

There is no prescribed route to follow for this Trail. You can start at any point, visiting as many or as few of the sites as you wish to. We expect that many visitors will come to Wheathampstead by car and park in the free car park in East Lane, so the descriptions start with the site that is closest to the car park.

1 THE BULL INN

Grade II listed

The earliest record of the Bull Inn dates to 1617, though it was originally a group of 16th century buildings. The Inn came with 119 acres of land belonging to the manor of Lamer, which lies to the north of the village. It was timber-framed with a plastered exterior and was later extended to include two riverside cottages.

The then-royalist General Monck (Coldstream Guards) is said to have stayed here during the Civil War (1642-1651).

In 1667 Roger Austin, an unfriendly landlord, came to the notice of the Quarter Sessions – once for refusing accommodation to Nicholas Brooks, a fishmonger from London, and on another occasion for not looking after his wife Elizabeth and their sons, Meshach and Abednego.

From before 1822 until at least the 1850s, the Bull was kept by the Hooper family. In the 1850s William Hooper was the village letter-receiver and then postmaster.

2 RIVER LEA

The river may derive its name from the Celtic 'lug' meaning 'bright'. The Irish or Gaelic spelling is 'lugh', hence Lughton, now Luton, where the Lea rises. Both the river and the town may have been named after Lugh the Shining One, the Celtic god of light and of the harvest. It is said that he drank from the source of the river and gave it its name.

The Lea is a chalk stream – shallow, fast-flowing and high in nutrients. It flows some 42 miles from Luton through Hertfordshire and north-east London, where it becomes the Lee, and discharges into the Thames at Bow Creek.

Following a treaty between King Alfred the Great and Guthrum the Old in about 880, the river formed part of the boundary between Saxon England (to the south of where you are standing) and the Danelaw (to the north).

The current bridge was first built in or before 1867, widened in 1895, and rebuilt in 1986.

At the north end of the bridge stands the village sign. This was erected in 2010 as part of the celebrations to mark the 950th anniversary of the deed by which Edward the Confessor granted Wheathampstead to the Abbey of Westminster.

The river is well stocked with fish, including barbel, roach and carp. You may be lucky enough to see a kingfisher or a grey wagtail, as well as the more common mallards.

While you are standing on the bridge, look across the road at the long side wall of Wheathampstead Mill.

3 TUDOR ARCHWAY

Grade II listed

The upper courses of this brick wall, which fronts the garden of Wheathampstead Place, are Victorian but the lower courses are 16th century Elizabethan. The top of the wall has a dog-tooth dentil course with tiled coping. The dentil style has been reproduced in walls in the new housing estate that centres on Waddling Lane.

Set into the wall is a 16th century stone arch made from Reigate Stone. It has a flattened four-centre head set in a square surround.

4 WHEATHAMPSTEAD PLACE

Grade II listed



The best viewpoint for this building is from Mount Rd, just round the corner from the Tudor Archway.

Also known as 'Place Farm', this was originally a medieval hall house

dating from about 1480. The elaborate timbering points to the wealth of the owners. It formerly had cross-wings at each end but only the one at the southern end of the building survives. At some point plaster was applied to the external walls, grooved so as to resemble stone, but this was blown off when a small bomb fell in the churchyard during the Second World War.

Wheathampstead Place may have been the site of the original rectory; the rector was lord of the manor. From the late 1500s until at least 1670, it was home to the Brocket family (not related to Lord Brocket). In the early 19th century it was owned by Lord Melbourne, Queen Victoria's first prime minister. Another prime minister who owned the house was Lord Palmerston. Sir William Beach Thomas, who wrote several books that include descriptions of wildlife round the village, bought the house in 1923.

Murphy Chemicals Ltd had their offices here for many years from 1932. Their premises extended over a large area behind the house and, at its peak, the company employed some 300 people. The entire site had to be decontaminated before it could be used for the housing that was built in 2001 and 2002.

The bridleway that starts here is part of the Lea Valley Walk and links to the Ayot Greenway. It also links with a footpath that provides a pleasant riverside walk to Water End House (built in 1610, listed Grade II*) and on to Brocket Park and Lemsford.

5 WHEATHAMPSTEAD STATION

(remains)



Wheathampstead Station was opened in 1860 on the new line that ran between Hatfield and Dunstable as part of the Great Northern Railway. For over 100 years it was the lifeblood of the village. Straw was

sent from here to Luton for the hat trade, watercress was despatched to London, washing arrived from London along with elephant dung from London Zoo for local vegetable-growers. Live cattle were transported, pleasure trips to Norfolk started from here, fresh fish came from the coast, and visitors arrived for the fishing and golf. George Bernard Shaw, who lived in nearby Ayot St Lawrence, was its most famous passenger and sometimes cycled to the station.

The sidings and goods yard were on the far side of Station Road; the bridge across the road was demolished in August 1967. The station was closed to passengers in 1965 and to freight in 1967. The platform is being restored by a group of local volunteers, sponsored by the Parish Council.

During the construction of the station a rare seventh century bronze ewer was found; originally from the eastern Mediterranean, it is now in the British Museum. In 1884/85 at least one rich Anglo-Saxon inhumation burial was found near the station, including several human skulls. A cast bronze 'Frankish Alemannic' closed vessel (sixth or seventh century) and a glass palm cup were also recovered.

6 WHEATHAMPSTEAD HOUSE

Grade II listed

Wheathampstead House was built in the 1840s and was home to Field Marshal the 10th Earl of Cavan (1865–1946) who fought in the Second Boer War and the First World War. He led the Italian 10th Army at the Battle of Vitoria Veneto in 1918, which secured the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Famous visitors included Dame Nellie Melba, the Australian opera singer. The impressive wall and gateway were added shortly after the railway arrived to screen the house from Wheathampstead Station. The wall is built of red brick with terracotta moulded coping and ornamental balustrades. It is about five metres high and 50 metres long. The wooden side-gates, each with six panels, are original.

The house, which was used as offices for Murphy Chemicals Ltd until they moved to Wheathampstead Place (Place Farm) is now a preparatory school for St Albans High School for Girls.



7 THE OLD BAKERY

Grade II listed

The core of this building is 16th century or earlier, with additions from the 17th and 18th centuries. It is now cased in painted brick and plaster. The rear of the building with its steeply pitched roof was formerly an open medieval hall house and is probably the oldest part. A cross-wing was added in the 1500s to give more living space; the three gabled front sections are 17th century. The decorated plasterwork is known as pargetting.

8 WHEATHAMPSTEAD MILL

Grade II listed



A corn mill has existed on this site for more than a thousand years. One of the four mills in Wheathampstead Manor that are listed in the Domesday book (1086) stood here. The present structure, which is remarkable for its length, is a three-bay, timber-framed building. The oldest central part dates from the late 16th century. The river flowed through the building to power the mill wheel. The original external weatherboarding was replaced with brick between 1890 and 1895.

The Mill was originally owned by Westminster Abbey and tenants can be traced back to 1500. Local Dissenters met here, possibly including John Bunyan (1628-1688), author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. There is a pub named after him in Coleman Green Lane on the east side of the parish, near the ruins of a 17th century cottage (Grade II listed) where he preached from time to time. The present owners of the Mill, the Titmuss family, bought it from Viscount Kilcourse of Wheathampstead House (Lord Cavan) in 1882.



You may like to stroll along Mill Walk (left), which runs behind the Mill alongside the mill-race. A magnificent Wellingtonia stands at its southern end, planted some years later to celebrate Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815.

9 CRINKLE-CRANKLE WALLS

Grade II listed

The former garden of the Old Rectory is bounded on its eastern and western sides by crinkle-crankle walls – brick walls built in the shape of a wavy line. They date from the early 19th century and are the only publicly accessible example in Hertfordshire.

There are several reasons why the walls were constructed in this way. The shape made it possible to make them higher while still being only two bricks (nine inches) thick, since the curving lines gave strength to the structure, allowing the walls to stand without buttresses and to expand without cracking in the sun. The alcoves were used for growing and ripening fruit, a process often helped by circulating warm air from a stove through vents in the brickwork.

The Old Rectory itself, which is also **Grade II listed**, conceals a 16th century timber-framed building within its 19th century brick exterior. The red brick chimney stack dates from the 17th century.

King Edward Place, on the other side of the road, was built on the site of the factory of Helmetts Ltd, founded in 1924 and once a major employer in the village. They made pith helmets, flying helmets, firemen's and police helmets, and crash helmets. The factory closed in 2002 with the loss of 200 jobs. To see a video of their work, made in 1953, see <http://www.britishtpathe.com/record.php?id=47537>

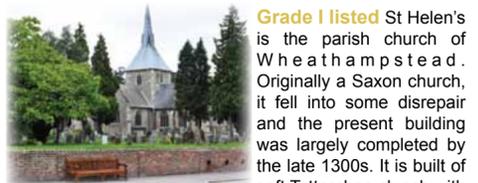
10 BURY FARM COTTAGES

Grade II listed



These are the only buildings that survive from the original complex of buildings of Wheathampsteadbury Manor. It appears that they were originally built by Westminster Abbey in the 15th century as 'Hall, Chambers and Gatehouse' to the 13th century moated Wheathampsteadbury Manor House. In the mid-18th century, they were upgraded to become 'The Manor House'. Later still, in 1879, they became a Victorian farmhouse and then farmworkers' cottages. Westminster Abbey administered the large estate until shortly after the Second World War when it was sold off for development.

11 ST HELEN'S CHURCH



Grade I listed St Helen's is the parish church of Wheathampstead. Originally a Saxon church, it fell into some disrepair and the present building was largely completed by the late 1300s. It is built of soft Totternhoe clunch with flint facings and limestone dressings.

The main shape of the building has not changed since that time although, at the instigation of the rector, Reverend Canon Davys, a major restoration was carried out in 1865. It is said that the bells are among the most difficult to ring in Hertfordshire.

The church contains a 14th century font and many interesting tombs and memorials to local families, including Hugh and Margaret Bostock, the parents of John of Wheathampstead who became 33rd Abbot of St Albans from 1420 to 1440 and again from 1451 to 1465. His tomb may be seen in St Albans Abbey.

There is a wealth of information about the church in the leaflets and booklets that can be found near the back of the nave.

12 ST HELEN'S CHURCHYARD

The churchyard has been in continuous use since at least 4000 BC. The number of burials has left it significantly higher than the High Street.

The churchyard contains six **Grade II listed** chest tombs, situated at the south-east corner of the church. The lych-gate was erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.

Among the many local people buried here are several members of the Lattimore and Sibley families and Sir William Beach Thomas, a World War I journalist and author of natural history. There is a memorial to George Upton-Robins, hero of Hill 60 (1915), who is buried in a military cemetery in Belgium.

The nearby grave of the Cherry-Garrard family, in the north-west corner of the churchyard, is of particular interest. The main inscription is to Apsley Cherry-Garrard, a distinguished soldier and father of Apsley Cherry-Garrard (1886-1959), a member of Scott's Terra Nova expedition to the Antarctic in 1910-1913 and author of 'The Worst Journey in the World'. His inscription is on the back of the stone cross that marks the grave. He lived at Lamer House, in the north of the parish.

The War Memorial that stands facing the High Street lists the names of the men of Wheathampstead who died in the First and Second World Wars. Local historians are researching the backgrounds and families of every man listed on the Memorial.

13 OLD CHURCH SCHOOL

Grade II listed

This former village school was built in 1862 on the village green, superseding the original National School on The Hill. As with the church, the work was initiated by Reverend Canon Davys and the architect, Edward Browning, also worked on the restoration of the church. The school is built in a distinctive polychrome Decorated Gothic style, using knapped flint walling with zig-zag bands of yellow brick and a slate roof that is also in a zig-zag pattern. Local schoolchildren were paid to collect flints from the fields to help with the construction of the building.

The school was enlarged in 1884 to take 330 children and closed in 1969. The building is now used as offices.

14 BREWHOUSE AND MALTINGS

Grade II listed



This red-brick building, on the left as you walk up Brewhouse Hill, has a gable end with a cart entrance at basement level facing down the hill. Brewhouse Hill was formerly known as Hamwell Hill, leading to Hamwell, now Amwell. In 1781 James Wilkins of Wheathampstead was granted land by the lords of the manor, Westminster Abbey, on which to build a brewery, which he called the Parrott Brewery. The plot of land on which the brewery stood stretched up the hill to the end of the yard behind this building and its neighbours. The buildings have timber frames behind their 18th and 19th century brick façades and are all Grade II listed. The brewery, by then known as the Hope Brewery, was bought by the Lattimores in 1841. Brewing ceased in 1904, when the Lattimores sold up, and the brewery building has since been demolished. The cart entrance leads into a storage tunnel that runs under the first cottage and stretches well back into the chalk. The cottage and tunnel appear to date to 1781.

On the way back down Church Street to the corner with High Street, note Cunnington's lighting shop. This shop and the house on its right, both of which are Grade II listed, were once the 'Walnut Tree' pub; the wrought ironwork from which the pub sign used to hang is still in place. This is a 17th century timber-framed building with a 20th century front extension in plastered brick. The pub may have taken its name from a prominent walnut tree mentioned in a poem about Wheathampstead that appeared in the Morning Post in 1778.

15 COLLINS CORNER

Grade II listed



No. 1 Church Street has particularly attractive patterned brickwork on its 18th century facade, using vitrified red brick, probably made locally, with red brick dressings and banding. It is now the entrance to the restaurant that occupies the conservatory-style building on the corner. This was rebuilt here in 1931, having been rescued by the owner, Charlie Collins, from the winter garden of Blackmore End House, a local mansion that was being demolished. From 1931 to 2006 the whole building was occupied by Collins Antiques. Charlie's son, Samuel ('Sam') Collins MBE, was a lifetime resident of the village and an important figure in the parish. He was greatly interested in village life, its people and its buildings and was a parish councillor for 39 years. Sam and Charlie are both buried in the churchyard, just across the road from the restaurant.

16 THE SWAN INN

Grade II listed

The Swan was built in about 1500 as an open hall consisting of two bays with additional buildings at each end. It is timber-framed, the spaces being filled originally using wattle and daub and later with bricks. In the past it has had its own brewery, malt house, accommodation for travellers, barn, stables and blacksmith's forge. The chimney was added in about 1680 and a new frontage in about 1750. A fire in 1900 destroyed an even older part of the building.

It is worth noting that there are 39 listed structures between where you are standing and the roundabout at the far (northern) end of the village.

17 LATTIMORES

Grade II listed

Lattimores is a 16th century, or possibly earlier, timber-framed house which was fronted with brick in the 18th century. The parapet of the front and south walls, which is clearly visible from the north side, was a very fashionable feature at the time but the steeply pitched roof betrays the earlier origins of the house. The Lattimores, who owned the Hope Brewery, lived here from 1791 until the late 19th century.

18 THE WHITE COTTAGE

Grade II listed

Inside this cottage are the remains of a late medieval hall house open to the roof, with a crown post and beam dating from about 1490. There are traces of smoke blackening on some of the timbers, as there would have been no chimney and smoke had to escape through a hole in the roof. Some of the original timber frame of the house can be seen on the side wall.

The Sibley family lived at the White Cottage for about 250 years. The frontage of the house was rebuilt in about 1630 by Francis Sibley, who also owned the Bell and Crown public house (the site is now The Crown House at 27 High Street). On his death an inventory was drawn up for the house, which included his 'joined' chair, his bookshelf and 'some few books', and, from his kitchen, six brass kettles, brass pans and skillets (pans with long handles, and short legs to stand in the ashes), '3 dripping pans, a Tin colander, Tin apple roaster and Tin pudding pan'.

The frontage was rebuilt again in 1763, this time by (another) Henry Sibley.

19 JESSAMINE COTTAGE

Grade II listed

This small house, constructed of red brick, dates from the mid-18th century. At that time, it served as the village 'lock-up'; prisoners were detained under the stairs. In the mid-19th century it was home to George Knight, the village policeman. In 1855, the local newspaper 'The Herts Advertiser', wrote 'under the operation of policeman Knight our village prodigalities have been to a great degree suppressed and if a strict watch is kept on all public houses it will effectively avert the open crime and immorality which was formerly notorious and revolting to the peaceable and well conducted inhabitants'. Amelia Nash of the Red Lion was fined £3 12s 6d for refusing to admit Knight to check that there were no customers in the house at 10.30pm. She had already been convicted of selling beer during prohibited hours.

In the 1940s, Mr Wren the wheelwright lived here, next door to his premises where Jessamine Garage now stands, i.e. a business that is still concerned with the transport needs of the village.

20 THE TWO BREWERS

Grade II listed

Built in the 17th century, this was once an inn called 'The Two Brewers'.

A notable owner of the inn was James Westwood. Also a blacksmith, he had his forge behind the building. Later it was moved by the river at the end of East Lane. James was a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters, an early co-operative insurance movement, and was also one of the oldest members of the volunteer battalion of the Herts and Beds militia. He was given a funeral with full military honours.

Later a barn at the back of the building was used as the village youth club. More recently the former inn has been a newsagent, tea room and art gallery.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD HERITAGE TRAIL

HERITAGE TRAIL

- 1 THE BULL INN
- 2 RIVER LEA
- 3 TUDOR ARCHWAY
- 4 WHEATHAMPSTEAD PLACE
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- 16 THE SWAN INN
- 17 LATTIMORES
- 18 THE WHITE COTTAGE
- 19 JESSAMINE COTTAGE
- 20 THE TWO BREWERS
- 21 DEVIL'S DYKE



Wheathampstead has an ancient history. At the end of the last Ice Age, Mesolithic hunter gatherers left worked flint tools here. Iron Age farmers kept cattle and lived in round houses beside Devil's Dyke. Celtic warriors built a defensive ditch there up to 30 m wide and 12 m deep. Some think that these extensive earthworks were the location of the tribe's original capital and possibly part of one of the biggest Iron Age sites in the country. Cassivellaunus, chief war leader of the Catuvellauni tribe, led resistance to the Roman invasion from here in 54 BC.

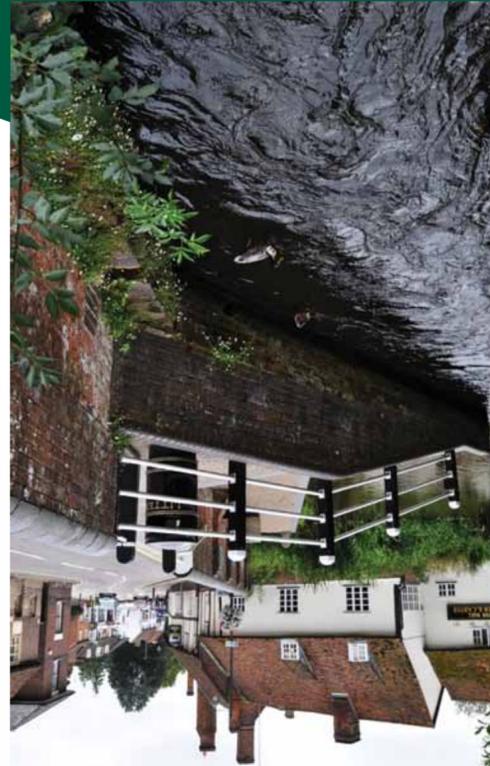
Two immensely rich early Romano-British cremation burials, "one rung below native royalty", from nearby Turner's Hall Farm included silver brooches and some fine bronze ewers from the Bay of Naples. Anglo-Saxons left a unique bronze burial pot and glassware (now in the British Museum) near the old railway station. The earliest document in the county (1060) tells of King Edward the Confessor's gift of his manor of 'Hwaethamstede' to his newly founded Westminster Abbey. Our church has an Anglo-Saxon foundation and thought by some to have been a minster with royal

connections. The River Lea was the boundary between Saxon and Viking England under the Danelaw Treaty agreed by King Alfred the Great in 880. More recently, in the 1940s, Mill Quay was broken when a circus elephant was taken there for a drink.

Other major sites include the remains of our railway station built in 1860 (recently renovated by a team of local volunteers), rare crinkle-crinkle walls and a High Street with many important seventeenth-century inns and historic buildings. Our heritage includes events such as the death of prize-fighter Simon Byrne ("The Emerald Gem") after a 99-round bare-knuckle fight on nearby Nomansland Common, the earliest steeplechases in Britain and Field Marshal Montgomery's review of the troops before D-Day. Important names connected with the village include the notorious Wicked Lady, newspaper magnate Lord Harmsworth, George Bernard Shaw and explorer Apsley Cherry-Garrard who travelled with Scott to the Antarctic.

Recent history includes filming of the TV series Band of Brothers and parts of the Harry Potter films. Wheathampstead is English history in microcosm. Today it is a vibrant, caring community with over 250 local businesses providing a wide range of services.

KEY: Heritage Trail site with plaque



WHEATHAMPSTEAD VILLAGE CENTRE

Welcome to WHEATHAMPSTEAD

Come to visit Wheathampstead – Verulamium Museum in St Albans calls it "The First Capital" and our timeline stretches back 10,000 years. You can walk our fascinating village Heritage Trail with 21 different historical sites marked by green and gold information plaques. Find out more about the colourful stories and people that bring our history to life then reward yourself with a visit to one of our excellent shops, pubs or restaurants.

This walkers' map covers the Wheathampstead village centre Heritage Trail. The complete circular walk is about one and a quarter miles (2 kilometres) and will take around an hour and a half to complete. If you are feeling energetic, walk the extra 0.6 miles (1 kilometre) to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Devil's Dyke to the east of the High Street. For even longer walks, follow one of the Heritage Trail routes of up to eight miles around the wider Parish through our beautiful countryside.

More information about famous events, characters and historic sites can be found on our website.

WHEATHAMPSTEAD HERITAGE TRAIL

www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk

DEVIL'S DYKE
A Scheduled Ancient Monument and our most historic site. Devil's Dyke is an impressive earthwork. Even today, more than 2,000 years after its construction, it is up to 40 feet (12 metres) deep. Sir Mortimer Wheeler excavated the dyke in the 1930s and suggested it was the site where Julius Caesar defeated the resistance led by the local Catuvellauni tribe under Cassivellaunus. It is a very significant Iron Age monument and partly responsible for St Albans Museum's reference to Wheathampstead as "The First Capital".



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