

High Street buildings analysis

Historically, local stone was under the control of the Lord of the Manor so, while this persisted, the construction of stone buildings was very restricted. It appears that the Manor House, the King and Queen, the Crown and the Bell Inn may have been the only buildings, built before manorial control disintegrated in the middle of the 1600s, still standing today. Most farmworkers' cottages were poorly built in the 1600s and did not survive, perhaps the reason that many Wheatley buildings date back to the early 1800s, although a few cottages built in the 1700s survive today, usually with two knocked together to provide more accommodation. Looking through the High Street booklet, the only other older buildings surviving from 1665 or earlier with, at least, some of their original structure appear to be 82 High Street (chimney and roof, albeit the frontage looks to have been re-constructed later) and 38 High Street (probably late 1600s at best). Most of the stonework of the other High Street frontages is of undressed, either uncoursed or coursed, 'rubble' suggesting that much redevelopment probably occurred after manorial control had lapsed. Good stone quoins with more substantial and dressed stone are only found at the George Inn and the King and Queen. Elsewhere there are buildings with reasonable stone quoins but inferior less-dressed masonry and an occasional higher-quality stone construction, such as 35 High Street and Oxford House, both known to be of a later era. The farming economy was good at the end of the 1700s and into the early 1800s, so it is probable that this is when many dwellings were either rebuilt, re-faced or re-modelled. Building costs were, by today's standards, incredibly cheap, with an abundance of local stone 'for the picking' and very low labour costs with a pair of cottages being typically built for £100 in the mid-1800s.

Broadening the picture to buildings of the 18th century or earlier, there is possible evidence of some 20 buildings with 18th century or older origins on each side of the High Street, if Bell Lane properties are included. At the west end, numbers 11 and 13 are believed to have origins from 1770. The Manor House is late 16th century with alterations by Abraham Archdale evidenced by a plaque dated 1601 on the east wing. In living memory, there were ruined cottages to the east of the Manor House, two fronting High Street and two at right angles to it. There was a house on the site of the Old Parsonage in 1612, although the present building is from the 18th century. The George has 16th century origins but has been much altered. There was a house on the site of Mitcheldene in 1648, but it has since been rebuilt. Numbers 35 and 37 date from the late 18th century. Number 38, originally thatched, is of considerable age from the 17th century as already mentioned. Number 40 was originally two cottages, built of rubble in the 18th century. Numbers 44, 46 and 48 are probably all late 18th century, number 46 has a 1776 date over the door.

After Holloway Road and Station Road, Number 55 is an 18th century cottage divided into two. The King and Queen dates to the 16th century. Opposite is number 52, built of rubble from the 18th century. Chillingworth House, once the Bell Inn, has origins to 1612, with the Bell Lane frontage replaced in brick in the mid-19th century. The houses on the east and south sides of Bell Lane suggest that this is an old and surviving part of Wheatley's housing stock. Number 82, from the 17th century, has a roof structure and chimneys from the Elizabethan era or earlier. To the east of this, and on both sides of the road, there are a dozen or so houses all of which appear to have 18th century origins, suggesting that this part of the High Street is part of the oldest surviving, as inspection suggests.

The house plots on the north side had relatively large back gardens extending up to Back Lane or Back Street, now Church Road, which would have had stables or artisan workshops on the latter frontage.