

Welcome to the Wheatley Heritage Trail

This gives detail of the points of interest. These are best explored by following the map in the centre of the leaflet. Each point, identified on the map by a number, relates to an associated brief description in the leaflet. The trail is one mile long and it is suggested you start at the Merry Bells car park.

Along the trail you will find some interpretation boards that supplement the information given in the leaflet.

Please be careful walking around the village as some of the pavements are narrow and the traffic can be heavy at times.

Please also respect the privacy of the residents as most of the buildings on the route are privately owned.

Introduction to Wheatley

Wheatley, the settlement in the valley, was part of the parish of Cuddesdon until 1854. The name Wheatley appeared in Saxon times in connection with land above Littleworth suggesting an arable wheat 'lea'. The stream in the valley used to be in the open, with stepping stones for people to cross. However, since 1858 and following several floods, it is now in a culvert running under the High Street.

The remains of Roman dwellings and Saxon burials have been found between Wheatley and Cuddesdon. In 1883 a Saxon cemetery was excavated, and artefacts removed from it are now housed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford.

Wheatley developed adjacent to 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 subsequently by a succession of bridges. 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. Wheatley boasted several inns and other trades including wheelwrights, maltsers and smiths which served this traffic.

The High Street is an interesting mix of older houses and more modern shops. The Manor House stands on or near the site of its early medieval predecessor held by charter from King Edwy by Abingdon Abbey in 956AD. After the reformation the first known owner/occupier of the manor was the Catholic Richard Archdale in 1568.

Wheatley is a lively village with schools, pubs, a chemist, library, post office, shops, a village hall and other amenities and sports clubs that help to maintain its vibrancy.

We hope that your walk around our village will help you appreciate this corner of Oxfordshire and the heritage of Wheatley.

1. Church of St Mary the Virgin

Reverend Elton acquired this site for the new church in 1849. The chapelry of Wheatley was separated from Cuddesdon parish in 1854. Land for the church and burial ground was then sold to Wheatley parish by Rev. Elton. The new church, designed by the architect G. E. Street (he also designed Cuddesdon College), cost £1,763 16s 6d, and was begun in January 1856 using Wheatley limestone. Wheatley's St Mary the Virgin Church was consecrated 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 1920. The church is Grade II listed.



2. Wheatley Primary C of E School

Houses, to the west of the Church, were built in the playground of the Primary School in the 1970s when it relocated to the former secondary modern school on Littleworth Road. These original 1858 school buildings further to the west were converted to houses.



Passing a terrace of cottages built in the 1860s, cross

3. The Lock-Up (also known as the Round House) and Quarry

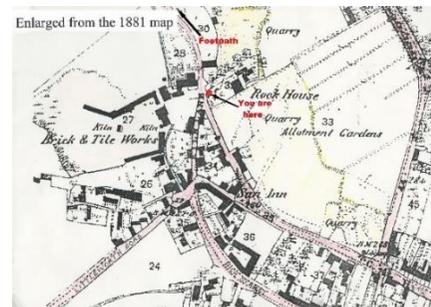
Holloway Road to the Recreation Ground where you will see...

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 rioters before being taken to the Oxford courts. It is a Grade II listed building. The surrounding area was a high quality limestone quarry, stone from which was used from the 14th century for buildings in Wheatley, Windsor Castle and some Oxford colleges. Once quarrying ceased, the area became the Parish Pit also used for bull and badger baiting until stopped by the constables in the 19th century. The pit was filled in and became a recreation ground in the mid-20th century.



To the left of the trees, you will see the depth of the quarry, and the cliff-face.

Take the right-hand fork along Westfield Road to just beyond the Kiln Lane junction at the driveway to Rock House and the gates to...



4. Old House

The Cooper family had a brick kiln here by 1742. Using these bricks, the Old House was built in the late 18th century for this family who also owned the quarry on the other side of the lane, where they also had lime kilns.



They used 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. Early in the 1960s the house was used by the Bailiff for the Shotover estate.

Walking back down Kiln Lane, many of these houses may have been built using Cooper bricks.

5. 4 High Street

As was fashionable at the time, one wall of this house was rebuilt in brick in 1847.



6. The Village Green

This was once an extensive green area, from High Street to Littleworth Road, south of the current site. Stage coaches passed the Village Green on their way to Shotover Hill and Oxford. Modern houses now fill most of the green. A stream used to run down the centre of the High Street (with stepping stones). There are grilles in the road where the stream, now in a culvert, can be seen.



7. The Manor

The present building is late 16th century and it was let by successive well-endowed owners. In 1864 the house was divided into four cottages until 1925. Restoration to single occupation took place in 1939. It is Grade II* listed.



On the other side of the road is...

8. 'The George'

This was a packhorse inn in the 16th century, being on the old coaching route. After coaches had been re-routed along the London Road, it closed as an inn. About 1830, it was converted into three tenements and remained so until 1959 when it became two homes.



9. Mitcheldene, 31-33 High Street

This dates from 1648. In 1818, it was acquired for an endowed school under the will of the then 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.



10. 44 High Street

This was probably built in the first half of the 19th century, when it was the 'The Railway Inn'. Later it was re-named 'The Sandpiper' and then 'The Common Room', which closed in 1999. The building is now a private house.



11. 48 High Street



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; moved to Station Road later; and then adjacent to the Merry Bells in 1972. After the bank had moved, the frontage on the High Street was used as a general store, changing hands several times and trading as as Phipps, Yeats, and finally Martins newsagents, which closed in 2000. It is now a private house.



12. 'The King and Queen'

Parts of this inn can be traced back to the 1500s, although we do not know what it was then called. It certainly was named 'The William and Mary' after their reign (1689-1702), and more recently became 'The King and Queen'. The chimneys and other features are original. Opposite is...



13. Memorial garden

On the right is a plaque for the Chapel of Ease that stood near the far gate to Bell Lane until 1795. A new building, dedicated to St. Swithin, but known locally as St. Mary's, replaced it here until 1857, when the new church took this name. A few of the original graves can be found in the grass.



Leave by the top gate, cross Bell Lane and walk up the main road to the pedestrian crossing over to the 2019 development which replaced the Railway Hotel shown here.



14. Former Railway Station

Just below this is the interpretation board. Further up, by the first road narrowing, the road bridged the railway. To the left was the site of the old railway station, opened in 1864 and serving Oxford and London. Adjacent to the station was Avery's saw mill, providing wood for the furniture industries in the High Wycombe area. The railway was closed in 1963 and, in 1994, the land was developed for housing, with buildings and roads named after local railway connections.



Re-trace your steps turning right down Bell Lane, which has many old cottages. Turn right into High Street.



15. Chillingworth House, 64 High Street



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 building 50 yards along on the other side of the road is...

16. 'The White Hart'

'The White Hart' public house was rebuilt after a fire c. 1830 and closed in 1999. It now functions as an Indian restaurant. The building to the left was the club room, where the Wheatley Morris men used to meet before its recent conversion to housing.



Opposite is a parade of shops and, to the left of these, is an alley. Follow this through to a road and then, on the left by a telegraph pole, a footpath which will take you into a lane. Part of Stile Cottage and Nos. 6-7 Farm Close Lane date from the turn of the 18/19 centuries. There is a good view over the rooftops towards the Church. Turn left at the end into...

17. Crown Square

The square was the centre of a 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 behind the local name of Louse Hill for the site of the three old thatched dwellings on the raised south side, which were pulled down in the 1960s for 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. Nos. 113 & 115 High Street were originally part of 'The Chequers Inn' which closed in the 1920s.



18. Crown Road

Walk along Crown Road to the site of 'The Crown Inn', an old coaching inn dating from 1544 (now 19 and 23 Crown Road). '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 for customers (now the main part of 116 Church Road). A little further along and opposite is Rectory House, dating from c. 1630, originally the farmhouse for Castle Hill farm. A new farmhouse was built up the hill to replace this in 1962. Now re-trace steps to Crown Square...



19. United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church was once a tanning barn, but was converted to a church in 1841/1843. In front of it, to the east, was a cottage which was rebuilt in 1898 and became the Sunday School. Adjacent to this is...

20. Cromwell House, 100 High Street



This was one of the houses used for tanning and drying hides. It was sold in 1849 for private housing. Oak panelling in one room 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.

21. Old Post Office, 107 High Street

Opposite is the site of an earlier Post Office (1926-2017), before it transferred adjacent to the Merry Bells, replacing Barclays Bank which had closed.



22. Roberts House, 94 High Street



There was a tannery here before William Avery, founder of the sawmill, converted it to a dwelling house, later named after his son-in-law. It was used to accommodate evacuees during WW2, now converted to three flats.

23. High Street cottages

Opposite is an attractive row of 18th century buildings. 101 High Street was once owned by All Souls College, Oxford, a prominent landowner in the village in the 1590s.



24. 95/97 High Street, Harris Stores



These houses were built in the 18th century. By 1876 they formed a shop kept by Joshua Harris, who sold millinery, grocery, ironmongery and medicines. In 1967 Mr J C Kelly took over the business and called it James's Supermarket. Nos. 95 & 97 were then separated. Both properties are now residential.

25. The Merry Bells

Between the 17th and 18th 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 hope that you have enjoyed your visit to our village. Further details about the history of Wheatley can be obtained from Wheatley Village Archive – see details below.

Acknowledgements

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Your Wheatley Village Archive

The new Wheatley Village Archive website was launched in March 2019, and is a very popular resource for those who do not live locally. Go to www.wheatleyarchive.org.uk for past details of your house, your road, residents, industries, the railway etc.

Do you have photographs or something related to the village that we can scan and add to the archive? If so, then please contact the archives on wheatleyvillagearchive@gmail.com so it can be arranged to temporarily borrow, scan and then include these on the constantly expanding website.

The archive in the Merry Bells is open every Thursday 2-5pm and the last Saturday of the month 10am-12.

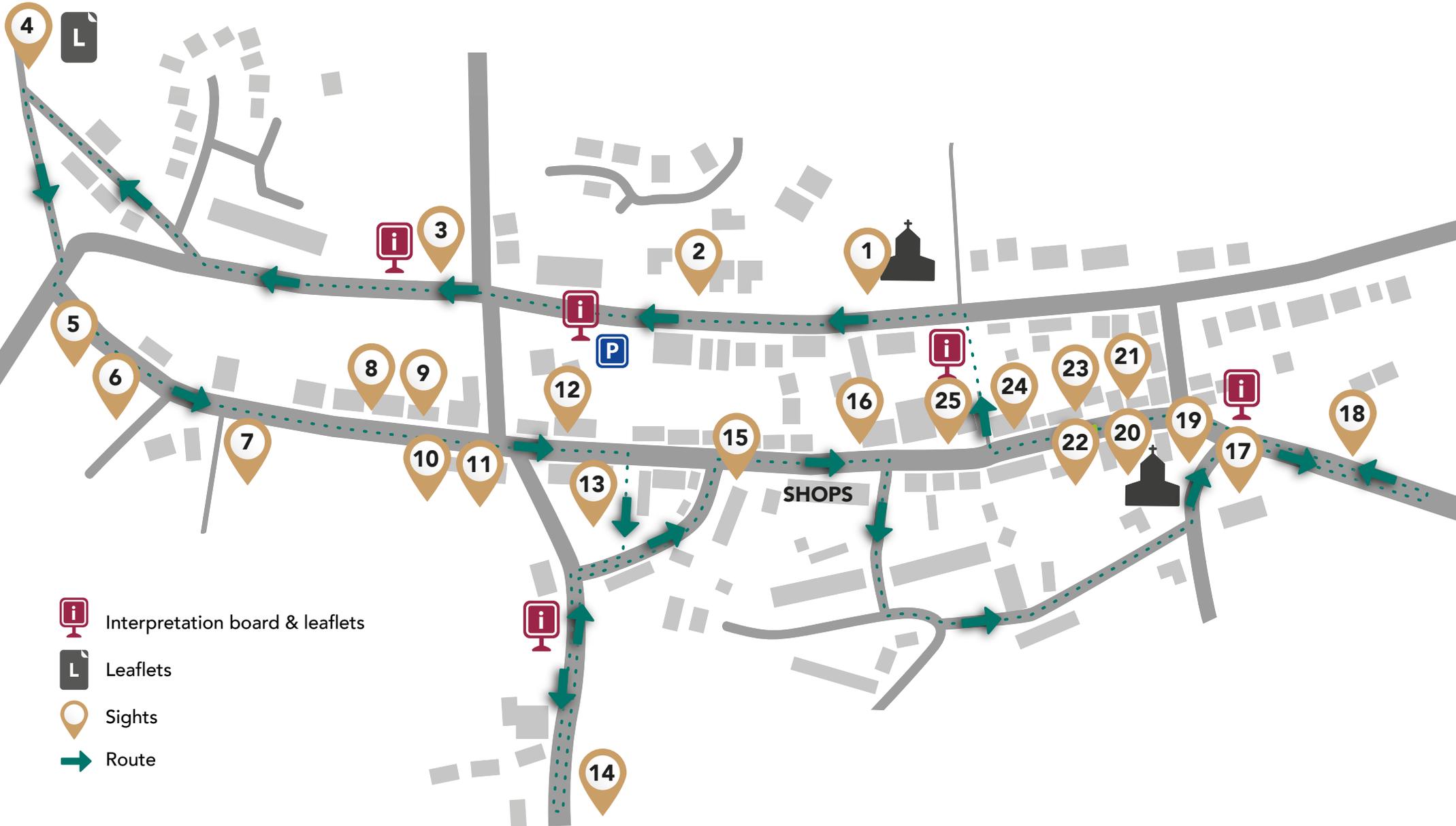


HERITAGE TRAIL

Wheatley
VILLAGE ARCHIVE

A fascinating 1 mile walk through this historic village

HERITAGE TRAIL



 Interpretation board & leaflets

 Leaflets

 Sights

 Route