

2567 1911 Powerpoint talk by Michael Heaton text

1. Welcome to 'Life in Wheatley in 1911' which has been created from the census of that year and archive and other records. With the help of a 1910 valuation survey, we know exactly where almost everyone lived, the names and ages of all the children and others living in the household, and the occupations of everyone.
2. First of all a statistical overview. There were 249 dwellings in the village, the majority were tenanted as was common in those days.
There was a population of 976 of which 402 were in employment. There were a significant number of females at home and not working, as expected in this era. Domestic service and agriculture were the main forms of employment. The Sawmill and Brick and limekiln businesses were the two more industrial sources of work in the village.
3. Wheatley was a self-sufficient village. Run by its own unitary authority – so didn't have to consult any district or county council, nor was central government wanting to be involved. Bliss!
4. Wheatley provided services from cradle to the grave
5. So, starting from birth. Kate Brister, aged 27, was the village midwife and district nurse who boarded with Ethelbert Green at the Firs, the house on the north east corner of Church Road and Holloway Road.
6. Then the essential Pinta. Then the essential Pinta. Deliveries were plentiful with 4 milk sellers in the village.
First, George Allen, whose son Joseph married into the Munt family who controlled market gardening as we shall see later. Maybe the Allen's benefited from cows pastured on Bowls Down owned by the Munts?
Then Caleb Harris who was related to the Munts and to the Allens! Perhaps it was inevitable that many would eventually marry into the huge Munt family!
Next James White with the White and Welford round, but no Munt connection! Last William Dennis at Wheatley Hill Farm who had a dairy herd
7. Your first school was the infant school. This was at the back of Bell Lane and had about 30 pupils.
8. It was run by 75-year old widow Rosalind Roberts who lived in Kiln Lane. The three assistant teachers in the photo were wearing black in mourning for King Edward VII, but did not live in the village. Incidentally they earned £12 a year. In addition, private tuition was available from Herbert Fernie, who lived in part of 76 Church Road, and 84 year-old widowed Frances Gale, who lived at the Old Parsonage in High Street.
9. The National School was on Church Road, seen here in 1907/8.
10. It was run by Rees Leyshon and Rees's wife Eliza and daughter Winifred also taught here. Leyshon Road was named after him. The slide shows a class in 1911. We know of 4 other assistants at the school. There were about 120 pupils. Education was, by then, compulsory up to the older age of 13!
11. Now for your health. There were two doctors whom we know about, Dr Barnes and Burgoyne Stanley at 76 Church Road where, by 1913, the sanatorium had morphed into the Rose and Lily tea gardens – a strange change! But Wheatley was without an undertaker as William Mitchell, after whom Mitcheldene is named, had retired. Or, perhaps Chapmans builders had taken this on, although the Kelly Directory does not say so. So, not clear how you held your funeral!
12. If, as some do today, you relied on the local shops, food shopping was no different then, standing in a queue and passing the time of the day. But most of us now have a regular supermarket shop or delivery, so not needing a visit to the local grocer, butcher or baker (there were no specialist greengrocers then).

13. Starting from the west end of High Street, there were grocers at 11/13 High Street where the three young Dungey brothers aged 17-21, Robert, William Bernard and Montague, had taken over from their parents who had emigrated to Australia in 1910. Originally, there were two shops here, the other being run by Joseph Frampton selling wooden buckets and other such items. He was one of the last known inhabitants to have worn a particular smock for which Wheatley was well-known.
14. There was a bakery at 39 High Street (later, Clarke's greengrocer and now the pharmacy), run by 61-year old widower John Clayton, who owned the land through to Church Road with a house there bearing his name today. The photograph shows it when it was run by the Hyde family. There was another baker in the village, 36-year old Edwin Hawes, who was carrying on his business from Penny Cottage, a five-roomed house in Church Road. It is not clear where the shop space was, but perhaps they just sold from the front room.
15. Crossing over the much-narrower-than-today Holloway Road, before 13 feet were lopped off what is now number 53 to widen the road and add pavements, this shop was a grocery, bakery and butcher's business, leased in 1911 by the young 28-year old James Hughes and his wife Keziah who was 10 years his senior. Keziah was not an uncommon name as there are records of three others in Wheatley, including the wife of Joseph Cooper.
16. Further along at Oxford House, the business had been established, as a general store, in 1866. In 1899, it had been possibly owned and run by Joseph Shepherd. In 1911, Charles and Emily Mold, both aged 36, lived with their two sons, aged 8 and 7, and a domestic servant, so business was presumably brisk and now included a food section. Today it is the Language School. The Chequers in Crown Square had closed by then and the use of the building as a shop selling food had not yet commenced with farmer Thomas Robbins living here rather than in College Farm.
17. On to butchers. 50 High Street was the site of charming cottages until about 1900. In 1911, the occupier was the Premier Meat Company, so its use as a butchers seems to have been established by then. Samuels the butchers took this shop over in 1936.
There was another butcher's shop at 64 High Street, now Chillingworth House. This was owned and run by Arthur and Ellen Bathard. Arthur had been the licensee of the White Hart for a few years over the turn of the century.
18. The third butchers were brothers John George Rose and Joseph Rose, both single and in their 60s and, also, members of this family who were involved in farming and renting-out cottages. They lived in Jessamine Cottage, now 1 Church Road, with two spinster sisters and two servants. Opposite, on the corner of Church Road and High Street they had an abattoir and a butcher's shop tacked on to the end of what is now 2 Church Road. They also owned and occupied The Green on which livestock were held awaiting their fate. Thomas White, who lived at 82 High Street was employed in the shop, and later he had his own butcher's business from this house. Albert East, living at 23/5 Church Road may have also been employed here, later working for Mr West's butchers shop in Station Road, coining the term 'East and West butchers'!
19. There was a drapery at 47 High Street, owned and run by Annie Life, married but with no evidence of a husband. Living with her were two daughters, one described as a ladies companion, the other a nurse. They may have fulfilled these roles at home too? In my house at 48 High Street the Post Office was run by Alice Tubb who had just taken it over from her mother Maud. Apart from Alice, there were five postmen in 1911, three listed as involved in the Postal Telegraph.
At 45 High Street was the unusual combination of a hairdresser and tailor in the person of George English.

Frederick Stamp sold china and glass at 58/62 High Street; there had been a saddler at 65 High Street but this had closed after 1910.

20. And then there was Wheatley's department store at 95/7 High Street, which had opened in 1876 and sold millinery, grocery, ironmongery and medicines. Ironmonger and blacksmith.

Ellen Sheldon was the 60-year old widow of Frederick Sheldon (blacksmith) who had died in 1907 and had run the smithy business on the Church Road frontage. Ellen is listed in the 1911 census as 'ironmonger' perhaps explaining one of the many doors on the High Street frontage of this house. Just a few words about the Sheldons. Ernest Frederick was the eldest of the surviving sons. He was a cycle dealer at 94 Church Road, as detailed later. Frederick, not to be confused with his father, joined the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and died in Baghdad in 1918. Robert James (not to be confused with another Robert who was also a Great War casualty) moved to Rugby on his marriage in 1911. There doesn't appear to have been room in Wheatley for all the sons to take up enterprises! The Sheldons were the owners of Cromwell House in 1910 but had either let or sold this to the Brazill family, who were blacksmiths, with Walter age 41 living here with his 44-year old wife Emma.

There was a sweet shop run by Clara Holland at 1 Farm Close Lane (now 1 Crown Square); the Sheldon cycle shop at 94 Church Road referred to earlier; a coal yard adjacent the station run by the Weedon brothers and, perhaps separately, another member of the Sheldon family, Edward, was a self-employed coalman.

21. Now the pubs. In 1911 there were 11 pubs or beer houses – the latter did not sell spirits. How many remain? Just 3. Charles Heath ran the King & Queen with his wife Elizabeth. Living with them were three sons aged from 18-35 who all were to fight in the Great War, and also one sister, one boarder and one servant.
22. William Spearing ran the White Hart with his wife Lizzie and five children aged from 5-21. While the photo is from the 1940s, perhaps it was the meeting point for the hunt in 1911?
23. William Tombs ran The Crown, of which we have no good photos, with his wife Annie their son, Llewellyn Richard who served in the Great War, 13 year-old daughter and three boarders. Alfred Gunn ran The Sun with his wife Kate.
24. The Kings Arms was run by Joseph Sturges and his wife Esther, They had four children aged 3-12, and one servant.
25. The Plough was run by George Walde and his wife Ellen and they had two young children. He later started a business at 47 High Street
26. The Red Lion which was a beer house was run by John Martin and his wife Harriet (It is now the New Club).
27. And the Cricketers in Littleworth was another beer house run by the widowed Anne Brooks
28. With two drinking holes with the name Railway in them, I don't see how the railway brought new opportunities to drink to the village. We don't know when the Railway Tavern at 44 High Street opened but it was run in 1911 by Alfred Phelps and his wife Priscilla. And the Railway Hotel, now the Sidings, was managed by Henry Brown and his wife Emma. Two grown-up children in their 30s were also involved in the business.
29. Now we come to the all-important market gardening business which fed Wheatley with most of its fresh produce and probably meat also. It was dominated by the Munt family and was a significant employer with 15 people in 1911 and 12 in 1921. In the mid-1920s, William Tombs chaired the 'Wheatley Smallholders' which had an annual turnover of £1,359 – equivalent to £0.5 million today. James Munt was a major tenant of the 15½ acre allotment site in Littleworth owned by Mrs Bird.
30. Other tenants were the Smith family who lived in the now-demolished Littleworth House. George and his wife Ann (later known as 'Auntie Smith') had three sons in the business.

Auntie rode an old sit-up-and-beg cycle, with handle bars curved backwards so that the rider could sit up straight like a dog in a begging position!

31. Three members of the Munt family occupied holdings on the north and south sides of the High Street, right in its centre, as shown on the map. It is pure speculation but this may been the main produce centre suggesting a pick-your-own approach? The three plots are being pointed out now – numbers 539, 538 and 484. 537 is the White Hart site, and 535 Lynton House.
32. But this wasn't the end to it as James Munt senior, owned and occupied the 20¾ acre Bullsdown, numbered 465 and shaded blue. This was the same 73 year old James Munt who occupied plot 538 north of the High Street and referred to above. Surely, this would have been used for grazing animals
33. The Munts were not the only family involved. Plot 427 adjacent to The Manor, was let by the Rose brothers to William Tombs, who lived at nearby 54 High Street. Other allotments, but not necessarily for the commercial growing of produce, were what-is-now Templars Close and the area to the north of the quarry/tip up to Parkhill (before any houses were built there); and a plot immediately to the east of the Church. And there were others involved in this industry
34. Most households would have had someone competent at sewing but if not, where did you get your clothes altered or your dresses made? Susan Stevens, a 69-year-old spinster, lived in the alms-houses Bethrapha, built by the Shotover Estate c. 1900 and shown on the left in 1908. Others were Florence Tombs, an 80-year-old widow at 7 Kiln Lane; the unmarried Susanna Munt living in this long-since-demolished row of cottages in Robbins Row (shown on the right); Eliza Hancock, another unmarried girl, living with her widowed mother at 1 Kiln Lane, although she was more skilled being shown as a dressmaker; and unmarried dressmaker, Mary Pym, living with her widowed mother Rose as a tenant of Mrs Anne Frampton.
And the same for your laundry if you didn't want to do it yourself. Laundresses were the widowed Elizabeth Stanley at Blenheim on the Littleworth Road; Mary Putt, another widow at 27 Church Road; and Mary Collins.
35. Rose Pym, mother of dressmaker Mary (above), was described as a boarding house keeper, presumably of the temperance hotel, now the Merry Bells, She is seen ringed in this gorgeous 1908 photograph of the Women's Wednesday Afternoon Group.
36. And what about a cobbler? Thomas Putt, living at number 7 Blenheim in the terrace of cottages, was a bootmaker and dealer. His business was later taken on by his son Stephen, known as Stivvie.
Another was the unmarried Henry Merritt, who had just moved into 4 Bell Lane. George Farthing was a bootmaker living in the house now 6 Farm Close Lane. He was married to Elizabeth, sister to John Russell who had been the post-master.
37. There were two main builders. First was Cullums, the largest construction organisation in the village, with a site at the top of Bell Lane leading into Station Road. They also leased a substantial yard on a 1-acre plot on the north of Church Road opposite Friday's Lane. William, the father of the surviving two (of three) brothers was 78 in 1911 and lived on their main site at 17 Bell Lane. Arthur lived at Quarry House, 2 Westfield Road and Francis at 44 Ladder Hill.

The Chapmans were, probably, the next best-known name in this trade in Wheatley. Their business was based in 62-year-old John's High Street house now known as The Robins. They had another yard on the south of High Street just east of the Manor. John and wife Helen had ten children, four of them over 21 and still living at home, including Arthur who was 29 and Hurrell who was 22, both plumbers and glaziers. And there were several other smaller building outfits.

38. Eeper Weeper, chimibly sweeper; had a wife but couldn't keep her – although Reconcile Smith, Wheatley's only resident chimney sweep, did keep his and their five sons, who all worked in the Headington quarry.
39. Blacksmith. Charles Sheldon had been the main village blacksmith operating out of the forge in Church Road at the top of the garden to Forge House, 99 High Street. After his death the forge moved to Cromwell House run by Walter Brazill assisted by Charles Sheldon's son Wilfrid and perhaps also assisted by Henry Chandler, who lived in the 29-35 Church Road terrace, as well as George Bartlett from Mott House.
40. There were 14 people employed on the railway. Edgar Phillips, aged 37 and living at Greystones, was the station master; Llewellyn Jackson and Henry John Bushnell were signalmen; Henry Nelms, Thomas Johnson and Henry Holland were platelayers; William Mells and Mark Shorter were gangers; Richard Shepherd a packer; Charles Redman a railway servant, and Wilfred Cox, aged 26, was a worker. Wilfrid later became a signalman and bought Mott House in 1958.
41. The brickworks were started on the site of the Old House in Westfield Road in 1742 but moved to Littleworth by the early 1900s. It was owned and run by the Cooper family over several generations and in 1911 they all lived together at The Lodge, 25 Parkhill, with three of the family in the business. The business employed another 11 other people.
42. These three lime kilns – originally there were 10 – are believed to be the only surviving ones in Oxfordshire. What was left of the poor-quality limestone from the quarry was converted in these kilns to agricultural lime.
43. Sawmill. This business started in 1893 after William Avery had spotted the site from a passing train. The sawmill stripped and sawed trees into timber for the furniture businesses in High Wycombe. There were 9 other sawmill workers identified in the census. Apparently it was a favourite – but uncomfortable? – haunt for canoodling couples!
44. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man. William Fisher was a tinker, an itinerant tinsmith who lived at 9 Blenheim. George English was the tailor, referred to earlier. This is not him!
45. There were a number of Wheatley serving soldiers noted in They Were a Wall. Other than Arthur Miles, whom the census lists as 'Overseas Military' (and who was killed in the war), these lived in the village in 1911. And three serving sailors must have been away when the census was taken.
46. Rich ladies yes – they lived on their own means. And three others probably in this category
47. Poor man. There were three other elderly ladies living in the alms-houses: Susannah Stevens working as a needlewoman, Ann Clements and Charlotte Hayfield. 'Beggar man'. 42-year-old blacksmith, Alfred Butler was a vagrant. There was no thief category in the 1911 census.
48. Domestic staff. 1911, nationally, saw the peak in domestic service, and in Wheatley it was the largest category of employee with 64 people in service, probably not all in Wheatley. Domestic service was, by now, regarded as a genteel occupation for young ladies (rather than farming in previous times) and this was one of the causes of resistance in getting girls back on the land in the Great War. Also, men thought that the women weren't up to it and, with lower wages, would drag down their own earnings!
49. Farming, here is a photo of the Walker family on Bullsdown.
50. The farmers in 1911 all rented their farms other than Rose Brothers and James Munt.
 Edward Walker, Rectory Farm, edged red 250 acres
 Charles Shepherd, Ambrose Farm, edged green, 120 acres
 William Dennis, Wheatley Hill Farm, edged blue, 105 acres
 Rose Brothers, mixed holdings, edged purple, 97 acres

Thomas Robbins, College Farm, edged dark brown, 57 acres

William Bell, edged light brown, 40 acres

James Munt, Bullsdown, edged light green, 21 acres

51. The map also shows the private allotments in Littleworth, the brickworks in Littleworth, the Howe Trust land, William Avery's land adjacent the railway (8 acres), John Crook's quarry area, Cooper's lime kiln area, William Cullum's land and E C Sheldon's holding alongside the river Thame. There were 5 others who were self-employed in farming including Jamie Clements, a single man of 20, who owned a threshing machine. The total number involved in farming was 56, the second highest category
52. How did you sell your house? Presumably you needed a solicitor and there were two in Wheatley. Joseph Burt lived with his wife Rose and five children under 21 at 5 Westfield Road and Arthur Welch who lived with his wife Elizabeth, and one servant at The Turrets, 19 Park Hill. It seems that the legal profession was already a profitable career.
53. The Merry Bells. Mr Atherton, who did not live in the village, was boarding house keeper to the Merry Bells – assisted, as already noted by Rose Pym.
54. The Home of Rest for Convalescent Churchworkers at 7 Park Hill was run by Catherine Pastor
55. There appear to have been just two active religions. Rev. William Curry, the 50-year-old vicar of the Church of England St. Mary's Church, was living with his wife Amy, three daughters and two servants at the vicarage, the current Morland House. There was also a lay reader, George Ogilvie Grant who lived at Bethrapha with a servant. and an organist, both resident in the village. The organist, Arthur Samuel Sheldon, lived with his father Samuel at 90 Church Road.
56. William Newton presided over the Congregational Church and lived with his wife Mary and two daughters at Rose Cottage, High Street (today Rose Villa and a house behind are on this site). There is no evidence of a Roman Catholic priest until the early 1920s.
57. So, this was how life was in Wheatley in 1911.