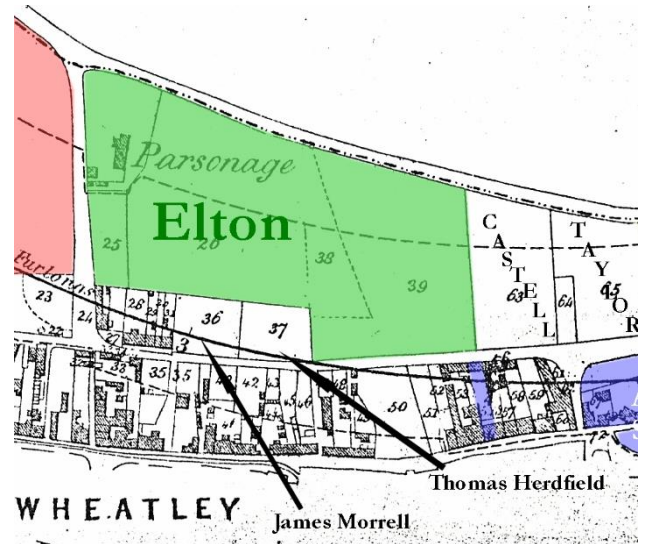


Church site in Church Road

The medieval chapel, on the south of the High Street in what is now the Memorial Garden, was pulled down in 1785 and a new chapel built. However, the prospective vicar, the Revd. Edward Elton (incumbent from 1849-1884), was anxious to have a more suitable church built. He raised £3,500, mostly in small contributions from University men.

The site had previously been one of the farmland holdings owned by the Whalley-Smythe-Gardiner family, extending from Church Road to London Road and bounded on the west by Holloway Road. It was put up for sale by auction in February 1846 as part of some 129 acres of farmland, but did not sell. By the time these unsold lots came up for auction again in June 1846, some of the land fronting Church Road had been sold and this became the terrace of houses as shown by the 1852 railway (abandoned) feasibility study which showed the terrace existing in 1852 and other ownerships of Morrell and Herdfield, the latter eventually becoming the Primary School.



Elton had acquired his land-holding in 1849 as evidenced by a letter dated 20 March 1855 requesting a Mr Orpwood to sign a deed under which this land fronting Church Road was conveyed in 1849 to Rev. Elton. This presumably resulted from the tidying up process at the time of a valuation (12 February 1855) when this land held by Elton was valued at £120 for the purposes of it being purchased by the Parish. On 16 January 1855, an official letter sent to The Incumbent on behalf of the Home Secretary, Lord Palmerston, approving the proposed new burial ground at Wheatley. Also in 1855, there was an itemised bill from Messrs Burder and Dunning for advice and assistance given in 1854-55 in respect of the separation of the chapelry of Wheatley from the parish of Cuddesdon and the conveyance of glebe land for the burial ground. On 4 January 1856, an agreement was signed between Elton and Mr John Castle, builder of Oxford, for the erection of the new church at a cost of £1,763 16s 6d. The architect was G. E. Street, who raised 'a good specimen of Early English architecture'. The spire was built by Holland of Thame, and has been described as 'unusual but very effective'. The new church, dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin, was consecrated in 1857.