

THE CONSERVATION AREA



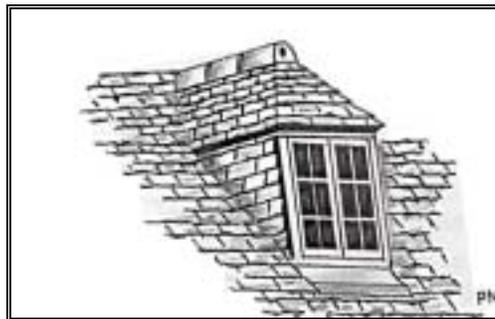
Church House, Bridge End

A Conservation Area is defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an ‘*area of special architectural interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’. For general guidance purposes, there is a map delineating the Wansford Conservation Area on page 8 of this pamphlet.

Anyone wishing to obtain advice on planning matters within the Conservation Area should contact the Planning Department’s Development Control Team at Peterborough City Council.

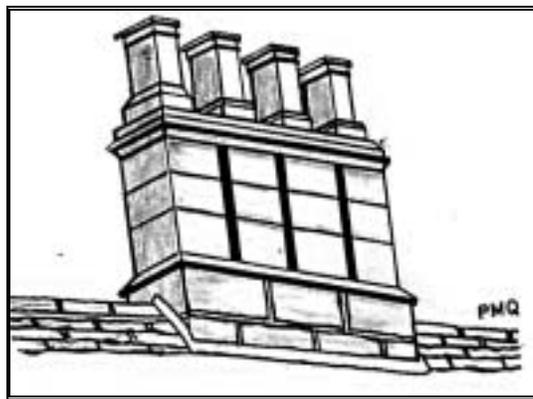
The eastern side of Bridge End comprises a terrace of mellow, two storey, stone-built houses under Collyweston slate roofs rising gently along a lightly curving incline from the old bridge. The windows are period and wooden framed. Old dormer windows rising from the slates provide a regular, pleasing feature.

These attractive properties can be dated generally from about the 17th and 18th centuries, with Wharf House dated circa 1650; but parts undoubtedly may be earlier. Formerly used principally for commercial and professional purposes, they are today exclusively residential. Number 1, on the corner of Bridge End and Peterborough Road, was the original Wansford Post Office until that facility first moved opposite The Haycock about 40 years ago. The original post box in the front wall of the house remains a village landmark.



Dormer Window feature, Bridge End

“Fielding House” originally also incorporated the property now known as “Church House”. For over a hundred years, from the 19th century into the 20th century, “Fielding House” was both residential and the local G.P.’s surgery. Wansford’s first recorded school was situated at 5, Bridge End from the mid-eighteenth century until the early 20th century. “Wharf House”, 11 Bridge End, as its name implies, was central to the Wansford wharfage activities – lighterage, boatbuilding, repairs, smithying, storage etc. - until the advent of the railways and a general deterioration of navigation channels gradually conspired to close business shortly after the mid-1800s.



Chimney detail, Bridge End

A number of stables, barns and outhouses contiguous to the rear of Bridge End were sympathetically converted into highly desirable residences with riverside gardens in 1977 and named Riverside Spinney, with access from Peterborough Road. These conversions retained much of the original oak timbers and stone, under Collyweston slates. The only other visible vestiges of the old wharf are a flight of steps and a length of wall in the lower garden of Bedford House.



The Old Post Office and Stores, Bridge End.

In addition to the church, there are three properties on the west side of Bridge End. 'Rivermead' was built in 1981 on a 'greenfield' site abutting the ancient water meadow. A house of modern design built of composite stonework under a tiled roof; this property is obscured from view behind a tall hedge of non-native *leylandii* planted along a boundary between the meadow and the house and parallel with the river. This hedge was a condition upon which planning permission was originally granted. A public footpath from Yarwell, now part of the Nene Way, transverses the meadow alongside the new boundary hedge and joins Bridge End at a stile and gate adjacent the entrance to 'Rivermead'.



Meadow Cottage, Bridge End

'Meadow Cottage' is the only thatched property in Wansford. It is probably late 16th century in origin and provides a warm, rustic charm with its design and outline entirely complementing its location and providing soft contrast to the more formal outline of the buildings opposite. In past centuries, it has been a hostelry - The Cross Keys - and a bake-house. Included in the deeds of Meadow Cottage were once the stone-pits that are today a feature of the front gardens of 23 and 24 Old North Road.

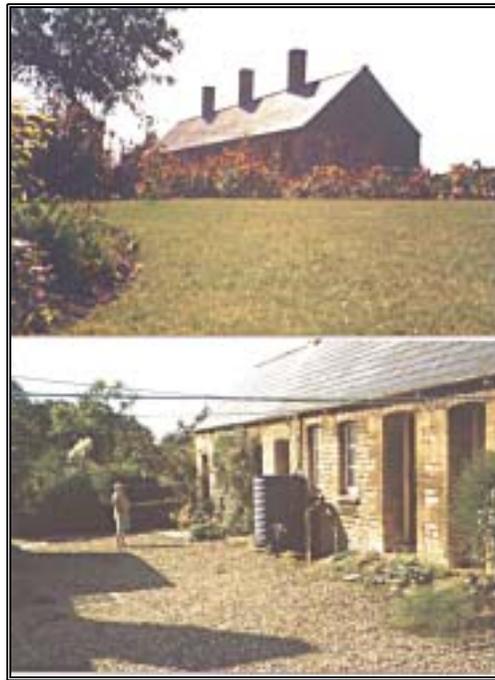
'Hillcroft' is a mid-20th century, two-storey, brick built-house under a tiled roof erected in what was formerly the garden of 'Fielding House', opposite. The brick construction and relatively elevated roof height are somewhat out of sympathy with the immediate environment given that it is situated amongst properties of significant age and distinctive styles. The carefully considered and much photographed prospect from the old bridge delineating the bold outline of St. Mary's church above the modest, thatched ridge of Meadow Cottage has been lost as a result of the high roof profile.

'Greystoke', abutting the Old North Road, the Village Green and Old Leicester Road, is quite possibly the oldest residence in Wansford with parts dated to c.1620. Stone built under a tiled roof, a date-stone on the Old North Road frontage reads 1657. This range of dates enables the house to claim the remarkable distinction of being part Jacobean, part Carolean and part Commonwealth at the same time! In the past this property has been a bakery and a maltings, although certain ancillary outbuildings were lost at the time the Mermaid Inn, which stood between 'Greystoke' and the church, was demolished in the late 1930s to facilitate a much needed road-widening scheme.



Greystoke (left) and 3, Old North Road. The 1657 date-stone is just out of camera-shot to left.

Holly Row, Old North Road, was originally a terrace of nineteenth century agricultural workers cottages, each with a washhouse with a copper and a 'bucket' privy situated within a terrace of outhouses to the rear.



Holly Row and rear outhouse block c1960 (photos: Mary Watson)

In recent years, 'Holly Row' has been much modernised and sympathetically converted to provide distinctive, mews-type properties. The three stone-built terraced cottages under Collyweston tiled roofs almost facing 'Holly Row' (2, 4 and 6 Old North Road) were also originally built to house agricultural workers but have since also been sympathetically converted to form mews-type properties.

'Hillside' (Cooper's Cottage), 19 Old North Road, is one of the most picturesque buildings in Wansford. This cottage formed part of the Duke of Bedford's Wansford Estate and was built in 1850 to house the family of George Eayrs, the local estate cooper. His initials are seen inscribed on a carved, stone barrel on the gabled front elevation along with the Duke's coat-of-arms. The date 1850 may be seen on the spandrel of the porch. The single storey former cooper's workshop is still evident attached to the left elevation of the building.



Hillside (Cooper's Cottage), Old North Road

Designed in a retro-Tudor style by the renowned architect, Samuel Teulon, it forms one of an important series of complementary buildings built for the Bedford Estate in the mid-nineteenth century,

known by some commentators as 'the Wansford look'. On the north elevation is inscribed the Duke's initials F.B. - Francis Bedford. This unique property has been subject to some restoration.



(photos c.1960 and 2002)



Loss of view due to building and vegetation - see p.10

The Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin

The parish church, properly a chapel of ease to neighbouring Thornhaugh church, is of considerable antiquity being of Saxon origin, certainly 11th century if not earlier. It possibly stands on the site of an earlier, wooden church which – given its location – may have replaced a pre-Christian temple or place of ritual. St. Mary's is strategically situated in a dominant position at the top of the northern slope rising from the old bridge. It is also set at the nodal point of the former Great North Road, the former Leicester Road, also Wansford Road that wends via Yarwell and Nassington to Fotheringhay and Oundle. Outside the church, close to the junction with Yarwell Road once stood stocks and a whipping post. The village pound, where stray livestock were impounded by the parish and returned upon payment of a fine, was also situated close by in what is now the garden of 'Holystones'.



Aerial view of St. Mary the Virgin, Wansford

At an unrecorded date, possibly during the 1400s, the church lost its chancel and subsequently fell into a great state of disrepair and dilapidation. A new chancel was built in 1902. Between those dates, when a vestry and organ chamber were also added, St. Mary's laid claim to be the smallest parish church in England. The tower is a mere 8 feet square internally and can be dated to the 13th century with its lancets, 2 light bell openings and dog-tooth decoration. The broach spire typical of the Nene valley has two tiers of lucarnes and probably dates from c1300. It houses six bells. The weather vane on the steeple bears the date 1902 and is pierced by what appears to be a bullet hole in the top, left quadrant. Shooting at weather vanes was once a common rural pursuit in England. The oldest part of the church is the 11th century Saxon window in the west wall. The south doorway is Transitional c1200 and the north arcade of the nave was built soon after. The south wall of the nave was rebuilt in 1663 along with the porch, the latter providing a buttress to the 'downhill' aspect of the church. At the time of the building of the new chancel in 1902, the foundations of the old chancel were uncovered and so, appropriately, the site of the new chancel corresponds with its much earlier predecessor.

The church possesses an exceptionally fine font of Norman origin that has been dated at about 1120. It was rescued from Sibberton Lodge, where it had been used as a cattle trough. It was possibly originally the property of the church of a now lost village or was cast out of its rightful home during the turbulent times of the Reformation. During the excavations carried out during the building of the chancel, the broken bowl of what was possibly St. Mary's original font was discovered and this was used to create a base for the rescued font.

The Village Green is a modest open space, bisected by the Peterborough Road conjunction with Old Leicester Road. It was created during a pre-war road widening initiative when the Mermaid Inn and sundry adjoining buildings were demolished. The southern portion of the Green abuts the churchyard and bears the village sign atop an oak post. Designed locally and funded by the Women's Institute, this sign was erected in 1990.

A village notice board is supported against the churchyard wall. A Post Office mail storage facility and a road grit bin are sited at the western edge of the green, close to the Yarwell Road junction. On the opposite side of the road, a grassy bank rises from the footpath to the stone boundary wall of "Greystoke" where there is a bench seat and a litterbin. This welcome open space offers a wide and most pleasing perspective of the church and down Bridge End towards the river. However, in recent years the growth of a large willow and other trees just below "Meadow Cottage" has denied the view across the field to the river and beyond.



Approaching the Village Green from the east, along Peterborough Road

1, 2, 3 and 4 Peterborough Road are a terrace of cottages and the contemporaries of neighbouring 2, 4 and 6, Old North Road, being generally similar in style, construction and age. The old surgery at 18, Peterborough Road, presently used as offices, benefited from full planning permission (2001) for conversion into a single dwelling.

A terrace of four houses was constructed in 2003 on the former site of Collier's Garage (1927-2002), a ribbon of land (0.01 hectare) midway along the south side of Peterborough Road.

This completes the section on the Conservation Area.