

TOWN TRAIL No. 2

Around the Common



The Baa Lamb trees as seen by local artists

STARTING AT 2 SOUTHDOWN ROAD
BEHIND THE HARPENDEN ARMS AND
RETURNING TO YEW TREE FARM
(PREZZO RESTAURANT)



13

Park Hall



Built in 1850 as the British School on land donated by Sir J B Lawes of Rothamsted Manor. The school moved to purpose built premises in Victoria Road in 1898, and Park Hall became the offices and Public Hall for the newly formed Harpenden Urban District Council. The Fire Brigade occupied the adjoining classroom block. The Town Council redeveloped the rear part of the old school as the new Town Hall in 1994. The Local History Centre is housed in a small room at the front of Park Hall.



14

Bennetts (Royal British Legion since 1959) - A much-modified late C16 timber-framed building, extended to the south in the C17, with C18, Regency and modern extensions. It belonged



formerly to the Rothamsted estate. John Bennet Lawes senior lived here in the early C19 and built the stables (now The Bean Tree) for the Prince Regent's horses when he visited for the local hunt. Used as a convalescent home in 1915.

15 Inn on the Green - A

row of C18 cottages. Home of Henry Salisbury from 1862 before he moved his business to Kingston House, 6 High Street in 1912. His son Frank Salisbury started his career as a painter here. It became the Mary-Ellen Tearoom until the 1970s, since when it has been redeveloped (twice) as a pub.



16 Yew Tree Farm - A C17 timber-framed structure with C19

additions - one of the four farms in the village centre, with farmyard buildings at the corner of Leyton Green. Became a GP surgery in the 1960s, which moved to The Village Surgery in Amenbury Lane in 2005. Now Prezzo restaurant.



Harpenden Common was part of the medieval Manor of Rothamsted. In 1901 the western parts were made over to the Harpenden Urban District Council by Sir Charles Lawes. The remaining Manorial Rights were purchased for the people of Harpenden in 1935, with the help of a donation. Used for grazing sheep until the early half of C20, part of it was ploughed for crops in WWII. The "Statty" Fair held in September moved to the Common opposite the Public Hall when it outgrew Church Green

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Larger versions of the illustrations in this Trail and more information about them can be found on our website: www.harpenden-history.org.uk

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1 No 2 Southdown Road behind the Harpenden Arms - is a late medieval hall house, complete except for its north end. Fragmentary wall-paintings survive from c.1600 when an upper floor was inserted in the open hall. The brick chimneys are early C19 when the crosswing jetty was underbuilt and a bay window added. The stream from the High Street ran in front of the cottage, crossed by a footbridge in the C19.

2 The Harpenden Public Halls - opened in 1938, to replace what is now Park Hall. The main hall is dedicated in memory of the comedian Eric Morecambe, a Harpenden resident from 1960-1984.



3 Harpenden Hall - known as Blakesleys - was the home of William Cressy who died in 1559 (brass memorial in St Nicholas' church). The gabled crosswing is all that remains of his late medieval timber-framed house, its hall having been replaced in the late C17 by the existing 4 bays to the south. It has been used several times as a school; also as a private lunatic asylum in the C19. It became Harpenden Urban District Council offices from 1931 until 1974, then Town Council offices, until sold for private offices.



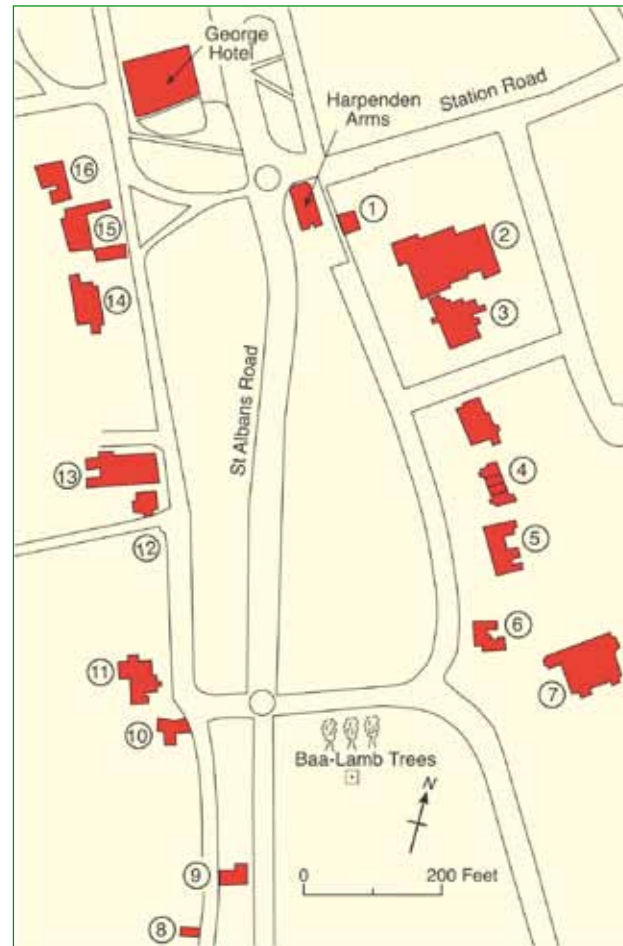
4 Mr Hodgson's cottages - built in 1879 by Henry Tylston Hodgson of the Welcombe (see 7). They were 'two-up, two-down' workers' dwellings with wash-houses and privies at the back and water supply from wells and rainwater cisterns. The windows have cast iron frames.



5 Friends Meeting House - built in 1887 as premises for Harpenden Lecture Institute (founded 1858). It was a military hospital staffed by V.A.D. nurses in WWI. Refurbished in 1933 for the Society of Friends. Pictured in 1972 before the porch was enlarged.



A Walk Around the Common



6 The Dene - little is known about this C18 house, which was described in 1799 as "James Floyd's dwelling with shop attached".



7 Welcombe
An early C18 frontage with traces of earlier timber-framed building and Vic-



torian additions. For nearly fifty years until his death in 1918 it was the home of Henry Tylston Hodgson, Deputy Chairman of the Midland Railway and a Harpenden benefactor, who added substantial C19 wings. It housed St Dominic's Convent School from 1931 to 1964, and was then converted to an hotel.

8 Coach Lane Cottage,

formerly Gable End Farm, a late C16 timber-framed structure with entry porch and northern wing added in 1928. The house to the north was built at that time, with mock timber-framing.



9 Silver Cup Public House - built in 1838 by John House, brewer, of Wheathampstead, using local flints in mortar on the wall facing Leyton Road. Photo includes the Archer family in 1890s. The Silver Cup was presumably one of the prizes for Harpenden Races.

Leyton Road was once the main road to St Albans, before it was replaced by a road cutting through the Common.

10 Fire Station - site of Heathfield works, used by Field's as a hat factory, and Abbot, Anderson & Abbot manufacturers of oilskins. The Fire Station moved from British School site when the old factory was demolished in the 1980s (See 13).



11 The Old House, 27 Leyton Road, was built as a small inn with a fine timber chimney in Tudor times, with later additions. Known as The Bull Inn until 1860 and since then a private house. The landlord in the early C17 was William Carlin, a yeoman brewer, who, despite falling foul of the law for keeping disorderly alehouses, became a churchwarden in 1640. The landlord from about 1830 was Henry Oldaker, who organised annual horse racing on the Common from 1848. The Harpenden Races continued until 1914.

12 Rothamsted Park gates and drive were constructed and the avenue of lime trees planted in 1880 by the Lord of the Manor, Sir John Bennet Lawes. Hitherto the main drive to the Manor House had been from Hatching Green. In 1938 the Rothamsted Estate sold 53 acres of parkland to the Council as a public park. The wrought iron gates were taken for salvage in WWII.

