

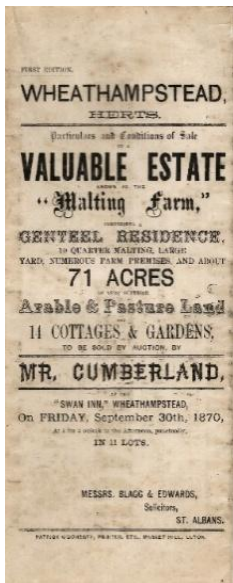


## News and events

- Our **next meeting** will be on **Wednesday 19 February**. Jon Mein will “follow the money” to tell us about **“The surprising history of The Swan, Stevenage”**.
- A date for your diary: **Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 May**. **“A window on Wheathampstead during the 2nd World War 1938/9 – 1945/6”**. Exhibition in the Memorial Hall, Marford Road, to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the war.

## Sarah Thrale's estate

Old auction particulars are often a mine of information for the local historian and the 1870 auction particulars for the sale of the “Valuable Estate” of the late Mrs Thrale are no exception. Kindly donated to the History Society by Anna



Park who spotted it for sale online in December, the document lists 11 lots, some of buildings and some of land. It prompts a range of questions about Sarah Thrale and about the property being auctioned.

Sarah Thrale was born in Kimpton in 1804 and married Henry Sibley, a member of an important Wheathampstead family, in 1834. He appears in the 1841 tithe schedule as owner and occupier of “House, malting” in a location opposite St Helen’s Church. He died in 1848 and the

census of 1851 shows Sarah, a widow, living at the house we now know as White Cottage with her “Rank, Profession or Occupation” described as “Independent, landed property”. Her age is given as 35 (but see below). Two doors away, on the far side of the big house, Lattimore, lived 23-year-old William Thrale, a baker and member of another extended local family. William and Sarah were married early in 1852. They were living together at Sarah’s house in 1861, when Sarah’s age is given as 56 and William as 32. She died on 27 August 1869 leaving “Effects” valued at less than £3000. Land and buildings were not included in probate valuations at that time so this relates only to her personal possessions.

The particulars state that the Valuable Estate is known as “Malting Farm”. We already knew the locations of three of the four farms in the village in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Place Farm, Town Farm, Bury

Farm) but were not certain until now of the location of the fourth that is named in other documents. The “Genteel Residence” (White Cottage) has a 10 quarter malting, which is small for that time, a large yard, and numerous farm premises. The estate includes about 71 acres of “very superior arable and pasture land”, and “14 cottages & gardens”. The advertisement for the auction (Herts Advertiser, 17 September) states that the house with about 4 ½ acres of adjoining land, (now Granary Close, hence the name?), will be leased to Mr Thrale so will not be auctioned.

The fourteen cottages, to be sold in three lots, were all on East Lane, “brick and tiled”, tenanted, and with gardens.

Sadly, the map showing the land to be auctioned has been torn from the brochure but many of the descriptions in each lot are cross-referenced to the 1841 tithe map and schedule so we can work out where they were.

Lot 1 comprised three arable fields totalling about 18 acres and located between Dyke Lane and The Hill. Tithe rent of £3.3s.3d. was payable to the rector. Lot 2 was a one-acre orchard on the Hatfield Road (now Marford Road) and probably somewhere near where the Catholic church is now. Lot 7 (“Little Baker’s Field”) is a two-acre field on the Codicote Road. The two fields that make up Lot 8 are on each side of the footpath that leads from the southern end of Lamer Lane to the golf course. Lot 9, a five-acre field known as “Wood Dell Field”, is north of Lot 8. Lot 10, a “very fertile” two-acre field known as “Little Herons” is nearby. Finally, Lot 11 is made up of five “enclosures of superior arable land” northwest of the end of what is now Rose Lane and with access to (Lower) Luton Road. It is described as “prettily Timbered” and presenting an “admirable site for the erection of a Country Residence”.

Interestingly, all these fields had other owners in 1841 which suggests that Sarah Thrale was a keen buyer of land as it became available.