

Lost buildings of Wheathampstead high street

Compiled and edited by Mike Smith using research
material gathered by members of the 'History of
our High Street' project in 2013.

1901

In the early 1960s, local antique dealer Sam Collins bought a badly discoloured painting of Wheathampstead High Street. When it was cleaned up it revealed a foxhunting scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Master of Hounds is astride his horse in the foreground. Foxhounds prowl up and down the street, eager for the off. The painting features many caricatures of well-known villagers including the publican of The Bull, the local blacksmith and Amos Gale the lamplighter, standing on his ladder. What is striking about the painting is that in the background we can see many of the buildings that



are still standing today. This painting celebrates Wheathampstead's good luck in still having a picturesque and historic high street. Or is it down to luck? Recent research by the 'Story of our High Street' project in 2013 suggested that the survival of so many old buildings owed more to economics. At the end of the nineteenth century the village, along with much of the agricultural southeast, had been experiencing a slow decline. In a prosperous economy, old buildings are torn down and new buildings take their place. This did not start to happen in Wheathampstead until the late 1960s. However the High Street still lost many historic buildings before 'listed building' status was introduced in the early seventies.



Many of the buildings have largely been forgotten, such as this extensive range of outbuildings and workshops at the rear of The Bull that housed many small businesses. 'Bull Yard' is now a car park. Many of the buildings on this side of the High Street had extensive property to the rear. Much of it is now used for housing.



Next door to The Bull stood a small cottage last used by Wren the wheelwrights. It was demolished sometime in the nineteen thirties.



The old cottage stood on the site now occupied by the forecourt of Jessamine Garage.



The Fine Fare supermarket was built in 1971. It is now occupied by Tesco.



Two buildings were lost when the new supermarket was built. The first building on the left has been dated back to the early eighteenth century and was once The White Hart pub. There was a unsuccessful campaign to stop the demolition. The second building was a early Victorian shop that last traded as the Wheathampstead Store. This photograph probably dates to the Edwardian period, before 1910.



Further up the High Street a man leans against the front window of the Bricklayers Arms in the middle 1890s. Perhaps he is the landlord? This building still exists and it now a private dwelling, renamed Latchford House.



Shortly after the photograph was taken the shop next door was burnt down. It was replaced in 1897 by a new building that was used by John Chennels who ran a grocery, chemists and post office on the site. The building is now used by an estate agent. This is our only photograph of the original building that may have been early nineteenth century or older.



The top of the high street has seen the most changes during the last one hundred years. Seven buildings were demolished on the site of the Granary Close flats in 1971. Many small businesses had been located in the outbuildings.



On the site of the modern-day Granary Close access road stood two shops, one of which was the bakers. They may have dated back to the eighteenth century. The building on the far left was once attached to Lattimore House.



A white-painted cottage is visible behind the two shops. The film poster on the fencing dates this photograph to 1963.



Next door to the two shops stood the Ship public house. In this photograph it is standing derelict in the late nineteen sixties after the police houses next door had been demolished. The man visible on the roof is stealing lead. The outbuildings of Town Farm are visible in the background on the right.



Two police houses stood next to The Ship pub, opposite The Swan. They were demolished in the mid- nineteen sixties, before the Granary Close development. This allowed the junction with Marford Road to be widened and improved. This was a busy and hazardous junction before the Cory-Wright Way bypass was built in the late 1970s.



It is unclear when the police houses were built but it was around the end of the nineteenth century or the early twentieth century. It is believed this photograph was taken in 1908.



Across the road from the police houses and opposite The Swan stood Town Farm. This was a rambling 16th century farmhouse with extensive outbuildings. It was illegally demolished in 1971. Houses were later built on the site of the farm. This photograph was taken on the 24th April, 1908.