

Hunsdon village centre contains many old houses, some known to date back to at least the 15th century. There are no known dwellings dating back before about this time, although a few old hall houses in the area are probably older, and Hunsdon was registered in the Domesday Book (1086).

The village centre is dominated by what is today the Village Hall. This had previously been the village school before the more modern one was built further up Widford Road. This building was originally believed to be a house called Harlowes, owned by John Harlowe in the 15th century, which overlooked Harlowes Green, one of the 5 Greens in the Parish, and which is now the Crown public house car park and a small green on which stands the War Memorial. It was certainly being run as a school in 1806, when Mrs Calvert of Hunsdon House was assisting the then schoolmistress. The Calverts were instrumental in enlarging and adding to the building about that time to improve the features of the school. The two adjoining houses were probably built on by the Calverts in about 1817 when major renovation by them was being undertaken to the school building, to make a more attractive centre for the village.

To the right of the Village Hall is a 15th century house, called White Horses because of the two carved brackets either side of the front. These were probably added by one of the owners in the early 18th century, however the bay window on the side was added in the 19th century. This 3 storey house, much modified over the centuries, contrasts strangely with the apparently matching two storey but much later 17th century Rose Cottage on the left of the group, previously called Ivy Cottage.

The house next to the White Horses is also of 15th century origin, the gateway through the house to the back yard having been made in the middle of the 16th century by the owner to overcome the court's objection to carts being stored inside the house, which up to then had been the practice.

Beyond this are a number of timber-framed cottages dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, known as Garlands Terrace until the beginning of this century, but little other is known of their history.

The brick house at the end of this row, Netherhall, was built by the builder owner, John Redington, in the middle of the 19th century for himself. He, and later his son, built many of the brick houses in the High St at that time.

The row of boarded houses before the Hunsdon Garage was a single old house owned and occupied in 1494 by John Smythe, and known as Smythes House. It stood roughly opposite what is believed to have been Smythes Green, where the village pump now stands. The northern end was added to in the 17th century together with cellars and made into a public house called The Angel, in the yard of which stood the whipping post. At that time it was owned by George Elliot, and following a succession of three George Elliots, was renamed The George.

In the 18th century it was converted to a farm by the Taylors, the then owners, and which became known inevitably as Taylors Farm. It was finally sold by the Taylors in about 1850 when records of the farm disappear. The building is now private dwellings, the northern end having in recent years been a sweet shop.

Facing the village pump stands The Pump House which in the early 16th century was called Hooks. The house at that time stood in 7½ acres of land and was one of the most important yeoman houses in the village. Hooks was lived in by a succession of wealthy people. Edward Wharley and his wife Margaret and their children were there in the early 17th century. After the death of Edward, Margaret continued to live there with her daughter while her son moved into a house known as Tippings, but now called The Old House. Margaret it was who in 1697 with a number of other wealthy parishioners were witness to a document agreeing to the building of 4 almshouses with charity money, these being the 4 houses next to No 32 further up the Widford Rd from The Pump House and opposite The George.

Eventually Hooks was sold in the late 18th century to James Lanham, a descendent of the Woods, who together with George Spellar, a relation by marriage, were carpenters in the village through the end of the 18th century, both being employed to undertake work in the Church, the almshouses and around the village.

About 1805 the house was divided into 3 cottages. When in 1812 the house was bought by John Hanney, he started the trades of builder, carpenter and wheelwright. He continued in this business until 1850 when it was taken over by the Markwells, after which the house became known as Markwells. The business thrived, many local farmers going there for carts, wagons and associated repairs, as Markwells had acquired a reputation for excellent work.

When in 1930 the Markwells retired, probably due to the falloff in the wagon trade, they moved across the road to Netherhall which they owned, and the house was sold to a Captain Walkington who renamed the house The Pump House. During the 1939 - 1945 period it was used variously as billets for men of The Essex Regiment and RAF personnel.

The Old House further up the Widford Road beyond the school on the east side is one of the oldest houses in Hunsdon, having started life as a medieval hall house with a chimney inserted later. Called Tippings in the 17th century, it was inherited by a nephew of the owner of The Pump House who converted it to a public house and called it The Wheatsheaf. The cartouche on the wall is the original pub sign of the Wheatsheaf. By the end of the 18th century it had ceased to be a public house, and in 1927 when the new school was built it became the schoolmistress' house, by then having been renamed Ye Olde House.

Pipers in Drury Lane, now called Orchards, was at one time the village poorhouse, having been taken over for that purpose as it had been standing empty for some time at the end of the 18th century. It remained the poorhouse until the occupants were moved in 1836 to the Ware Union, the then empty house being made into 4 flats into which the women living in the almshouses in Widford Rd were moved. After some time the 4 flats were again reconverted back to a private house.

The red brick house opposite The Pump House, The Old Post Office, is a timber-framed building of 17th century origin which had a brick face built on in the 19th century. It became the village Post Office in 1930 until a few years later the Post Office was moved further south in the High St.

The Fox and Hounds public house in the High St was originally built as a yeoman's house in 1670, then called Hickmans. It was bought by Edmund Calvert of Hunsdon House in 1819 and made into a public house called The Horse and Groom to replace one he had demolished in Hunsdonbury, known as The Three Rabbits. The name was later changed to The Fox and Hounds. It was always a popular inn as it stood on the main coach route between London and Bishops Stortford, and with its large yard and ample stables was a good stopping place for passing coaches, bringing in lots of trade.

Opposite The Fox and Hounds lies a small cottage set back from the road called Quaker Cottage. This was originally built in 1695 as a Quaker Meeting House by Daniel Wharley, who was a prominent Hunsdon Quaker. It was given to the Quakers 5 years later when he left the village. It was bought at the end of the 19th century by Charles Redington the builder who let it as a Mission Hall. Since then it has had a number of uses including a tea room, and during World War II became a domestic dwelling.

Bela Down and No 19 next door were built by Charles Redington in the 19th century. No 19 was the home of the first Post Office in Hunsdon, and continued there for 30 years until moved to the brick house further up the High St.

Hunsdon Church dates probably to the 11th century as a priest was recorded in the Domesday Book as living in Hunsdon. Certainly the north wall of the Nave is thought to be at least 12th century, probably part of the original church. Under the whitewash of the north wall are frescos depicting the 7 deadly sins. The rest of the building varies in dates through the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. The bell tower and north porch are early 15th century, probably built by John Tyrell who held the Manor from 1423 to 1428. The south Chapel was built by John Carey, 3rd Lord Hunsdon, in about 1610 in his own lifetime to hold a tomb for him and his wife. He died in 1617 and his monument in alabaster is of the highest sculptural quality then available in England. The screen and pulpit were supposedly erected at the same time. The altar rails are also 17th century with recent additions at the ends.

All that remains of the rood screen is the lower pair, the staircase and the beam which held the Holy Cross now in the Vestry. While the east window in the Vestry is circa 1320, the window in the west end of the north wall of the Nave is thought to be from the 16th century. The south wall Chancel window is circa 1450 in which the White Rose of York is depicted. Sir William Oldhall, the Lord of the Manor at the time is known to have been a zealous Yorkist.

On the north wall of the Chancel is a monument to Francis Poyntz who was a member of the Court of Henry VIII and died of the "sweating plague" in 1528. There is also a standing monument of exquisite detail to Sir Thomas Forster who died in 1612. The rails are the same as those around the tomb of Mary Queen of Scots in Westminster Abbey.

Brasses on the walls are to Margaret Shelley, who died in 1495 and who had lived at Olives Farm, and an unusual plate in the south wall of the Nave to James Gray, a park keeper who died in 1591. There is also an inscription of circa 1450 on the north side of the Chancel arch, viz: "IHC MARIA".

The font is circa 1500 but was recut in 1851 to the original design, and the old alms box is thought to be 17th century.

The registers commenced in 1546, however Queen Mary was registered as a Godmother to a Hunsdon child in 1537, but Church warden accounts only date from 1769. According to some old wills recently transcribed the Church was originally dedicated to St Mary, then from about the time of the Reformation, it was known only as Hunsdon Church. In about 1880 the Rector at the time had it dedicated to St Dunstan.

Hunsdon House which lies to the east of the Church was built in the 15th century by Sir William Oldhall, but by the 16th century the house and extensive parks were in the hands of The Crown. Henry VIII rebuilt the house making it into a splendid palace. Henry spent a lot of his leisure time at Hunsdon hunting in the well stocked deer park.

In 1558 Queen Elizabeth gave Hunsdon House to her cousin Sir Henry Carey, creating him Lord Hunsdon. After several changes of ownership through Lord Willoughby in 1653, Matthew Bluck in 1671 and Josiah Nicholson in 1743 it was inherited by Nicholson Calvert in 1759. The Calvert family who made a number of major changes to the structure of Hunsdon village and the area about during their ownership, finally left Hunsdon when the house and Manor was sold in 1858.

Recent archaeological work has uncovered the old moat, in which many very old shoes were found and now under part of the house, and emptied an old cesspit in which was found amongst other items, the skeleton of a dog which must have fallen down the garderobe chute! Attempts at landscaping have also revealed remains of early structures which stopped the gardening activities.

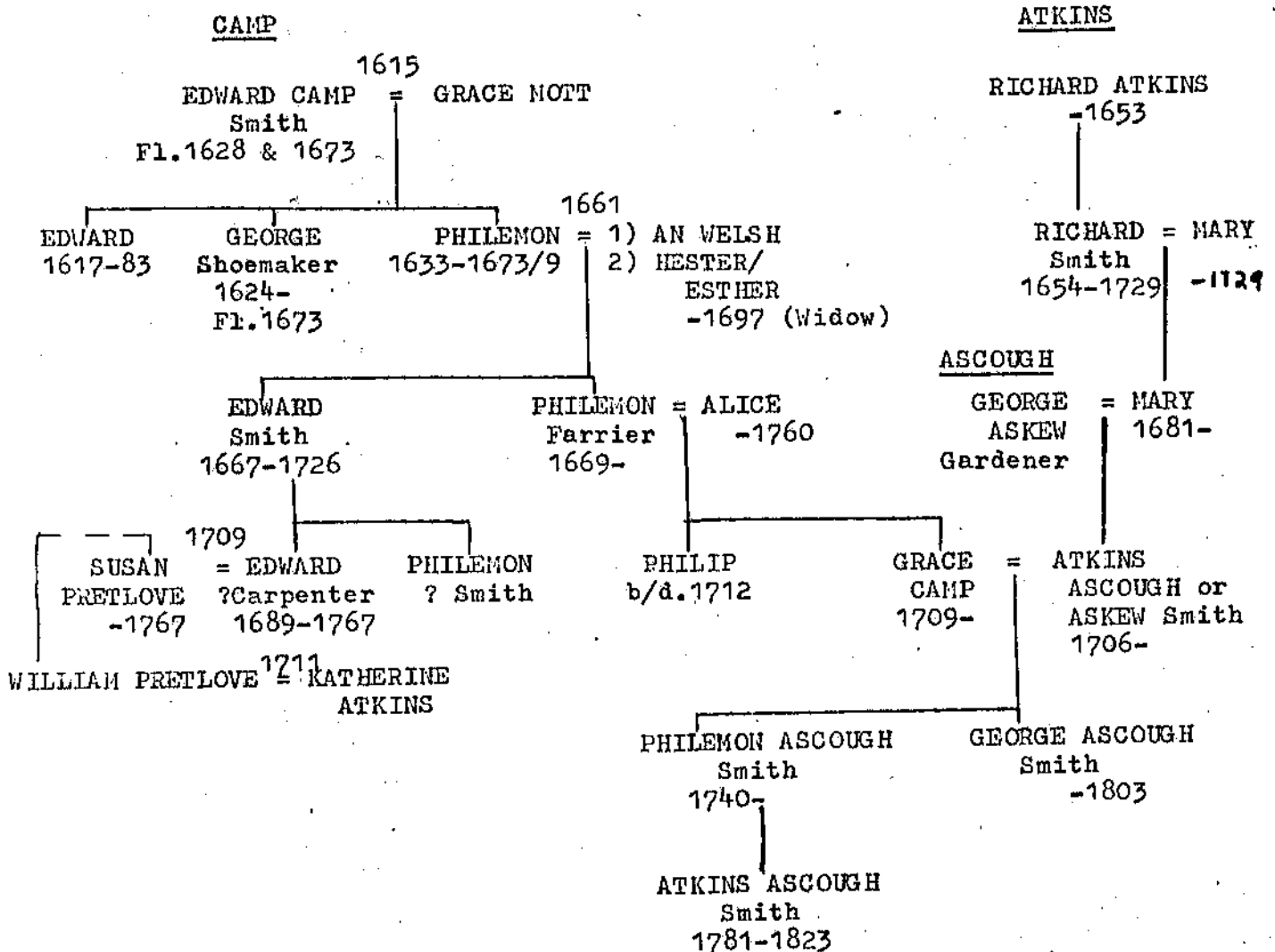
The one area of Hunsdon in which a number of houses survive from the sixteenth century or earlier is Smith's Green. We can study the houses which survive and we have many title deeds and other documents, but putting the two together is not easy. Many houses changed their name; the name of an old house was transferred to a new one on a different site as with Deathes; and the descriptions of the situation of a house given in the deeds is often imprecise. There was, for example, a house at Smith's Green which in 1560 was described as Smith's House alias the Kangle, alias the George, called the George in olden times. In the early seventeenth century the house was known as the George. In 1691 the Court Roll contains the description 'the George, once called the Angel' which may give us a clue as to the origin of Kangle in the name of what seems to have been an ancient local inn. A property called Winslows appears as Winslows, Little Winslows, and Winslow Leggatts, with many variant spellings of Winslows and such different descriptions of its location that there may have been two houses with the name.

The houses, for which early deeds survive, were on the west side of the main road, facing Smith's Green, the area where the pump now stands. They were between Swantons and the road. One of them, the Gatehouse, may indeed have been Swanton's gatehouse. The plan shows those which we can locate.

The GATEHOUSE is well recorded, though it is difficult to be sure that that was its early name for in the mid-sixteenth century it seems to be called Cote House or Cottalles. In 1556 Thomas Be(a)rman, a Hunsdon yeoman, left the Cote House 'wherein I dwell' to his son, Thomas. This Thomas left Cottalles, in 1566, to his wife, Katherine. 'Old Mother Bearman an ancient widow of this parish' was buried in 1611. Her grandson, John Elliot, referred to her as living in one of his houses in his will made in 1606. The house was left to his sister, Bridget Harrison, after his grandmother's death. Katherine Bearman made her will on 14 January 1610; she mentions Bridget Harrison and John Elliot in it, calling them cousins. Unfortunately she does not name her house, but it had a hall, a parlour, a room over the parlour, a loft over the parlour, and another room - 'my chamber' - possibly over the hall; there was a milkhouse. This was a substantial yeoman's house and, from the furniture which Katherine left, it was a well furnished house. It seems reasonably certain that this was the Gatehouse.

The Bearmans were weavers: in 1556 Thomas left his second son, Richard, the looms in his shop. In 1628 the Gatehouse came into the possession of a family of blacksmiths. Henry Waylett was the owner and let or sold it to Edward Camp, blacksmith. In 1697 Philemon Camp mortgaged the Gatehouse to Katherine Elliot. In 1709 Philemon and his wife Alice sold it to Thomas Cramphorne, a coachman, whose family were still in possession in 1750. The situation of the Gatehouse was described in 1628 as 'at Smith's Green, between the pasture of Thomas Foster, esq. called Longmore (on) the East and the tenement of John Elliot called Winslows (on) the West. . upon the King's Highway (on) the South, and (on) Longmore (on) the North'. In 1709 it was described as between the pasture of Mr Lowe called Longmoors on the east and north, on a messuage belonging to Philemon Camp (? Winslows) on the west, and on the queen's Highway on the south.

The Camps were smiths: whether they had a smithy at the Gatehouse or elsewhere we do not know, but a later Edward Camp left his house, shop and stocks of iron to his son Philemon in 1726 so there must have been a smithy elsewhere by then. The family were active as local black-smiths for 200 years. The family tree shows how the tradition was carried on through a daughter's marriage.



The history of the GEORGE is straightforward. In 1494 and 1526 it was described as 'situate at Smythes Green . . . between the tenement called Wynslows on the North and Harlowe Green on the South . . . abutting on the pasture of William Shelley on the West and . . . upon the Highway . . . between Widford and Stanstead Abbot on the East'. Thomas Shelley granted it to the Smith family for three lives. Since the property was already called Smiths this was probably the renewal of a much older grant. The Smiths must have been locally influential to have changed the name of the house and given their name to the Green, unless this is a coincidence and the Green was named from a smithy. The Shelleys owned Olives and attached to the George was a croft called Pond Croft which is at the back of Olives farmhouse, between the moat and Brickhills field. Was clay dug near Olives to make bricks for some new building at Smiths Green? If the Smiths were responsible for any such building, they might well have given their name to the Green.

Thomas Forster of Swantons bought 'the messuage called Smythes House, otherwise the George, in old time called the Kangle' for £60 in 1560, from Thomas Smith. Nicholas Smith, Thomas' brother, was the occupier. In 1570 Thomas Forster left his 'tenement called the Cangle alias George' to two sons, Richard and William, who sold it in 1574 to their brother, Thomas. In 1579 Thomas sold it for £110 to George Elliot and his wife Elizabeth; they were already the tenants. Elliots lived at the George until 1691. 'George Eliot of the George, so commonly called by the name of his house' was buried in 1613. His son, heir, and namesake had been born at the George and was christened in 1585. The name of the house was used in the registers to distinguish this family from that of George Elliot of Blackcroft, the weaver. The second George died in 1659, leaving the house to a third George who died in 1691. The house passed to this George's eighteen year old daughter, Katherine, who married a Londoner called Taylor. Eliot Taylor, her son, inherited in 1731; and the property continued in the hands of Taylors until 1833 or later. In 1732 it was occupied by Andrew Speller, a carpenter. The description of the situation of the house in 1691 closely matches the description in 1494: 'abutting towards the East and South on the King's Highway leading from Hadham to London, and towards the North facing the Messuage called Little Winslows, and towards the West facing land once Thomas Foster's'. This leaves no doubt that the George was on the west side of the main road; it was probably

The beautiful Pump House on the other side of the main road is one of the oldest houses in Hunsdon and was almost certainly an inn. We have not been able to find any deeds which clearly refer to the site * This is typical of a common dilemma: deeds survive for a house which has gone or been much altered while a splendid example of an old house can hardly be documented.

The other dilemma produced by the careful description of the sites of the Gatehouse and of the George given in their deeds, is where to locate Winslows. Two fields were called Winchlows in the 1842 Tithe Award. They are the fields above and behind the houses on the west side of the main road, north of Smith's Green. The large field to their west was called Home Field and we believe Swantons was in this area. The ground south of Home Field, on either side of the stream, the Moors in 1842, was Longmore, 'the pasture of Thomas Forster' in 1628 and of Mr Lowe in 1709.

WINSLOWS was first referred to in 1494 as 'the tenement called Wynslows lately Nicholas Shelley's' and described as on the north side of Smith's House. This description was repeated in 1526. One way we can fit this description with those which put Winslows on the west of the Gatehouse, is to assume that these are three neighbouring buildings on the curve of the road facing the southern end of the Green, that is Harlow Green.

The evidence which we have for the ownership and occupation of Winslows is so contradictory that it is difficult to explain it whether we assume there were two separate houses or one only. In 1566 Thomas Bearman left Winslow Legates to his daughter Bridget making his brother-in-law, Robert Wood, responsible for the letting. In 1585 John Elliot of Olives, who may have married Bridget Bearman, left his 'right, title and interest . . . in . . . Winslow Legates', occupied by William Hancock,

to his son Ferdinand. Presumably this was the same house which another John Elliot left to his son, John, in 1606; he called the house Little Winslow and described it as occupied by William Hancock. John Elliot was the owner of Winslows in 1628. This seems straightforward except that the house kept having slightly different names. BUT in 1587, two years after the first John Elliot made his will, Robert Wood left his son William the 'tenement wherein I now dwell called Little Winslow'. The Woods could hardly have lived in the same house as William Hancock. Woods were in possession of Little Winslows much later for, when Margaret Wharley sold it to her son, Abraham, in 1711, she was said to have bought it 'of Samuel Wood and John Wood'.

There were other houses around Smith's Green. In 1685 John Byde let a house called GALLOPINS 'abutting on the highway called Smiths Green on the South and on . . . land formerly . . . Peter Calvert's on the North' to Christopher Meadle, a bricklayer, and his wife Frances. Thomas Madle, Christopher's nephew or grandon(?), inherited the property in 1703 and mortgaged it to Abraham Greygoose, for £10.12s in 1707. It was then described as in the lane leading from Smiths Green to Hunsdon Lodge. Madle defaulted on his mortgage and Greygoose took possession in 1713 but sold it back to Madle in 1738. When Thomas died in 1744 the cottage, now 'called Smiths Green', was left to a grandson, John Madle. There was by this time an adjacent cottage and the Mardles still owned them both in 1761. HARLOWS house, which Thomas Bearman left in 1556 to his son Richard, may well have been on Harlow Green.

There were three public houses near the two Greens. The SIGN OF THE FEATHERS, occupied by Thomas Lambe, was one of the properties Peter Calvert bought in 1672; it was at or near Smiths Green. A nearby cottage was occupied by John Pricklove. On the west side of the main road and further south was the CROWN. Martha Cramphorne was the occupier in 1758; she died in 1762. In 1794 Thomas Cranwel was at the Crown. William Legerton recalled in 1855 that he could remember Edmund Calvert 'buying the House and Premises called the Crown (upwards of twenty years since) . . . After he purchased it, it stood empty a long time and ever since a Policeman has occupied it rent free'. In 1842 the Tithe Award listed it as the Crown Public House, owned by the Calvert family.

They also owned the FOX AND HOUNDS Public House opposite; the name and the licence may have been moved from the public house with the same name which Edmund Calvert had opened near Parsonage Green. One or other of these public houses may have been the house at Smiths Green which Dorothy How let to Henry Wharley in 1694 with the right to brew and bake in the brewhouse. This must have been a large house for five rooms were retained by Joseph and Dorothy How as their living rooms. Or could this have been the Pump House? It was freehold not copyhold and we are only told that it was at Smiths Green. The furthest house to the south along the main road, on the west side, was the Tanner's House; it belonged to Felix Calvert in 1842, to Charles Hawthorne in 1768-83, and may have been the home of a family called Calton, who were tanners between 1588 and 1692.

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1. In 1721 Thomas Humphreys sold the two properties to James Johnson of Hunsdon, victualler. John Johnson mortgaged them for £78 in 1724 and for £60 in 1731 and left them to his wife who remarried. John Goulding, her second husband, bought them from the heirs on her death in 1756 and sold them in 1779 to James and Mary Freshwater who lived at the Three Cones until 1796.

Handwritten note:
 16. 9. 1700