

A Desk-Based Archaeological Assessment of the New Town Hall and 14 Brand Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire



Keith J Fitzpatrick-Matthews

North Hertfordshire District Council

Museums Service

Archaeological Report 36

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The photograph of the interior of the building on the title page is by Tony Fitzpatrick-Matthews.

Introduction

This Desk-Based Assessment has been produced to assess the potential for the presence of archaeological remains on the site of the proposed refurbishment of Hitchin New Town Hall (12-13 Brand Street), the attached Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium, and 14 Brand Street (until recently occupied by Kam's Chinese Takeaway) (Figure 1). It aims to gauge the degree of survival of deposits and features that pre-date construction of the existing buildings that occupy the site. As such, it can only raise the possibility that certain remains may exist rather than state with confidence that they do survive to be affected by the proposed development.

It also assesses the importance of the standing buildings as archaeological monuments in line with current guidance. Although these buildings are of relatively recent date (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), there is no reason to write them off as sources of information about the past. The importance of using this type of evidence to understand the expression of social relations is an important area of research (Matthews 1999, 156), while its contribution to the production of 'thick descriptions' of the movements of people within a townscape in the past is another (Matthews 2003, 59).



**Figure 1: The site from space, 2009
(© Microsoft Earth)**

Hitchin

The historic town of Hitchin is a relatively well preserved example of a medieval market town, its form typical of such towns in the south-east midlands. Its history has been well researched since the earlier twentieth century, partly thanks, in recent years, to the existence of an enthusiastic and active Historical Society. Its archaeology is less well known, although several large scale excavation projects have taken place since 1980 and two recent overviews of the archaeology of the town have been published (Thompson 2005; Fitzpatrick-Matthews & Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2008).

Geology

The town lies in an area of rather complex geology, with the base of the Middle Chalk, the Lower Chalk and the underlying Gault forming the bedrock of different areas, according to topography (*see below*; Figure 2). The situation is complicated by the presence of a buried river channel, subsequently blocked to become a lake bed, with deposits of gravels and clays in its base, which were exploited as a source of raw materials by later brick- and tile-makers.

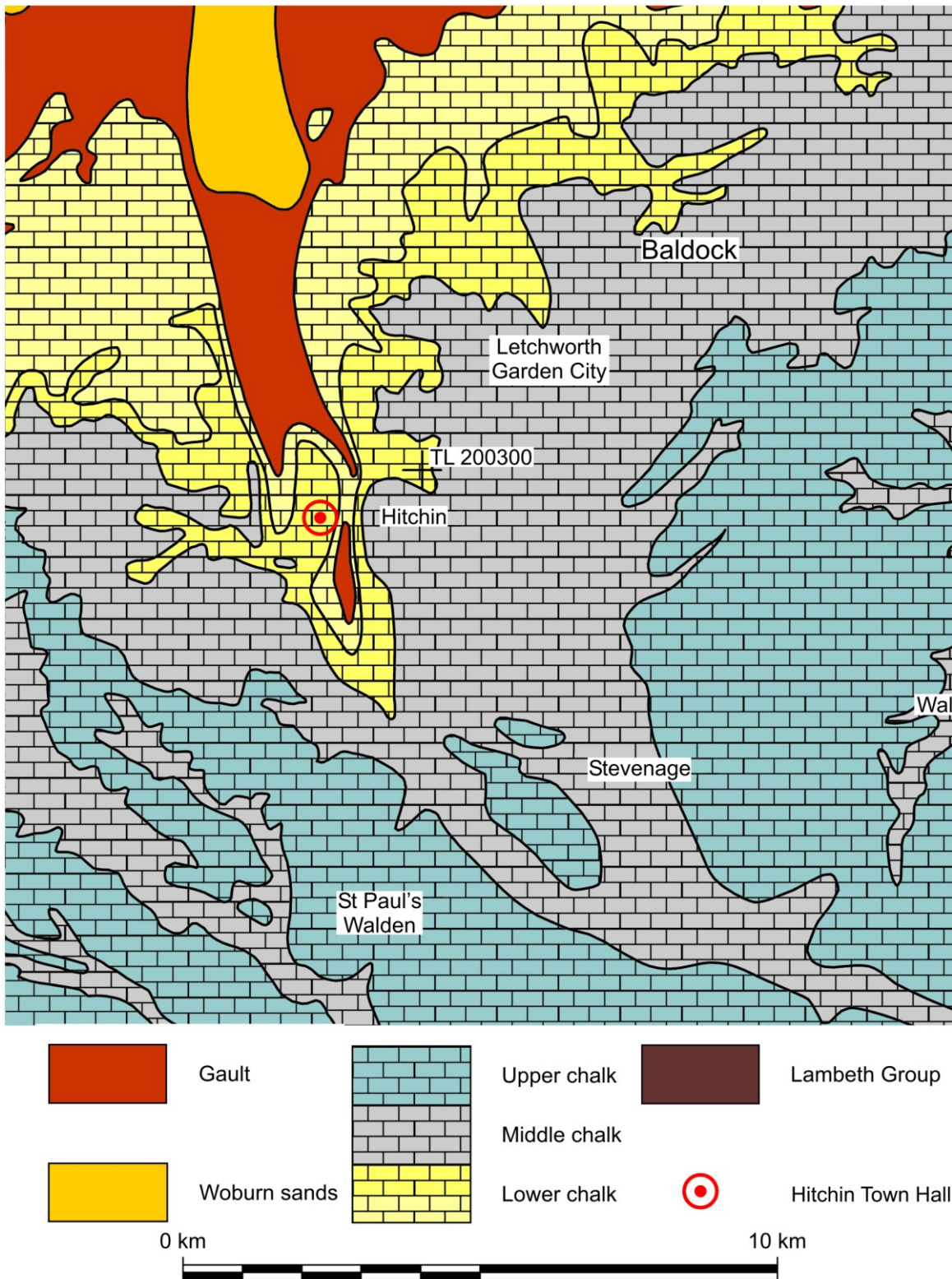


Figure 2: Solid geology

In the Brand Street area, the solid geology consists of Lower Chalk, formed from the bodies of microscopic marine creatures that lived during the late Cretaceous era (100-65 million years ago), when southern Britain lay beneath a shallow tropical sea, known as the Tethys Sea. During the Eocene epoch (55.8-33.9 million years ago), clay was laid down on the bed of this sea as it dried up,

which remained as a range of hills, with a tributary of the Bytham River (a major river running from Leicester, via Kings Lynn towards Lowestoft) flowing northwards through Letchworth.

The chalk is an important aquifer containing generally potable – albeit extremely hard – water with dissolved calcium bicarbonate (Hopson *et al.* 1996, 129). It varies seasonally, with a maximum around March and is extremely susceptible to periods of drought, with a variation of up to eight metres recorded at Kimpton between 1964 and 1989. Two streams rise from springs to the south of the town: the River Hiz, which runs through the town centre, and the River Purwell, which flows to its east. The two rivers meet to the north of the town. The chalk is also a source of flint, particularly in its upper layers, which occurs locally both as nodules and as tabular flint.

Chalk is a poor building stone, with only chalk rock being exploited, although it continued to be used until the early nineteenth century. The most widely used stone came from Totternhoe, to the west of Dunstable, Beds (Clifton-Taylor 1977, 56). The use of chalk rock was generally restricted to infill between more durable materials. Lower quality chalk was formerly used to make a material known as clunch by puddling chalk slurry with straw and clay to produce building blocks that were not strong, and whose durability was limited and depended on keeping the material dry by plastering and roofing. Use of clunch ceased in the nineteenth century as brick became more widely available. A similar material, cob, was also produced in the Middle Ages and early post-medieval period, using clays mixed with chalk and straw (Pevsner 1977, 417); it is likely that a similar material was used at Baldock during the Roman period. This suffers from the same limitations as clunch. Flint was also used as a building material in churches during the Middle Ages, although it is not now exploited.

Chalk has also been used in the production of cement, plaster and mortar, especially the marly deposits from the Lower Chalk, as they are highly siliceous and contain alumina, requiring only minimal additions of clay. Uses of the lime produced from roasting chalk have included building materials, as fertiliser and in the tanning process (Wilmore *et al.* 1925, 13).

This solid bedrock is covered by a considerable depth of fluvio-glacial deposits of probably Anglian date (c 478,000-424,000 BP). The southern side of Brand Street is said to follow the line of a buried channel running from west to east that may have been filled at this time (Burleigh & Stevenson 1994, 17). There are also deposits of Hoxnian date (c 424,000-375,000 BP), which probably formed as land surfaces on deposits inside kettle-holes worn into the chalk during the preceding glacial period (Brownsell 2008, 406). During their exploitation in the nineteenth century, deposits of this date were frequently a source of early hominid material culture associated with fossil fauna.

Topography

Hitchin lies in a break in the Chiltern Hills known as the Hitchin Gap, an ancient drainage channel that separates the north-eastern plateau of North Hertfordshire from the Chilterns *sensu stricto* (Munby 1977, 30), created during the Anglian glaciation of the Ice Age, around 470,000 to 425,000 years ago. The ice sheet ground away the hills and gouged out a new channel, around thirty metres deep, that filled with gravels; as the ice retreated, it left behind a series of lakes that slowly dried out. A river flowed south through this to join an ancient line of the River Thames near Hertford. Later glacial phases did not have such a dramatic impact, although the flow of the river was reversed, forming the Hiz and the Purwell, which now join the River Ivel and, eventually, the Great Ouse. Although most of the present day drainage of Hertfordshire is southwards to the Thames, Hitchin lies in a small group of parishes where the drainage is northwards to the Great Ouse and Cam (Wilmore *et al.* 1925, 38).

The underlying geology affected the formation of the landscape during the Pleistocene glaciations, with harder rocks (such as the Melbourn rock at the base of the Middle Chalk) creating shelves in the escarpment (Doubleday 1951, 16). Above these shelves, the scarp tends to be concave, whilst the plateau, on the Upper Chalk, has given rise to a rolling character on the gentle dip slope. Successive glaciations rounded off the valleys and these were followed by renewed down-cutting; the clay capping of the plateau creates a run-off for ground water, with the effect that almost every valley in North Hertfordshire contains a stream.

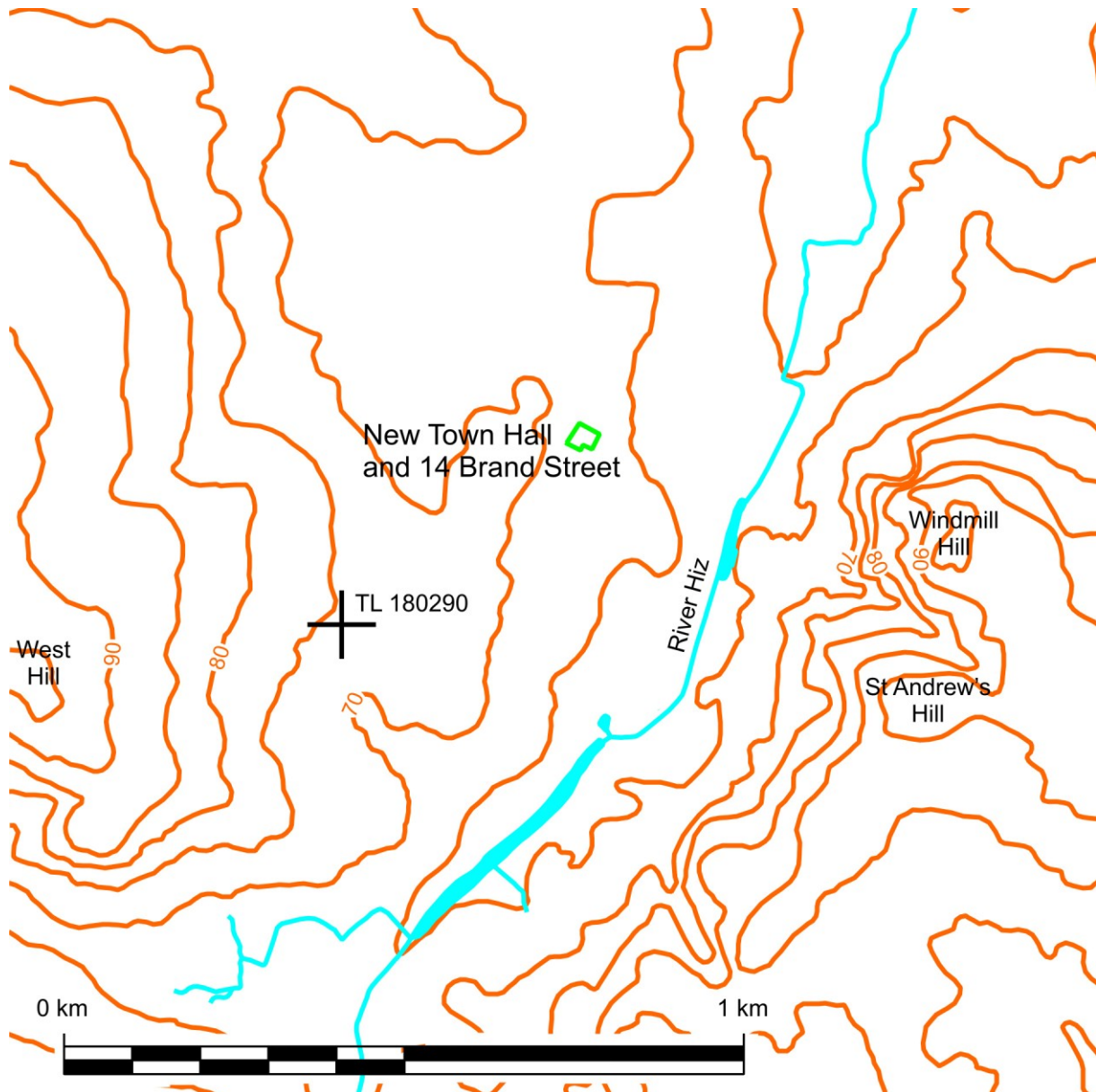


Figure 3: Topography of the town centre; height in metres above Ordnance Datum (1:10,000)

The town centre occupies the valley of the River Hiz, a small stream that has been largely canalised through the town centre (Figure 3). It flows roughly south to north, from Wellhead through the parkland of Hitchin Priory at the southern edge of the town, past the east end of St Mary's Church, parallel with Bancroft and Grove Road; it meets the River Purwell, flowing in an east to west direction at the former Grove Mill on the northern edge of the town. The situation of the town, sheltered from

the prevailing east wind, encouraged the prominent Quaker Dr Samuel Fothergill (1715-1772) to call it “*the English Montpellier*” (Cussans 1874, 33).

To the east of the town centre, the land rises rapidly to Highbury, a significant placename relating to the early medieval status of the town as a fortified *burh* (Gover *et al.* 1938, 9). Windmill Hill and St Andrews Hill dominate this side of the town. To the west, West Hill is a more gentle rise, albeit to a similar elevation, and the site of the New Town Hall and 14 Brand Street lies on slightly sloping ground, just below the top of a low ridge that forms a northward trending spur from the main mass of West Hill. To the west of this slight ridge, the Capswell springs in Butts Close are the source of the now culverted Capswell Brook, which flows east beneath the north end of Bancroft and Skynner’s Almshouses to join the River Hiz.

Documentary data

Early medieval origins

The earliest reference to Hitchin is found in a probably mid seventh-century document known as the Tribal Hidage, an assessment of Anglo-Saxon peoples for tax, where the name *Hicce* refers to a semi-independent people within the overall control of the midland kingdom of Mercia (Davies & Vierck 1974, 232). It is important to note that the name is applied to a group of people, not a place, and cannot be used as evidence for the existence of a settlement at this time. However, as will be seen, there is archaeological evidence that the *Hicce* had an important central place on the site of modern Hitchin, which may have borne a different name.

Although Reginald Hine (1929, 411) states that Offa, King of Mercia 757-796, built a palace in the town in 758, he also quotes William Dunnage’s manuscript *History of Hitchin* to the effect that the palace was built in Offley, while the king stayed on in Hitchin to supervise the work (Hine 1927, 69). Even this is a misapprehension, as the unpublished work of Dunnage states that “... *Offa was defeated and compell’d to retreat to Hitchin, where he stayed a few days, until his supplies came up; he then marched against the Enemy and compleatly defeated and slew him near the Great Wood, on the left of the Ickening (or Ickniel) Road, and built himself a Palace on the spot where he defeated his Enemy, which was called Offley, ever afterwards*” (Dunnage 1815, 22). Hine appears to be muddling this account with a passage elsewhere in Dunnage, which describes a house Offa “... *had given to Eadrick when he left Hitchin...; when Eadrick was chosen Abbot of St Albans he gave the Palace with all its Furniture to John de Grant, one of Offa’s first Councillors; the Palace which may be so called, stood near the Church of Saint Andrew.*” (Dunnage 1815, 34).

According to Dunnage, much of his information for the early history of the town came from “*the testimony of John Blomvill, one of the Founders of the Priory of the White Carmelites in Hitchin, and Thomas Cobham, a descendant of John Cobham, also another of the Founders of the same: unfortunately for Posterity, the Books from whence the following Pages were copied, through negligence became so damp, that upon turning over the Leaves in translating, they completely dropped from the Fingers upon the slightest touch, a great, and probably the most essential part of the History of this Town, is for ever lost to Community...*” (Dunnage, 1815, ii-iii). This does not inspire confidence: even if he were translating the purported medieval documents accurately, the story of Offa appears to derive from Matthew Paris’s *Vitae Duarum Offarum* (‘Lives of the Two Offas’), a largely fictitious account of the monarch and his putatively fifth-century ancestor. The work is worthless as history, so the local Hitchin tradition of a connection with the greatest of Mercian kings

rests on very shaky foundations. Dunnage (1815, 33), followed by Hine (1929, 411), quotes Blomvill as the authority for a devastating fire in the town in 910. Again, we cannot be certain of the accuracy of either the date or the event, although it has passed into local received wisdom.

In the late tenth century, a local noblewoman named Æthelgifu bequeathed various properties and income for a number of churches in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire (Howlett 2008a, 192). These included a provision for Æthelnoth to receive Langford ... *on þa gerad þe he selle ælce gære into hyccan þreo dægforma , ofor his dæg þ land æt langaforda <æt langaforda> into hyccan...* ('on the condition that each year he gives three days' produce to Hitchin (minster church) & that after his days, the land at Langford (be given) to Hitchin') (Whitelock 1968, 7). A copy of the original document, written in Hitchin, survives in the Scheide Library of Yale University, following its purchase at Sotheby's by William H Scheide in December 1969, and is considered the most important of only forty or so surviving Anglo-Saxon wills.

According to the twelfth-century *de Inventione Sanctę Crucis nostrę in Monte Acuto et de ductione eiusdem apud Waltham* (chapter XII), a certain Tovi *Pruda* ('the proud'), standard-bearer to King Cnut, donated his property at *Hicche* to the Abbey of Waltham Cross (Stubbs 1861, 11). There is no contemporary evidence for this assertion, although Tovi *Pruda* is a witness to a charter of Cnut's, dated 1033. In 1062, a charter supposed to have been issued by Eadweard the Confessor (King 1042-1066) confirmed a donation of land in Hitchin to the Abbey, although the status of the charter is, at best, dubious. The anonymous *de Inventione Sanctę Crucis nostrę* dates from after 1177, when its author was expelled from the community at Waltham Cross and was thus written more than a century after the Abbey's consecration in 1060. Although its Victorian editor believed "*how thoroughly to be trusted he is as a faithful reporter of what he saw himself and heard from others*" (Stubbs 1861, xxvii), there is little reason to believe that the author had access to documents of better authenticity than we do.

High medieval

We are on more certain ground with Domesday Book, the great survey of England commissioned by William I (King 1066-1087) in December 1085. It was undertaken to establish what land was owned by the King in the newly-conquered territory of England, what other people owned and what taxes they owed on it. These various pieces of information collected were intended to give a clear picture of the resources available to the feudal overlord of the estate and, ultimately, to the king. Of particular importance is the concept of 'taxable land'; the geld was a tax specifically collected to finance the defence of the kingdom against Danish and Norse attack. Only one class of land, arable, was used in assessing the geld. William's commissioners also sought to establish who the owners had been at the time of Eadweard the Confessor's death in January 1066 (Harold II being regarded by the Norman administration as a usurper).

Domesday Book records that Hitchin (*Hiz*) was held in January 1066 by Harold, Earl of Mercia, who became King after the death of Eadweard the Confessor (Morris 1976, 1.3). Although Nathaniel Salmon (1708, 161) states that Harold received it from Eadweard, this appears to be no more than a conjecture. It was part of an extensive group of manors in northern Hertfordshire that had been held by the earls of Mercia and it is possible that they held them as successors of the Kings of Mercia following the conquest of the kingdom and the deposition of its queen Ælfwynn by the West Saxons in 918. Various rights (*avera* and *inward*), due to the king from the sokemen of these manors, may confirm its status as ancient royal demesne (Sanderson 1912, 8). Following the Norman Conquest in

October 1066, many of the manors held by the earls of Mercia became royal possessions. The group held by William I included the Wymondleys, Minsden (Langley), Waylay, Westoning (Beds), Kings Walden, Wandon, Charlton, Temple Dinsley, Offley, Wellbury, Willian, Flexmere (a lost place in St Pauls Walden), Hexton, Lilley and Ley Green, assessed for tax at 37½ hides (a hide being a unit of arable land equivalent to about 120 acres). Wymondley and Hexton had been appropriated by Harold, while Kings Walden, Charlton, Offley, Temple Dinsley, Wellbury and Waylay were appropriated under William I's sheriffs Ilbert and Peter de Valoines (Sanderson 1912, 7).

The Baliol family was granted the manor, apparently by William II at the end of the eleventh century (Chauncy 1700, 161) and remained in the family until the forfeiture of lands by John Baliol, English puppet King of Scotland, in 1296 (Sanderson 1912, 8). The reversion of the manor was subsequently granted to a succession of individuals before being settled in 1311 on Robert de Kendale, Constable of Dover Castle and Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1308.

Four water mills are recorded in Domesday Book (Morris 1976, 1.3); one was presumably the Port Mill on Portmill Lane, another the Shotling (Sheekling or Grove) Mill to the north of the town, while the remaining mills may have included that at Ickleford or those that were later reckoned as part of the manor. These two manorial mills are the Malt Mill near the Priory (Howlett 2004, 8-9) and the Hemp Mill, in Priory Park (Howlett 2004, 47). The mill at Charlton is certainly recorded in 1177, while another water mill is recorded in the manor in 1248, held by William de Lindley, whose father had also held a mill (Sanderson 1912, 7). It is unclear whether this is the Port Mill or Shotling Mill.

In 1221, the manor was granted the right to hold a fair (Sanderson 1912, 7); a century later, Robert de Kendale was granted the right to a fair to be held on the vigil, day and morrow of the Decollation of St John the Baptist (28-30 August).

A Carmelite Friary was established in the town in 1317, when the king granted it a messuage to build a church and house. Others were given by John de Cobham. The Friary's church was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Although elements of the medieval buildings survive, notably the cloister, there is not currently enough information to understand its plan in detail.

The High Medieval town has been described as an 'inchoate borough' in the middle of the twelfth century, at the time when the Baliol family held the manor, and it has been surmised that this was when it first developed as a consequence of the growth of its market (Sanderson 1912, 6). There is no evidence that burgage rents were ever charged, although it appears throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries represented by jurors separate from the county before justices in the eyre (Howlett 2008a, 204). This assumption of a twelfth-century development may not be correct, as discussed below.

Late medieval

In 1376, the male line of the de Kendales failed and two thirds of the manor reverted to the crown, the other third passing in dower to the widow of Edward de Kendale, who married Sir Thomas de Barrè. The two thirds moiety passed first to Edward III's mistress Alice Perrers, who forfeited it a year later. It passed through various hands until being traditionally settled on queens regnant from the late fifteenth century.

A park, called Punfold, is mentioned in the grant of the manor to Sir Hugh Segrave in 1380, which is not mentioned in the *inquisitio post mortem* of John de Baliol in 1269 (Rowe 2009, 128). This

suggests that it was created in the intervening century. The name is evidently a variant of penfold, a Middle English term for an animal pen or pound. A group of field names on the western side of Hitchin, including Paynes Park, Park Piece and Little Park Piece suggest its location. It appears to have been bounded by Paynes Park, Upper Tilehouse Street, Grays Lane, Lucas Lane, Oughtonhead Way and Bedford Road (Howlett 2004, 1). The name is clearly related to the pound that formerly stood on the western side of Grammar School Lane, demonstrating that its origins were early.

The market place began to be infilled by the granting first of semi-permanent stalls and later of built tenements during the later medieval period. There is a lease dated 1470 of forty years for two stalls (Sanderson 1912, 3). There is evidence to suggest that the church owned land in the market place between what are now Bucklersbury and Sun Street (Howlett 2008a, 202), which suggests that the infill was at least in part an effort by the church to maximise its revenues.

A second religious house was founded in the town in 1361 by Sir Edward de Kendale as the Gilbertine Priory of New Biggin (or Newbigging) on land donated for the purpose by Sir Edward de Kendale (Hillelson & Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2009, 2). The donation was small, consisting of a messuage, a toft and two acres of land known as *Berriorchard*, designed to support just three canons (Beresford-Webb 1969, 7; Stephenson 2005, 77). In 1518, William Chambre left 4s to New Biggin (although he left the Carmelite Friary 20s by the same bequest), but other early sixteenth century benefactions to religious houses in the town omit New Biggin (Stephenson 2005, 78). The Priory escaped the dissolution of smaller religious houses in 1536 and it has been conjectured that Prior John Moulton surrendered it on 22 October 1538, on the day that Chicksands Priory was dissolved (Stephenson 2005, 79).

The Fraternity of Our Lady, established in 1475, was granted the right to hold two fairs, one in the Wednesday of Easter Week and the second on the feast of the Translation of Edward the Confessor (13 October), which were granted to private individuals following the Dissolution (Sanderson 1912, 7). The Fraternity's base survives as The Brotherhood, at 2 Bancroft.

The Dissolution and after

The manor remained the property of royal wives until 1705 (Howlett 2008a, 211). As the vestry took over more of the running of the parish, though, the importance of the manor for local government declined and by the beginning of the twentieth century, manorial rights and dues were of little more than historical and ceremonial interest.

Hitchin was regarded as the second largest town in Hertfordshire, according to Sir Henry Chauncy (1700, 168), who states that it *"is reputed the second Town in this County for the Number of Streets, Houses, and the Multitude of Inhabitants; theretofore it has been accounted famous for the Staple Commodities of this Kingdom; and divers Merchants of the Staple of Calice have resided here..."*.

In the late sixteenth century, John Norden (1598, 19), a native of Barley near Royston, recorded that *'in the towne is made great store of Malt'*, showing the importance of agricultural produce and the growth of trade with London brewers. Just over a century later, Sir Henry Chauncy (1700, 170) stated that Hitchin *"For the better Incouragement of Trade in this Town, the Inhabitants have used to hold a Market here every Tuesday in the Week by Prescription free from the Payment of Toll for any Sort of Corn or Grain sold here: also three Fairs every Year, one on Easter Tuesday, another on Whitsun Tuesday, and another on the 13th of October, for the Sale of all Manner of Cattle, Corn, Grain, and other Merchandize, paying Piccage and Stallage of the Markets and Fairs, to the Lord of the Mannor*

of Hitchin.". The cultivation of lavender began in the early nineteenth century (Cussans 1874, 35; Anonymous 1899, 17) and developed into an important pharmaceutical industry, with Ransom's and Perks & Llewellyn's the two principal businesses distilling it and other products. The main lavender fields lay to the west of the town, at the top of Gray's Lane, but ceased production in the twentieth century; it was revived at Cadwell early in the twenty-first century.

From the late sixteenth century on, the town's inns flourished, with their heyday in the eighteenth century. Three inns of this period are well preserved (The Sun, The Red Hart and The George), all in the southern part of the town; one of the largest of the town's inns, The Swan, formed the focus of the buildings that became Gatward's Ironworks in the 1880s and The Arcade in the 1920s. As the coaching trade declined with the arrival of the railway in 1850, the inns lost much of their economic importance and only The Sun survives today as one of the town's principal hotels. Hitchin remains a shopping centre of at least sub-regional importance, attracting visitors for its market and small specialist shops. It is the latter which characterises the uses to which the buildings described here are currently put.

The development of coaching, on which the inns depended, led to improvements in the town's notoriously poor roads; Brand Street (then Pound Lane) was placed under the care of the Hitchin to Bedford Turnpike Trust. In 1777, the Trust asked the inhabitants to take responsibility for the upkeep of the road, which they failed to do, so the Trust did repairs itself and charged the town. At the time, Pound Lane was a mere ten feet (3.0 m) wide, although parts were widened to twenty feet (6.1 m) in 1813. The eventual widening to 34 feet (10.4 m) carried out in 1834 was undertaken as the final part of the Trust's five-year campaign of improvements in the town (Foster 1987, 92). The demolished structure belonged to William Jeeves, a member of the local brick-making family, and ran the entire length of the south side of Pound Lane. It was described as "*a nice old, double-fronted, bay-windowed house*" (quoted in Crosby *et al.* 2003, 29).

The original Town Hall, at 10 Brand Street was not strictly a public building, as it had been built by a private company (Anonymous 1899, 51), following a meeting in May 1839 at which a sub-committee was formed with the express purpose of commissioning a Town Hall. It is in Italianate style and was designed by Thomas Bellamy in 1840 (Anonymous 2007, 7). From the outset, it was recognised as being too small and by the end of the century, plans had been drawn up for the New Town Hall, part of the subject of this study. This was partly prompted by the formation of the Urban District Council, which replaced the Board of Health, with its first elections on 19 December 1894. The New Town Hall opened on 18 March 1901 by Mrs Hudson, the wife of George Hudson, Member of Parliament for Hitchin 4 July 1892 to 8 January 1906 (Douglas & Humphries 1994, 16). The scheme cost £7,300 and involved land donated by William Ransom, Alfred Ransom, Frederic Seebohm, W O Times and the estate of James Hack Tuke. Its first event was a production by Hitchin Musical Society of selections from Handel's *Messiah* and Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (Fisher 1999, 109). In March 1907, it witnessed a speech by Emmeline Pankhurst in favour of women's suffrage (Fisher 1999, 122).

A Mechanics' Institute was established in 1835 (Foster 1987, 186), which first met in a house "*at the top of Brand Street*" (Anonymous 1899, 39), which is counted in the 1838 Rate Assessment as part of Parcel 253 on Merrett's map (*below*, page 39), which was used as a basis for the Assessment. This was on the north side of the street. Subsequently, it was housed in the Old Town Hall (Craven & Co

1853, 198). When a Library was built in 1861, on the east side of the Old Town Hall, the Institute's library was incorporated into it.

Although one of the nineteenth-century trade directories states that the Workman's Hall was built in 1868 (Anonymous 1899, 51), there is evidence that it was in existence before 1851 and the Listing Record for the New Town Hall states that it dates from 1841 (*below*, page 57), although the source for this statement is not known. It is set back from the street behind a frontage incorporating coffee rooms. It could hold over three hundred people and had a classroom upstairs. Its running had largely devolved upon the Friends' Adult School by 1908 (Foster 1987, 188). In 1875, Henry Aylott was the Hall's keeper (Bishop 1875, 41). Along with the Old Town Hall and, later, the New Town Hall, it was a venue for social gatherings and lectures for learned societies, such as a series on early Flemish and German painters given by Percival Gaskell in early 1901 for the Hitchin Society of Arts and Letters or a "smoking concert" held by The Church of England Temperance Benefit Society (Fisher 1999, 111).

The former Friends' Meeting House (now Hertfordshire County Council offices) was built in 1839 on the site of the former Pound Farm Yard, bequeathed to the Society of Friends by Joseph Sharples. He also left a gift of £1000 towards the cost of the building (Foster 1987, 36). In the following year, the Infirmary was built opposite (Foster 1987, 60).

A second Workhouse is said to have been established in Brand Street in the 1850s (Foster 1987, 30), but this seems to be a misunderstanding, as the master and matron named by Anthony Foster, James Wakewell and his wife, held that position at the Union Workhouse in Chalkdell. This is off Oughtonhead Way and later became the Lister Hospital, which closed in the early 1970s.

Placenames

The name Hitchin is first recorded in the seventh-century Tribal Hidage as *Hicca*, a dative plural for nominative plural *Hicce*, which would be the name of the people whose administrative centre presumably lay on the site of the town (Gover *et al.* 1938, 8). The name itself appears not to be Old English, as no convincing Germanic etymology for it can be found. It is more likely to be of Celtic origin and plausibly derives from **sicco-*, a word that survives in Modern Welsh as *sych*, meaning 'dry' (Ekwall 1928, 197); there is no need for Reginald Hine's (1929, 355-6) scepticism regarding this derivation, despite the unconvincing attempt by Skeat (1904, 62) to make it an Old English personal name. The forms with final *-n* derive from the Old English dative plural form *Hiccum* (Gover *et al.* 1938, 8).

A name of this type is most likely to have been a river-name in origin, the term referring to a stream that may have become dry seasonally or as a humorous term for a stream with a notably weak flow: either suggestion is plausible for the River Hiz. The name of the river is not ancient, being apparently first recorded by Sir Henry Chauncy (1700, 168); it is formed from the spelling of Hitchin in Domesday Book, where the final *-z* is a Norman attempt to render the *-tch* sound of English (Skeat 1904, 62). Earlier names for the river include *Cadwelbroke* ('Cadwell Brook', referring to the stretch north of Ickleford) in the thirteenth century and *Ickleford River* in 1690 (Gover *et al.* 1938, 3).

Clifford Offer (2002, 75), a former rector of St Mary's Church, has presented a strong case for identifying Hitchin with *Clofesho*, "*the most famous lost place in Anglo-Saxon England*" (Cubitt 1995, 27). His case rests partly on the meaning of the place-name, which refers to a 'cloven spur of land', which plausibly describes Hollow Lane, which splits the high points of Windmill Hill and St Andrew's Hill. It is perhaps significant that this cleft in the hill runs down to the River Hiz immediately opposite

the east end of St Mary's Church, providing the town with its most iconic view. The historical implications of the identification are very significant: *Clofesho* was the location of a series of national synods during the eighth and early ninth centuries and was clearly a place of at least ecclesiastical importance. The advantage of identifying Hitchin with *Clofesho* is that it gives a more usual Old English topographic name to a town that came to adopt a tribal name; other examples include Leeds (originally the name of a *regio*, a small early medieval semi-independent kingdom) and Oundle.

Brand Street has been recorded since 1841, although it was not formally confirmed until 1852. Before this, it had been known as Pound Lane (Fitzpatrick & West 1997, 9), Pulter's Lane (Hine 1929, 360 does not give a source for this assertion) and possibly as Hurst's Lane in 1676 (*pers. comm.* Bridget Howlett). Pound Lane refers to the animal pound that formerly stood on the western end of Grammar School Walk, Edward Pulter probably owned property on the corner of Pound Lane and Bancroft in 1556 and Edward Hurst probably owned the same property in 1676 (*pers. comm.* Bridget Howlett).

Pound Lane was widened in 1834 (Hine 1927, 297), when it was renamed Broad Street. Although it is said that that the present name derives from one of the county's three Members of Parliament at the time, Thomas Brand (1808-1890) (Fitzpatrick & West 1997, 9), he was M.P. from 3 August 1847 to June 1852 and the name is recorded six years before he entered parliament and he had adopted the surname Trevor in lieu of Brand in 1824. The origin of the name is therefore something of a puzzle.

Tradespeople

Customs returns and trade directories record the names and trades of the occupiers of buildings on Brand Street from the 1850s on. It is not always clear where the earlier businesses were located, as the earlier directories do not give building numbers, while the construction of new buildings may have changed the numbering system, although they appear to have stabilised by the end of the nineteenth century.

There is, however, a persistent confusion about 11 and 12 Brand Street, which were perhaps numbers belonging to the buildings on the corner of Paynes Park, now occupied by Latchmore Court. However, the Old Friend's Meeting House (currently offices occupied by Hertfordshire County Council) were formerly listed as 11 Brand Street, although they are now listed as on Grammar School Walk, while the address of the New Town Hall is usually given as 12/13 Brand Street. Between 1878 and 1906, 11 Brand Street was the site of T B Latchmore's home and photographic business from 1870 (Fleck & Poole 1976, 7), while 12 Brand Street was the site of a dyer's business in 1910, so these numbers cannot have been applied to properties on the north side of the street.

By the 1890s, it is apparent that the site that was to become the New Town Hall was numbered 13 Brand Street. Between 1878 and 1895, it is recorded as the site of the business of William Henry Jelly, a tin plate worker.

Numbers 14 and 15 do not appear as numbered businesses in the directories. It is unclear whether they were private residences at the time these directories were compiled or if they were the locations of businesses in unnumbered premises.

Numbers 16 and 17 were built in front of the Workmen's Hall; by 1882, James Crawford was operating the business at the front as a Coffee Tavern. Between 1886 and 1898, it was run by James

Terry Hunt as the Coffee House, but in the meantime, a Temperance Hotel had been established by 1894, presumably using the upper storeys of the building. Between 1898 and 1906, it was known as Hill's Temperance Hotel, while Mrs F J Trussell ran it and the Workmen's Hall in 1929. It may also have been home to the Blue Cross Temperance Brigade run by Walter Parsons, recorded at an unnumbered address in 1908.

Archaeological data

General

The archaeological record for Hitchin is dominated by two periods: the Lower Palaeolithic and the medieval. The former is associated with the discovery of large numbers of tools, especially handaxes, in the brickearths and other deposits that were quarried as a source of clay for brick making in the nineteenth century (Thompson 2005, 4). The latter relates to the growth of the town, from at least the tenth century onwards, as a market centre. There have also been finds of other periods, with a denuded Bronze Age burial mound excavated nearby in 2004 (Boyer 2005, 20 incorrectly describes it as a roundhouse of Iron Age date), the discovery on the same site of a probably tenth century burghal ditch (Boyer 2004, 23) and sporadic discoveries of material of Late Iron Age and Roman date throughout the town centre.

The impression given by the known data is that there was isolated settlement – consisting of farmsteads – throughout later prehistory and into the Roman period. It is only with the Late Roman period (after AD c 200) that there is more evidence for nucleated settlement. Land divisions have been found around Portmill Lane and St Mary's Square that suggest the growth of a village around St Mary's church. This impression is reinforced by a series of burials discovered over many years on the eastern side of Queen Street. Often described as burials in a seventeenth-century plague pit (e.g. Hine 1929, 417), radiocarbon dates from burials excavated in 2001 suggest that they are late to sub-Roman, while the burial rite (extended supine, with head to the west and unaccompanied by grave gifts) suggests that they were Christian, as would be expected at this date (Davis 2005, 62-3).

This places the origins of the town in the so-called 'Dark Ages', the transitional period between the end of Roman rule around AD 411 and the establishment of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the later sixth and seventh centuries. This is a very unusual circumstance and makes Hitchin an extremely important place, both within Hertfordshire and more widely in England, for understanding the resurgence of urban life following economic collapse and the abandonment of most towns in the early fifth century.

Prehistory (before c 100 BC)

The prehistoric record is dominated by a nationally important collection of handaxes, tools associated with the first human species to colonise western Europe, *Homo heidelbergensis*. They were found in considerable numbers at Highbury, Ransom's quarries at Hitchin Hill and Jeeves' quarry by The Well on Stevenage Road, but also at Benslow, High View, Brand Street, Bearton Road and Brampton Park Road. They probably represent several distinct phases of human activity in the area and belong to the handaxe tradition, which was the longest-lived of all human technologies. Although many of these tools derive from clay pits dug for the late Victorian brick-making industry in the town or from gravel pits used in road repairs, there is a record of at least one from the vicinity of the site (Figure 4). The material appears to date from the Hoxnian interglacial, c 420,000-375,000 BP,

an extremely remote period, which makes this material extremely significant for understanding the earliest human settlement of Britain.

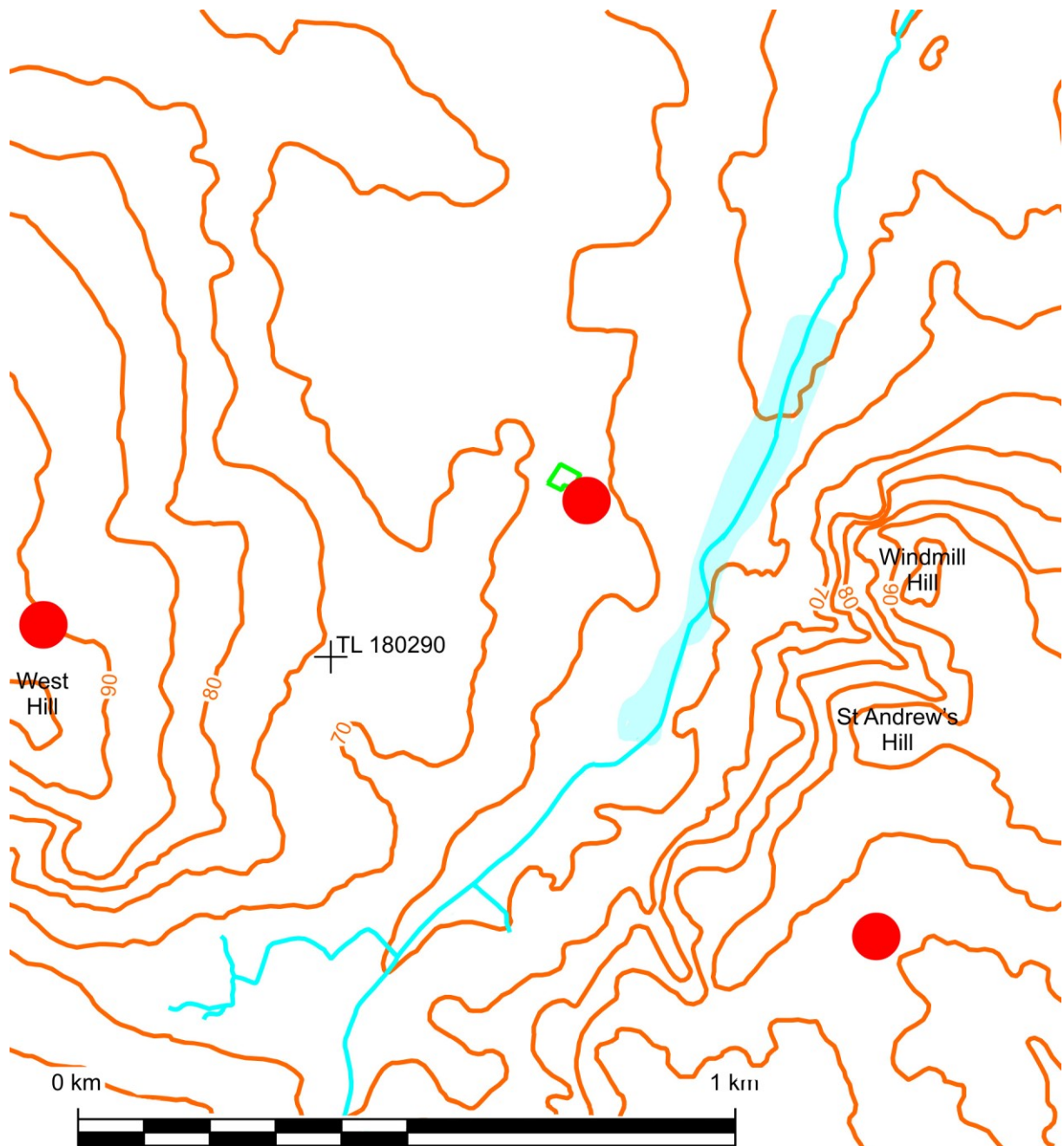


Figure 4: Palaeolithic find-spots in the centre of Hitchin (the site is outlined in green)

The brickearth in which the early tools were found contained mammal and fish bones, molluscs, mosses, leaves and seeds from flowering plants. The mammals included Merck's rhinoceros, the straight-tusked elephant, red deer, roe deer and wild horses. These remains help to date the brickearth to the warm phase known as the Hoxnian Interglacial (around 425000 to 375000 years ago), as this is when these species flourished together in Britain. A deposit of travertine formed in nearby marshy pools and contains the bones and teeth of small mammals, including bank voles, water voles, pine voles and badgers; it has been dated to around 400,000 years ago. Taken together, the plant and animal remains show that the local vegetation included both open grassland and light woodland, on the banks of shallow lakes that eventually dried out. This would have been an ideal

environment for *Homo heidelbergensis* and would have provided these nomadic people with all the resources they needed.

There is then something of a hiatus in the record of human activity in the town: there are no Middle or Upper Palaeolithic finds (although this does not mean that they will not be made in the future) and the number of Mesolithic finds (dating from c 10,000-4000 BC) is small. Palaeoenvironmental data suggests that the area around the church was a seasonally flooded water meadow at this time (Morley 2003, 36), which would have provided a good source of food and other resources such as reeds for the hunter-gatherer population.

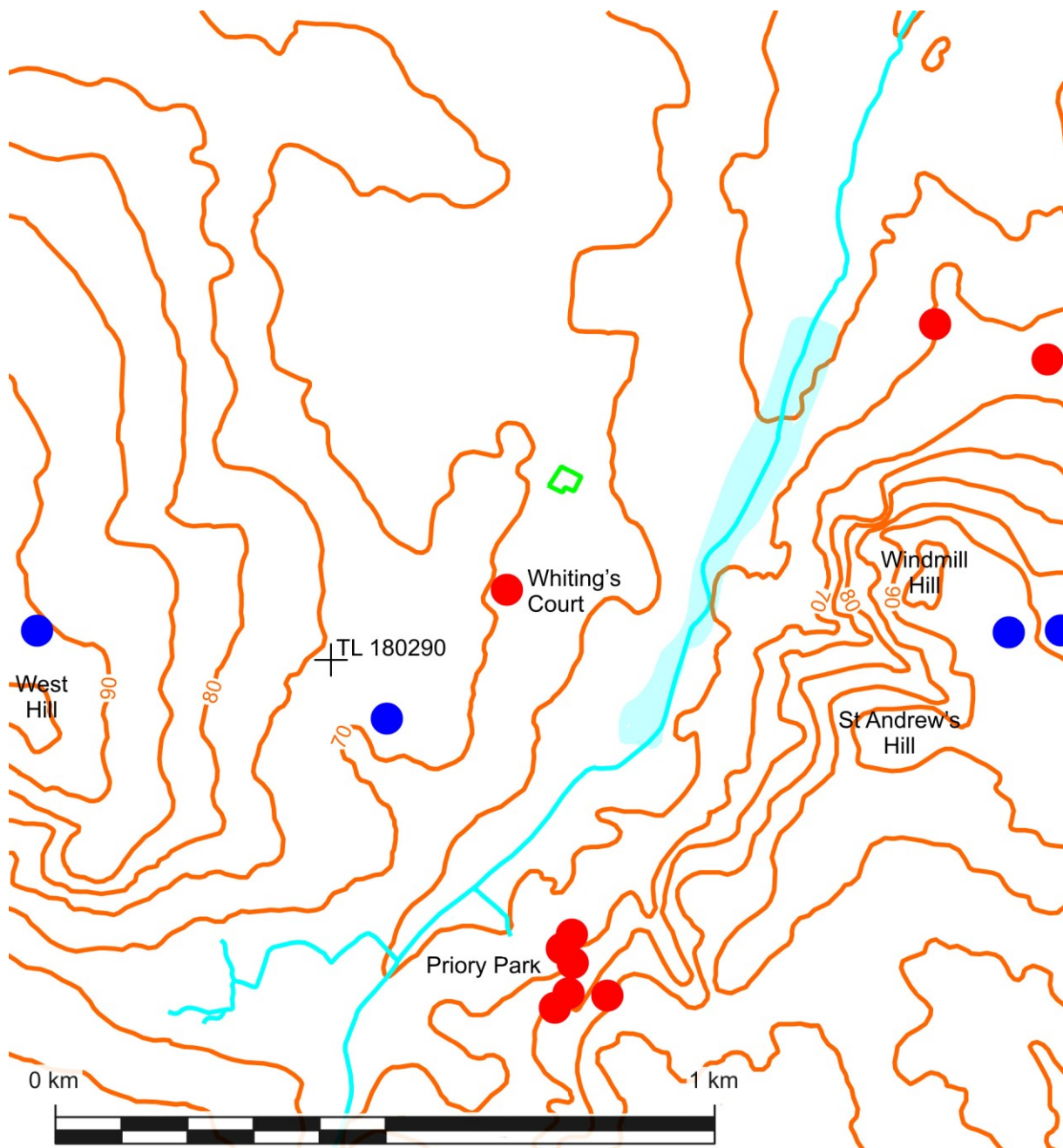


Figure 5: Neolithic (blue) and Bronze Age (red) sites and finds (the site is outlined in green)

After about 4300 BC, people (including new settlers from Europe) began to cut down the light woodland that grew on the higher ground to grow crops and keep livestock, bringing about a change

in the subsistence strategies of the population. Although their tools have been found across Hitchin, suggesting that there was widespread but small scale clearance of woodland to create fields, none are known from the town centre west of the river (Figure 5); those nearest to the site were found at Wratten Road and suggest domestic activity. It is likely that much of the historic town centre was still liable to flood and was still used mostly as a source of wild foods and raw materials.

During the third millennium BC, enormous technological and social changes took place, with evidence for a social elite, its members buried under round barrows, accompanied by objects to display their wealth and prestige. There are several cemeteries of these mounds in the town, including in Priory Park, to the south of the site (Figure 5). During excavations carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology in 2004 at Whiting's Court to the south of Brand Street, the remains of a levelled burial mound were discovered, but all that survived was the ring-ditch from which the soil to make the mound had been dug. As a result, it is impossible to date the mound more closely than c 2500-1400 BC. The position of the mound, close to the top of the slope, is typical of round barrows and it is quite possible that it is just one of several forming another cemetery on the slope above what is now Market Place. The excavators have re-interpreted it as an Iron Age roundhouse (Boyer 2005, 20), but the width and depth of the ditch are impossibly large and it was clearly the quarry ditch for a central mound.

The Late Iron Age and Roman periods (c 100 BC-AD 410)

Although this period is generally well represented throughout North Hertfordshire and claims have occasionally been made for a Roman settlement preceding the medieval town of Hitchin (e.g. Cussans 1874, 33), there is no real evidence for extensive settlement (Figure 6). Most of the evidence for the Late Iron Age in Hitchin comes from burials, which have been found all over the town, in Grove Road, Burymead, Purwell Estate, Bancroft and Foxholes (Thompson 2005, 6). There have also been finds of Iron Age coins, including one of Tasciovanus (king c 25-10 BC) and two of Cunobelinus (king AD c 9-41). Such finds give the impression that there were numerous farms in the area, probably increasingly relying on the growing settlement at Baldock to sell their produce.

Numerous Romano-British burials have been found across the town, from first century AD cremations at Burymead to others in Bancroft. These show that there were definitely people living and dying here. Coins and other domestic rubbish have been found across the town, where most seem to come from old field ditches. There are also a few pits, which must have been near houses, while a timber building has been excavated at Queen Street.

There are records of the discovery of Roman material to the south of Brand Street (Burleigh & Stevenson 1994, 25) and also at the rear of 22 Bancroft, but the context of their deposition is unclear. The work undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology at Paynes Park in 2004 suggested that the hillside in this area was part of a Roman field system (Boyer 2005, 23), but it is equally possible that the Roman material was residual in early medieval property boundaries, as the ditches followed the same alignments as the properties of the later town.

The greatest concentration of finds lies on the eastern side of the River Hiz, between the higher ground of Windmill Hill and St Andrew's Hill, and the River Hiz. Excavated evidence indicates that this area was laid out into small plots, perhaps of an agricultural character, on the edge of a village-like settlement whose economy was based on farming. That some buildings of more pretension existed is hinted at by the discovery of flue tiles (probably from a bath-house) in the archaeological evaluation

of St Mary's Square and by the presence of reused Roman tile in the late twelfth-century tower of the parish church.

The Roman villa discovered near Purwell Mill in the nineteenth century lay outside the historic parish, but is claimed as the centre of an agricultural estate that can be traced in pre-enclosure boundaries and field-names. According to this, the entire parish of Great Wymondley, together with Purwell Field (the land in Hitchin east of Queen Street and Walsworth Road, and north of Hollow Lane and Wymondley Road) and Bury Mead (north of the town) formed the Romano-British land-holding, with its community of farm workers living in the hamlet of Walsworth. The hypothesis, first put forward by the local pioneer of economic history, Frederic Seebohm (1883, 431), in the 1880s, is intriguing but unprovable.

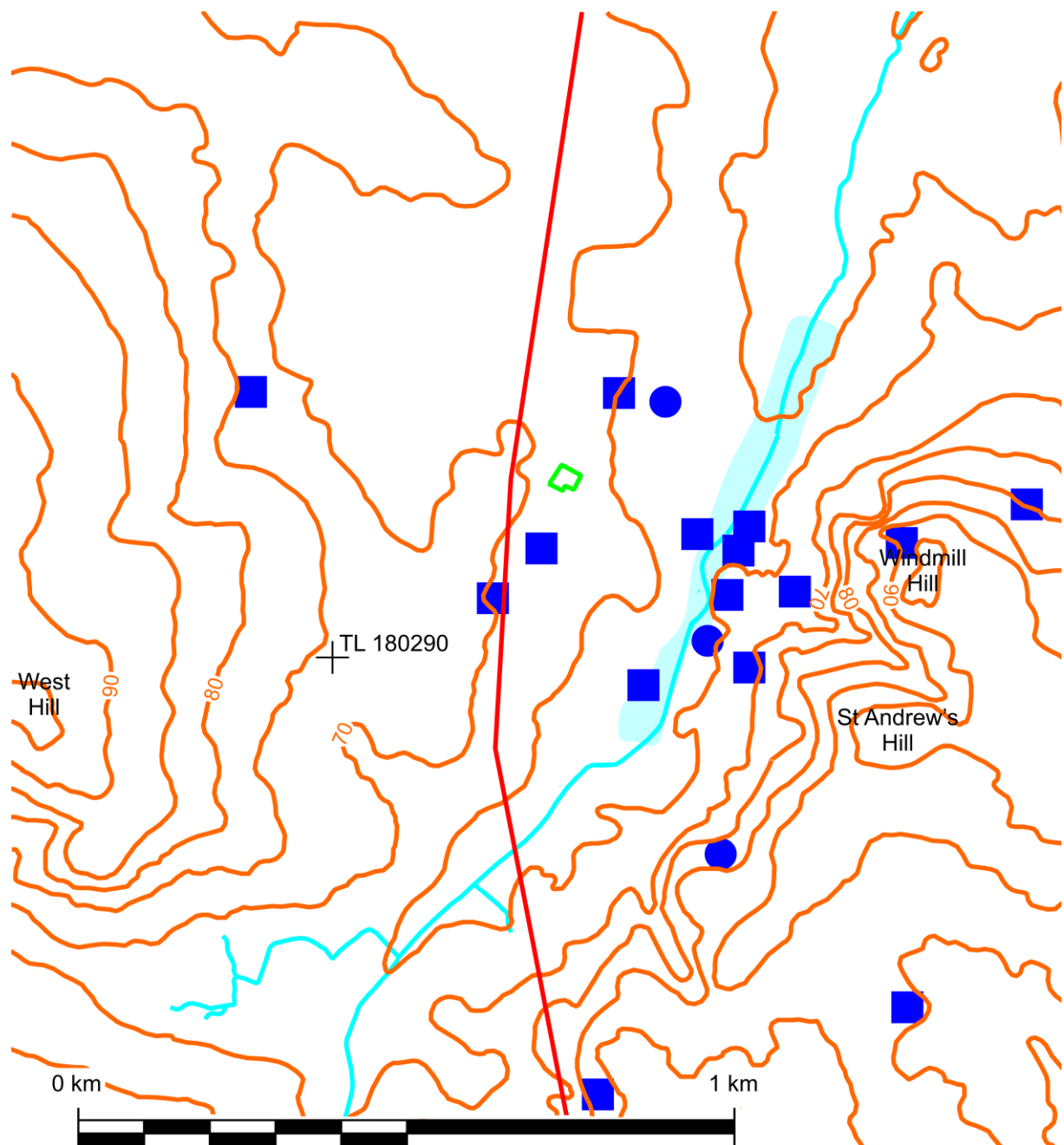


Figure 6: Iron Age and Romano-British settlement evidence (squares) and burials (circles); the supposed road is shown in red

It has been claimed that a Roman road passes through the town, descending Hitchin Hill close to the line of Park Street, crossing the Hiz close to the bridge in Bridge Street and running along the western side of the churchyard, crossing Bancroft by the junction with Portmill Lane, heading in the direction of Ickleford along the northern part of Old Hale Way (Viatores 1964, 78-9). However, a reassessment of the Viatores' work by Angela Simco (1984, 78-9) has suggested that many of the features they recorded as evidence for Roman road-building were only created as a result of Enclosure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: not one stretch of the claimed road through Hitchin, supposedly running from *Verulamium* via Bedford to Ickchester, has any evidence for ancient engineering at any point in Bedfordshire. It is therefore likely that the road is a fantasy.

The early medieval period (AD c 410-900)

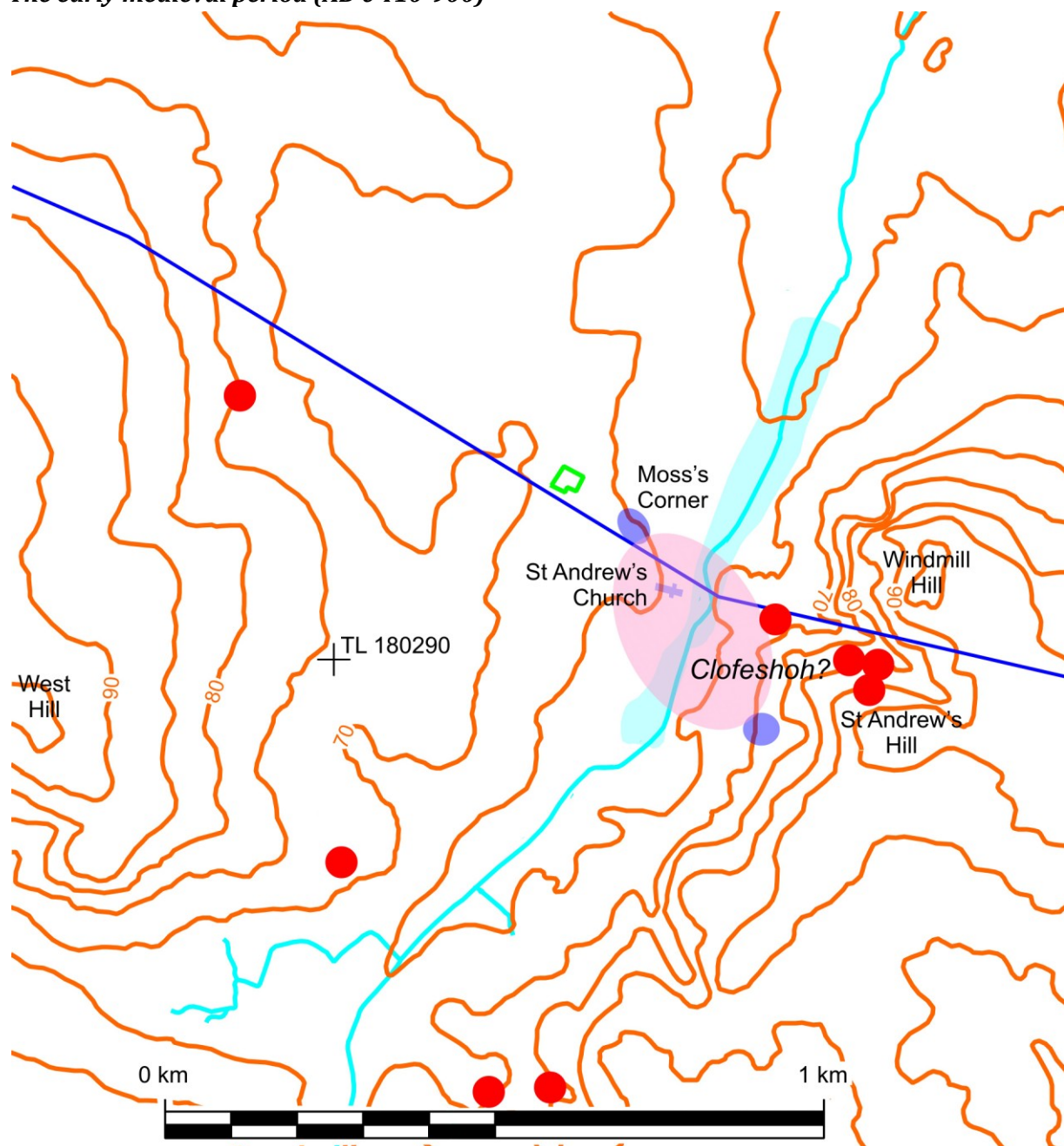


Figure 7: The early medieval settlement (pink), with cemeteries (pale blue) and finds (red)

Hayo Vierck (Davies & Vierck, 283) was worried that “[t]he customary localisation of the Hicca in the neighbourhood of Hitchin can neither be confirmed nor refuted” on the grounds that “it is difficult to define a settlement area there.” This objection cannot be sustained: the name is of Brittonic origin and the lack of early Saxon settlement remains is therefore not an issue. Moreover, there have been finds of fifth- and sixth-century Germanic material from the town in recent years (Thompson 2005, 10), although archaeologists are now wary of ascribing ethnic identity to individuals on the basis purely of their material culture (Hills 2003, 93).

A cemetery at Moss’s Corner, at the eastern end of Brand Street (below, page 25), is likely to have lain outside the settlement area, as is that at Queen Street. Given the position of the church, which is also likely to date from this period, and the concentration of finds on the western slope of St Andrew’s Hill, it is probable that this was the main focus of the settlement, which may have been renamed *Clofeshoh* as local people began to adopt the language of Anglo-Saxon settlers.

Although the church is usually said to have been founded by King Offa of Mercia (757-796), but the authority for this is found in a very late document. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, foundations were uncovered while replacing the church floor and they were carefully planned. The plan of the church that can be reconstructed from them is a typical basilican form, used for regionally important churches in the seventh century. This means that the original foundation was earlier than Offa. This early building was later enlarged into a cruciform plan, more typical of the tenth or eleventh centuries. The original dedication to St Andrew may hint at even earlier, Late Roman, origins.

It is also evident that the church lies beside a potentially early east-west route. This follows Wymondley Road, descending from Highbury in the cleft now followed by Hollow Lane, to cross the River Hiz and pass north of the church to Brand Street, part of Bedford Road, Oughtonhead Way and into Oughtonhead Lane. There is another concentration of early medieval artefacts from the area around the springs at Oughtonhead Common (Thompson 2005, 10), suggesting that this was an important path in the fifth and sixth centuries.

The high medieval period (c 900-1350)

Numerous placenames (including Bearton and Burymead) suggest that Hitchin was classed as a *burh* in the early high medieval period (Gover *et al.* 1938, 9). *Burhs* were defended settlements, with a planned street layout, a market and local administrative functions (Figure 8). The plan of modern Hitchin certainly indicates that at least part of it was first laid out on a regular grid and an analysis by Gil Burleigh and Mark Stevenson (1994, 13) suggested that it was a planned town dating from the Late Saxon period, with a defensive bank and ditch running along a line just east of Paynes Park and Coopers Alley. The discovery of a massive V-shaped ditch on exactly this line at Whiting Court in 2004 appears to confirm the suggestion: the size is too large to be a simple property or field boundary, the V-shape is typical of Late Saxon burh ditches and it contained some scraps of St Neots type pottery, dating from the ninth to twelfth centuries (Boyer 2005, 23-4). Further work in 2007 revealed the scale of the ditch: despite post-medieval truncation, it survived to a depth of over two metres and was more than 2.5 m wide at the top. There would have been a bank of similar scale to the east, which has not survived, as it appears to have been destroyed by being pushed back into the ditch within a few years of its initial construction.

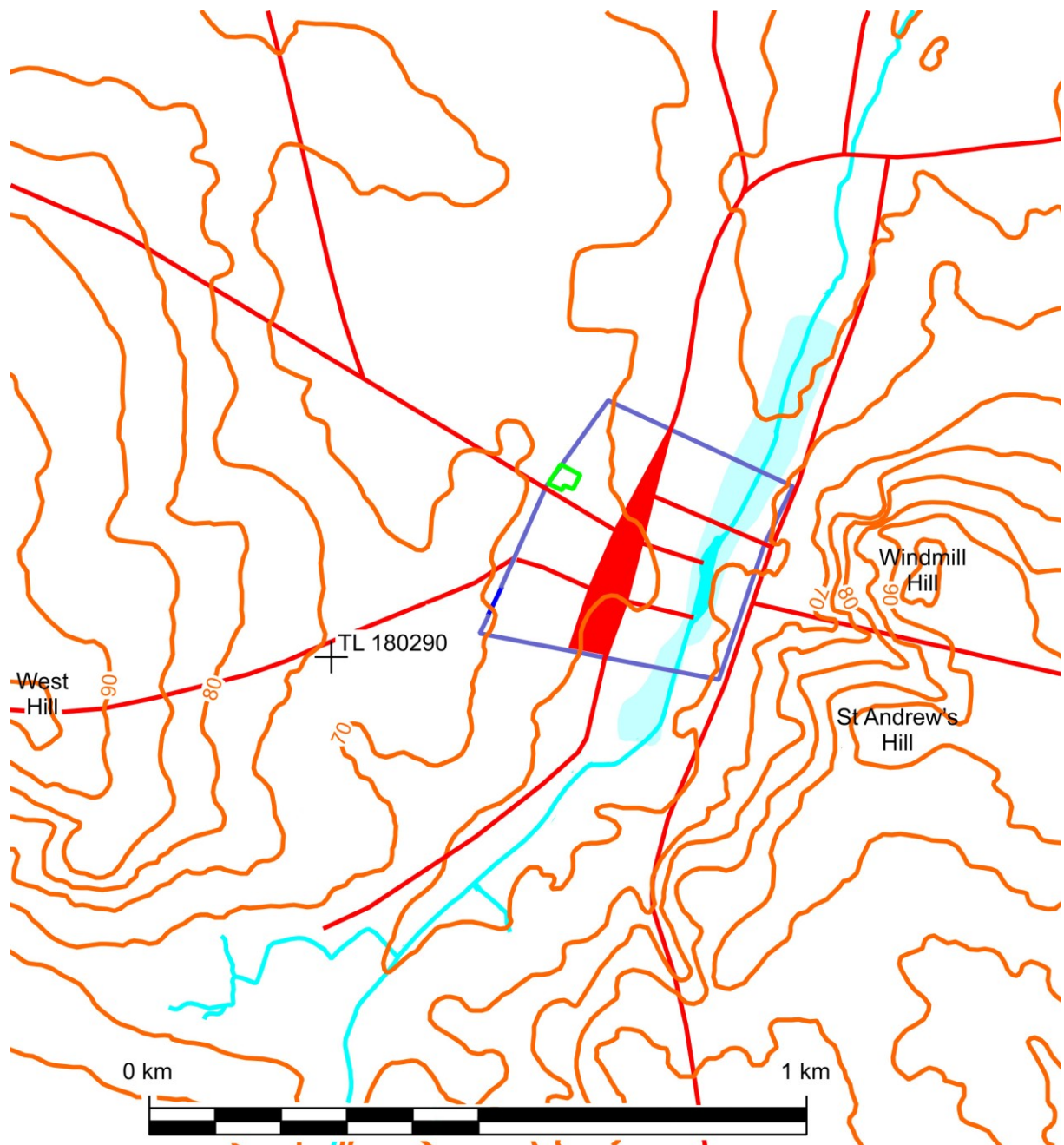


Figure 8: Possible layout of the *burh*
(the dark blue line shows the excavated section of burghal ditch and the pale blue line shows the projected extent; red lines show roads and the market place)

The burghal defences seem to have been dismantled soon after their construction, as there is little silting in the bottom of the ditch. The remaining fills are largely clean and probably derive from the bank erected to its south, forming to town wall. The subsequent shiring of Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, administered from their respective *burhs* at Hertford and Bedford (built in 912 and 914, probably just before and just after Hitchin), resulted in a loss of status for Hitchin (Howlett 2008a, 192). The former territory of the Hicce was cut by the new administrative boundary, although the economic influence of the town continues to dominate the villages of neighbouring parts of mid Bedfordshire to the present day.

The ancient minster church may have been enlarged, probably in the tenth century, with the addition of north and south transepts and a much larger, apsidally-ended chancel. This is typical of developments in church architecture at this time. The evidence is weak, being based on observations made in 1911 during work on the floor of the church, when short stretches of earlier walls were recorded. However, there are at least two pieces of surviving decorated tenth- or eleventh-century masonry incorporated as rubble into later rebuilds (Elders & Burleigh 2010, 31), adding weight to the hypothesis of a tenth-century rebuild.

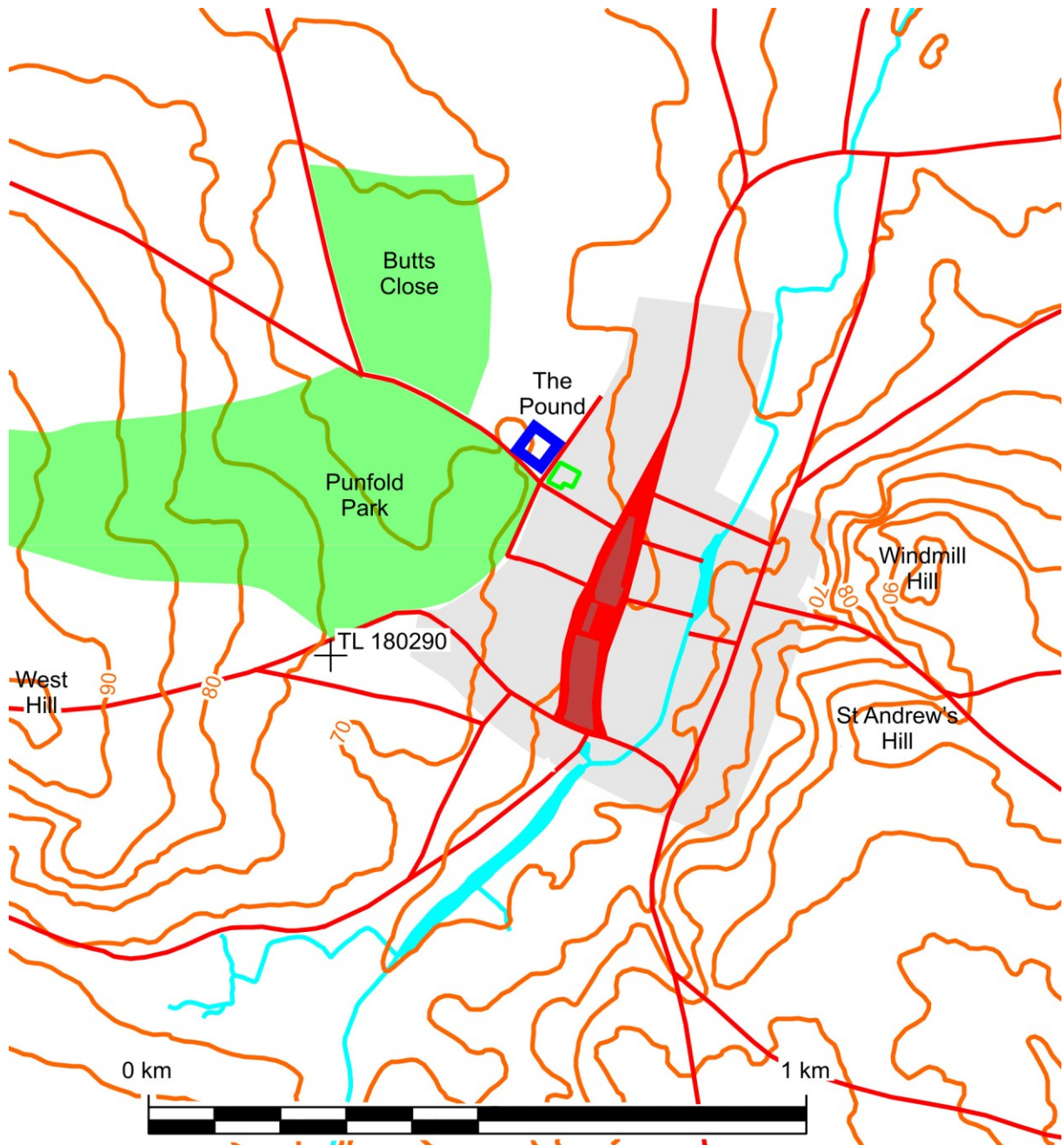


Figure 9: The medieval town

(streets are shown in red; pale grey shows the maximum extent of the built up area; grey/red shows the market place infill; the green areas show Butts Close and Punfold Park)

The later High Medieval town is little known archaeologically (Figure 9). The most significant surviving monument is the parish church, all of which is later than the high winds of 1115 (Hine 1927,

72), which seems to have destroyed the old Minster, if it had not already been rebuilt in the eleventh century. The church was then granted to the community of nuns at Elstow, who paid for it to be rebuilt. It may be that when the manor was granted to the Baliol family, it may have wished to leave a mark on the town. Pottery kilns have been found east of Bancroft and at the western end of Tilehouse Street (in the latter case, two separate dumps of spoiled pots – wasters – rather than the actual kiln were found). These can be dated to the thirteenth century and although their location within a town is unusual, as they were more conveniently situated close to sources of fuel, the ready supply of high grade clays in the town made them economically viable.

The late medieval period (c 1350-1550)

If archaeological evidence for the High Medieval town is sparse, that for the Late Middle Ages is almost non-existent, apart from a rich legacy of standing buildings. It has been proposed that Old Park Road takes its name from a deer park established during this period (Howlett 2004, 1-3), while the ponds that lent their name to Fishponds Road, at the northern limit of the town, were probably also dug around this time. New suburbs developed north of the town, along that part of Bancroft formerly known as Silver Street, where several surviving buildings must have been the first to occupy those sites. Other buildings in the town also date from this period, including the Red Hart (dating from around 1490, probably the town's oldest inn) and the former Swan Inn, dating from around 1475. The Cooper's Arms in Tilehouse Street seems to have been built as a home for a wealthy merchant or burgess (Smith 1993, 95); Brotherhood Hall (2-5 Bancroft) was built in 1475 for the Fraternity of Our Lady, established in that year. For the first time, buildings designed purely as commercial premises began to be built, as at 23 Market Place and 15 Bucklersbury.

St Andrew's Church continued to grow: a clerestory was added to the nave and a new chancel built in the mid fifteenth century, and a chantry house was built in the churchyard. By 1490, the Fraternity of Our Lady had the church rededicated to their patron, the Virgin Mary. Between 1420 and 1450, the Carmelites finally got their church (with a cloister), but they were very poor by the early sixteenth century. They had been joined by a community of Gilbertine monks in the priory of Newbigging, founded in 1361 on land donated by Sir Edward de Kendale. Over its first few decades, it was given several sources of income, but received no bequests at all during the fifteenth century and was even less prosperous than the friary.

The 2004 excavation south of The Arcade produced less evidence from this period than the preceding, apart from a few pits and postholes. The excavator has suggested that the site reverted to agricultural or horticultural land during the fifteenth century (Boyer 2005, 30). This would fit with the likely drop in population following the disasters of the fourteenth century (the famines of the early decades and the Black Death of the middle decades). Nevertheless, the town clearly remained prosperous, with most of the surviving work in the parish church dating from this time. It is possible that the soil at Whittings Court is evidence for this prosperity: rather than being productive horticultural or agricultural land, it is just as likely to have belonged to a formal garden.

The post-medieval period (since AD 1550)

The archaeology of the post-medieval period in this part of the town is dominated by industrial remains, including evidence for tile-making at Brooker's Yard, a short distance to the south. Instead, this period is best represented by standing buildings. Nevertheless, the range of activities seen at Whittings Court and at Brooker's Yard shows that archaeological material may be the only surviving evidence for a variety of economically important cottage industries.

The growth of the town in the suburbs is documented by the appearance of new street names and in the centre by the renewed occupation on sites such as Portmill Lane, which had been abandoned in the fourteenth century. The earliest buildings forming infill in the northern market place, between High Street and Churchyard, also date from the sixteenth century, marking the final stage in the conversion of market stalls to shops, although some of the latest encroachments may have been in what is now Market Place (Howlett 2008a, 196-7). Why the process never extended further north than Gilden Square (Moss's Corner, at the southern end of Bancroft) is not known. Brick and stone slowly took over as the favoured materials for building from the late sixteenth century, but there are still examples of timber buildings, such as 25 Bancroft, from this period. A further change affected the plan of houses: the medieval open hall fell out of favour as people now desired greater privacy and large fireplaces at one end of the room instead of central hearths. 10-11 Sun Street shows this development.

The eighteenth century was the heyday of the town's inns, as it had developed a reputation as a health resort among London physicians, attracting travellers and the coaching trade. The springs at Charlton were pressed into service as part of the fashion for spa bathing. The Swan Inn yard was built and survives almost intact as The Arcade and Arcade Walk. Coaches ran directly to London, Bedford, Kettering and Leeds. Local breweries, such as Lucas's, established in 1709, profited from this trade. Travel became easier as the roads were improved by Turnpike Trusts. The first to be established was the Hitchin and Welwyn Trust in 1726, although it did not become fully operational until 1763. The Hitchin and Bedford Trust was created in 1769.

During the nineteenth century, the Market Place was cleared of many of the buildings that partly filled it: the Bell House, Manor Courthouse and Bell Row were demolished in 1829, while The Shambles were dismantled in 1853. Elsewhere in the town, the Port Mill was demolished in 1852. The Corn Exchange, built in 1853 at a cost of £2000, reflected one of the town's traditional sources of wealth. A new Workhouse was established at Chalkdell in 1837, while the Infirmary on Bedford Road was opened in 1840 and enlarged in 1862.

Water supply, sewage disposal and burial grounds were pressing problems in the Victorian era, as their role in public health became understood. Mains sewerage was provided from 1853 and a waterworks was established in Queen Street, with its reservoir on Windmill Hill; a new sewage farm was built at Burymead in 1877 and a new water tower on Windmill Hill opened in 1909. The Hitchin Gas Company was founded in 1834, one of the first in England, with its works at Benge Mead, to provide street lighting. The Electrical Supply Company was established in 1906 in Whinbush Road. The first telegraph wires were fitted to the Post Office in Market Place in 1869.

One of the most important changes to the fabric of the town during the twentieth century was the slum clearance programme carried out by the Urban District Council in the late 1920s and 1930s. Because most of the growth of the town between 1500 and 1850 had been accommodated by filling in the spaces between buildings, overcrowded and often poorly made housing dominated the town centre, especially around Queen Street. A decision was made to create new housing estates on the edge of the town and to move the residents from these so-called slums into better quality modern homes. Such clearances were not always popular with the residents and they created large open areas that often remained undeveloped for decades; in one case, the creation of St Mary's Square at the foot of Hollow Lane, the result was overwhelmingly positive and has created one of the most iconic views of the town in the east end of St Mary's church.

The immediate vicinity of the site

There is no extensive open land in the surrounding area that would allow the preservation of monuments from earlier periods. However, there are standing buildings dating largely from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that show the development of Brand Street and adjacent roads. The best evidence for earlier periods is therefore likely to derive from chance discoveries of archaeological material made during building and other works.

Sites recorded in the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

HER number	National Grid	Name	Description
282	TL 184- 292-	Palaeolithic flint implements	Palaeolithic flint implements. Letchworth Museum (Acc 8640, 1525, 1495, 6532, 7171, 8050, 8050b, 8642) (but NB acc no 8050 is also listed under [1185], from Riddy Field).
12332	TL 194- 291-	Undated horse burial	'By the Brand Street corner the skeleton of a horse was discovered fully harnessed, one that had probably met with an accident there and been buried where it lay' (Hine 1927, 286). Hine relates the discovery to road maintenance of the market place (at some time in the 19th century), and the horse burial he assumed to be post-medieval; but the burial of an entire horse, in its harness, in the town centre is surely unlikely (such a burial would contravene regulations, and would entail the digging of a very large pit; the harness would be salvaged, the horse taken to the knackers' yard). The implication of the find is of a late Iron Age or possibly Roman ritual burial; or post-Roman, as human burials of this date are known in the vicinity.
13353	TL 184- 292-	Probable Late/sub-Roman or Saxon cemetery	A cemetery appears to have existed in the area of the Brand Street-High Street-Bancroft junction. Human skeletons were found when Moss's shop was built in 1868; more bones along the footpath on the opposite side of the street; five or six skeletons were found on the site of the Trooper inn, on Moss's Corner, Bancroft, in 1899; more came from the site of the bank on the corner of Brand Street at the start of the 20C (Burleigh & Stevenson 2000, 11); under the pavement on the north side of Brand Street in 1952 (Walker 2000, 43); and recently at no.2 Bancroft during renovation (Burleigh & Stevenson 2000, 14). These are apparently all inhumations without grave goods, so could be late Roman, sub-Roman, or later Saxon, and lie about 50m NW of the churchyard. Their relationship with the Saxon minster [4390] is unclear (Thompson 2005, 9).
16570	TL 183- 292-	Hitchin Town Hall	Hitchin Town Hall replaced an earlier building in Pound Lane, and was built on the site of a tin-plate workshop (Fleck & Poole 1999, 21). It was designed by Edward Mountford and Thomas Geoffry Lucas in neo-Georgian style, in red brick with stone details (Pevsner & Cherry 1977, 204). Now Listed, it consists of a front with 'Wrenaissance' influence, and a rear hall in Arts & Crafts style. On the frontage is a carved inscription HU DC (Hitchin Urban District Council) with the date letters AD MCM beneath. Inside the hall has a barrel-vaulted ceiling on concrete beams, with elaborate details on the consoles of roses and lavender, the crops grown locally for the horticultural and pharmaceutical industries. The building was extended at the back in the 20th century.

Table 1: Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record

Most archaeological discoveries are collated and indexed in databases formerly known as Sites and Monuments Records, but now more generally known as Historic Environment Records. Compiled originally from Ordnance Survey record cards that had been maintained by local “correspondents” (represented in North Hertfordshire by W P Westell, curator of Letchworth Museum from 1915 to 1943), these databases often contain duplicated information, material of dubious value and data that cannot be precisely located. Nevertheless, they form the first basic record that should be consulted for localised archaeological information.

Hertfordshire County Council’s Historic Environment Record (HER) records four sites within 150 m of the Town Hall, one of which (HER 16570) is the Listed Town Hall itself (Table 1).

The discovery of the Palaeolithic material 282 is poorly located and little is recorded about the objects in Letchworth Museum’s Accessions Register. Number 1495, a ‘flint implement’ was purchased in 1922; 1525 is described as an ‘implement’ and was one of six loaned to the museum by Basil H Newton in 1922. None of the others is currently indexed in Idealist, the Museums Service’s computer database of objects. However, the paper index states that 6532 is a hammer-stone with core, from Hitchin, loaned on 10 February 1933; 7171 is a Palaeolithic Acheulean type handaxe, donated by Reginald Hine on 23 December 1935; 8050A and 8050B are both recorded as coming from Riddy Field, so are irrelevant to Brand Street; 8640 is described as a “*rough early palaeolith, found below ground at Brand Street, Hitchin*” and was loaned by T W Latchmore on 28 September 1942; 8642 is a Neolithic flint knife found at Oughton Head and loaned by T W Latchmore at the same time as 8640. It is therefore only possible to be certain that one of the finds—8640—is from Brand Street, while three are certainly not from this part of the town.

The HER itself expresses scepticism about the ‘horse burial’, 12332. Reginald Hine (1927, 286) gives no source for his account of the discovery of the horse burial, nor is it dated; in the previous sentence, he describes the discovery of a mass of cattle horn-cores on the eastern corner of Market Place in 1895, which he also ascribes to road repairs. Hine’s accuracy is not always good: he reports the discovery of a decorative bronze ferrule from a medieval staff in the same part of Market Place some years before, giving its inscription as *Haec dirigit me[m] [sic] iter* (which he translates as ‘This shall direct my way’) but the original publication, which he cites as an authority, transcribes it as + *Haec in tute dirigit iter*, meaning ‘May this direct my way in safety’ (Anon 1853, 361). If anything, Hine’s report may be a muddled description of the discovery of human bones, more of which are recorded as 13353.

The first record of human remains at the corner of Brand Street and Bancroft appears in a letter to the press dated 1899 (quoted in Walker 2000, 44, who does not name the newspaper), which presumably dates the reported discovery of “*five or six more or less complete human skeletons*”. They are said to have been found during the digging of a cellar on the site of the former Trooper Inn. The same letter reports similar discoveries during the construction of the adjacent shop of W B Moss in 1868 and “*about the same time*” on the opposite footpath, when it was lowered. There are also said to be records from the early twentieth century of burials found on the site of Lloyds TSB Bank (Burleigh & Stevenson 2000, 11), although it is not clear whether they relate to the construction of the bank c 1930 or to some other discovery. Simon Walker also reports the discovery of more bones in 1952 beneath the pavement on the north side of Brand Street, but nothing further seems to be known about this. In 1989, the writer recorded and recovered a collection of human bone that had been redeposited beneath the floor of 2 Bancroft during the nineteenth century (Fitzpatrick-

Matthews & Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2008, 17). A selection of bones has been made to obtain radiocarbon determinations in an attempt to date this evidently extensive burial ground, but a date between the fourth and ninth centuries is most likely.

HER 16570, the New Town Hall, forms the focus of this report and will be described and assessed in greater detail below.

North Herts Museums Records (not also in Herts HER)

The Sites and Monuments Record maintained by the Museums Archaeology Service into the 1990s includes further detail about the human burials of HER 13353. According to a notebook maintained by T W Latchmore and now in the collections of Hitchin Museum, the discoveries made in August 1899 consisted of the lower halves of three skeletons, with three skulls and a number of ribs that were not *in situ*. Around the same time, further graves were found beneath Passingham's wine shop in Bancroft. The record notes a further rumour, in the autumn of 1976, that human remains were found during alterations to Lloyd's Bank but reinterred in the parish churchyard to prevent delays to the building work. Around the same time, during alterations to the Westminster Bank on the opposite side of Brand Street, no human remains were observed (North Herts SMR 447). It is possible that it is the 1976 discovery that is alluded to by Burleigh & Stevenson (1994, 11) and misdated by them to an earlier part of the twentieth century.



Figure 10: The New Town Hall, 2 December 2010

Buildings

Only the New Town Hall is listed (with Workmen's Hall and associated linking structures possibly also included), so architectural descriptions have been based on observations made in the street (Table 2). Although only 14 Brand Street will be affected by the proposals, it forms a pair with number 15, while 16 and 17 were built as part of the Workmen's Hall, forming its entrance. These other properties will therefore be considered here.

12	Hitchin Town Hall	1900 in Roman numerals on central pair of stone pilasters. Queen Anne style with some Art Nouveau details. Red brick, stone quoins, tiled roof. Two storeys, plinth, wooden modillioned cornice. Central entrance arch and carved roof pediment; copper roofed wooden cupola astride roof ridge. Seven flush two-light lattice casements with wood mullions and transoms. Designed by Thomas Geoffry Lucas and Edward W Mountford; built by Fosters. Of local civic importance.
13		
14	Kam's	Mid nineteenth century; yellow (Arlesey?) brick, red brick quoin to west with pebble-dash to the north, Welsh slate roof. Two storeys, with simple wooden cornice supported on three sets of paired brackets. Two recessed sash windows of two 4x2 panes each, under flat cutter arches and thin projecting sills Small circular iron plate in centre beneath cornice may be the end of a tie-beam. Modern shop-fronts with central doors sharing a recess.
15	Buccis	
16	Swinton	Mid nineteenth century; red and black polychrome brick to the two western bays and plain red brick to the, Welsh slate roof, chimney rising from the centre of the western gable with five pots. Three storeys, the upper storey covered in render and fake "timber framing", with pargetting beneath the windows. Three sash windows; those to the first floor are recessed slightly and of two 4x2 panes each, under flat cutter arches; those to the second floor project slightly, with moulded brackets supporting the sill, and consist of two 3x3 upper panes over a taller single pane beneath, separated by a mullion. Modern shop fronts; recessed modern door to the left (west) has a simple doorcase.
17	The Lunchbox	

Table 2: buildings affected by and adjacent to the development

The two buildings (consisting of four properties) east of the town hall, 14-17 Brand Street, are roughly contemporary and their architectural details suggest that they date from the middle of the nineteenth century. The polychrome brickwork visible at first floor level in number 16 suggests a slightly earlier date for this property (before c 1850) than the yellow brick of 14-15 (perhaps c 1850). The right hand (eastern) bay of 14/15 once formed the entrance to the Workman's Hall to its rear. There is now no longer a connecting door between these buildings. None of these four properties is currently listed, nor is the Workman's Hall, but all lie within the town's Conservation Area.



Figure 11: 14-15 Brand Street, 3 July 2006

Photographic evidence

Thanks to the enthusiasm of nineteenth-century amateur photographers in the town, there is a good series of historic photographs, many of which are held in Hitchin Museum. These include the archives of Thomas Benwell Latchmore (1832-1908) and his son Thomas William Latchmore (1882-1946), whose photographic business was at one time located on Brand Street, as well as of the *Hertfordshire Pictorial*. Another photographer, George Avery had also worked in Brand Street, in the Old Town Hall yard, until his business was bought out by T B Latchmore in 1870. Other photographers who worked in the town include Henry George Moulden (1861-1916) and Francis Frith (1822-1898) (Gadd 1976, 7-8).

The earliest view readily available from the archives of Hitchin Museum (HITM 179/10) is dated approximately 1867-70 and shows a street scene looking down hill from close to the junction with Paynes Park towards High Street (Figure 12). On the north side of the street, only one building shown in this view is still easily recognisable, numbers 14/15, which are plainly a pair of private residences. The photograph enables a description to be made of the ground floor; as with the upper storey, there are two sash windows of two 4x2 panes each, under flat cutter arches and thin projecting sills; to left and right are the front doors of the properties, recessed under semi-circular arches with steps

up to floor level. In the pavement at the front of the building there are light-wells beneath the windows, indicating the presence of a cellar in the front of each property. To the left, the edge of a building demolished (in 1899?), presumably to make way for the New Town Hall, is visible.



Figure 12: Brand Street 1867×70 (HITM 179/10)

Beyond numbers 14/15, numbers 16/17 are a two-storey, three-bay structure with central door recessed under a semi-circular arch with a step up to floor level. To the left, the ground floor window has a flat cutter arch, a shallow sill and, apparently, shutters. To the right, there is a broad entrance under a semi-circular arch with a projecting lamp on a metal bracket over it. This would have been the original entrance to the Workman's Hall. A comparison of the first-floor windows with those of the current three-storey structure on the site shows that they are indeed the same building: the second storey must have been added subsequently.

Roughly contemporary with this photograph, although not given a date in the archive, is HITM 330/3, which was taken from a position closer to the junction (Figure 13). It is not exactly contemporary with HITM 179/10 as there is a board running the width of number 14 at first floor level, perhaps a sign of some kind; none of the later photographs shows it, so perhaps this was either a short-lived feature or the photograph is earlier than any of the others; the evidence of a later photograph suggests that this may have been taken in the 1870s. There is more detail visible of the lamp on a cast iron support hanging over the broad entrance on the right side of number 17 than on the earlier photograph. The house at 13 Brand Street is more clearly visible, with details of its architecture enabling a date in the first half of the nineteenth century to be suggested for the façade. It is of brick (probably red brick), two storeys with a pitched roof partly obscured behind a parapet. The three

recessed sash windows are under flat cutter arches with shallow projecting sills. To the ground floor there is a central door with a decorative doorcase with a broken pediment and semi-circular arch, with a sash window to each side, under flat cutter arches, with a shallow projecting sill and wooden shutters. The tops of cellar windows with light-wells in the pavement can be seen beneath the ground floor windows. It is possible that this façade was added to an existing building, which would account for the asymmetric frontage and could be the structure shown on the anonymous map of c 1750 (*pers. comm.* Bridget Howlett and see Figure 23 below, page 38).



Figure 13: Brand Street in the 1870s (HITM 330/3)

The next photograph (HITM 197/3) is not dated, but the presence of penny-farthing bicycles (which suffered a rapid decline in popularity after 1889) leaning against the front of the buildings together with more modern safety bicycles (apparently to Whippet design, introduced in 1885) and a front-steering large-wheeled tricycle (which was first sold in 1882), suggests a date in the second half of the 1880s (Figure 14). It may not be a coincidence that J T Chalkley had set up his bicycle sale and repair business on the opposite side of the street in 1885 (Foster 1987, 99). There is a dark mark above the ground floor of number 14, where the base of the panel visible in Figure 13 was located, suggesting that the panel existed at a date between that of Figure 12 and of this photograph. By this time, the upper storey has been added to numbers 16/17. The central door has been replaced by a window of identical design to that of the window to left (west) and entry to the property was presumably by the passageway to the right. The (relatively) new upper storey had similar details to those still present, although the pargetting is not restricted to the panels beneath the windows. There is also no glazing to the central window, and a close inspection of Figure 13 suggests that this is

an original feature. There is now a projecting sign over number 16, reading COCOA & COFFEE ROOMS to the right and WORKMANS HALL COFFEE HOUSE to the centre, while more details are visible of the lamp over the broad entrance. In the entablature of the arch, the words REFRESHMENT ROOMS are visible.



Figure 14: 14-18 Brand Street in the late 1880s (HITM 197/3)

Photograph HITM 428/3, dated to the 1890s, gives a better view of 13 Brand Street before demolition (Figure 15). This gives better detail of the roof, which is hipped at the west end, where there is a chimney stack with two pots rising from the west wall of the property and a second chimney with no pots at the gable end to the east. There is a modillioned projecting cornice at the base of the plain brick parapet, which has contrasting (stone?) slabs on top. The roof appears to be tiled. The recessed first floor windows are sashes, each with an upper panel of 1×4 panes and a lower panel of 4×4 panes; those on the ground floor are of two panels each of 2×4 panes. There are shallow slightly projecting sills to all the windows. There appear to be iron bars across the cellar window in the light well to the right.

The doorcase has a broken pediment supported on squared columns, possibly of the Doric order; the semi-circular arch rises from the tops of the columns. The door, which is largely obscured by someone standing in the doorway (presumably the householder, William Henry Jelly (c 1828-1907)), appears to be of two panels. There is a single step up to floor level.



Figure 15: 13 Brand Street in the 1890s (HITM 428/3)

West of the house, there is a wooden gate, which appears to be attached to a fence leading into an area set back from the street frontage. This is evidently the entrance to the yard of William Jelly's tin-plate workshop and can be compared with a photograph showing the workshop, seen from the upper floor of the Old Town Hall (Figure 16). This appears to show that the area set back is in fact an entrance for wagons with asymmetric double gates: the security spikes on the right hand gate are visible in both photographs.

The workshop itself is a single storey building, which appears to be timber-framed, as the weatherboards to the eastern gable elevation are incomplete and reveal studwork behind. The frontage appears to be of rendered brick (or similar) on a slightly projecting plinth. There is a central door to the street, with a step up to a door with several small panels. To the left (west) of the door is a recessed sash window of two 2x3 panes and a much larger, slightly projecting window of 4x10 panes to the right. The roof appears to be slate or wooden shingles. In the eastern gable is a small door with hinges top and bottom. There are further weatherboarded buildings to the rear, including a rear extension to the street-frontage property. The entire complex looks rather ramshackle and

somewhat dilapidated. It may at one time have been the workshop of John Bowler, recorded as a blacksmith in the street in 1853 (Craven & Co 1853, 193) or of Samuel Bowler, recorded as a whitesmith in the same year (Craven & Co 1853, 197). William Jelly is first recorded at 13 Brand Street, his house, in 1886, although his business is recorded from 1878. It is possible that the buildings are older than the nineteenth century; they resemble barns and similar buildings arranged around a farmyard.



**Figure 16: Jelly's workshop on the corner of Brand Street and Grammar School Walk
(after Fleck & Poole 1976, 29)**

Beyond Grammar School Walk, the gates and gate piers leading to the former Friends Meeting House are visible. None of the features visible in this photograph survives and it is impossible to date it closely within the later nineteenth century.

These nineteenth-century photographs are valuable in documenting the development of the north-western end of Brand Street before the construction of the New Town Hall in 1900. They enable an assessment to be made of the character of the buildings that have been lost (notably Jelly's workshop and yard) and also show alterations to buildings that survive in a substantially different form. They also show the changing character of the street, although during the nineteenth century the north-western end remained principally residential, with only Jelly's yard on the very edge of the historic town of industrial nature. From the 1870s on, though, a small number of properties can be seen to have been put to commercial use. The first of these is 16-17 Brand Street, where a Cocoa House and Coffee Rooms were established and is to be associated with the increased popularity of the temperance movement during the 1870s and 1880s. The addition of a third storey to this property, either late in the 1870s or the earlier 1880s, may have been to provide accommodation for the temperance hotel established there at an unknown date before 1894.

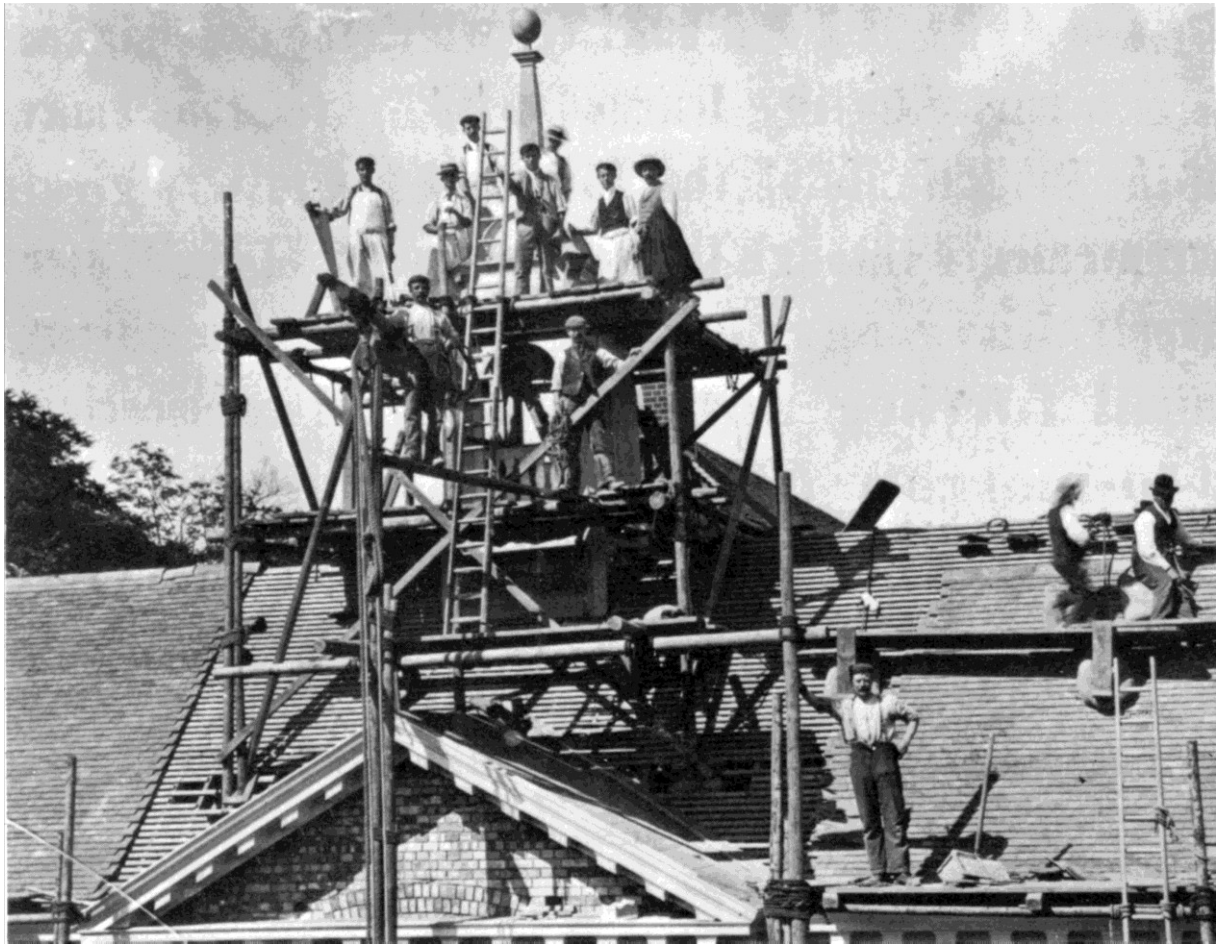


Figure 17: The 'topping out' of the New Town Hall, early 1901 (after Foster 1981, 52)

Photographs taken in the twentieth century add no real detail to the photographs already discussed. One intriguing view shows the 'topping out' as the finishing touches were put to the bellcote before the building opened in 1901 (Figure 17). Tiling of the roof is almost complete but the decorative cartouche is not yet installed in the pediment.

There is a view of an elderly General William Booth (1829-1912), founder of the Salvation Army, addressing (or perhaps haranguing) a crowd in front of the New Town Hall, either in 1906 or 1908 according to pencil notes on the photograph in Hitchin Museum (HITM 171/3; Figure 18). However, General Booth is known to have undertaken tours of Britain by motor car in 1904 and 1909; the car used in Hitchin is identical to that from the 1904 'motorcade' and it is possible that the photograph dates from that year.



Figure 18: General William Booth makes an address in front of the Town Hall in 1904, 1906 or 1908 (HITM 171/3)

An interior shot, from a “Japanese Bazaar” held in February 1905 (actually a missionary drive by the Queen Street Congregational Church and opened by the Bishop of Barking) provides a view of the main hall (Figure 19). This shows the proscenium arch appearing exactly as it does today and one of the concrete beams that supports the roof. Much of the detail is obscured, as the photograph is from a newspaper report of the “bazaar”, which included bamboo houses forming a Japanese village celebrating a feast of lanterns, a Buddhist temple, a volcano and a *zenana* (part of a traditional Muslim house in south Asia reserved for women). In other parts of the hall, *tableaux vivants* depicted *Cinderella*, *Sally in Our Alley*, *Good King Wenceslas* among other things that were not in keeping with the theme of the display. In fact, the exhibition dealt with more than Japan, including information about China, Zanzibar, Madagascar and India (hence the *zenana*). It was widely regarded as the best social event of the year (Fisher 1999, 111).



Figure 19: The “Japanese Bazaar” of February 1908, inside the New Town Hall (© Herts Pictorial, from Fisher 1999, 110)

There are two scenes of the Proclamation of George V as King in 1910, one showing the scene outside the New Town Hall, with various dignitaries (including the Fire Brigade) lined up to hear the proclamation (HITM 220/4; Figure 20). This appears to have been delivered from a temporary rostrum erected in front of the Town Hall steps along with a temporary flag pole. A second view shows much the same scene. The details of the building are identical, apart from the flag pole that now projects at an angle from above the front door, put up at an unknown date, and the sign giving the council’s logo and the name of the building erected in 2009.

There is also a view of a horse-drawn parade descending Brand Street as part of the celebrations, presumably a few minutes after the formal proclamation (HITM 241/3). This view shows a large painted sign on the west gable of 17 Brand Street reading COFFEE ROOMS AND TEMPERANCE HOTEL. The design of the lamp hanging over the entrance to the Workman’s Hall has changed, while there is also a projecting sign between the left and central windows at first floor level; unfortunately, no detail can be made out on it. At this time, 14-15 Brand Street still appear to be residential properties. This has changed by 1 August 1939, when a photograph of a parade of boys from the Boys’ Grammar School (HITM no accession number; Figure 21) shows projecting shop signs at first floor level to both properties and an awning to number 14. The Coffee Rooms and Temperance Hotel have evidently closed, the sign on the gable end now reading LATC[HMO]RE GROC[ERS].

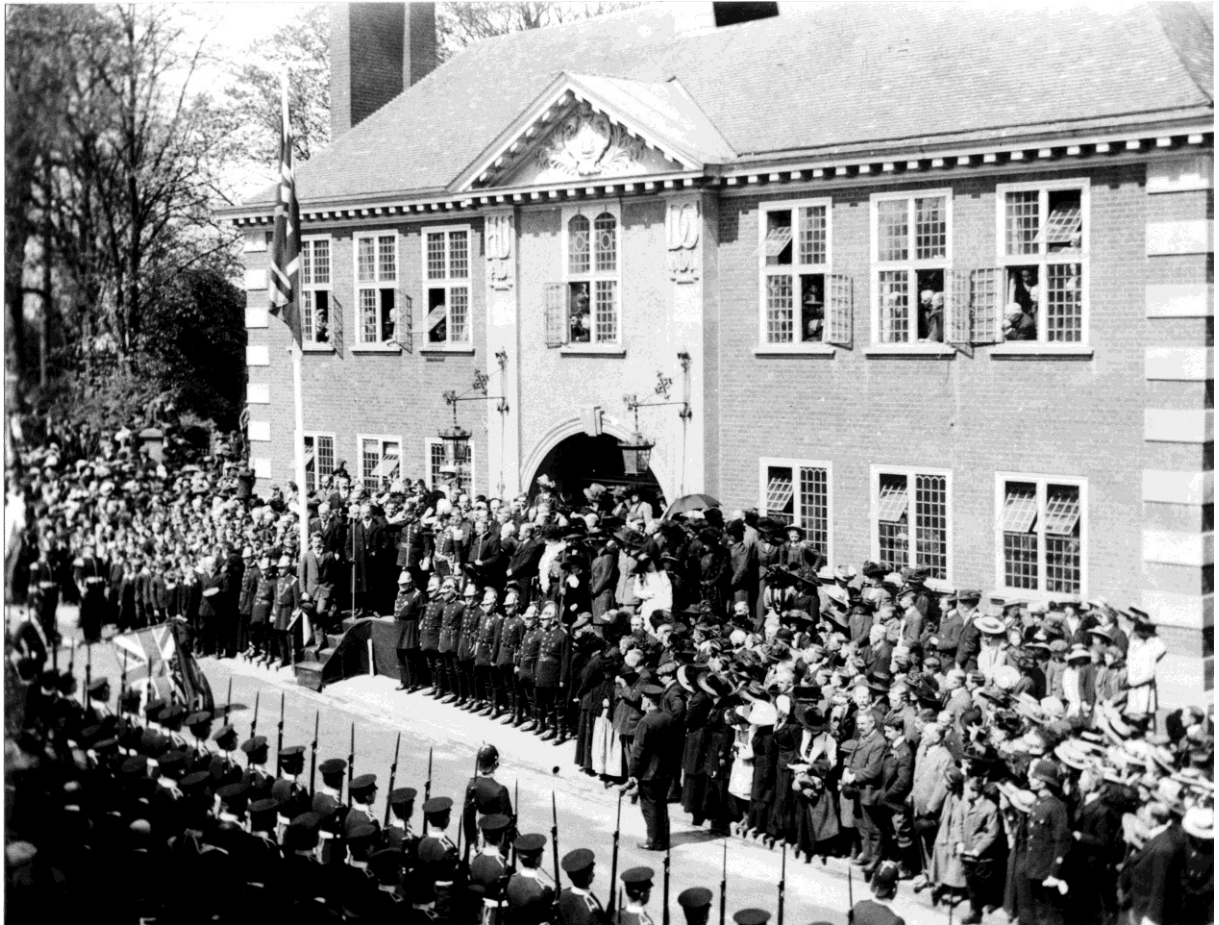


Figure 20: The Proclamation of King George V in 1910 (HITM 220/4)



Figure 21: Parade of pupils from the Boys' Grammar School, 1 August 1939 (Hitchin Museum)

Cartographic evidence

Drapentier's view (1699)

The earliest 'map' of the town is not actually a birds-eye view at all, but a perspective, seen as if from Windmill Hill or St Andrew's Hill, published as part of Sir Henry Chauncy's (1700) *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (Figure 22). Because of this, Pound Lane lies on the far side of the town as seen in this view.

Nevertheless, it is possible to recognise the lines of Paynes Park/Coopers Alley and Grammar School Walk as lines of trees (set within hedges?). There is no sign of the animal pound, which stood on the western side of the junction of Grammar School Walk with Brand Street, although this may be a reflection of the low status of the structure in comparison with the buildings that appear to be the main focus of Drapentier's work.

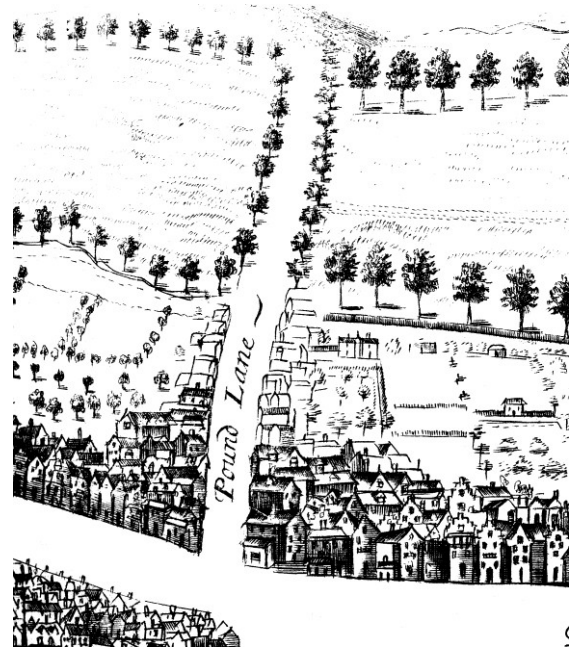


Figure 22: Drapentier's view, c 1699
(not to scale; size as published)

Both sides of Pound Lane are built up, although the buildings do not appear to be contiguous, as they are in the centre of the town. The future site of the Town Hall appears to be occupied by several buildings that occupy the street frontage, with a separate structure to the rear (north). To the east of this building, Drapentier depicts an orchard. There also appear to be buildings occupying the site of 14/15 and 16/17, although it is not possible to be certain of the details.

This is a general problem with Drapentier's view (Howlett 2007, 27). The street frontages appear to be more densely built up than is reasonable for this period. The buildings occupying the western part of Market Place, for instance, are much more numerous than the structures of The Shambles, which stood here until the middle of the nineteenth century. Caution should therefore be exercised in trying to interpret the detail of this view

Anonymous (c 1750)

Hitchin Museum holds an undated map (Figure 23) that has been claimed as the 'earliest map of Hitchin' since the mid 1990s (Burleigh & Stevenson 1994, 18), a view that has now been demolished (Howlett 2007, 30). The map can probably be attributed to William Willmore and dated between 1736 and 1772, with a date c 1750 being probably close to its true date. The colouring of Pound Lane, highlighted in yellow, shows that the map maker regarded it as a significant route; if this is meant to indicate its status as a Turnpike Road, then it would also date its production more closely to after 1769, when this Trust was established.

The map is distorted between High Street and Tilehouse Street, as the surveyor has included an over-sized drawing of St Mary's. This does not affect Pound Lane, however, which is shown as partly built up along the southern side, with a building at the western end of the north side, on roughly the site of the New Town Hall, which may be the former 13 Brand Street. This is similar in many ways to Drapentier's view, but with less density of buildings. The pound is visible on the west side of Grammar School Walk, while the building to the north is not shown.



Figure 23: The anonymous map of c 1750; Brand Street is coloured yellow (not to scale; actual size)

The map also shows a tree immediately to the east of the building apparently close to where Drapentier shows an orchard. There then seems to be a hedgerow, depicted as a green smudge, along the north side of the lane to its junction with Bancroft.

Dury and Andrews (1766)

Andrew Dury and John Andrews's map, first issued on 1 May 1766 (Figure 24), is part of a large-scale survey of the entire county at a scale of 1.95 inches to the mile (approximately 1:35,000). Its accuracy is much greater than that of the map of c 1750 and it gives an indication of topography, marks field boundaries and streams, and colour codes significant boundaries. In rural areas, though, field boundaries appear to be vastly simplified (Ruston 2004), while a close inspection of the detail raises the suspicion that much of that detail is invented or at best conventionalised.

Of course, the purpose of the map was as a depiction of the roads of the county and it was never intended to show the same sorts of details as maps focusing on individual towns. Nevertheless, it confirms the overall impression given by the anonymous map that while the southern side of Pound Lane was built up, the northern side was not. It is impossible to be certain that the fact that no building is depicted on the north side of the lane at its junction with Grammar School Walk means that no such building existed in 1766.

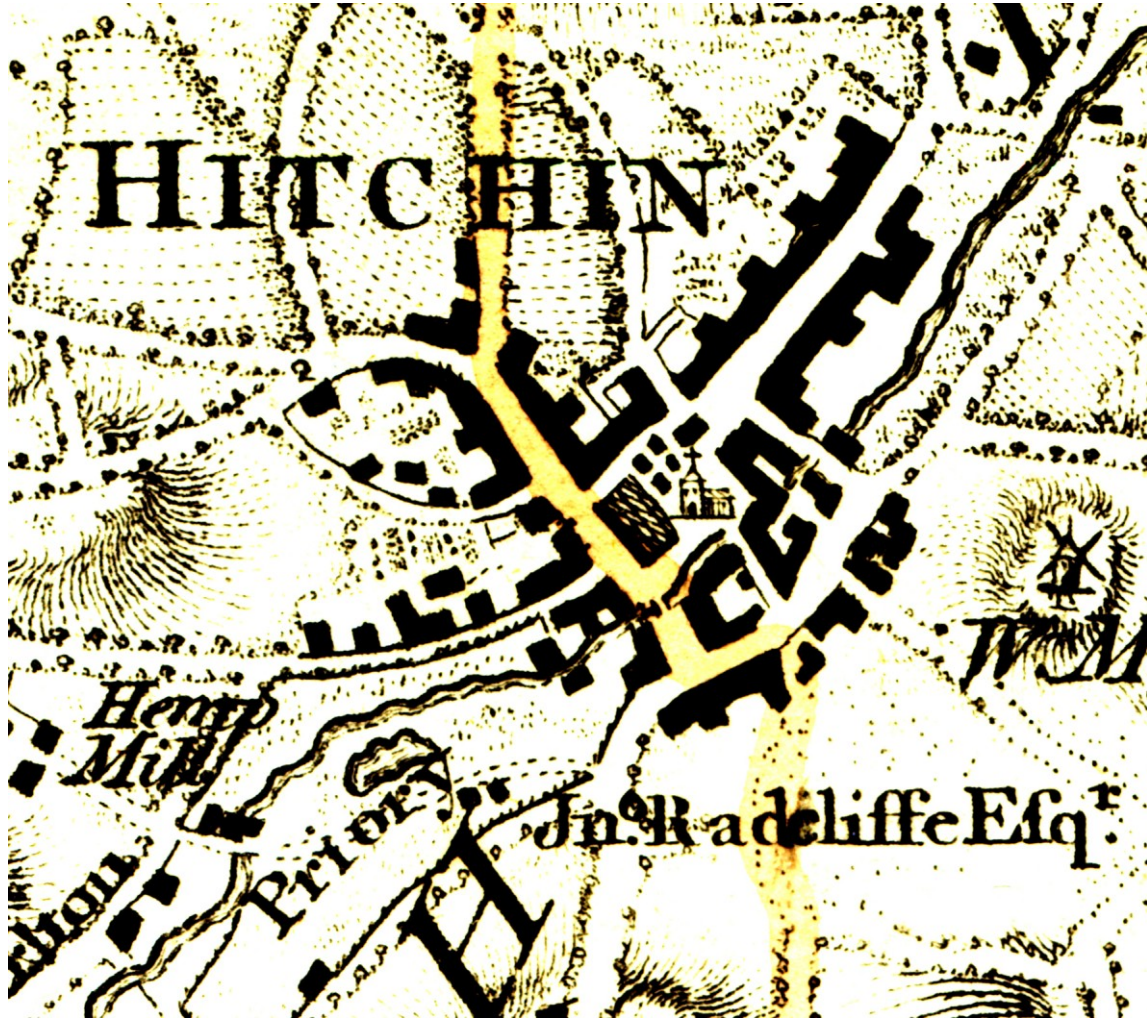


Figure 24: Dury and Andrews's map (1766), enlarged to 500% (about 1:6500)

Henry Merrett (1818)

Henry Merrett's map of 1818 (Figure 25) was not an original survey, but was a copy of a survey of the parish carried out in 1816 by Messrs Neale and Attfield. Although their map has been missing for many years, their reference books have survived (and are now kept at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford (D/P53/29/7-8)). Merrett's copy appears to be a faithful transcript of this lost original and is therefore the earliest accurate survey of the town (Howlett 2008b, 13).

This map shows much more detail than earlier maps and its accuracy is considerably greater. There is a large building on the site of the New Town Hall and the buildings to its east; this may be the same structure as that shown on the anonymous map and Drapentier's view. If this is the case, then the workshop used by William Jelly, which was in the space without a building in this particular property, cannot have been in existence in 1816; however, it could be his house, the demolished 13 Brand Street (*pers. comm.* Bridget Howlett). The southern side of Pound Lane is built up almost all the way along its length, although the buildings do not reach as far west as Paynes Park.



Figure 25: Henry Merrett's map (Hitchin Museum)

It has not been possible to examine the original of this map, as it is currently being conserved. It will be examined in detail once it is returned to the Museum.

Andrew Bryant (1822)

As with Dury & Andrews's map of more than fifty years earlier, Bryant's is a map of the whole county, published on four sheets as a scale of around $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to the mile (1:42240). Little is known of the map-maker, whose first name is not even certain; he ignored previously published maps, including the first edition Ordnance Survey one inch to the mile (1:63360) maps, and undertook a completely new survey of his own. The results produced the most accurate map of the county published up to that time, its conventions closely resembling those of his contemporaries, including the Ordnance Survey (Ruston 2003). Because the scale of the map is so much smaller than Merrett's almost contemporary plan of the town, it has not been reproduced here.

Ordnance Survey

In 1851, the Ordnance Survey surveyed a series of maps for Local Boards of Health, authority for the establishment of which was granted by the Public Health Act of 1848. Hitchin was one of the first towns to establish a Board, on 19 March 1850 (Douglas & Humphries 1995, 14). These maps were published in June 1852 and show town centres in considerable detail and at a larger scale than any other maps the Survey has produced (Figure 26). They were produced at a scale of 1:528 (1 inch to 44 feet) and were designed to allow Boards of Health to design various improvements, such as

under-street sewerage. Plans for the sewers in Hitchin were drawn up in the following year. The copies of the maps held in Hitchin Museum show the annotations made for the projected lines of the sewers in red ink.

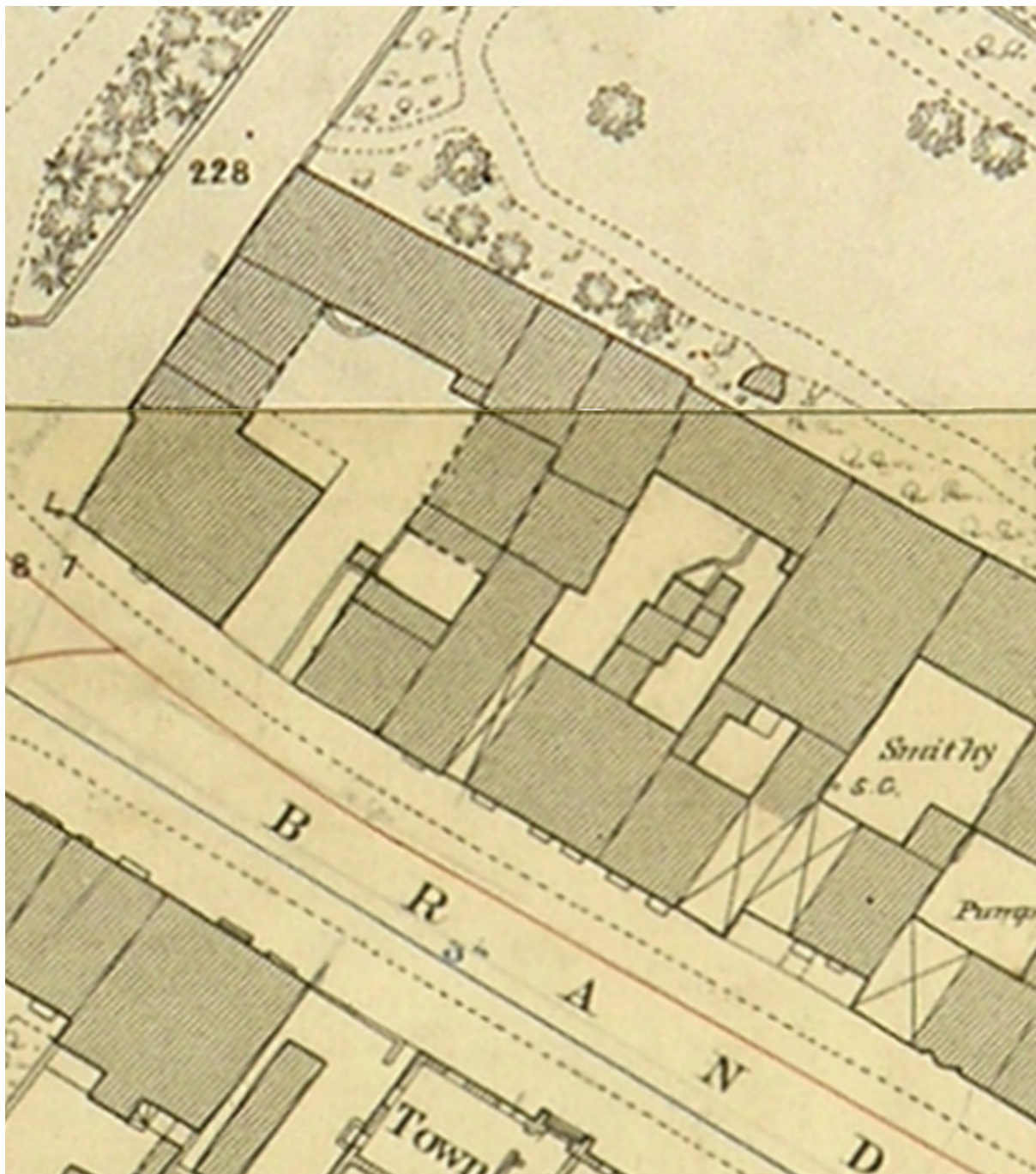


Figure 26: The Local Board of Health map of 1851

The map shows what was William Jelly's yard by 1878 at the north-western end of Brand Street, in the corner of the junction with Grammar School Walk (not named at this date). The buildings are arranged around the yard, as seen in Figure 16. The presence of a double gate with a single extra gate to the right is explained: the double gate leads into the yard, while the single gate to the right leads into a passage that presumably led to a side door in the house at 13 Brand Street. Various subdivisions are shown of the other buildings around the yard that probably reflect subdivisions not visible from the photograph, although there is at least one contradiction: the map suggests that the

building forming much of the north-eastern side of the yard continued all the way to Grammar School Walk. However, the photograph (Figure 16) shows that there was a gable end on the line of the south-eastern wall of the buildings forming the north-western range and that the northernmost of these continued all the way to the north-eastern boundary of the property.

There are also a number of puzzles raised by the map in relation to other photographs. The first is with the house east of the yard, 13 Brand Street. The property shown in Figure 15 was clearly in existence at this time yet subsequent Ordnance Survey maps in the 1880s and 1890s show the same division into two separate properties. The door, which is placed centrally in the photographs would be close to the dividing wall. The map also shows only one light-well, to the right hand property, whereas the photographs suggest that there was a second to the left (west) of the door. It is difficult to account for this disparity between the maps and the photographic evidence. Nevertheless, the door was certainly in the centre of the building, which consisted of a single property.

Between 13 and 14 Brand Street is a covered alley, which is on the line of the alley between the New Town Hall and 14 Brand Street. This appears as the left hand door in the photographs of this property, so access was presumably from a door at the side or back. Three light wells appear to be shown, one to number 14 and two to number 15; the right hand light well would be beneath the step up to the front door, so it is not clear what the map is actually depicting here.

A second puzzle is that what appears to be the Workman's Hall is shown, with a wide covered alley to reach it from the street, yet according to the only document so far examined to provide a date, it was built in 1868 (*above*, page 10). Nevertheless, the Listing Record for the New Town Hall gives a date of 1841 (*below*, page 56), without citing an authority. It is not yet clear how this issue is to be resolved.

Two light wells are shown on the street frontage, which cannot be seen on any of the photographs.

Summary

The evidence assembled above shows that the site has considerable archaeological potential, which will be assessed below. A general synthesis of the data permits a reasonable understanding of the development of the site from remote prehistory to the present.

During the Hoxnian Interglacial, around 420,000 to 375,000 years ago, early hominids are known to have passed through Hitchin in some numbers. A palaeochannel, which may have contained a stream, ran along what is now Brand Street and may have been the source of at least one Lower Palaeolithic handaxe, recovered early in the twentieth century. Activity over subsequent millennia is obscure and it is not until the earlier Bronze Age (c 2500-1140 BC) that activity in the area is once again attested. The presence of a burial mound nearby suggests that the site is located close to an area of contemporary habitation or cultivation. There appears to have been scattered occupation in the form of farmsteads and fields from this time until the later Roman period.

During the third century AD, there is evidence for the growth of a more nucleated community in the area around Queen Street and perhaps across the western side of the River Hiz. This became an important administrative centre during the seventh century, when it became the central place of the Hicce, a people whose name suggests that they were a population of indigenous origin who retained a separate identity during the centuries of Anglo-Saxon settlement. It is possible that their church, the precursor of St Mary's, was chosen as the location for a series of national synods during the

eighth and early ninth centuries. This makes the origins of the town unusually early and exceptionally significant.

Probably during the early tenth century, the town appears to have been fortified with an extremely substantial bank and ditch. Fortified towns, known as *burhs*, were a feature of the English reconquest of Mercia following its invasion by Vikings at the end of the ninth century. The history of *burh* construction in eastern Mercia is poorly recorded, but the construction of defences at Hitchin is likely to have occurred between the foundation of that at Hertford in 912 and that at Bedford in 914. As at Hertford, the *burh* defences were soon dismantled as the reconquest was rapid. Significantly, the New Town Hall probably lies on or close to the northern part of the west gate of the *burh* at Hitchin.

There is little evidence that this part of the town was heavily developed in the Middle Ages, and although Drapentier's view of c 1699 suggests that there were properties lining the street frontage, the map of c 1750 indicates that only the north-western end of the street was built up. Indeed, the historic maps suggest that Pound Lane was relatively undeveloped until it was widened in 1834. This may have given landowners an incentive to construct more substantial houses and shops than previously. The final stage in the development of the site was the demolition of 13 Brand Street and, to its west, Jelly's tin-plate workshop and yard, for the construction of the New Town Hall in 1900.

The site inspection

The New Town Hall

A visit to the New Town Hall was made on 3 December 2010, when an inspection was made not only of the listed building, but also of the Workmen's Hall and the later twentieth-century infill between the two. There is little need to repeat the description given in the Listing Record (*below*, Appendix 1 page 56), although it should be noted that there are some interesting period fittings relating both to the early twentieth-century date of the structure and also to later (1960s?) redecorations. A series of photographs is provided on CD-ROM to supplement the written description.

The New Town Hall is a typical example of late Victorian and Edwardian civic architecture; there seems to be little doubt that Thomas Geoffry Lucas was the principal architect of Hitchin's New Town Hall as Edward W Mountford was a business partner who tended to be involved in larger schemes (he was actively involved in designs for the more prestigious Old Bailey at the time that the Town Hall was being designed). Lucas was also responsible for Lancaster Town Hall (also with Mountford), an altogether more imposing structure (Listed Grade II*), and Beckenham Town Hall. However, he was more important as an architect of the Garden City movement, with some work in Letchworth Garden City (such as the "£150 houses" at Paddock Close, 1905) and, more significantly, Hampstead Garden Suburb (1908-10).

It is functional rather than impressive (indeed, it was described by a visitor in 1901 as a "*somewhat ugly building*" (Fisher 1999, 109)); it was also heavily criticised by one of the councillors who pointed out that the site allowed no room for expansion (Fleck & Poole 1976, 29). Nevertheless, it appears to have been an instant success and was well used for much of the twentieth century.

The main entrance is through two pairs of later twentieth-century glazed doors, with access usually by an electronic door-release except when there is a function taking place in the main hall, when the doors are unlocked. Inside, the paintwork is dull ('Germolene') pink and cream. There is a wooden War Memorial plaque recording honours awarded to Hitchin men during the First World War on the west wall; opposite is a resin (?) plaque dated 30 April 1983 commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the twinning of Hitchin with Bingen am Rhein in Germany.

There is a central suspended brass ring light fitting, with nine individual lamps in frosted glass shades of 1950s design. This is probably contemporary with Perspex signs pointing left and right to the Gentlemens (*sic*) and Ladies (*sic*) Cloakrooms respectively. A pair of double doors, painted pink, in the centre of the north wall gives access to the main hall. They have well made handles with Art Nouveau detailing.

The cloakrooms are approached through shallow arched openings with decorative frames that appear to be original. Beyond the opening to the west (left), a stairway gives access to the first floor before the door to the Gentlemen's Cloakroom, beyond which there is a small cloakroom area before reaching the toilets proper. There are no interesting fittings in these rooms, although the windows are original and the main door has original fittings. The Ladies' Cloakroom is larger and there appear to be some original wooden cupboards (now painted white) in the Cloakroom area, although the toilets are of 1970s or 80s style, as with the Gentlemen's.

The main hall is now known as the Mountford Hall, although this name has only been used regularly since January 2010; it has presumably been so named to distinguish it from the Lucas Room, but confusingly has been given the same name as a music venue at the University of Liverpool. It has similar pink and cream decoration to the lobby. It is dominated to the north by the proscenium arch and stage, and to the south by a balcony. There are five semi-circular windows on each side with attractively decorated brackets to the pelmets on each, and blocked dormers above the second and fourth. Artificial lighting is provided by four suspended brass ring light fittings, each with six cut glass shades. There is also a scaffolding bar for Par-64 stage lights and two Par-32 lights pointing at a central glitter ball. The balcony is supported at the front (north) on three octagonal cast-iron columns.

Some of the doors retain original fittings, but the wide central door is of 1970s or 80s type. There are three blacked fireplaces (two to the west, one to the east) with original surrounds that now contain radiators. The stage, which projects slightly into the hall, is approached by five steps on each side. There are some early twentieth-century electrical fittings on the stage.

To the east of the hall, the large double doors give access to a small lobby area lit by a circular roof light. There is access to a second gentlemen's toilet from the south-eastern corner of the lobby, while an access corridor along the east side of the hall continues north and south. Two steps to the east lead down into part of the 1950s build, where there is a door through to the bar area, considered below (). The southern corridor leads back to the Ladies' Cloakroom at the front of the building, giving access to a subterranean electricity switch room. The northern corridor leads to a door giving access to the stage and the range of rooms beneath it, as well as being open to the kitchen in the new build. Both corridors are lit by two circular roof lights.

Under the stage there is a range of rooms, mostly divided by late twentieth century partitions. As their ceilings are formed by the stage above, they project above ground level, allowing illumination by plain windows without light-wells. A scar in the external wall shows that a window in the north-eastern corner has been removed at some point. The room to the south-east contains a disused and blocked staircase that would once have given access into the corridor above: it is likely that this is the original entrance to the sub-stage area. All the fittings in this area appear to date from the 1970s or 80s. At the west end of the sub-stage lobby area is a second staircase, giving access to the stage and other rooms at the north-western end of the building. The hand-rail and supports are plain.

Although the doorcases to the rooms in this corner of the building appear to be original, most of the fittings are of mid to late twentieth-century date. The door to the fire escape at first floor level is of recent (1960s or 70s) manufacture and the plaster on the ceiling of the dormer in the west wall of this room has fallen away, exposing the laths above, which may indicate that there is a problem with water seepage through its roof.

There is no connection between this room at first floor level in the north-western corner of the building and the range of rooms at the south (front) of the building also at this level. These rooms at the south are approached by the staircase beside the entrance to the Gentlemen's Cloakroom. These stairs have decorative balusters and a moulded rail; there are brass rings mounted on the wall at the bottom of the stairs, presumably to put cords blocking access to the first floor when it is not in use but the main hall is open to the public. At the top of the stairs, there is an interior three leaded light window of Art Nouveau design illuminating the top of a staircase going back down to an external

door, now used as a fire escape, and to the balcony of the main hall. A Perspex sign points right to the Lucas Room.

The colour scheme upstairs continues the same dull pink below the dado rail with cream above. To the left (west) there is an office with two windows with original fittings, including attractive latches. There is a moulded plaster architrave around the ceiling, with a pair of modern (1970s or 80s) suspended fluorescent lights. A small area has been partitioned off in the north-western corner of this room for use as a kitchen.

To the right (east) of the top of the stairs, a short corridor with semi-circular vaulting and moulded surrounds at each end gives access to a small lobby area. The corridor is painted entirely dull pink and the lobby area entirely in cream, apart from the wooden decorative mouldings, which are painted white. There are Perspex signs similar to those elsewhere pointing to the Lucas Room to the east and the Balcony to the north.

The sign to the Lucas Room is over the door of the Lucas Room's lobby; there is an internal window of five leaded lights over the door to give natural light to the external lobby. The room is painted dull pink with white gloss painted mouldings. There are several interesting internal fittings, including two sets of brass coat-hooks moulded on moulded wooden brackets and an arrangement of four pulleys in black Bakelite mounts with metal cables exiting via the ceiling, labelled "Do not use", which are perhaps connected with bolls formerly mounted in the bellcote (which appears now to be empty).

There is a door to the east wall giving access to the Lucas Room, which is paired with another in the external lobby area. Inside the room, they are set within a rectangular frame, painted white. The Lucas Room has three windows to the south wall, is painted dull pink, with a ceiling and end walls (east and west) in Pompeian red and has white decorative mouldings. There are two moulded wooden rails on the north wall, the uppermost longer than the shorter, of unclear function.

The room is dominated by a large fireplace to the east wall, with a plain neo-Georgian surround and plasterwork above, including a central oval cartouche with garlands but no crest in the centre, with a cherub's head at the base of the cartouche and two pairs of clam-shells to each side. The fire surround has glazed tiles surrounding a black-painted cast iron fireplace with Art Nouveau decoration, marred by a piece of black paper held in place by several generations of sticky tape to prevent draughts.

A moulded architrave at the top of the walls is broken by the fireplace and surmounted by inward-curving walls leading to a reduced ceiling area within a rectangular moulding. In the centre of the ceiling is a floral plaster roundel with four smaller roundels around it. On the long axis, there are square ventilation grilles toward each end. Between the roundels and grilles on this axis, there is an emergency light and a smoke detector. Towards the four corners of the ceiling are suspended brass electric lights, with five lamps inside frosted glass sheds, of 1950s design.

The rooms so far discussed lie within the New Town Hall, the building Listed in 2010. The remainder of the property consists of the Workmen's Hall and the early twentieth century gymnasium, together with the 1950s build linking them with the New Town Hall. It is unclear how far the Listing (Appendix 1, *below* page 56) affects these structures; there are certainly not described in them.

The Gymnasium and linking structure

The Gymnasium is a single-storey brick building with a pitched slate roof; in the centre of the roof ridge, there is a section of corrugated iron roofing raised slightly above the level of the slates. There were originally three windows and a door on the west side and a scar suggests the presence of a lower building formerly abutting it in the centre of the western side, where the later kitchen now stands. Only the door at the north-western end and the window next to it survive, although the cutter arches in contrasting orange brick for the other windows are still visible. The surviving window has four panels, consisting of a pair of six light upper sections and a pair of plain glazed windows below. The door has the pair of six-light upper sections and two small plain glazed windows above a plain double door. None of the other walls has windows; the south wall is the north wall of the Workmen's Hall.

Inside, the Gymnasium is a plain open space with a wooden floor for sports and white painted wooden panelling extending about two fifth of the height of the walls; above the panels is plain brick. There is a suspended false ceiling of square yellow fibre panels, some misplaced, with three rows of six inset fluorescent lights, each occupying the space of three panels. In the west wall, the space of two windows has been taken up with a serving hatch with three panels above and a half-height door to the left below. The surviving window is blocked with two vertical iron bars screwed into the frame; the window catches are an attractive early twentieth-century design.

To the west is a group of rooms linking the Gymnasium with the New Town Hall and giving access to the upper storeys of the Workmen's Hall; the ground floor of the Workmen's Hall is now accessed directly from the Gymnasium and serves as a storage space for sports equipment.

The doors from the Gymnasium lead via two steps up into an atrium, with a staircase with plain iron balusters and a plastic-coated rail to the south. The staircase leads up to the first and second floors of the Workmen's Hall, described below (page 48). The walls are painted cream.

Beyond the atrium is a short corridor that leads to the lobby east of the Old Town Hall's main hall via a pair of wooden doors glazed with single large panels of frosted safety glass. Two similar doors in the north wall give access to the bar area, while a similar pair of doors glazed with plain safety glass form a second entrance to the complex via the alleyway between the New Town Hall and 14 Brand Street. Between the two pairs of internal doors, a curving section of wall has been covered in grey and white mosaic tiles with the former Hitchin Urban District Council's crest picked out in coloured tiles. This forms an attractive focal point for the corridor. There is an emergency light and a single circular light to provide artificial illumination.

The bar can be entered either from the corridor or from the lower part of the small lobby off the main hall of the New Town Hall. It is a plain rectangular room painted cream with a low white ceiling and wooden features painted dull pink. The counter has panelling similar to that of the serving hatch into the Gymnasium and a black top. There is a central ceiling light from the flat roof.

From the area behind the counter, two doors lead through into the kitchen, with four windows and two doors. This has white tiles to about two thirds the height of the walls, with a dull yellow colour above. The serving hatch to the Gymnasium occupies much of the east wall and in the west wall, there is a broad opening to the corridor running along the eastern side of the New Town Hall, with a small serving counter.

These linking buildings consist of a low, single-storey flat-roofed red brick building. The style of architecture suggests a date in the 1950s, although it is possible that it could be as late as the 1960s,

as suggested by the Listing Record; there may be archives of Hitchin Urban District Council that would shed further light on the precise date of construction.

The Workmen's Hall

Mid nineteenth century, red brick, three storeys, with half-hipped, steep slate roof with ridge running north to south. Currently three, but originally four windows on the western side. The eaves project slightly on a plain white painted cornice above angled brick modillions. Plain sash windows to the second floor, with lintels hidden under the eaves, of two by two panels; in the south gable end, a window of three by two panels, with a shallow curve to the upper panels. Recessed sash windows under pointed cutter arches to the first floor, with sash windows consisting of a wider central two panel section flanked by narrow two panel sections. One window in the second bay to the north to the ground floor; consisting of glass light bricks, it appears to be a twentieth-century insertion. Each window is separated by projecting brick pilasters. Level with the top of the ground floor windows and beneath the sills of the first floor windows is a band of contrasting purple brick, two bricks deep. To the south face and projecting round the sides to the first pilaster, there is a lozenge pattern picked out in purple brick from the level of the window sills.

The ground floor is currently used for the storage of equipment used by sports clubs in the Gymnasium and had been subdivided to take this use into account. There are six cast iron columns in two rows to support the floor above. The first floor has been subdivided to create male and female changing areas, with showers and toilets. The décor is cream emulsion to the walls, with tiles in the shower cubicles. Again, there are six cast iron columns in two rows supporting the floor above. The second floor remains a single open space, open to the rafters, which are a feature of the room. The large south window is also a dominant feature.

As a result of the considerable changes made to the interior of the Workmen's Hall in the twentieth century, it is unclear where the original staircase was situated, although it may have been to the north-western corner.

14 Brand Street

As yet, it has not been possible to gain access to the interior of 14 Brand Street. In recent years, it had been trading as a Chinese take-away, Kam's, but this seems to have ceased operation in 2009 and the lease expired in December 2010.

The building is of mid nineteenth century date; as it appears on the Board of Health's map of 1851, it was clearly built before then. The structure is of yellow (Arlesey?) brick, with a red brick quoin to the west and pebble-dash on the gable end to the north. The roof is of Welsh slate and runs parallel with Brand Street. There are two storeys, with a simple wooden cornice supported on three sets of paired brackets. Each of the two properties in the building has a recessed sash window of two 4x2 panes, under a flat cutter arch and thin projecting sill at first floor level. Comparison with historic photographs suggests that these are all original features of the building. The ground floor, though, has been completely altered, with the removal of all brickwork and the insertion of modern shop fronts, accessed through a central shared recessed area. There is now no trace of a light well for the cellar and it is not known if the cellar remains accessible.

There is a small circular iron plate in centre of the facade beneath the cornice, which may be the end of a tie-beam. This may have been inserted at the time the shop fronts were created. The curious brick 'quoins' in the west end of the building project well above the level of the roof, but is not a

chimney; Bridget Howlett has pointed out that it looks as if it may be a remnant of the former number 13, as it is the same height as the parapet of the demolished building and of identical character (see Figure 15: 13 Brand Street in the 1890s (HITM 428/3) Figure 15, *below* page 31).

The yard at the rear of the building is almost entirely covered with temporary roofing, making it impossible to observe from outside. It has presumably been used as storage for the take-away, perhaps with freezers and refrigerators installed.

This building appears to date from a time when there seems to have been something of a building boom in the town (Fitzpatrick-Matthews 2007, 30). In part, this was a result of rapidly increasing population, but in this case, it may be related to improvements to Pound Lane, when its widening must have improved the desirability of the street as a place to live.

Discussion

The site lies on the very edge of the historic core of the town. While this may be thought to reduce its historical significance and archaeological potential, this is not the case. Indeed, for certain periods, this makes it more important. The potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and features will be considered first, while the likely effect of the proposed redevelopment of the site will be assessed in the light of the potential.

The archaeological potential

Any site within the core of an historic town such as Hitchin will have archaeological potential, especially if it has not seen redevelopment since 1950, as is the case here. There are additional factors that increase the potential of this particular site.

Firstly, there is the possibility that material of Lower Palaeolithic date may survive. The discovery of at least one handaxe in Brand Street is poorly documented and the circumstances of its retrieval do not appear to be known. One possibility is that it derives from the fill of the palaeochannel known to run along the street. The precise location and dimensions of this channel do not appear to be recorded and it may have been a relatively small feature. Nevertheless, no material of this date has been recovered under controlled archaeological conditions in the town and the potential for further discoveries must therefore be regarded as moderate, with the significance rated as high.

There is also a possibility that other prehistoric remains of a later date will survive. The presence of a Bronze Age burial mound at Whittings Court to the south could indicate the location of a barrow cemetery, while the general and poorly located scatters of Late Iron Age material from the area around Bancroft raises the possibility that more material will be found. The potential should be seen as moderate, with moderate significance.

Romano-British material is also relatively commonplace across the town centre, although the evidence suggests that the main focus of occupation lay in the Queen Street area. Nevertheless, the potential for further discoveries should be regarded as high, with a significance rated moderate.

It is the early medieval period for which the most significant remains are likely to survive. The line of the burghal ditch was predicted by Gil Burleigh and Mark Stevenson in 1994 and the discovery of the ditch in 2004 showed their guess to be correct. The projected line of the ditch would run beneath Brand Street, remaining parallel with Grammar School Walk. Like Paynes Park, the present lane lies to the outside of the defences, perhaps originating as an extramural road in the tenth century. The ditch itself should pass beneath the New Town Hall or (possibly) 14 Brand Street. More significantly, the precursor to Brand Street, Pound Lane, was evidently the only thoroughfare leading west from the centre of the town and was probably therefore part of the original design of the Late Saxon *burh*. This would mean that the west gate of the town ought to be located at this point. As the defences were of soil and turf and there is no decent building stone in the area, the gate would almost certainly have been constructed from timber and its remains would be fragile, most likely consisting of post-holes and beam-slots. The potential for the survival of remains associated with the tenth-century *burh* is therefore high and its significance is also high.

Little is known about the later medieval development of Pound Lane and no buildings earlier than the nineteenth century survive in Brand Street. None of the historic photographs shows buildings of

pre-nineteenth-century date, unless the façade of 13 Brand Street was a latter addition, as plausibly suggested by Bridget Howlett, while the historic maps suggest that it remained undeveloped except at the western end, where the proposed development site is located. The potential for the survival of medieval deposits and features is therefore moderate and the significance should be rated moderate. The potential for the survival of post-medieval remains is high, but their significance should be rated as low. In Table 3, the 'risk' of disturbing archaeological deposits and features is rated as the aggregate of an arbitrary score of the potential for survival coupled with the potential significance of these remains (1-3, for low to high).

Period	Potential for survival	Significance	Risk rating (1-6)
Early prehistoric	Moderate	High	5
Later prehistoric	Moderate	Moderate	4
Romano-British	High	Moderate	5
Early medieval	High	High	6
Later medieval	Moderate	Moderate	4
Post-medieval	High	Low	4

Table 3: Potential for archaeological survival by period

There is cellarge to parts of the proposed redevelopment area. At the rear (north end) of the New Town Hall, there is a sunken area beneath the stage that is proposed for museum storage in the current plans. This will have truncated almost all of the archaeological deposits, although it is possible that the bottom of the burghal ditch would survive at this depth, should it pass through this part of the site. There is also a small switch room beneath the south-eastern corner of the building, which is likely to have destroyed all archaeological deposits, although the deposits from the palaeochannel might survive, depending on the channel's dimensions.

The sunken area at the southern end of the Workman's Hall is likely to have had a significant impact on the survival of archaeological deposits. However, it is too far east to have affected the burghal ditch and probably too far from the street frontage to have impacted on medieval and early post-medieval structural remains. The cellar beneath 14 Brand Street, though, will have destroyed any remains at the street frontage of any date. As its extent is not known, it is unclear how devastating this will have been.

A further impact on the survival of archaeological remains will have been the construction of services from the nineteenth century on. While the older services have an archaeological interest of their own, all of them will have affected at least the upper parts of the stratigraphy of the site. As it has so far been impossible to gain access to the yard of 14 Brand Street, it is unclear if any services cross this area, although it is likely that drains, at least, will exist. Drains of nineteenth-century date are likely to be relatively superficial and to have damaged underlying deposits and features only minimally; they are, of course, archaeological features in their own right.

The impact of redevelopment

The proposed redevelopment of the site will have an impact on archaeological remains, not least in the intended demolition of an historic property. At this stage, there are no finalised designs for the scheme, but there is likely to be minimal disruption inside the New Town Hall; however, there are likely to be works carried out in the pavement in front to allow the construction of a ramp for disabled access, in the construction of foundations for the replacement for 14 Brand Street, intended

as the entrance to the museum, and in the provision of services, especially for the new toilets and the café.

The demolition of an historic building should not be undertaken before a full programme of recording is completed. Observation of the exterior of the structure at 14 Brand Street suggests that original fittings from before 1850 survive, such as the sash window to the first floor. Until an inspection can be undertaken of the interior, it is impossible to know how many other original features survive inside the building. It will therefore be necessary, before any demolition takes place, to carry out a full survey to record this property in its current condition. As demolition proceeds, it will also be necessary to maintain an archaeological watching-brief to ensure that any features uncovered during the work are also recorded.

Monitoring of all ground works, including the removal of existing services and the provision of new services, the construction of new foundations and footings, and the construction of access ramps, must be undertaken by an archaeologist. Time to record all deposits and features revealed by the work should be given and the recovery of artefacts and ecofacts that will assist in their interpretation permitted.

This recording work is intended to mitigate the consequences of the redevelopment. It will not provide a full account of the development of the site from early prehistory to the present and should be restricted to those parts of the site directly affected by the development.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Listing Record for the New Town Hall

507832

TL1834229280

BRAND STREET

Town Hall

Grade II

Town Hall, built 1900-1901, extended to the east in the later C20. Designed by Edward Mountford and T Geoffry Lucas for Hitchin Urban District Council.

MATERIALS

The building is constructed in red brick, laid in English bond, with rendered details and stone dressings.

PLAN

Approximately rectangular with a slightly projecting front office range, and late C20 extensions linking with the former Workmen's Hall and gymnasium to the east.

EXTERIOR

The building comprises a Neo-Georgian front range, with 'Wrenaissance' influence, and a rear hall in the Arts and Crafts style. The office range has stone capping to the brick plinth and quoins to the corners. The hipped tile covered roof has a central cupola, an end stack at the east elevation and a stair turret beneath a gablet at the west elevation. A slightly projecting central panel of one bay framed by pilasters is clad in stone. At ground floor, a central moulded arched entrance with enlarged keystone has recessed later C20 glazed and timber doors with small-paned leaded lights above, Iron lantern brackets and suspended lanterns are above either side of the arch. Carved at the top of the pilasters are the letters HU (to the left) and DC (to the right) with AD and MCM (the date in Roman numerals) beneath. At first floor, a pair of lancet windows with small-paned leaded lights and a moulded stone lintel lie beneath a pediment with central carved coat of arms and foliate motifs. The pediment and eaves rest on modillions. On either side of the central bay are three windows each to the ground and first floors. At ground floor, four are original mullion windows with small paned leaded lights; two to the left of centre have inserted transoms. All first-floor windows are mullion and transom windows with leaded lights.

The hall to the rear has a tiled gable roof and rough-cast render at the upper levels. It is five bays long, has a rectangular plan and lies at a right angle to the front range. Each bay is defined by half-buttresses and has a semi-circular or Diocletian window with two mullions beneath the eaves. There are two tile-hung dormers to each pitch with timber casement windows. The west elevation has a central opening at ground floor with stone quoins, part glazed doors and a canted, pent roof. To the rear is a remodelled brick extension with hipped roofs, partly constructed in the same style as the hall, which accommodates the stage and back rooms internally.

The later C20, flat-roofed single and two-storey extensions to the east obscure the east elevation of the hall and have no historic interest. The linked, much altered, two-storey gymnasium has a half-

hipped roof covered in slate with dentil cornice, some contrasting brickwork and replacement windows.

INTERIOR

In the office range, a central ground-floor foyer has contemporary quarry tiles, plain dado rail and cornices and a wooden plaque commemorating honours won by Hitchin men in World War I. A simple, enclosed staircase leads to the first floor. The rooms off the staircase are plain in decoration, served by corridors with arched openings, plain dado rails and cornices. The Lucas room on the first floor has two entrance doors with a moulded architrave. A fireplace at the east end has a deeply coloured tile and carved wood surround. There is a plaster cartouche, thought to represent the Lucas family crest, surrounded by foliate and shell motifs above. There are deep cornices, some with egg and dart motifs.

To the rear of the foyer double doors lead to the multi-functional hall. The hall has an adjustable sprung wooden floor, contemporary with its construction, and a barrel-vaulted ceiling with prominent concrete beams rising from columns and elaborate consoles to the cornice. The details on the consoles represent a rose and lavender, crops grown locally for the horticultural and pharmaceutical industries. Contemporary brass light fittings remain. To the north, the stage has a simply moulded proscenium arch and remodelled rooms beneath. To the south, a first-floor gallery is supported on three slender columns; a separate access to the seated gallery is at the first floor. On the east side, an inserted double opening leads to a remodelled corridor partly integrated into the later C20 extensions which incorporate a new entrance into the complex and link the hall with the former Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium. The latter now serves as a late C20 sports facility and the former hall has been subdivided; neither have fixtures and fittings of interest.

HISTORY

Hitchin Town Hall was constructed for Hitchin Urban District Council in 1900-1901 as a replacement for the Old Town Hall of 1840, also on Brand Street. Built on land donated in 1897 by local dignitaries Frederic Seebohm and William and Alfred Ransom, the competition to design the Town Hall was won by Edward Mountford and T Geoffrey Lucas. It was constructed at a cost of £7,300 and combined council offices and a hall. A small extension at the rear of the hall was built on land donated by Dr Oswald Foster and appears to have been either constructed or remodelled during the interwar years. In the 1960s the hall was extended to the south-east, linking it to the Workmen's Hall and Gymnasium of 1841, resulting in some exterior and interior remodelling.

SOURCES

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REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

Hitchin Town Hall of 1900-1901, Brand Street, Hitchin is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- Architectural Interest; the front range of the building has carefully considered detailing expressing civil dignity balanced by the domestic quality of the flanking bays and elevations of the rear hall. The building was designed by E W Mountford and T Geoffrey Lucas, renowned architects in the design of municipal and domestic buildings with many listed buildings to their names
- Intactness; both the exterior and interior of the building are largely intact
- Interior; the Lucas Room is distinguished for its decorative plasterwork
- Group Value ; Hitchin Town Hall has group value with the designated old Town Hall, the contrasting architecture of the two buildings demonstrating the evolution of the building type from the mid-C 19 onwards.