



News and events

MEMORIES AND REMINISCENCES OF THE 2nd WORLD WAR

- We are carrying on with this project despite Covid-19. If you have or know someone who has memories of the 2nd World War, please record them on a mobile phone, tablet or laptop, or write them in an email, and send to 2ndwwmemories@gmail.com. We will share our research with everyone via a dedicated website page. Thank you.

Next meeting: All our meetings are cancelled until further notice.

Notes and queries

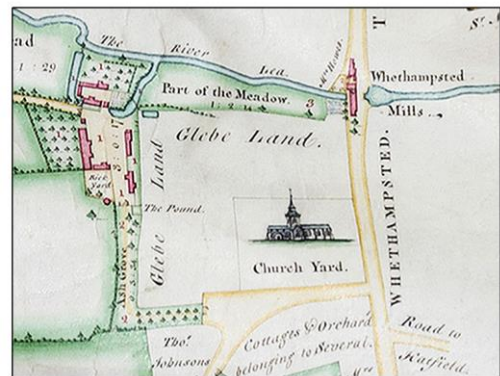
The four mills of Wheathampstead?

Many writers have repeated the story that, according to Domesday, there were four mills in the manor of Wheathampstead in 1086, located at Wheathampstead, Batford, Pickford and Hyde. In fact, Domesday does not record where these mills were located, nor how they were powered.

The *1315 extenta*, a record of the assets of the manor of Wheathampstead, mentions one mill but does not say where it was. The *1405-06 Account Roll* records a single mill at Thropmelle, which might be the hamlet of Batford. It looks as though our supposed thousand-year legacy of milling on four sites is distinctly shaky. So what do we actually know?

- Batford, Pickford and Hyde mills appear on the 1749 Warburton county map of Hertfordshire.
- The current Hyde Mill dates back only to 1835.
- Pickford was a mid-18th-century paper mill. The building was converted into a factory in 1897 and was later demolished.
- Batford may have a long history but the documentary evidence goes back only to 1857 when the corn mill was built. The mill building still exists but the millpond has been filled in.
- Wheathampstead mill is harder to date. The brick-facing of the building we know today is late 19th century. It conceals a timber-frame building that dates to the 17th century, perhaps even to the 16th century. The mill appears on the 1758 Yeoman map and intriguingly the label

says 'mills' and not 'mill'. Were there two mills here in the 18th century? This is not as unlikely as it may sound because downstream at Mill Green the medieval mill had two water wheels, one on each side of the river.



Part of the 1758 Yeoman map (© Dean and Chapter of Westminster). There is evidence for two other mill sites. One is at Marford where late Victorian maps show a substantial millstream running alongside the south bank of the river to the west of Marford Farm. This millstream appears to line up with a deep channel through the garden of the farm that narrows and re-joins the river half-a-mile downstream. This may be the remains of a head-race and tail-race for a mill. If there was a mill at Marford, the lack of documentary evidence suggests that it may date back to the medieval period when it would have been on the boundary of Wheathampstead and Sandridge parishes.

There is also evidence of a water-driven fulling mill on Melissa Field, Lower Luton Road. For details of this mill, go to 'Local Research' on our website (address below).
Mike Smith

Further reading: Howes H. (2016) *Wind, water and steam* Hertfordshire Publications