

# BAMPTON: OUR BUILDINGS

Bampton is a pretty and historic town with many fine houses located within a substantial conservation area. In this booklet, we present an overview of the building styles you can see here and some more specific detail about eight of them.

Use the map on the rear cover to locate the buildings as you enjoy a wander around our historic streets, meet the community and perhaps visit some of our shops, cafés, restaurants and pubs.

You can find out more by visiting the Bampton Heritage & Visitor Centre which is based inside St Michael & All Angels Church; a separate booklet is available to purchase about this fine grade one listed building – one of the oldest in Bampton.

If you would like to find out more about Bampton, our Guided Town Trails or the Self-guided Family Town Trail please visit the centre, email [bamptonheritage@btinternet.com](mailto:bamptonheritage@btinternet.com) or visit [www.bampton.org.uk/heritage-centre](http://www.bampton.org.uk/heritage-centre) where you will also find our opening hours.



Our thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for supporting 'Our Buildings' project.



# Overview of Buildings

The majority of properties we see today in the town are 18th century or later as much of the earlier town was destroyed by fire during the English Civil War which reached Bampton in 1645.



One of the town's oldest buildings is the grade 1 listed Church. The tower is the oldest part dating from the 13th century. The Swan was erected nearby in the mid 15th century to house stonemasons who were extending the church.



Much of the stone for the houses we see today came from the local quarries, and mortar from the lime kilns. Quarrying was an important element of the economy of Bampton employing large numbers of local people.



Court Grove is a former town farmhouse dating from the 17th century. Note its wide cart entrance.

The town reached the height of its prosperity from the wool trade in the 17th and 18th centuries and some fine houses were built as a result.



Bowdenhayes is a particularly unspoilt Georgian house dating back to 1789. The fashionable timber verandah was inspired by the designs of English cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale.

The leather industry prospered here in the 18th and 19th centuries. This terrace of cottages on Silver Street was built for local tannery workers.



# Overview of Buildings

In the early 19th century, prominent homes replacing or incorporating older buildings were built around the centre of Bampton. Others had new façades added that were more in keeping with 19th century fashions. This period saw elegant homes with symmetrical design and ornate decoration.



In line with national building trends during the Victorian period bay-fronted buildings and some short brick terraces were added. Although local stone or brick were used here in Bampton, brick became more common place around the country in general and roofing was generally slate.



As the demand for housing increased in the 20th century, development of the town continued with additions such as the unusual Nissen houses in Frog Street and a council housing estate in the 1960s. More recent building includes Ashleigh Park built in the 1980s and the housing development built in 2006 on the site of the old Scotts stone quarry.



# Leburn House, Luke Street

Leburn House is an impressive stone built town house in a prominent position in Luke Street. The adjoining Lower Leburn House was the service block and former stables block for the main house. Formerly one property, it was built on the site of an earlier dwelling in 1766 by Richard Bowden a wealthy mercer (a fine cloth merchant).

At that time the road layout was significantly different and the front of the house (now the rear) looked out towards the churchyard. The rear of the property had a large garden extending far beyond the current road and the later Victorian houses we see opposite today.



This fine property has an exceptionally attractive 4-bay front elevation with a very deep coved cornice.

Sadly much of the original interior detail was destroyed during the 1920s when the house was subdivided. In 2007 new owners carefully restored the house which now benefits from some fine architectural detail typical of the late 18th century. A splendid compact dog-leg staircase extends to the attic storey with alternating fluted, columnar and barley-sugar balusters.



For thirty years in the late 19th century Leburn House was the home and business premises of two brothers Richard and Thomas Densham. Richard was brought up in Bampton and returned here as a well-respected solicitor. The two gentlemen were very active in the local community while also bringing up their orphaned nephew Thomas Row who also became a local solicitor.



# White Horse, Fore Street

Built on the site of an earlier inn, The White Horse as we see it today dates from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Its handsome and symmetrical façade and distinctive porch with black stuccoed end pilasters and 16 pane sash windows are typical of that period.

The earlier inn was a post house with postriders carrying mail and packages by horse drawn carriages or coach to and from the town. The horses, which could also be rented, were kept in the stable block. By 1830, mail coaches were leaving The White Horse daily for Barnstaple and Bristol often with passengers on board.

The White Horse also became an Inland Revenue office and stamp distribution point - not postage stamps, but those used on wills, deeds and other documents in recognition of the appropriate tax having been paid to the government.

During the mid to late 20th century The White Horse was particularly salubrious and frequented only by high class visitors to the town.

Over the centuries The White Horse has been at the heart of Bampton Charter Fair which takes place annually on the last day in October. Pony and sheep sales used to take place outside and the farmers and visitors would refresh themselves in the Inn.

Over recent years all of the Inn's rear and adjacent buildings have been developed and now comprise 5 separate dwellings.



# Old House, Frog Street

This extensive building dating from around 1735, is located in a picturesque setting near to the Shuttern Brook. In 1790 the site was a busy town tannery run by John Oxenham.

A tannery is a large site with multiple buildings where animal hides are turned into leather using tannic acid. The site continued to operate as a tannery under new owner Thomas Farrant from 1810, at times producing 25 hides per week from 48 tanning pits.

Devon was one of the highest producers of leather in England during early 1800s. However, a shortage of oak followed and demand for leather reduced after the Napoleonic wars.

*The Napoleonic Wars were a series of conflicts fought between France under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte and a number of European nations between 1799 and 1815.*

This was the old watermill where ground oak bark and water were mixed to make tannic acid. The building has been fully renovated in recent years.

By 1841, possibly supporting a dwindling income from the tanyard, the tanner's wife, Elizabeth Farrant and daughter Ellen ran a boarding school on the same site with 17 female students. A lack of further records suggest that the tannery ceased trading after the tanner's death in 1847.

From 1882 the property came under ownership of George Frost a nursery man and seedman and was run as 'The Nurseries' until 1939.

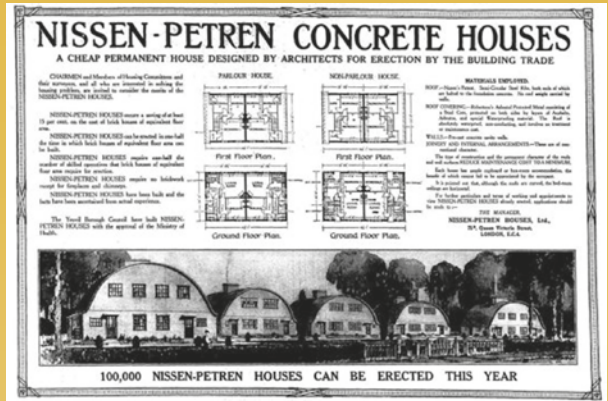
During subsequent years the title was split several times and now comprises three dwellings within the main building in addition to the renovated mill house and a 1980s house built on part of the land.



# Nissen Houses, Frog Street

Bampton Urban District Council built this block of three semi-detached Nissen-Petren houses in Frog Street in 1922. They were designed by Yeovil architects Petter and Warren. They have a distinctive semi-circular roof construction which is clad in curved corrugated iron sheets and roughcast brick cavity walls. The front room features a cast iron fireplace

The houses were built as low-cost housing and their design was based on the principles that Lt Colonel Nissen, of the Royal Engineers, used in the construction of the First World War Nissen huts. There are similar council houses in some Somerset villages. They represent a most unusual attempt to provide the cheap and decent council housing that our country needed following the First World War.



This 1925 advert in The Times proclaims the advantages of this revolutionary and unusual design which required only half the skilled labour needed to build traditional brick built homes and could be erected in half the time. The early erection of the roof enabled the work of filling in the walls and building the fireplaces and chimney backs to be proceeded with independently of weather conditions. The estimated cost of construction at £350 was around £100 less than that of traditional housing.



# Castle Grove, Castle Street

Castle Grove, situated on the northern outskirts of the town, is one of Bampton's most substantial properties. Probably built on the site of an earlier Elizabethan mansion called Tristrams House, a small part of the current building may date from the 16th century. The small wing was built in the 18th century and was followed by the larger Regency wing in the early 19th century. Constructed of render on rubble stone, the building was probably thatched before the 19th century but now has a slate roof.

Throughout its history the house generally served as a large family home, often with the owners having some standing and taking an active part in community life. A Bishop's faculty from 1728 dedicates the front north pew of St Michael and All Angels church for the owners of Castle Grove and the pew behind for their staff.



Castle Grove was the family home of Captain Anketell Moutray Read who was killed in France in 1915. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery.

*The Victoria Cross (VC), introduced by Queen Victoria in 1856, is the highest and most prestigious award of the British honours system. It is awarded for gallantry "in the presence of the enemy" to members of the British Armed Forces. The medal has been awarded 1,358 times.*

When the current owners purchased Castle Grove in 1984 new life was breathed into the building as they converted it into a nursing and residential home with sheltered accommodation. They have continued the tradition of supporting the community started by previous residents and hold an annual fête on the lawns.





# Methodist Chapel, Mary Lane



There are records of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, coming to Bampton to preach 'in an open place' in 1766. The Bible Christian movement, a breakaway group from the Wesleyans, formed a society here in 1861. They purchased land in Mary Lane in 1862 and built the chapel and rear caretaker's cottage on the site of an older building.

Initially Sunday school classes were held inside the chapel and were attended by 110 scholars but by 1896 a dedicated Sunday school building had been built alongside the chapel.

The right hand building was the chapel - a double height building where three services were held every Sunday. The adjoining building served as the Sunday school with a ground floor meeting room and a first floor school area.

John Wesley had proclaimed that "buying, selling, and drinking of liquor, unless absolutely necessary, were evils to be avoided." The temperance movement gained much popularity and Bampton Methodists were encouraged to sign a pledge to abstain from alcohol. With around 13 pubs and inns in the town at this time there was plenty of temptation!



The chapel was renovated in the 1980s, at the time when the Sunday school building was used as a community space for children's parties, the Brownies and a women's group.

Membership numbers fell significantly over the late 20th century. By 2003 there was just one church service a month. The chapel closed in 2005 and the buildings subsequently sold and converted into two dwellings known today as Old Chapel House and Lavender Cottage.



Rev Earnest Squire served as the Methodist minister from 1889 until after the First World War.



# National School, Brook Street

In the 1820s Mrs Elizabeth Penton, whose family had benefited from the profitable local wool trade, gave this building in Brook Street as a school. Initially called the Free School and later National School, free education was provided for 100 pupils, rising to 150 pupils upon introduction of compulsory education under the Education Act 1870. She also left an endowment for the maintenance of the building, the purchase of materials and teachers' salaries. The teachers had to be Church of England and if there was only one teacher that had to be a woman.

On the first floor a large sliding partition separated the boys and girls in a large school room which was also used as a community space for lectures, musical rehearsals, concerts and meetings. The school mistresses lived on the ground floor.



1930's Schoolroom

*Scarlet fever, a bacterial infection, was the leading cause of death in children in the country around the turn of the century. In January 1894, newspapers record a 2 week extension to National School holidays as a consequence of the disease after ten local cases were diagnosed.*



*In 1912, news of the Titanic disaster reached Bampton and under the guidance of headmaster Mr Frederick Townsend the National School children collected £5 1s 3d for Titanic Relief Fund which had been set up to provide for families of the 1503 passengers and crew who died.*



The school closed in 1938 with the opening of State schools and the property was converted to 3 houses.



# Forde & Old Malt House, Briton Street

This impressive symmetrical house, adjacent stone built buildings and land originally formed the Fulford or Forde estate next to the River Bathern. It has a very remarkable history.

From 1732, the town's workhouse was located here in an earlier building. It provided shelter and food for as many as 60 local adults and children in return for work until the early 1800s when the responsibility for the poor and destitute of Bampton was taken over by the Tiverton Union.

Forde House records suggest the house as we see it today was built around 1825 when it was owned by landowner James Greenway and was occupied by a series of tenants.



From around 1840 to early 1903 it became the home and workplace for John T Periam and his family. Records show that Mr Periam was a very busy man; lime quarry proprietor, farmer, lawn manure agent, maltster, wine and spirit merchant, banking agent for Stuckey's Bank and stamp distributor.

The stone built Malt House was leased by the Youth Hostel Association in 1932 and became a magnet for cyclists and hikers for the next 40 years, with just a short break from 1940-45 when the British army took over the hostel. The primitive low ceilinged hostel with its 'breakneck stairs', 'stuffed squirrels' and 'white washed interior' operated until 1971. The hostellers didn't mind being encouraged to use the public



toilets down the road rather than the pail provided.

Today the site comprises four separate dwellings.



