

[Bishops Stortford]

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# BISHOP'S STORTFORD

## INTRODUCTION

### **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 Bishop's Stortford town. The report is divided into three parts:

1. A summary of what is known of the archaeological and historical development of the town using the evidence from archaeology, buildings, old maps and documents, and surviving physical elements of the historic townscape 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 town, including academic research priorities.
3. A strategy which aims to take forward the research and management priorities.

### **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 SMR numbers are shown in square brackets.
- 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In addition, numerous articles, both published and unpublished have been used and a bibliography of these is included at the end of the report.

## **Bishop's Stortford**

The town of Bishop's Stortford lies at the eastern edge of Hertfordshire on its border with Essex. The navigable river Stort travels through the town from north to south and the main route from Cambridge to London passes through the parish. This route is crossed by an east-west road, which partly coincides with the Roman Stane Street and connects Bishop's Stortford to the Roman settlements of Braughing on the west and Great Dunmow on the east (Page 1912, 292).

### **Prehistoric Settlement in the Vicinity (fig. 1)**

There is comparatively little evidence of prehistoric activity in the environs of Bishop's Stortford. A single Palaeolithic handaxe (over 40 000 years old) and one other flint axe were found on or near the Stort river bank in the late 19th century [1091 & 2847]. Two possible Mesolithic sites (c.8 000-4 500 BC) were discovered in the 1960's, to the north and north-east, at The Meads [2849] and Silver Leys [2834] respectively: the finds were unstratified, however. One Neolithic site (c.4 500-2 400 BC), of a hearth and associated flints, was found in Lime Crescent [572] and one Late Bronze Age site (c.1000-800 BC) comprising rubbish pits and a boundary ditch, was found at Thornbera Road [1090]. Apart from at Silver Leys the only other evidence of occupation from the Iron Age falls towards the edges of the modern town. To the south, towards Thorley, some Early Iron Age (c.800-500 BC) pot sherds were found in a disused gravel pit in 1912 [2785]; and during the construction in 1992 of the Woodside Industrial site to the east, extensive evidence was found for occupation from the Early Iron Age to the Romano-British period (c. 800 BC-5th century AD) comprising storage pits, ditches and a possible Middle Iron Age (c.500-100 BC) round house drainage gully [9816].

### **The Roman Settlement (fig. 2)**

Bishop's Stortford has abundant evidence for a Roman settlement to the north of the town centre, focused along the route of the Roman road 'Stane Street' near the point where it crosses the Stort. The main centre appears to be in the area of the Cannons Close housing estate, to the north of Stane Street. When the estate was constructed in the 1950's, observations were made by T W Ellcock and salvage excavations undertaken by H E Wall and Bishop's Stortford College, which resulted in the discovery of buildings, rubbish pits, burials and large quantities of pottery and finds from the first to the fourth century AD [513]. Wall also excavated to the west of the railway in this area during the 1950's and discovered further occupational evidence [1435]. A possible tile kiln site [2234] lies to the northern extremity of the known settlement, within a brick field which was still being exploited in the 19th century. Several burials were also observed during the construction works including a stone coffin burial [514] and a group of cremations [512] which suggest that a cemetery probably exists on the eastern side of the settlement. Further settlement evidence, comprising pits and post holes of the first and third centuries, was found to the west of the railway at Grange Paddocks in 1979 [6505]. Sections of Stane Street were excavated ahead of development in 1976 [6520] and 1997 [9868] which revealed a probable early date c.50 AD for the first phase of the road and a second constructional phase during the second century when the settlement probably developed. The discoveries included; pottery from the second to the fourth century; fourth century

iron-smithing hearths; hard packed flint surfaces, which may have been the foundations for timber buildings; post-holes and possible boundary ditches running perpendicular to the road.

Most of the excavated material in support of the settlement has come from the north of Stane Street but recent excavations have uncovered gulleys, pits and post holes to the south of the road [9868]. The above evidence suggests that the Roman occupation at Bishop's Stortford was a small roadside urban settlement in the form of a ribbon development along both sides of Stane Street between Cannon Close and Grange Paddocks. Finds of pottery [2136] near Stanstead Road just south of Stane Street have also been made and a stone coffin burial was discovered near Dunmow Road, a kilometre to the south-east [1093]. Other sites have also been discovered near the town. In 1994 a large rubbish pit was uncovered at Bishop's Park, 2.5 km to the south-west of the Cannon's Close settlement, which contained 1st and 4th century coins, a variety of pottery wares and tile, bones, oyster shells and burnt wood [10094]. As stated earlier the Woodside Industrial Park, approximately 2 km to the east of the settlement and close to the area of Stane Street, also yielded Romano-British material including a Claudian cremation burial which contained pig bones, four bronze brooches and eight pottery vessels [9816].

The main concentration of the known settlement area and cemetery are shown in figure 2, but it is highly possible that these may be more extensive.

### **The Saxon & Medieval Settlement (figs. 3, 3a & 4)**

#### *The Domesday Manor*

Before the Conquest, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, the manor of Stortford was held by Eddeva the Fair. Following the Conquest William I sold the manor to William, Bishop of London, who bought several estates from the new King (Page 1912, 296). Domesday Book assesses Stortford as six hides, with land for ten ploughs and woodland for three hundred pigs. It also had two mills and a resident priest with two knights (ibid.).

The fact that Stortford had a resident priest may suggest the presence of a Saxon church, and an accompanying settlement; and it has been suggested that Saxon Stortford was centred on North Street with tofts running east and west to Water Lane and Basbow Lane (Sparrow, ix). No archaeological evidence for a Saxon settlement exists, however, the only finds have been two iron spearheads that may have been Saxon, which were found at Finchinbrook [2846]. Evidence of Saxon settlement must therefore be a research priority should any development occur within the historic town core.

Any Saxon settlement probably does lie in the area described above and focused on St Michael's church and the market place rather than the castle which is likely to have been built at a later date (see below). The site (significantly removed from the Roman settlement) may have been a significant cross-roads of north-south and east-west routes lying about 1 km south of where Stane Street must have crossed the Stort. North Street, South Street, Cornmarket Street (probably the present High Street), Fyl Street and Water Lane are all mentioned in the 13th century (Page 1912, 292) (fig. 3a).

Such good communications probably brought a high level of commerce to Bishop's Stortford during the medieval period and the Bishops appear to have had a prescriptive market there since that time (ibid.). The town was a borough by 1340 with members of Parliament and there are records of burgage rents from the 14th century (ibid., 293).

Pottery collected in the 1950's from the same brick field that yielded evidence for the possible Roman kiln site mentioned earlier, also included a group of medieval sherds. These were probably of the 14th century and included 'wasters' suggesting that they also came from a kiln site [2234].

#### *The Medieval Market (fig. 3a)*

The present market place is in the centre of the town where the two main roads intersect. It would have been much bigger than this, however, in medieval times, probably comprising the area encompassed by Church Street, Potter Street and High Street and has shrunk as a result of building encroachment. Markets may well have also taken place along North Street and at Windhill, where the road is wide.

Running off the market square were a number of rows which probably consisted of permanent stalls. Church records give an important insight into the medieval economy of the town in their mention of Fish Row, Spicery Row, the Mercery (textiles), the Buchery, Shop Row, Barley Hill and Wheat Hill (ibid.). Fish Row apparently branched off to the west of the Corn Exchange and to the south was Potters Hill where a cross called Potters Cross stood which may have been the market cross (ibid.). This area later became known as Poultry Hill and subsequently the Leather Market (ibid.). Medieval court rolls contain frequent references to the surnames of Skinner and Tanner and there are records of tanning being practised in Water Lane in the 15th century, so it would appear that leather making was emerging as an important trade (ibid.). Tanning required a ready supply of water and at this time the river ran parallel to Water Lane, about 50 metres to the east (fig. 3a & 5).

#### *Fairs*

Fairs were held three times a year, on the feasts of St Michael, Ascension and Corpus Christi and Session Rolls record that part of the fairs were held inside the churchyard until the end of the 16th century (Page 1912, 293).

#### *Medieval Town Crosses*

Four crosses, thought to have been destroyed either at the Reformation or during the Commonwealth, are said to have stood on the four roads leading from Bishop's Stortford (Chauncy, 335). They were; Collin's Cross, Crab's Cross, Wayte Cross and Maple Cross, and their supposed approximate locations are shown in fig. 4 (Glasscock 1905).

#### *Waytemore Castle [SMR 28] (fig. 3a)*

The castle is first mentioned in a charter c.1086 when it is confirmed to the Bishopric of London by William I, when it was probably only an earthwork and timber structure

(*ibid.*). It was apparently dismantled by King John in 1211 or 1213 following a dispute with the Bishopric but was rebuilt later that century (Page, 298). When the castle moat was cleared in the 19th century a few Roman coins and a brass weight, also supposed to be Roman, were found and deposited in the museum at Saffron Walden (Cussans, 110). In October 1850 the top of the motte was excavated and the foundations of various chambers were found. The well at the west end of the castle was cleared but “nothing of interest” was noted (*ibid.*). The foundations and the well were then recovered. In 1881 the motte was covered with trees and riddled with rabbit burrows (*ibid.*). The castle and its grounds were acquired by Bishop's Stortford Urban District Council in 1907 for use as a public garden (Page, 299).

Today the motte is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (number 20628) and appears unusually sub-rectangular in plan. It is the largest in Hertfordshire, measuring 83m by 65m with a height of around 12m. There is the remains of an 11th century masonry shell keep at the top, which incorporates Roman and medieval tiles. The south bailey has been extensively remodelled as a public park.

#### *The Castle Prison* (fig. 3a)

A prison was in existence at the castle by the early 13th century as there is a record of a prisoner detained for murder in the king's prison at Stortford in 1234 (Page, 299). In September 1344 there were fifty people in the prison. Although it was used for all manner of criminal, it seems that the majority of those held were convicted clerks (*ibid.*). The prison was not within the castle keep but stood with some other buildings outside the moat on the site of Castle Cottage (*ibid.*).

The castle was in ruins by 1549 but the prison survived and was apparently used throughout the 16th century to hold religious dissenters and was known as ‘The Convict's Prison’ (Cussans, 110). The prison was apparently sold in 1649; demolished, along with a bridge leading to it, and ‘The Cherry Tree Inn’ constructed from the materials (*ibid.*). In 1850 an area in front of the inn was dug up and the foundations of the prison uncovered. Walls ranging from three to five feet in thickness were seen to extend under the inn but no finds other than a skull and some bones were reported (*ibid.*).

The inn apparently stood near the gatehouse of the castle and was later incorporated into ‘Castle Cottage’ (Page, 299). The cottage was demolished in 1938 and excavations discovered three human skeletons in a row and three skulls (SMR 4227). A medieval date was suggested for these at the time but the burials may relate to later use of the prison. Other skeletons have been found in various parts of the field surrounding the motte, the most recent discovery was in January 1999 when gardeners uncovered parts of six skeletons beneath a rose bed, close to the discoveries of 1938 (SMR 9812).

An osteological appraisal of the 1999 skeletons revealed the remains of at least one juvenile, aged between two and four years, and serious ‘edged weapon’ trauma to an adult male skull, which had begun to heal (Asplin, 12-13). This, along with evidence that another individual was suffering from rickets, has led the author to suggest that the burials may be from a hospital rather than a prison (*ibid.*), although no documentary or archaeological evidence for a hospital is known.



### *Medieval Deer Park (SMR 6502)*

About one kilometre to the west of Bishop's Stortford is Stortford Park Farm which lies in the area of the Bishops deer park (Page, 300) (fig. 4). The park formed part of the estate of the Bishops of London from at least 1282 (SMR 6502).

### *St Michael's Church, High Street (SMR 972)*

The church is built on a hill close to the centre of town (fig. 3a) and dates from the early 15th century (Page, 303), although it probably stands on much earlier foundations. It is constructed of flint with stone dressings and has a nave of six bays. The walls are embattled and there is a four stage tower at the west end of the nave. In 1812 the spire and upper stage of the tower were taken down and the present belfry stage and spire built. The chancel was lengthened eastwards by five feet, six inches towards the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century and the church was subject to various restorations throughout the 19th century including the addition of; a north chancel aisle and south vestry; a chancel clerestory and an organ chamber (Page, 303). 15th century roofs survive in both the nave and chancel along with the original oak doors, a 15th century rood screen and chancel stalls (ibid.). During restoration works in 1869 a Norman font bowl of Purbeck marble was discovered under the floor and installed in the church. Beneath the floor the workmen also discovered a fragment of a stone cross; some badly corroded 17th century armour and a quantity of silver coins. The coins were apparently melted down by the workmen (Cussans, 118). An 'ancient altar stone' was found beneath the chancel floor and reinstated to support the present altar table (ibid.).

### *The Chantry (now 2, 10, 12 & 1 Half Acres, Hadham Road)*

There were three medieval guild chapels in St Michael's church: the guilds of St John the Baptist, St Mary and St Michael (Page, 305). The guild of St John the Baptist was apparently connected to 'The Chantry' and a house called The Chantry, in Hadham road at the end of North Street (fig. 5), may stand on the site of this guild's original priest's house (ibid.).

The present structure forms an L-shaped complex of buildings which appear to be an almost complete rebuild of the medieval residence. Number 1 Half Acres forms the north wing and is the best preserved of the earlier parts, featuring a painted pargetted exterior and exposed heavy beams on the interior. The former Chantry bell is attached to the exterior west wall. The remaining buildings are 18th-19th century remodelling of 16th and 17th century timber-framed structures with 19th century additions. The complex is grade II listed (DoE list).

Other medieval buildings mentioned in documents are; a 15th century schoolhouse which apparently stood near the churchyard and, along with a gatehouse, paid a rent to the church (Page, 293); and Hockerhill Bridge, which is referred to in the 14th century (ibid., 296).

### **The 16th & 17th Century Town (fig. 5)**

The church received rent for 70 tenements in the town in 1530, the majority of which were *messuages* which probably contained a dwelling (Doree, ix). Royal commissioners who visited the place in 1546 described it as a market town on a main thoroughfare with 500 people who took the Holy Communion (ibid.).

16th century Bishop's Stortford had many inns, mercers and shoemakers which suggest that it was a thriving centre of trade and commerce at this time (BSDLHS, 26). ). By the beginning of the 17th century 13 tanners were recorded in Water Lane (ibid., 33) and some indication of the commercial standing of Bishop's Stortford during the mid to late 17th century is provided by the survival of thirteen different tradesmen's tokens for the town, which are dated from 1666-9 (Page, 292-3). Such tokens first appeared following a general loss of confidence in coinage in 1644 and continued to be used during the Commonwealth (1649-60). They were issued and accepted by the proprietor of a business within a locality (Cussans, 112-3).

Malting was becoming an important source of employment in the area. There is a record of 1636 where the justices of the peace for Hertford state that the maltsters of Bishop's Stortford were mainly employed in making malt for the neighbouring gentry, who sent them their own barley for the purpose (Page, 295). In 1646-7 the people of Ware Upland complained about the appalling condition of the roadways caused by heavy malt waggons churning the surface (Munby). As a result a law was passed which banned heavy carting during the winter, forcing the maltsters to revert to pack horses which must have thwarted the growth of the industry (BSDLHS, 33).

The inns benefited from gentlemen travellers who used Bishop's Stortford as a half way stop-over on the London to Cambridge route (ibid., 35). Some of them suffered, however, after a bridge was built over the Stort at Southmill c.1670 by King Charles II's surveyor, in order to avoid the regularly flooded roads of the town. This sent the main north-south route through Hockerill and resulted in new inns being built at the cross-roads. The Crown, Red Lion, Coach & Horses and The Cock all sprang up to cater for the passing trade which also led to these places becoming the first posting and coaching inns (ibid.).

### **Inns (fig. 5)**

#### *The George Hotel, 2 High Street*

The leading inn of Bishop's Stortford and an ancient establishment in the town supposedly dating back to c.1400, there is a record of its sale in 1417 (Jolliffe & Jones, 26). The George was visited by Charles I in 1629/30, has been a coaching inn and has housed the Excise office (ibid.). The oldest part of the present building is the mid 16th century east range, which faces North Street and possibly part of the west wing. During the 17th century the west wing was lengthened and heightened to three storeys with new, transverse gabled roofs; and a kitchen with a large chimney was added to the north-west end of the east range. The exterior of the building was extensively remodelled in the 19th century (Smith 1993, 34-5). It is a Listed Building, Grade II.

#### *The Boar's Head, 30 High Street*

A 15th-16th century inn which may have been the church house and was certainly owned by the church throughout the 17th century. A large beam above the fireplace is supposed to be the rood beam which was removed from St Michael's church during the Reformation and there is a record of a piece of rood timber being sold in 1564 (Jolliffe & Jones, 25). The inn was remodelled during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The oldest part of the building is the west bay which features heavy exposed timber work and the east elevation has a 17th century brick chimney-stack with three diagonal shafts (DoE list). It is a Listed Building, Grade II\*.

*The Half Moon, 31 North Street*

This inn originally occupied the building next door since the mid 17th century and was transferred to this one c.1752 (Jolliffe & Jones, 27). This 17th century timber-framed building was remodelled in the late 19th century and now features pebbledash walls (Page, 293). It is a Listed Building, Grade II.

*The Star, 7 Bridge Street*

An early 17th century inn with oak panelling and contemporary outbuildings (Jolliffe & Jones, 27). The building may date from the late 16th century as it has a brick fireplace of that date. It was remodelled in the early 19th century when a painted brick front was added (Doe List). It is a Listed Building, Grade II.

*The Black Lion, 10 Bridge Street*

A 16th century building mentioned as one of the manorial properties used by Bishop Bonner, it had extensive stabling and outbuildings but may not have become an inn until the 19th century (Jolliffe & Jones, 23). The building is of a high quality, exhibiting moulded beams and carved woodwork. The west range may be as early as c.1500, the corner block early-mid 16th century and the south range possibly mid-late 16th century (Smith 1993, 32-3). It is a Listed Building, Grade II\*.

*The Cock, 2 Stansted Road*

A Cock Inn is mentioned in manorial records of 1555 but may have been a reference to an inn of that name which stood in market square. This building is thought to have been an inn by 1620 and has also been known as the Black Lion and the Vernon's Head. It may once have been used as a court house and there is a possible priest's hole on an upstairs landing (Jolliffe & Jones, 25). The building is of the late 16th century and is a plastered timber-frame with much exposed timber work on the interior. It has a 19th century iron sign and is a Listed Building, Grade II.(DoE list).

*The former Red Lion, 43 Hockerill Street*

A 17th century timber-framed building which was formerly an inn. It has heavy moulded oak beams on both floors but the exterior was extensively remodelled in the late 19th/early 20th centuries when the road was widened and the ground floor now houses a modern shop frontage (DoE list). It is a Listed Building, Grade II.

*The Grapes, South Street*

Now demolished, it was originally a timber-framed and plastered building which probably dated from the 16th century (Page, 293). The Grapes was first licensed c.1850 and became infamous for one of its landlords; George Chapman alias Severin Klosowski. Chapman was executed in 1903 for the murder of three wives. It was also claimed that he may have been Jack the Ripper (Johnson 1962, 42).

**Early Surviving Buildings (fig. 5)**

*Tissimans, 8 High Street (formerly The Old House)*

A timber-framed house of c.1400 with a red tiled roof. It was originally a 'Half-Wealden' type with an open hall to the north, a central cross passage and a two storey bay to the south. It was re-fronted in the 16th century and now has a modern ground floor shop frontage. The interior has exposed timber work and the east wall of the first floor rear room has a painted Jacobean frieze. It is a Listed Building, Grade II\*(DoE list).

*Tissimans, 10 High Street*

A jettied timber-framed building of c.1600 or earlier with steeply pitched red tiled roofs. It has first floor oriel windows and a pargetted wall in its west bay dated 1545. The interior has four-centre arched brick fireplaces on the first floor. It is a Listed Building, Grade II\*(DoE list).

*10 North Street*

Built c.1500 with a jettied first floor and a crown-post roof. It was heightened by the addition of a gabled second floor in the 17th century (Smith 1993, 35).

*21 North Street*

Probably a late medieval (15th century) timber-framed and rendered building, formerly jettied to the east. The rear wing is probably 17th century and the building was re-fronted with a parapet and pediment in the 18th century when the second floor was added. The ground floor shop windows and first floor bays were added in the mid 19th century (Smith 1993, 35). It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*23 North Street*

An 18th century remodelling of a 16th century timber-framed house. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*Windhill House, Windhill*

Immediately west of St Michael's Church lies this complex of buildings dating from the early 17th century. The east building, formerly known as Windhill House, has an early 17th century timber-frame with a late 17th century frontage and 18th century windows. The interior has a Jacobean oak staircase. The other buildings date from the 18th and early 20th centuries (DoE list). Windhill House became a monastery at the beginning of the 20th century until 1994 (see *St Joseph's Monastery and St Joseph's Church* below). It is now used as commercial premises.

*3 & 5 Windhill*

A 16th century timber-framed structure with extensive 18th and 19th century additions. The oldest section of the house is on the west side. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*11 Windhill (The Links)*

An early 18th century painted brick front to a timber-framed house of the 16th and 17th centuries. It has exposed timber work on the interior and is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*30 Windhill*

An early 19th century yellow stock brick re-facing of a 16th/17th century timber-framed house with exposed timber work on the interior. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*Guild House, 6 Water Lane*

A stuccoed mid 18th century re-faced timber-framed building, probably of the 16th century. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*14 Water Lane*

A c.1840 yellow stock brick re-facing of 16th/17th century buildings with exposed timber work on the interior. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*The Manse, Water Lane*

This was apparently a fine house with a large garden which stood on the eastern side of Water Lane, opposite the Congregational Chapel. The building was superficially of Georgian appearance but contained the fabric of an older structure. It was demolished in 1966 to make way for a car park (EHASN 19, 1).

*2 & 4 Bridge Street*

A probable late medieval timber-framed house, featuring a dragon-beam and medieval fireplace, which has 17th century alterations (Smith 1993, 33). It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*6 Bridge Street*

A small late medieval building with a jettied upper storey and a crown-post roof (Smith 1993, 33). It has a 17th century rear wing and chimney-stack and is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*11 Bridge Street*

A probable 16th century building with a 17th century moulded plaster ceiling featuring the Tudor Rose. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*23a Hockerill Street*

A 16th century timber-framed building with modern plaster and rough cast walls. The interior has exposed timber work and a triple crown-post roof. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

**The Grammar School (figs. 5 & 7)**

Founded c.1579, the grammar school, according to Page, stood on the corner of High Street and Church Lane (*sic*, Church Street?) and had an adjoining library (Page, 293). After a period of decline the school was re-founded by Dr Thomas Tooke who acquired the 'Wheat Hill' market-house in 1699 and built a schoolhouse on arches over it, with the west front overlooking the churchyard (*ibid.*). Cussans states that the re-founded school was erected in Windhill and by 1768 the buildings were so dilapidated that they were pulled down (Cussans, 113-4).

The school was revived in 1850 and according to Cussans a new schoolhouse, paid for by subscription, was erected on the old site and had thirteen pupils on its opening (Cussans, 114). The school was enlarged in 1853 and 1860 and became a boarding

school. By 1881 there were 87 pupils (ibid.). Cussans does not mention the relocation of the school to Hadham Road but this was clearly done by the 1870's as it is marked on the OS 1st edition map. The school closed in 1930 (Ewbank) and has since been demolished. Springfield Court now occupies the site.

#### *Almshouses*

Five almshouses were founded in New Town by deed in 1572 (Page, 305). These may have been the ones marked on the 1898 OS map south of Newtown Road, behind the Baptist church (fig. 6). The site is now cleared and is likely to be developed.

Later almshouses were built on the west side of South Street in the early 20th century and these still exist.

### **The 18th Century Town (fig. 7)**

The 18th century brought massive growth and transformation in the economy of Bishop's Stortford. Although it was still described as a considerable market town in 1770 (Munby), its horse and cattle fairs had enabled an enormous expansion in leather-working by the 1750's through the tanners of Water Lane (ibid.). The second half of the century saw the transformation of the malting industry, fuelled initially by the establishment of The Essex and Herts Turnpike Trust and later by the construction of the Stort Navigation.

#### *Leather-working*

The leather-workers, primarily glovers and shoemakers, were by far the most important group of artisans in mid 18th century Stortford (Munby). They made up almost a quarter of the workforce, numbering 75 compared to 25 cloth-workers, and outstripped those working in milling and malting (ibid.). By the 1790's however, their number had almost halved and those working in malting had risen by 50% (ibid.).

#### *The Turnpikes*

Before the 18th century people, produce and raw materials travelled over a meagre road network that was little more than a system of badly rutted muddy tracks. The 18th century saw the introduction of the Turnpike on many of the major highways. Tollgates, or 'turnpikes', were erected in order to levy tolls on all road users, with the exception of pedestrians, and were administered by Trusts, the tolls going towards the upkeep of the road. The turnpike roads were a great step forward because they had properly constructed surfaces that were kept in good order, and thus enabled people and cargoes to be transported more speedily.

The Essex and Herts Turnpike Trust (aka The Hockerill Trust) was appointed by Act of Parliament in 1744 to manage the Highway from Harlow Bush Common to Stump Cross and originally had tollgates near the Greyhound at Spellbrook and by the Chequers at Ugley but these were later moved nearer to Bishop's Stortford (BSDLHS, 43).

#### *The Stort Navigation*

It was largely the mastermind of George Jackson to make the Stort river navigable to trade vessels (Page, 295). The work began after an Act of Parliament in 1765 and

was completed in 1769, when the first barge arrived at the Bishop's Stortford wharves (ibid.). Stretches of the navigation were canalised utilising fifteen locks, beginning at Feilde's Weir near Hoddeston where the Stort joins the Lea, and terminating at a canal basin in Bishop's Stortford (Thomas, 84). The navigation was to have a tremendous impact on the malting business (see below) with malt becoming the major downstream load. It also stimulated the development of other businesses which required the transport of bulk commodities. Merchants in coal and timber are first recorded after its opening (Munby) and new building materials such as stone and slate, which could transform the look of the town, could be imported easily.

#### *Growth of the Malting Industry (fig. 6)*

The vastly improved communications which the turnpike and the navigation provided enabled Bishop's Stortford to attract the malt from north-west Essex that had previously gone to Ware (Munby), and ship its malt directly to London instead of transporting it by road to the canals at Ware and Stansted (Universal British Directory, 302). By the end of the century malting had developed from a rural cottage industry into the principal industry of the town. Before 1800 Stortford was selling more malt to London than anyone else and was only rivalled by Ware in its productivity (BSDLHS, 40). The industry dominates the description of the late 18th century town in the Universal British Directory of 1791-8:

"No particular manufactory is carried on here; the staple commodity is malt, of which large quantities are made: this place is a general reservoir for the major part of that article made within 25 or 30 miles, particularly from Saffron Walden in Essex, Newport, and villages adjacent; it is deposited in the care of persons called meters, and disposed of by them to factors or brewers in London for a small commission of 1½d per quarter: it is then put on board barges and sent to the metropolis" (UBD, 302).

#### **Brewing (fig. 7)**

##### *Hawkes & Co. Brewery, Northgate End*

The town brewery stood on a large site at the corner of North Street and Northgate End, backing onto Brewery Lane (now the east-west part of Water lane where it joins North Street). Some brewery buildings survive along this part of Water Lane, adapted for other uses, but the major structures have been demolished and are now the site of the YMCA and a Waitrose supermarket [6850]. The brewery was founded by Messrs. Hawkes, Nash & Co. in 1780 (Nash had disappeared from the name by 1850) (Poole, 10). It was bought by Benskins in 1898, along with 157 pubs and beerhouses, from its then owners the Wigan family for £263 000 (ibid.). The brewery was closed in 1916 when it became a depot (ibid.).

##### *The Fox Brewery, Dunmow Road*

This brewery operated from 1886 and was run by a succession of people until 1915 when it was bought, along with one off licence, by Benskins (ibid.). Now demolished, the site is occupied by a garage.

#### **The 19th Century Town (fig. 7)**

The early 19th century saw the growth of the coaching inns; The Red Lion, The Cock, The Coach & Horses and The Crown, centred around the Hockerill cross-roads, to the detriment of many of the inns of Bishop's Stortford. Early housing development occurred in the New Town area, to the south of the old town core, bounded by

Newtown, Apton and Jarvis Roads. One of the earliest was Prospect Place, built in 1824 (Ewbank). The opening of the Great Eastern Railway had the largest impact upon the town, however, with the population increasing from 2305 in 1801 to 6595 in 1898 (Page, 295).

#### *The Great Eastern Railway*

Started by the Northern and Eastern Railway Company, the line was to run from London to Cambridge (Allen, 12). The construction reached Bishop's Stortford in 1842, when the station was built. In 1902 the line was acquired by The Great Eastern Railway Company (ibid.). The railway was to have a tremendous impact on the town. It not only affected industry but also the movement of people and as such stimulated the expansion of housing: Sidney Terrace was built specifically to house railway workers (Sparrow, xiv).

#### **Public Buildings (fig. 7)**

The Elizabethan Poor Law was in existence from 1601 until 1834 and had a tremendous impact upon the development of society over this period. It was paid for by general taxation and administered by the local vestry until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, when parishes were grouped into Union's and the Union Workhouses were built.

The *Parish Workhouse*, mentioned in 1793, apparently stood on the south side of Hockerill Street. The building later became part of a malting which was still in use in the early 20th century although its location is unknown (Page, 296).

#### *The Union Workhouse (Herts & Essex General Hospital), Haymeads Lane [10059]*

This was completed in 1836 and opened on 10th June 1837 (BSDLHS, 49). It is a red brick structure with slate and concrete tile roofs, built on a hexagonal plan design by T. L. Evans (Morrison 1999, 75). It has an original detached infirmary which features cross-ventilation and water closets: rare for the 1830's (ibid., 157). The workhouse contained 220 inmates in 1850 (Kelly, 179). It now forms part of the hospital staff accommodation block and is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

During the Second World War the Ministry of Health erected emergency medical service hospitals on many old workhouse sites and at Bishop's Stortford there remains a particularly large example of one (Morrison 1999, 178). It comprises twenty four ward huts built of rendered blocks and painted brick and two two-storey huts which were probably nurses accommodation [10059].

#### *The Pest House, Maze Green Road*

Pest Houses originated in the mid-late 16th century as a result of the plague of 1563 and were usually situated outside the settlement, for obvious reasons. They became common during the smallpox epidemics of the 18th century and were still in use in the early 19th century after which they were superseded by workhouse infirmaries and cottage hospitals.

Maze Green Road on the OS 2nd ed. Map of 1898 is shown as *Pest House Lane* on the OS 1st ed. Map of c.1874-9, although the Pest House is not shown. It does appear however, on a map surveyed c.1823 for the purpose of equalising the Poor Rates and its approximate location is shown in figure 6.



*The Cottage Hospital, Rye Street [10007]*

In 1895 a hospital was given to Bishop's Stortford by the Frere family and built to the north of the town (Page, 296). It has been converted to residential use.

*The Corn Exchange, Market Street*

Built in a prominent position in the centre of the town, on the site of the Kings Head , which was demolished in 1825 (Sparrow, xiv). The Corn Exchange was designed by L. Vulliamy in the Greek Revival style and completed in 1828. It is currently used by the Halifax Building Society and various businesses. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

The *Police Station* was built in 1890 (BSDLHS, 55).

**Ist Hertfordshire Light Horse Volunteer Corps (fig. 7)**

The volunteer infantry and cavalry raised during the Napoleonic Wars were disbanded in 1809 and 1827 respectively but Bishop's Stortford raised a force of volunteer cavalry in 1862 (BSDLHS, 55). The volunteer corps was the brainchild of John Dobede Fairman, a wealthy local maltster (Sainsbury, 227). In 1865 Fairman had a barracks built on land that he owned in Silver Leys. This single storey brick structure with a slate roof measured 92 ft by 27 ft and featured a large, round-arched porch surmounted by a clock and a life-size statue of a hart (Sainsbury, 230). The building still exists to the rear of the rugby club car park in and is now occupied by small businesses. The hart statue has been relocated to the frontage of a shop at 14 North Street. The corps was disbanded in 1879 (BSDLHS, 55).

The corps rifle range is marked on the 1st edition map to the north of the cricket fields with a target 'butt' at its west end. The butt earthwork appears on the 2nd edition map but it is not annotated. The feature does not appear on subsequent maps at all but a field visit confirmed that the butt still exists as a considerable C-shaped earthwork 25-30m in diameter and 4-5m in height.

**Religious Institutions (fig. 7)**

*Church of the Holy Trinity, South Street*

Built in 1859 to serve the new ecclesiastical parish of Holy Trinity, New Town (Page, 296). It is constructed of Kentish rag-stone in the Early English style and cost c.£1800 to build (Cussans, 109).

*Church of All Saints, Stanstead Road*

Standing on an elevated point in Hockerill to the east of the Stort. The original church, built in 1851-2 at a cost of £2315, burnt down in 1935. It was of the Gothic style and comprised a five-bay nave, baptistery, south porch, two vestries and a bell cote at its north east corner (Smith 1978, 58). The present building, by S E Dykes Bower, was erected in 1936-7 and has incorporated the remains of the earlier church (ibid.). It is constructed of rough limestone with ashlar dressings and is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

*St Joseph's Monastery and St Joseph's Church, Windhill*

In 1903 Windhill House (see above) was acquired by the Redemptorist Fathers who established a monastery there. The Redemptorist Order was founded in 1732 at Scala,

near Amalfi in Italy by St. Alphonsus (Smith 1978, 71). Their first English church was built in Clapham in 1843 and they arrived in Bishop's Stortford in 1900 where they occupied a small house in Portland Road, with an attached iron church (Page, 294). St Joseph's Church, to the west of Windhill House, was built in 1906 by Doran Webb in the Italian Renaissance style. It stands on the site of the stables of Windhill house and is dedicated to St Joseph and the English Martyrs (Page, 294). The Redemptorists left in 1994.

### **Nonconformist Houses (fig. 7)**

#### *Quakers*

Quakers were practising in the parish by 1665 (Page, 296). Their original meeting house stood on the north side of New Town Road and was replaced in 1709 by a newer building (now demolished) (ibid.). There was a burial ground to the rear which is now a public garden: presented to the town in 1935 by the Friends. Amongst those buried there are Dr Thomas Dimsdale (died 1800) who developed an inoculation for smallpox and travelled to Russia in 1768 to inoculate the Empress Catherine and her son (Smith 1978, 91)

#### *Wesleyan Methodists*

A congregation was formed in the town c.1823 (Page, 296) and in 1825 a seed warehouse in Church Street was bought and converted into a chapel (Smith 1978, 83). A second chapel was built in 1866 at 1 South Street (east side) which closed c.1900 and was later the site of the Phoenix cinema (ibid.). This was superseded by the present chapel on the west side of the street which was built in 1903 (ibid.).

#### *Congregationalists*

The Congregationalists first appeared in Bishop's Stortford in 1662 (Page, 296) and built a chapel in Water Lane in 1717 which is said to have stood in the north-west part of the site of the present church (Smith 1978, 77). In 1767 a new brick church measuring 40 ft x 44 ft was erected on the site at a cost of £700 (ibid.). The present church (Now used by the United Reformed Church) was built in 1859 in the Romanesque style by Poulton & Woodman and is of yellow stock brick with Bath stone dressings and a slate roof. The interior features elaborate cast iron work. It is a Listed Building, Grade II (DoE list).

#### *Baptists*

Meetings were originally held in a barn in South Street in 1818 (Smith 1978, 85) until a chapel was built in Sandpit field in 1819 (Page, 296). This was demolished in 1899 when the present chapel in Newtown Road was built (ibid.). The present chapel [SMR 10375], in red brick with limestone dressings and a slate roof, was erected in 1899 but an earlier chapel is evident on the same site from the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps of 1874-9 and 1898 respectively.

#### *Town Cemetery, Apton Road*

The cemetery to the south of the town in the Newtown area was begun in 1855 and features both Church of England and Nonconformist chapels (Page 296). The identical chapels, by G. E. Pritchett, are of the Perpendicular style with flint-faced walls and limestone dressings and are Listed Buildings, Grade II.(DoE list).

### **Schools (fig. 7)**

#### *Nonconformist Grammar School, Maze Green Road*

This school was opened in 1868 by the East of England Nonconformist School Company after it acquired the land and buildings of Stortford Collegiate College in Maze Green Road (Page, 296). The Collegiate College was a non-sectarian school that had opened in 1850 (ibid.). Cussans describes the Nonconformist school as a handsome brick building, large enough to accommodate 100 boarders (Cussans, 114). The premises had become Bishop's Stortford College by 1912 (Page, 296).

#### *The Catholic School, Windhill*

A small house of Belgian Nuns (Soeurs de Ste. Marie), who had been practising in Grange Road since 1896, bought Wind Hill Lodge at the west end of Windhill and had a large convent school built to the side (ibid.). The school is still active.

#### *Diocesan Training College for Schoolmistresses, Dunmow Road*

Built by Joseph Clark of diaper brickwork in the Tudor Gothic style, this grade II listed college opened in 1852 (DoE list). Its original buildings comprised; two dormitories, three classrooms, kitchen, dining room, training room, laundry, and infant and junior practising schools (BSDLHS, 55). It closed in 1979 after which it became an Essex Education Authority boarding school (ibid.).

#### *Northgate End Elementary School*

The Northgate End school, built in 1839, was originally a British School (Ewbank), it is now a drop in centre.

### **Industry (fig. 7)**

#### **Malthouses (fig. 6)**

##### *26b The Courtyard, Windhill*

A former malthouse and stables dating from the 17th century which were converted to a billiard room and servants quarters in the 19th century. The building is a single storey, red brick structure with stone dressings and a slate roof, which features a flat-top ventilator at the north end. The interior has much 17th century ornament including a Jacobean fireplace. It is grade II listed (DoE list).

##### *The Maltings, rear of 27 Hockerill Street*

A long range of 18th or early 19th century former maltings. They form a two storey structure of red brick with steeply pitched, projecting red tile roofs and feature two conical ventilators near the centre. Modern windows have been installed. It is grade II listed (DoE list).

##### *15 Bridge Street [SMR 5347]*

A two storey, early to mid 19th century former malthouse range (Flinn's Maltings) which was formerly three storeys. It is built of painted brick and weatherboarding with pitched slate roofs and it has three (formerly four) kilns (dismantled). The east side has a lean-to range with first floor windows and a central sack hoist. To the north of the range is the former owners house. The complex is grade II listed (DoE list).

*North range of former malthouses at junction of South Street and Southmill Road*  
[SMR 5359]

A two and a half storey, red brick range with weatherboarded ends and roofs of red tile and slate. It was built in 1843 and features a gabled, overhanging sack hoist with a weathervane at its west end. The centre has segmental arched openings on both floors and there are two slated, flat-top vents towards the east end. The interior has exposed, half-timbered walls at the west end and adjoining the west end is a former owners house. The complex is grade II listed (DoE list).

*Central range of former malthouses at junction of South Street and Southmill Road*  
[SMR 5360]

A four storey red brick range, with dark blue brick banding and a slate roof. It was built in 1897 and the west end, which faces the street, has three triangular dormers. The taller central block features recessed, panelled walls and two, slated roof ventilators. The rear section has triple blind arches and the east wall has windows on each floor. It is grade II listed (DoE list).

*South range of former malthouses at junction of South Street and Southmill Road*  
[SMR 5361]

A three storey red brick range, with a slate roof, built in 1856. The weatherboarded west end to the street, which formerly had a large kiln, features an overhanging sack hoist and three windows. The side walls have round-headed blind arcading of ten bays and there are two flat-top ventilators towards the east end. It is grade II listed (DoE list).

Many more maltings appear on the OS 25" map of 1898 and are recorded on the SMR. they are shown in fig. 6

*Gasworks, Gasworks Lane*

A gasworks is evident on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps at the end of Gasworks Lane which runs south from Station Road, to the east of the river. It was founded in 1832 (Sparrow, xiv).

*Waterworks, Maze Green Road*

A waterworks appears on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps at the end of Maze Green Road. Its exact date of foundation is unknown but it is likely to be of the mid 1850's

Further industries of the 19th century included brickworks, a foundry, a sawmill, a hat factory and barge building yards and these are shown in figure 7. There are also documentary references to coachworks and sacking works (Kelly, 179).

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