

Heritage enlarged trail text v15 no windmill

1	Welcome to the Wheatley Greater Heritage Trail. 5 mins introduction
2	Up to the end of High Street and then north to Lye Hill Quarry, the whole of Wheatley sits on a band of limestone which ranges from very hard to soft. So, Wheatley developed as a limestone quarrying centre from the 14 th century supplying high quality stone for Windsor Castle and many of the Oxford colleges. This resulted in Wheatley being one of Oxfordshire's wealthiest villages in 1334 from information gleaned by Kate Tiller in her ambitious book, ' <i>An Historical Atlas of Oxfordshire</i> '. Evidence of these quarries remains as we shall see.
3	As well as having this outcrop, Wheatley also sat on two seams of Kimmeridge clay, west of the end of the High Street, which resulted in brickworks in the village from 1742 to 1939.
4	It was also on an important cross-country route between London and Worcester where the route crossed the river Thame, initially by a ford just east of Wheatley, and later by a bridge. A traveller wanting to go to Oxford took a spur along Wheatley's curved High Street and then over Shotover Plain. Later this was part of the old Oxford to London turnpike road. There is evidence of 16th century occupation of the inns along this route and several buildings have been researched showing evidence of a make-over in the first part of the 17th century.
5	The original route went over Shotover Hill. The revised route, from 1790, went along the London Road (before the A40), and connected up with what is now the A40 west of Wheatley.
6	Wheatley boasted several inns and other trades including wheelwrights, maltsters and smiths which served this traffic. The influence of this historical past on the current village underlies this tour, the first part of which deals with the old London to Oxford road down the High Street, Crown Road and the mis-named Roman Road.
7	Between the 17 th and 18 th centuries, and aside from agriculture, Wheatley's local industry was quarrying and brick-making. It seems that the workers were prone to drunkenness! To counter this in 1888, Mrs Miller of Shotover House provided The Merry Bells as a temperance hotel. In 1970 it became Wheatley's Village Hall. We are going east towards London and there are a few things I want to tell you before we move from here. Firstly, there was a stream from Shotover which ran down the west end of High Street, originally as an open sewer as shown in artist's mock-up. Before the parade of shops its course changed and it went round the back of the houses on the south side, emerging into and crossing Crown Square. When this stream was culverted in the mid-1800s, the culvert was extended down the High Street. At the same time, the level of the very end of High Street and Crown Square were raised as is evidenced by Cromwell House which we will pass. The second thing is to point out that some of the houses on the north side, numbers 97-105, are accessed up steps. Why was this as there was no stream originally in this part of the High Street? We believe it was because at this point the very hard limestone outcrop was higher and the houses had to be built on top of this rather than trying to level this off. There are no cellars in this part as a result.
8	Immediately opposite is one of Wheatley's oldest buildings with the chimney believed to date from the Elizabethan era. The chimney stack is stone mixed with cob which has been gradually moving to the south (back) as the cob dries out more on that side. There is a well-preserved stone fireplace on the first floor suggestive of examples found by Linda Hall (L. Hall, Period House Fixtures and Fittings) in 1445 in Hampshire, so possibly a recycling of a fireplace from a much older building.
9	These houses (95 & 97) were built in the 18C. By 1876 they formed a shop kept by Joshua Harris, who sold millinery, grocery, ironmongery and medicines. In 1971, the gradual conversion to dwellings began. Now move off telling them to note the shop windows on No. 97.
10	101 and 103 are an attractive pair of white-painted 18 th century buildings. 101 High Street was once part of one of the 195 strips owned by All Souls College, Oxford, a prominent landowner in the village in the 1590s.
11	No. 107 is the earlier Post Office (1926-2017), before it transferred adjacent to the Merry Bells, replacing Barclays Bank which had closed. There is still a letter-box in its front wall.
12	Opposite is Cromwell House, one of the houses once used for tanning and drying hides. We believe that the original house dates to the 17 th century when it may have been a farm dwelling with some of the best dressed stone in the village later becoming two one-up one-down thatched cottages. Panelling to a small cupboard, dated to the 17 th century, is said to have come from Holton House where Cromwell was in attendance when his daughter, Bridget, was married to Henry Ireton on 15 June 1646. It was sold in 1849 for private housing. Note that the road was raised 2.5 feet, probably when the culvert was installed in the mid-1800s
13	The United Reformed Church was once a tanning barn but was converted to a church in 1841 to

	1843. In front of it, to the east, was a cottage which was demolished and rebuilt in 1898 as the Sunday School.
14	Friday Lane was once part of one of All Soul's strips
15	The square was the centre of this tanning business starting with the slaughter of cattle from markets held at 'The Crown Inn' until 1909. The hides would have been lice-ridden, and this was probably the reason for the local name of Louse Hill for the site of the old thatched dwellings on the raised south side, now replaced in the 1960s by more modern housing. During the tanning process, the hides were washed using water from the stream which ran behind the High Street houses, many of which were also used for the tanning business.
16	Nos. 113 & 115 High Street were originally part of 'The Chequers Inn' which closed in the 1920s. The original road level here was also once lower until being raised in an unsuccessful flood-alleviation scheme.
17	College Farm, the location of the original All Souls farmhouse but re-built in a slightly different location c.1768.
18	Crown Road, and further on Roman Road, were part of the old road from London to Oxford. As such, you would expect an inn and 'The Crown Inn', dating from 1544, was an old coaching inn – but not a change-over-of-horses point which was at the Swan in Tetsworth being some 11-12 miles from Oxford. Instead 'heavy' horses may well have been loaned from here to pull coaches up Shotover Hill. In the 1790s the coaching route was altered and, as 'The Crown Inn' was then no longer on this route, a 'tap' bar was built on Church Road (Back Lane) for customers.
19	Ambrose Farm. Subject of a recent OBR report (392). Probably built in the early 17C as a three-unit house parallel to Crown Road, with a detached kitchen to the rear which in 1776 was linked to the main house, also raising a two-storey chamber block with twin gables to the north. There are apotropaic marian marks on a bressumer beam. There was a major phase of alterations in the 1920s.
20	(Jackie's Lane.) A Roman bath-house was excavated at the top of this hill in 19C, as part of a farm from that era. A coin from emperor Constantine's reign, 306-307, was found in the 1980s, there was a possible Saxon deserted village with 'Old Wheatley Close' shown on the 1590s All Souls map. Graves also found at the top of the hill, typical of a Saxon settlement.
21	The railway, which came in 1864 crossed here via a level crossing, with typical railway railings in evidence but perhaps not in their original position. Ridge and furrow is found in the lower fields
22	Passing the back of Wayside, just before the entrance to Rectory House is a barn with a now-indecipherable datestone of 1720. This barn is now the RC church. The house was originally the farmhouse for the main farm in Wheatley and the staircase has been dated to 1630 by dendrochronology. A new farmhouse up the hill to replace it was built in 1962, now Castle Hill Farm.
23	Mulberry Court is another old dwelling and this had a barn with an identical 1720 datestone.
24	(Return via FCL 6 Farm Close Lane) Subject of OBR study 439. The deeds and much of the detail of the original house clearly support it having been built in the 17C. The apotropaic burn marks (to ward off evil spirits) and window catches and stays, similar to those found at Ambrose Farm, suggest that it might date from the first half of the 17C, fitting in with one of the 'golden ages' of farming. Note Stile Cottage. Back into High Street
25	Cinnamons was previously The White Hart, rebuilt after a fire soon after 1822 and finally closed in 1999. It is now an Indian restaurant. The building to the left was the club room, where the Wheatley Morris men used to meet before the building's conversion in 2019 to housing.
26	This was once the 'The Bell Inn' (notice the bells on the plaque on the house wall), the deeds dating from 1612. It remained an inn until 1854, when William Chillingworth became the owner as a result of the loan default by the licensee. He rebuilt the Bell Lane frontage in brick as this was then fashionable – the . In 1911, it was a butcher's shop, later a betting shop.
27	(Bell Lane.) All properties are 18C. Up a path to the right of 9 Bell Lane was the infant school, established in 1840 and closed in the early 1970s. The ochre painted house was where the bier was kept, we shall see the site of the old chapel shortly. 17, Bell Lane was the home of the Cullum family who had a building business with a yard adjacent.
28	At the top of Bell Lane, cross the road and point out the give-way sign. The development on the left is set down because this is where the line and the station, opened 1864 and closed 1963, were. Railway bridge was (where the light now is). The Sidings was the site of

	the Railway Hotel, built soon after the railway came, demolished in 2018. Wheatley House built 1890s.
29	Historically, Wheatley's mother church was in Cuddesdon. But Wheatley wanted its own place of worship and this was a Chapel of Ease, built in the mid-1500s, which stood near the top gate to Memorial Garden until 1795 when a new building, financed by the Sims family and dedicated to St. Swithin, but known locally as St. Mary's, replaced it on the same site. Burials not permitted until early 1800s, had previously to be in Cuddesdon, quite a climb! A few of the original 430 graves from 1800 can be found in the grass. The chapelry of Wheatley separated from Cuddesdon parish in 1854, and a new church took this name on its completion in Church Road in 1857. A memorial to the fallen in WW1 was erected at the High Street end in 1921. This deteriorated over the years and was replaced in the 1970s with another memorial cross, donated by Magdalen College – in the mid-1920s, they had been bequeathed the 230-acre Wheatley farm.
30	Parts of the King & Queen can be traced back to the 1500s, although we do not know its name then. It was certainly named 'The William and Mary' after their joint reign (1689-1702). The chimneys and other features are original. (Up to Church Road.)
31	(Pause in the car park to see the new Church.) The site in Church Road (originally Back Lane) was acquired for a parish church in 1849. The new church, designed by the architect George Street was completed in 1857. The spire was added in 1868 by Holland of Thame. The bell tower has a Russian bell, gifted by Corpus Christi College, Oxford in 1921 and is a wonderful (now published as a mini-book) love-story in its own right. The church is Grade II listed.
32	From here, we can witness the evidence of the period of agricultural decline in the period from 1830 after the Napoleonic Wars. One of the ways which this manifested itself was in the break-up of the Whalley Smythe Gardiner manorial estate triggered by an adverse court case in 1820, and the drunkenness of both the father and son – the latter died at the age of 25 from the drink!.
33	Opposite is a terrace of cottages built in the late 1840s on one of the multiple holdings which made up this estate
34	Another site from this estate ultimately housed the National School built in 1858. The school buildings were later converted to houses when this, by then the Primary School, moved to Littleworth Road in 1982
35	Beyond was the school playground, now also residential. (Move to crossroads.)
36	At the next junction up and now Morland House, the village surgery, was once the vicarage, built, on the prospective vicar's insistence, in the early 1850s before he agreed to take up his post in Wheatley described by the Bishop as 'the most difficult village'.
37	Fire Station, now the Scouts building.
38	(The Lock-up/Round house.) Following a spate of political rioting across the country, this distinctive limestone building was built by the Overseers in 1834 as an overnight 'keep' for agricultural 'Swing' rioters before being taken to the Oxford courts. It is a Grade II listed building. However, it may never have been used for its purpose as, by 1853 per a press report, it was stated to be unfit to be used to lock up felons – pretty bad for those days! This was the last phase of quarrying, and once quarrying ceased, the area became the Parish Pit and was also used for bull and badger baiting until stopped by the constables in the 19C. The pit then was used for burning the household refuse until partway through the Second World War. Then it was filled in and became a recreation ground in the mid-20 th century. As we walk along we come to Templars' Close, the land of which is believed to have been held in 1279 by Henry of Wheatley held from the Templars of Sandford. You should look over the wall to see the depth on the quarry and, beyond, the quarry face.
39	The precious-grain store building was acquired in 1928 by the Plymouth Brethren and it became the Granary Church. Its religious use ceased c. 2003. The Sun was built late 18C – first known landlord 1788 – for the workers in the brick business
40	Westfield Road. Houses built for brick industry workers
41	Kiln Lane. Old House built in the late 18C for the Cooper family who had a brick kiln here by 1742 using the local Kimmeridge clay to make their bricks which are found in many of the Wheatley properties. The brickworks here closed in the 1890s, moving to Littleworth where there was a similar seam of clay. Point out blown bricks (which had lime added) and various shapes inc. chimneys.
42	Walk towards Westfield and point out one of the pits being the earlier quarrying from which stone was used for Windsor Castle and some of the Oxford colleges and contributed to Wheatley's early

	wealth as a result of it 'sitting on' a band of limestone. The furthest-away pit was in the Royal Shotover Forest which, being part of the royal hunting resource needed permission from the king in order to be quarried.
43	Walk to the left of the New Club into Blenheim, early (late 18C) affordable housing and stand where was the cattle pound. Emerging onto Littleworth Road, you see what was the village green, now modern housing after compulsory purchase by the local authority and on-sale to a developer. Coaches passed over the Village Green on their way to Shotover Hill and Oxford. The High Street frontage of this green, which we will see shortly, has similar houses.
44	This corner of Wheatley was a butchery business in the 18th and 19th centuries carried on by the Rose family. William Rose 'baconman and grocer' bought the property in 1751. There was a slaughter house on the site from 1809 to 1938, and cattle were pastured on the Green awaiting slaughter. Ernest Alden took over the business in 1911 and it closed in 1938.
45	(4 High Street). The south façade of 4 High Street was changed from stone to brick in 1847 using bricks from the Kiln Lane quarry in Flemish-bond style, 3 years before the brick tax was withdrawn. At the same time the roof was re-tiled with slate instead of tiles.
46	Original late 16C Manor House was the middle of the central part of the enlarged house, separated for the usual fire precaution reasons from the kitchen in the right wing. It was never occupied by the well-endowed owners. The 1601 datestone refers to a later extension. In 1864 the house was divided into four cottages. Conversion to single owner-occupation had taken place by 1939. It is Grade II* listed.
47	(44) Built in the 19C, when it was the 'The Railway Inn'. Later it was re-named 'The Sandpiper' and then 'The Common Room'. The centre of Wheatley's drug business in the later 20C. The building is now a private house.
48	(48) Once thatched, in 1847 this cottage became the Post and Telegraph Office run by Mr Lovelock. Barclays Bank took over the premises in about 1926; PO moved to 107 High Street in 1926, and then adjacent to the Merry Bells in 2017. After the bank had moved, the frontage on the High Street was used as a stationer and later as a general store, changing hands several times and trading as Phipps, Yeats, and finally Martins newsagents, which closed in 2000 after the owner was held up at gunpoint. It is now a private house.
49	(Point out) the widening of Holloway Road in the 1970s with 13ft taken off the building on the right to provide pavements.
50	Mitcheldene which dates from 1648. In 1818, it was acquired for an endowed school under the will of the Bishop of Oxford (Charles Moss), and it remained a school until 1858. The girls were taught in the main house and the boys in an older building in the garden behind. The building reverted to housing, staying in the same family until the mid-1990s.
51	This was a packhorse inn in the 16C, being on the old coaching route, with a few rooms to let. After coaches had been re-routed along the current London Road, it closed as an inn. About 1830, it was converted into three tenements, since 1959 two homes.
52	(No. 11) Believed to have been built in 1770, this property traded as two shops, one being used by Mitchell of Mitcheldene. By 1900, this shop was in the hands of the Dungey family as a general store 'always open up to midnight'. The other shop belonged to Joseph Frampton who was a farmer, cooper and quarryman and who owned the quarry pits where the recreation ground and Templars Close now stand. He sold wooden buckets and other such items and was one of the last to wear a smock for which Wheatley was well-known.