schools in the town, where children were expected to plait a set quantity during the morning which was measured off at the end of the session



(Underwood 1976, 124). A building with wooden arcades in the Market Square, currently a jeweller's shop, is said to have served as the old plait market (Dyer 1987).

5.5.13 Lace Making

Lacemakers are listed amongst the late 18th century Methodist congregation, and the first Methodist meeting place in Ampthill was at the home of James Marriott, a lace-buyer (Underwood 1976, 91 and 115). Girls were taught to make pillow lace at the workhouse, potentially a more lucrative occupation than straw plaiting depending on the quality of the lace (Underwood 1976, 108).

5.5.14 Ampthill Park

In the 17th century Lord Elgin was licensed to preserve game during the reign of Charles I. However, the Great Park suffered greatly during the Commonwealth; game was decimated and 287 oak trees were condemned as unsound for Navy purposes. The Great Park was disparked by Charles II and leased to Lord Ashburnham. Ampthill House was built for Lord Ashburnham in 1694 (Page 1912). Little Park was owned by John Cross of Oxford who bequeathed the park and house for the establishment of a hospital for retired college servants. The house and park were let by trustees and the Hospital was built nearby in 1702 (Underwood 1976).

5.5.15 The Warren

In 1649 the warren comprised 250 acres but by 1785 it was more than twice that size although from 1770 onwards, extensive reductions were made to the size of the warren to allow farmlands to be enclosed (Underwood 1976, 77).

5.6 The Industrial Period (AD1850 - AD1914)

Ampthill's population grew slowly between 1831 and 1861 (Godber 1969) but by the end of the 19th century the population almost doubled. The census of 1891 records 548 households comprising 2,294 individuals, compared to 1,234 individuals in 1801 (Underwood 1976, 132). The town continued to expand, in particular southwards along Dunstable Street. Agriculture was the main employer with the brewery, Allen's pharmaceutical works to the rear of Church Street and the Foundry in Oliver Street also providing employment (Underwood 1974, 34). In 1891, Ampthill became an Urban District, separate from the surrounding villages.

5.6.1 Streets

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1881 (BLARS Map sheet 240) shows an increase in the density of buildings to the rear of Bedford Street and Church Street though there are no marked streets associated with this activity (Fig. 8). Similarly, an increase in the density of buildings to the rear of the north side of Woburn Street, to the west of Park Hill, is also accompanied by unmarked tracks. Several new streets are shown in the south of the town. An unmarked street, now known as Baker Street, extends eastwards from Dunstable Street and then southward to form an irregular square with another unmarked street. Buildings are shown on the internal frontage of this square and also to the north-east. Rows of terraced houses are shown on the north side of Sander's Piece which



extends eastwards from close to the south-east corner of the square. Further to the south, Oliver Street is shown extending south-eastwards from the east side of Dunstable Street, to the north of “Amphill Union Workhouse”. Station Road, which leads from west to south west marks the southern limit of development on the west side of Dunstable Street.

By 1900, the 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey shows “Park Street” running parallel to the north side of Woburn Street between Bedford Street and Park Hill. The green lane leading from Slut’s End to Dunstable Street is marked “Austen’s Lane”.

5.6.2 Buildings

There are a number of surviving late 19th century (1840-1900) buildings in the town - see Table 5. The buildings are evenly distributed throughout the town (Fig 5).

HER	Address	Comments
6100	52-64 Bedford Street	1847
6101	46-50 Bedford Street	1849
6231	28-42 Bedford Street	mid-19th century
6227	23 Park Street	late 19th century
6228	25-27 Park Street	late 19th century
1828	Old Police House, 1 Park Hill	
6155	39 Woburn Street	1850
614	School House, The Sands	mid-late 19th century
6168	15-19 Alameda Road	
6109	2 Bedford Street	1852
4387	Court House, Church Street	mid-19th century
6184	Methodist Chapel, Dunstable Street	1884
6219	19 Dunstable Street	mid-19th century
6220	37-59 Dunstable Street	mid-19th century
6214	Ossory Arms, Arthur Street	mid-19th century
6208	Providence Place, 1-9 Oliver Street	mid-19th century “Georgian character”
6222	Rose Vale, 11 Oliver Street	mid-19th century “Georgian character”
6223	13 Oliver Street	mid-19th century “Georgian character”
6224	15-17 Oliver Street	mid-19th century
6225	23-27 Oliver Street	mid-19th century
6226	29 Oliver Street	mid-19th century

Table 5. Late 19th century buildings (post 1840) in Amphill, as listed in HER.

5.6.3 19th Century Suburbs

Prior to 1850 the town was mainly confined to the areas adjacent to the four main streets with little development on the west side of Dunstable Street, north and south of Church Street and east of Bedford Street. The construction of Chandos Road led to increased development to the west of Dunstable Street and south of Woburn Road in the 1880s and there was similar development to the south of Station Road on the west side of Dunstable Street/Flitwick Road and around the Avenue to the east. Small zones of Victorian suburbia survive today in the form of a number of 19th century terraces to the west of Bedford Street, the north of Woburn Street, and at the southern end of Dunstable Street.



5.6.4 The Moot Hall

The Duke of Bedford ordered the demolition of the Moot Hall in 1851. The new Moot Hall (HER6109), a slightly smaller building on the same site, incorporates the clock and clock turret from the original building (BCC 1996, 8).

5.6.5 The Methodist Chapel

The first Methodist meeting place in Ampthill, a house in Church Street, was licensed in 1805, and in 1813 a chapel with an associated burial ground (HER6233) was built on top of the hill in Woburn Street. Foundations for a new larger chapel (HER6184) were laid in 1883 and the chapel was opened in 1884 (Underwood 1996, 115 -116). A Primitive Methodist Chapel was built on the south side of Saunders Piece in 1871, but by the early 20th century the congregation had dwindled and the chapel was closed in 1932.

5.6.6 The Alameda

The Duke of Bedford ordered the demolition of the brick walls flanking the Alameda gates in 1882 (BCC 1996, 7).

5.6.7 The Strict Baptist Chapel

A Calvinist chapel, the Strict Baptist Chapel (HER7845), was built on the north side of Oliver Street in 1904 (Underwood 1976, 117).

5.6.8 Trades

In the late 19th century there were three doctors, two solicitors, an architect and surveyor, a surveyor of roads, a bank manager, a veterinary surgeon, Superintendent of police, Inland Revenue Officer, Relieving Officer and Registrar in Ampthill. In addition to the professions, there are 48 trades listed in the 1892 Trades Directory including eight innkeepers, eight beer sellers, six butchers, six grocers, two bakers, two confectioners, a greengrocer, a fishmonger, a chemist, a draper, two ironmongers, a bookseller and stationer, and a tobacconist. There were also eight bootmakers, three tailors, three dressmakers, three watchmakers and two hairdressers. There were two blacksmiths, two agricultural implement makers, two cabinet makers, a coachbuilder, an upholsterer, a wheelwright, and a saddler, as well as two coal merchants, a cattle dealer, and a china and glass dealer. There were four market gardeners, four farmers, four builders, two plumbers, a carpenter, a joiner, and a stonemason. There was also a miller, a Town Crier, a photographer, a brewer, a printer, a leather seller, an auctioneer, three carriers, a "Manchester Warehouseman" and other unspecified trades (Underwood 1974, 35).

The above list accounts for only a fraction of the population however. Agriculture would have employed many people and the brewery would have continued to be a major employer. In addition there were other smaller concerns. Burgess's Mineral Water works was established in Church Street in the 1850s and then relocated to Oliver Street soon after. Although it did not close until a century later, it is not marked on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey. There was also a small candle factory attached to Rushbrooke's drapers on Market Square, Charles Stapleton's boot factory in Woburn Street, and Dillingham Bros. wheelwrights in Arthur Street.



5.6.9 The Foundry

The Sand Road Iron Works (HER6827) was established on the north side of Oliver Street c. 1870 (Underwood 1976, 133).

5.6.10 Gas Works

The Amphill Gas Company was established on the north side of Maulden Road to the east of the Church in 1849. The gas works (HER6797) was closed in 1934 (BCC 1996, 8).

5.6.11 The Railway

The Midland Railway line between Bedford and London was built in the 1860s and the Railway Station (HER 6826) to the west of the town was opened in September 1867. An earlier scheme to run the railway by the east of the church was abandoned. The distance between the town centre and the railway was considered a disadvantage and the state of the station buildings was often a cause for concern. The station was closed in 1959.

5.6.12 The Warren

In 1649 the warren comprised 250 acres but by 1785 it was more than twice that size, although from 1770 onwards extensive reductions were made to the size of the warren (Underwood 1976, 77). Parliamentary Enclosure in 1808 effectively swept away the restrictions of the Warren allowing the town to expand in the 19th century (BCC 1996, 8).



6. ASSESSMENT OF AMPHILL'S CHARACTER, IMPORTANCE AND POTENTIAL

6.1 *Character of the Present Town*

Amphill is a small market town that retains some of its medieval layout and buildings as well as much of its former Georgian charm. It has “a diverse character which changes subtly from one area to another” (BCC 1996, 9). The close association of the town with its park is a major feature. The development of the historic town of Amphill was inextricably linked with that of the Manor of Amphill, the market charter providing the earliest impetus for the growth of the town. Later, the royal connections with the town, in particular Henry VIII's love of hunting there, added to Amphill's fortune. The coaching age saw the town flourish, but with the coming of the railways it was Flitwick to the south which prospered as an industrial town in the late 19th and 20th centuries. This reversal of fortunes may have served to protect much of the historic character of Amphill.

The original settlement was probably situated around the parish church to the east of the present town. In the early medieval period this Saxon core gradually shifted to the area of the present market place. At this time Church Street was the main axis of the town. It had the church continuing in use at its eastern end and the market place at the western end. During the medieval period the settlement expanded northwards along Bedford Street and southwards along Dunstable Street. This became the second axis of town development. Now at the centre of the town, the market place had a market cross, a market house, a Moot Hall and a butcher's shambles. It was the focus of town life into the post-medieval period.

The town shown in the Russell estate map of 1743 (Fig 6) reflects the basic shape of medieval Amphill, with some scattered outer settlement fore-shadowing areas of future development. These areas were being filled in by the time of the Enclosure Award map of 1808 (Fig 7). Now development extended southwards along Dunstable Street onto former Amphill Warren land, with small roads leading off on either side. The 1st edition OS map of 1881 (Fig 8) shows the huge expansion of the town in the second half of the 19th century, with the growth of a suburban pattern of terraced housing and much rebuilding within the old town. The subsequent trebling in size of Amphill in the 20th century is depicted in Fig 10. Particularly large amounts of development have taken place on the south-eastern side. The town is now completely surrounded by modern estates on all sides apart from the north and north-west.

There has been little modern development within the historic core of the town. Expansion southwards took place between WWI and WWII but the major expansion eastwards occurred in the period following WWII. The three parks - Houghton Park to the north, Great Park to the north-west and Little Park to the west - prevented expansion in those directions (Fig 3). However, as Fig 10 shows, Amphill has more than doubled in size in the period from 1945, with the



building of modern housing estates continuing to extend the boundaries of the town.

Amphill town centre was designated as Bedfordshire's first Conservation Area in 1970. The Conservation Area was enlarged in 1972 to include Amphill Park (Fig 9) and contains the largest concentration of listed buildings in the county (BCC 1996, 9).

6.2 **Archaeological Potential**

There has been little modern development within the historic core of the town, which accounts for the preservation of a relatively large number of standing buildings, as well as the small number of archaeological excavations that have taken place. The area of the former brewery to the east of Bedford Street, which is now occupied by a petrol filling station, may have a reduced potential for archaeological survival. Similarly, the small modern shopping precinct to the rear of Church Street and Bedford Street may have partially destroyed archaeological levels. A summary investigation and discrete enquiries suggest that few of the buildings on the street frontages have cellars (Fig 11). There is therefore great potential for archaeological deposits to be preserved beneath existing buildings.

There is insufficient data to construct stratigraphic profiles or other models of archaeological deposits.

The potential of towns for dramatically increasing knowledge of past society and economy has been emphasised in the research frameworks recently set for the East Anglian region (Glazebrook 1997, 59-64). It was concluded that the "...urban potential of deposits, buildings, artefacts, ecofacts and palaeo-ecological diversity ensures that towns remain priority areas for research" (*ibid*). Small market towns represent an important category of towns for which major research questions can be formulated.

Some of these questions may refer to the relationship between the town and its rural hinterland (this has not, however, been the focus of this report, which has concentrated on the town itself). Amphill clearly also has the potential to contribute to debate about urban origins, though it is not clear to what degree the settlement can be considered as urban prior to the granting of the market in the early 13th century. Locating and identifying the nature of the Saxon settlement must therefore be a research priority for the town.

As one of the most important of the medieval market towns of the Mid Bedfordshire region, Amphill has the potential to provide considerable archaeological information about the nature and development of town life in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Areas of particular interest are: -

1. the character of settlement, as evidenced by property boundaries, burgage plots, and archaeological remains of houses and civic buildings in the form of postholes, beamslots, wall foundations, etc.



2. the nature of commercial and industrial activity which sustained the economy of the town. Archaeological evidence in the form of pits would be expected to be found to the rear of properties and these are likely to contain both occupation material and evidence for crafts. The small scale watching brief (WB407) associated with landscaping in front of Katherine House on the west side of Dunstable Street, demonstrates the range of material which may be preserved close to the medieval street frontages. Specific locations such as the Oxflood may have exceptional conditions for preservation of archaeological evidence of both kinds.

The standing buildings also form a major part of the archaeological heritage of Ampthill. The Conservation Area here contains the largest number of listed buildings in the county (BCC 1996, 9). In addition to the medieval church and the Feoffee almshouses at the east end of Church Street, there are several buildings which retain medieval elements. Many of these were previously considered to date from the 17th century or later, suggesting that closer investigation may reveal further elements of medieval Ampthill. The fashion for re-facing earlier houses in the Georgian style in the 18th century could also hide a number of previously unknown earlier buildings. Further building survey work would be needed to clarify the true extent of survival.

Changes to the market place and the considerable amount of re-building that took place in the 18th century now give the centre of town a distinctly Georgian atmosphere. The creation of a suburbia during the major expansion of the 19th and 20th centuries all contribute to the rich and varied townscape that is Ampthill today.

6.3 **Archaeological Components**

The archaeological components identified in the course of this study are shown on Fig 12.

- **Component 1. Church**

The earliest surviving building in the town is St Andrew's Church, parts of which date to the medieval period. It is known that an earlier church existed in Norman times. A significant possibility is that the church was originally a Saxon foundation, and that this served as the focal point around which the first settlement developed. Potential exists for locating earlier church structures, perhaps within the footprint of the present church. There is also potential for locating early burials either within or close to the medieval burial ground.

- **Component 2. Probable Saxon Settlement Core**

The first Saxon settlement of Ampthill is likely to be located in the vicinity of St Andrew's Church at the eastern end of Church Street. There is strong indirect evidence, but as yet no hard evidence, for the existence of this community. The area around the church is an area of high potential, although there is some potential for finding evidence of Saxon activity throughout the historic core of the town.

- **Component 3. Medieval Town**



The medieval town appears to have developed around the market place (Component 5 below) which was established at the west end of Church Street. Bedford Street to the north and Dunstable Street to the south are likely to have become established later. Woburn Street, formerly known as *Myllstrete* was not originally a major street in the town. The boundaries of the component have been drawn on Fig 12 in such a way as to include gardens and closes to the rear of properties, as well as buildings that tended to front onto the streets. All areas of the medieval town have considerable potential for producing evidence of settlement and industrial activity, as outlined in the summary below.

- **Component 4. *Town Pond***

The Oxflode was situated to the rear of Church Street at its western end and may be preserved beneath the Oxlet carpark. Clearly, any deposits associated with the Oxflode have high potential for preserving environmental evidence (BCC 1996, 11).

- **Component 5. *Medieval and Post-medieval Market Place***

The medieval and post-medieval market place is technically part of Component 3 but worth considering as a major component in its own right. The area of the market square is inclusive of the former Moot Hall, market house, market cross, shambles, etc, as well as the shops and inns established around the square. At least since the granting of a market and fair in the 13th century, this has been the major public space round which the town has developed. It seems to have developed organically and there is no evidence that it was laid out as a planned feature (although this cannot be discounted). Of all the areas of the medieval town, this probably has the highest archaeological potential. Excavations of the market square in Bedford (see the EUS Bedford report) have demonstrated that significant archaeological deposits can be surprisingly well preserved in such central parts of town.



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