

The Red Lion: 1851 to 1914

The Red Lion, which was demolished in the 1930s, stood where the Post Office in Station Road is today, opposite Mount Road.



The earliest photograph we have of the Red Lion

The Ordnance Survey map dated 1879 shows that there was a group of buildings in this location at that time. The Red Lion was on the roadside, with cottages behind. The 1891 census records two households as being 'Back of Lion'.



The first official listing of The Red Lion by name is in the 1851 census, which shows George Nash (65) as a carpenter and beershop keeper living with his wife Maria (62), daughter Amelia (26), who is a straw plaiter, son Francis (22, bricklayer's labourer) and grandson Charles (6) who is at school¹. The previous (1841) census includes the same George Nash (55), carpenter, his wife Maria (45) and their sons Frederick (15, bricklayer's apprentice) and Francis (12). Amelia is not mentioned. It is not possible to determine exactly where they lived but it was just up the road north of the mill. This suggests that George Nash obtained his licence as a beerhouse keeper, alongside his work as a carpenter, sometime in the 1840s.

The Hertford Mercury of 25 February 1854 included a long story with the headline '*Wheathamstead – Singular Case*'. The Hertfordshire Epiphany Sessions heard that Daniel Nickols, a 20-year-old labourer of Wheathampstead, was charged with stealing a coat, a wooden box and a variety of other articles, the property of John Boyes. Mr Boyes gave evidence that he and a companion had spent half an hour in the Red Lion at six o'clock one Saturday evening, leaving his horse and cart in the shed. When he left the pub, the horse and cart, with 'drapery goods inside' had gone. He informed the police and spent all night looking for the horse and cart but did not see it again until the Sunday evening; all the contents were missing. Eight witnesses, including Amelia Nash and two policemen, gave evidence that, when taken together, told the story that Nickols, who had been in the pub all afternoon, had taken the horse and cart soon after six o'clock and led them up the road towards Gustard Wood. At about 7.30, he was seen driving the cart 'very fast' on the Luton/Sundon road about ten or twelve miles from Wheathampstead. The horse was later found asleep in the road between Peter's Green and Kimpton; it appeared to have been 'over-driven'. The police witnesses gave evidence that they had found the missing box in a field and that nearby footprints matched the prisoner's shoes. Other witnesses had found a chaise lamp and a parcel of silk handkerchiefs in various places.

When all the evidence had been heard, the Chairman, the Marquess of Salisbury, reached the following conclusion:

The CHAIRMAN, in summing up the evidence, said it was doubtful whether the prisoner, in taking away the prosecutor's cart, and distributing the contents in various fields, was actuated by felonious intention. The prisoner did not appear to have appropriated any of the property to himself, and therefore his conduct might have been a mere drunken frolic. Verdict—Not Guilty!

Nickols must have counted himself a lucky man.

In contrast, this report from the Herts Guardian dated 23 August 1859 tells a sad story (see next page).

¹ This probably refers to the first National School in Wheathampstead which opened in 1815.

WHEATHAMSTEAD.—*Inquest.*—On Monday last, an inquest was held before R. G. Lowe, Esq., coroner, at the Red Lion, on the body of William Fensom, aged 6 yrs. It appeared from the evidence, that the little boy, when in company with a lad named John Slough, who is in the employ of George Wilshere, Esq., of Kimpton-hall, was sent to Wheathamstead mill, with a horse and cart with wheat. Slough, when up in the cart putting the chain to the sacks heard a screaming noise in the mill: he immediately gave an alarm, and at the same instant the mill was stopped by Miss Sarah Bruton, daughter of Mr. Bruton, the owner of the mill. It appeared the little boy was playing with the water wheel which caught his jacket sleeve, and he was drawn through and instantly killed. A portion of the mill was obliged to be taken down before the body could be extricated. P.c. Knight was on the spot, and sent for the surgeon, Dr. Cripps, of the same village, but to no purpose. Verdict: "Accidental Death." Mr. Bruton was cautioned by the coroner to have that portion of the mill made more secure.

Amelia Nash, George Nash's daughter, was licensee at this time but a report in the Herts Advertiser of 3 December in 1859 suggests that she was having some problems.

ST ALBANS LIBERTY PETTY SESSIONS

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 26TH, 1859

INFRINGEMENT OF THE BEER ACT

Amelia Nash, landlady of the Red Lion, Wheathamstead, was summoned at the instance of the Police, for having before half-past 12 o'clock on Sunday morning, the 13th ult., opened her house for the sale of beer, against the statute so made and so provided.

Police-constable Knight proved the case against the defendant, to the satisfaction of the Bench, who imposed a fine of £2 and 12s 6d costs, or, in default of payments, six weeks' imprisonment.

The defendant thanked the bench and paid the amount.

Miss Nash was soon in court again, as reported in the Herts Advertiser of 23 February 1861.

ST ALBANS LIBERTY PETTY SESSIONS

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 16 1861

REFUSING TO ADMIT THE POLICE

Amelia Nash, landlady of the Red Lion beer-house, at Wheathampstead, was charged that she being duly licensed to sell beer by retail to be drunk on the premises, refused to admit into her house George Knight, he being one of the officers of police for the County of Hertford.

Police-constable Knight, said – On Thursday night, the 7th of February instant, I went to the Red Lion beer house, kept by the defendant near the mill in the village of Wheathampstead, at ten minutes before 10 o'clock at night. I went into the house and saw the landlady and a man there in the tap room. I told her if I found that man in the house any night, that night included, after 10 o'clock, I would summons her before the magistrates. I watched the house until about half past 10; the man had not come out of the house. I then went to the front door of the house and knocked. Defendant asked who was there? I answered "The police". She said she should not open the door. I told her she had nothing to fear from the mob, there was no-one at the door but me. I told her several times, if she did not admit me to see if that man was in the house I should summons her. I wanted to go into the house for the purpose of executing my duty. She said there was no one in the house. I had reason to believe there was someone there. The man I speak of was not a lodger in the house. When I found she would not admit me I went away. She is licensed to sell beer by retail on the premises.

Defendant denied that Knight said he was the police, and said that the man had left by the back door, before 10 o'clock.

Fined £3, with 12s 6d costs. To be levied by distress; if not paid, or in default of distress, one month's imprisonment.

From the general feeling manifested by the inhabitants of the village, it appears that Police-constable Knight has given great satisfaction by the proceedings he has taken in this case.

These two court appearances, Miss Nash's fear of "the mob" and the comment in the last sentence together suggest that The Red Lion had become an unruly house. This may explain why, though The Red Lion is listed by name in the 1861 census (taken less than two months after this court case) there is no mention of a licensee or of anyone living on the premises, nor is it listed in Kelly's Directory 1862. Perhaps it had been closed?

In the 1871 census, the entry for Household 6, which is in the right location, suggests that Charles Chapman was combining a fishmonger business with selling beer from premises previously known as The Red Lion.

The undersigned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

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Civil Parish (or Township) of Wheathampstead City or Municipal Borough of Wheathampstead Parliamentary Borough of Wheathampstead Town of Wheathampstead Village or Hamlet, of Wheathampstead Local Board, or Improvement Commissioners Parish) of Wheathampstead Ecclesiastical District of Wheathampstead

No. of House	ROAD, STREET, No., and No. of NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES No. of the Street or Lane	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	COE- DITION	AGE of Person	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Year of Birth	Year of Death
6	High Street	1	Henry Roberts	Head	Mar	28	Licensed Hawker	Weymouth, Dorset		
			Charles Chapman	Head	Mar	28	Fishmonger & Beer Seller	Wheathampstead		
			Jane Chapman	Wife	Mar	28	Fishmonger's Wife	London		
			John Chapman	Son	Unm	16	Schooler	London		
			Elizabeth Chapman	Daughter	Unm	11		Wheathampstead		
			Charles Chapman	Son	Unm	1				
			Henry Odell	Lodger	Mar	42	Fishmonger			
			George Thomas	Boarder	Mar	40	Master Butcher & employe			
7	Corner of Luton Road	1	Edna Thomas	Wife	Mar	37	Butcher's Wife	Wheathampstead		
			Edmund Thomas	Son	Unm	32				
			Francis Thomas	Son	Unm	21				
			William Thomas	Son	Unm	19	Butcher			
			George Thomas	Son	Unm	18	Schooler			
			Joseph Thomas	Son	Unm	12	Labourer			
			George Freeman	Head	Mar	41	Labourer			
			Ann Freeman	Wife	Mar	40				
			Charles Freeman	Son	Unm	10				
			Elizabeth Freeman	Daughter	Unm	4				
12	Luton Road	1	Thomas Chapman	Head	Mar	41	Journeyman Bricklayer	Wheathampstead		
			Elizabeth Chapman	Wife	Mar	41	Beer Seller	Wheathampstead		
			John Chapman	Son	Unm	12	Schooler			
14	The Sconce	1	Joseph Hutchins	Head	Mar	70	Labourer	Wheathampstead		
15			Joseph Hutchins	Son	Unm	23	Labourer			
			Henry Davies	Son	Unm	26	Labourer			
Total of Houses			Total of Males and Females			12	11			

* Draw the pen through such of the words as are inappropriate.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE Reference: RG. 10 1376

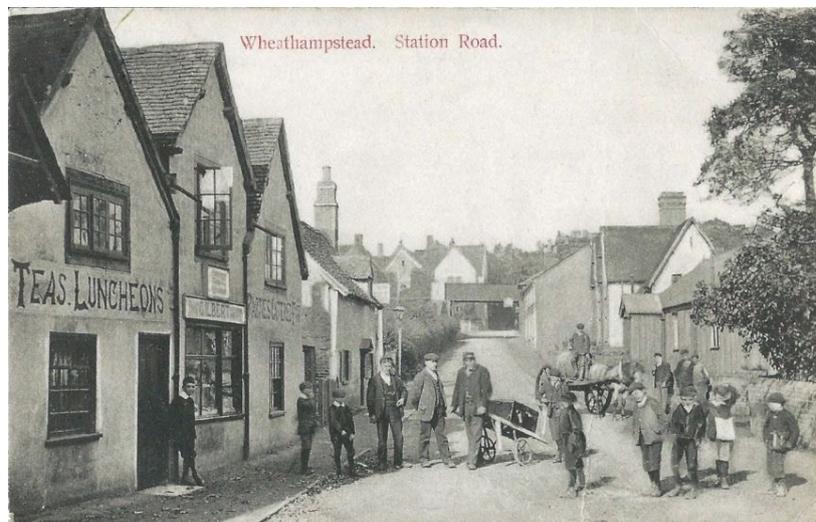
GENERAL PHOTOGRAPH NOT TO BE TAKEN WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, LONDON

Charles, aged 28, was a native of Wheathampstead but his wife Jane (28) was from London, where their two older children were born. Henry Odell (42), their lodger and also a fishmonger, was a member of a long-standing Wheathampstead family.

Kelly's Directory of 1878 lists William Welch as a beer retailer in Wheathampstead but does not give an address. The 1881 census shows Mary Welch, a widow aged 64, as a beer seller in the right part of the village; it is reasonable to assume that she was at The Red Lion. She lives with her grandson William (12), who is at school, and three lodgers: Henry Odell (41), a labourer who is married but whose wife was not present on census night, Francis Freeman (80), retired widower, and Joseph Hutchins (70), also retired but unmarried. Kelly's Directory 1881 confirms that Mary Welch was retailing beer but, again, no address is given.

The 1890 Kelly's Directory lists George Edmonds as a beer retailer in Wheathampstead and the 1891 census confirms that he was at The Red Lion; he is described as a brewer. He lived with his wife Emma (40), daughter Elizabeth (21) who worked as a domestic servant, son William (15), a 'house boy', son George (13) who was at school, widowed mother-in-law Charlotte Twidle (*sic?*) (70), and two lodgers: Charles Hill (23) single, a groom, and Henry Davies (26) single, an agricultural labourer.

George Edmonds died early in 1893; his widow was granted a Protection Order 'enabling her to carry on the Red Lion until next transfer day'.



The Red Lion early in the 20th century

We do not know who took over the Red Lion from Mrs Edmonds but the Herts Ad dated 1 May 1897 reported that a Protection Order for the Red Lion had been granted from J. Boutle to E.J. Collins so J. Boutle may have held the licence since 1893. 'E.J. Collins' is Elijah Collins who kept the Red Lion until at least 1914 and probably 1920 (see below).

In 1898, The Red Lion, along with all the other pubs and beerhouses in the parish, was valued in the Poor Rate Assessment. The Assessment Committee of the St Albans Union gave it a gross value of £30 with a rateable value of £24. On appeal to a meeting held on 16 February 1899, this was reduced to £27 and £21 10s. Twenty-one other pubs and beerhouses in the parish were reassessed at the same meeting, with rateable values ranging from £8 10s. (The Elephant and Castle) to £24 10s. (The Railway Inn).

In the 1901 census, the beerhouse is listed simply as 'The Lion' and is kept by Elijah Collins (51), who lived with his wife Laura (41) who came from Hampshire, and their daughters Laura (14), born in Windsor, May (10), born in Belgravia, Jessie (8), born in Scotland, and son William (1), who was born in Wheathampstead. In the previous year, young May had been given an 'honourable mention' for her entry in a 'Stories and Anecdotes' competition run by The Golden League in The Herts Advertiser and Times.

There followed a long period of stability in the tenancy of The Red Lion.

Kelly's Directories for 1902, 1908, 1910 and 1912 all list Elijah Collins as a beer retailer in Wheathampstead, though without giving an address.

In 1904, the minutes of the County Licensing Committee listed The Red Lion as owned by Pryor Reid, with beer 'on', so Elijah Collins was their tenant.

In the 1911 census Elijah is 61, described as an Army pensioner and beer retailer living in an unnamed beerhouse in the right location with his wife Laura (51), daughters May (20), a draper's assistant and May (20), an unemployed milliner, and son William (11) who was at school.

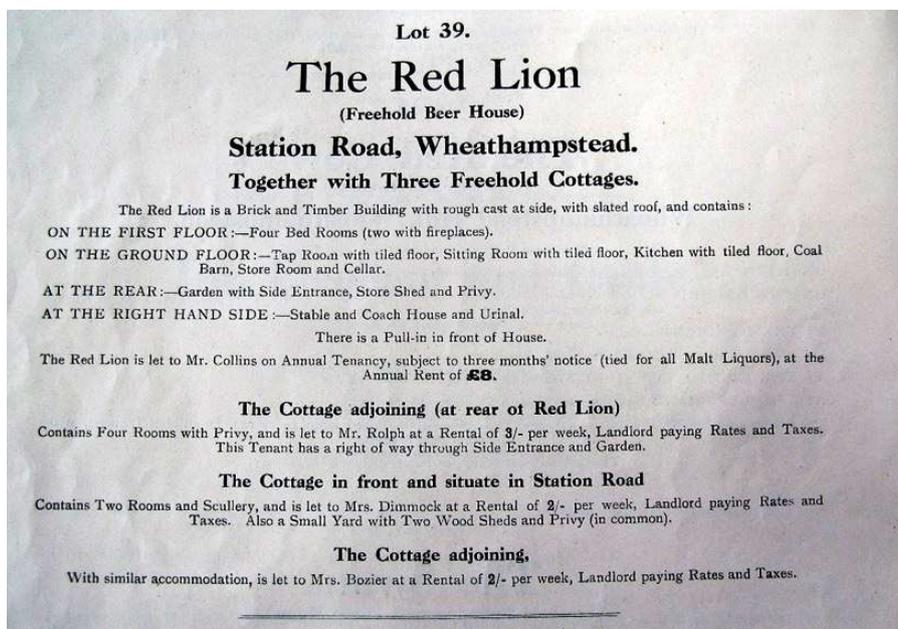
The last reference to Elijah Collins as licensee at The Red Lion before 1914 is in Kelly's Directory for 1912. He died aged 70 in 1920 and Laura in 1933 aged 73. They are buried together in the churchyard at St Helen's.



The Red Lion in the 1920s/30s

Postscript

The Red Lion was sold at auction in 1920 as part of the Hatfield Brewery estate. Mr Collins was the tenant and the sale included three cottages.



Kelly's Directory for 1927/8 lists Mrs Laura Collins as still running the Red Lion at that time. The pub is not listed in Kelly's 1934 directory and the building was demolished in 1936.