

The original course of the Thames flowed from the Goring Gap (about eight miles north-west of Reading), then north-east through the Vale of St Albans, entering the North Sea on the coast of East Anglia near Ipswich. However, the last of the ice sheets, which covered southern England to a depth of 1,000 metres sometime between 300,000 and 400,000 years ago, blocked the river valley and diverted the Thames into its present course. Large lakes developed at Wheathampstead and at St Albans. When the ice melted it left the clays and gravels with which local gardeners are all too familiar.

To find out more about this, see '*Hertfordshire – a Landscape History*' by Anne Rowe and Tom Williamson, published by the University of Hertfordshire Press in 2013.