

Kimpton is a moderately sized parish of about 1500 ha (3700 acres) in the south-west of North Hertfordshire. It is a mostly agricultural area with about 70 ha (170 acres) of woodland. The main settlement area – Kimpton village – lies east of the centre of the parish area, while Peters Green (and the former Perry Green, which now forms part of it) is to the west and Blackmore End is to the south. There are smaller hamlets at Ansell's End and Porter's End.

The parish is bisected by a Y-shaped valley with its foot to the east and a fork at the west end of the village: one branch trends to the north-west along Whiteway Bottom, the other south-west along Kimpton Bottom. The valley shows the former course of a lost river, known as the Kym, Kyme or Kime, now culverted under the High Street. It joined the River Mimram at Kimpton Mill.

## Placenames

Kimpton is first recorded as *Kamintone* in Domesday Book, which is usually explained as \**Cyman tūn*, 'the enclosed farm of Cyma'. The river-name expert Eilert Ekwall was in no doubt that Kym or Kyme is a back-formation from the village name (in other words, it was never an independent river-name). Although Cyma is a genuine Old English personal name, there is river-name Kyme in Lincolnshire, which Ekwall derived from Old English \**cymbe*, 'a hollow'. If the river-name came first – which is what we usually find – could Kimpton be the *tūn* on the River Kym? The next possibility is that because many river-names belong to an older stratum of place naming than Old English village names, \**cymbe* may be Brittonic (a Celtic dialect). Brittonic \**Cumbja* ('valley-river') would develop into Old English \**cymbe*, and we should bear this possibility in mind. The Mimram also has a Brittonic name, as do most other local rivers.

The name of the Mimram is one of the few local names recorded before Domesday Book was compiled in 1086. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle described the building of a *burh* (a fortified town) at Hertford in 913, *betweox memeran and beneficcan and lygean* (one manuscript spells *memeran* as *maran* and another gives *mæran*), 'between the Mimram and the Beane



and the Lea'. All three rivers have names that are meaningless in Old English and have Brittonic origins. Mimram seems to contain Brittonic *\*mimo-*, 'speaking, murmuring, mumbling', and *\*aramo-*, 'gentle, calm, quiet'. The original *\*Mimaramā* would mean the 'murmuring gentle river'. Speakers of Old English found words with three repeated consonants challenging to say and changed the third *-m-* to *-n-* by a process known as dissimilation.

local rivers.



Kimpton as shown on Google Earth, with the High Street running along the valley of the lost River Kyme

The manor of Hookenhanger or Hockinghanger is first mentioned in 1235×6, and the name means Hocca's *hangra*, 'Hocca's wood on a steep hillside'. It was one of the three principal manors of medieval Kimpton, the others being Parkbury and Leggatts, both first mentioned in 1303. Parkbury was connected with Park Farm, the site of a deer park first recorded in 1366, while Leggatts was held by a family of that name.

Other places in the parish include Bibbs Hall, which was *Bibeswrthia* in the late twelfth century. The name means Bibba's *worð*, 'Bibba's hedged farm'. Bibbesworth was the name of one of the lesser manors of the medieval parish. It was held of the manor of Pirton, an excellent example of how manors were all about ownership, not geography, as Pirton is not even nearby. Little Bibbesworth was another manor held of Pirton and granted to the Priory of St Mary's at Hertford. The Priory's holdings were valued at £2 13s 8d in the Inquisition of Pope Nicholas, carried out in 1291.

Two 'reputed manors' are known in the parish. A 'reputed manor' was one where the demesne lands (those belonging to the lord of the manor) were separated from services (such as the requirement for the lord's tenants to work his fields); in feudal law, this is also called seignior in gross. The first of these to be mentioned, although not as a manor, was Plummers, the home of Thomas *de Plumere* ('of the plum-tree pool') in 1272. The first mention of it as a manor is in 1596. The second is Leigh or Lye, mentioned in 1518; the name is found today as Lye Wood, the home of Thomas *de la Leye* ('of the clearing') in 1314. Rye End is not recorded before 1728, but the name is Middle English *atter ee*, 'at the water', wrongly understood later to be *att ree*. Blackmore End was the home of Kateryna *de Blakemere* ('of the black pool') in 1296. Peters Green and Perry Green are not mentioned

before they appear on Dury and Andrews's map of Hertfordshire, published in 1766. They show as developed hamlets that had existed for some time. Their origins are currently a mystery.

## Domesday Book

The earliest record of the village is in Domesday Book, as already mentioned. The commissioners who compiled it were keen to find out how the owners had been in January 1066, when King Edward the Confessor was still alive, as they regarded Harold II as a usurper. Ælfgifu, the widow of Earl Ælfgar of East Anglia (died 1062), was the tenant in 1066. She was the mother of Earls Eadwine of Mercia and Mōrcær of Northumbria, and mother-in-law of Harold II. William I's half-brother Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, let it to Ralph Courbespine, a member of the Maminot family, after the Norman Conquest. The Maminot's barony was Dover-Castleward, from which Kimpton was held for two knights' fees (sufficient land to give two knights income to perform the duties they owed their feudal overlord). The barony passed to the family of Geoffrey de Say (1155-1230), one of the signatories of Magna Carta in 1215. The medieval lords of the three principal manors of Kimpton held their lands from the Maminot and the Say families.



Inside the parish church, dedicated to Ss Peter and Paul

The Domesday commissioners assessed four hides of arable land for tax, set at £12. These fields were worked by seven ploughs, of which two were in demesne (on the lord's land), although there was the capacity for ten, including an extra team on the demesne land. As well as arable, there was meadow to support six oxen and pannage (woodland foraging for acorns) for 800 pigs. The population is given as 24 adult males (2 Frenchmen, 12 villeins, two bordars, three cottars and five slaves), which indicates that the community consisted of about 150 people.

## Archaeology

We need to use archaeological data to understand periods earlier than the Domesday Book. There have been very few archaeological fieldwork projects in the village and no overall surveys, so the following summary is based mainly on monuments recorded in the county Historic Environment Record and the database of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The PAS database has only six entries: one is an Iron Age Coin, one an Iron Age object that may have been an earring, two are Roman coins, one is a medieval coin, and the other two are post-medieval coins.

[Find out more about early Kimpton and its archaeology here.](#)

Share this:

Email

Print

Facebook

Twitter

Pocket

WhatsApp

Pinterest

Reddit