

Annex 2: A brief history of Leckhampton and Warden Hill

Warden Hill

Although the name may be much older, the earliest recorded mention of Warden Hill is in John Norder's 1617 survey of the manor and hundred of Cheltenham and several connected fields around the hill itself bear the name in Pinnell's survey of 1778¹. Given the history of small scale agriculture including many orchards in the area it's not unreasonable to suppose the name derives from the warden pear, a common medieval term for a hard cooking pear² which now features in the Parish Council emblem.

The hill itself is now a public open space, known as Weaver's Field. It received Queen Elizabeth II Field status in 2012, awarded as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The area was directly connected to Cheltenham's South Town in 1822 with the opening of the major toll road which is now the Shurdington Road.

After the second world war the area south of the then GWR railway across the Shurdington Road was 'glebe land' belonging to the Church of England. In 1953 only a few farm buildings, the Shurdington Road and a country lane called Farmfield Road existed amongst the fields but, after a little legal hiatus in the absence of any actual ownership records, it was then sold

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The Leckhampton and Warden Hill area in 1811 (above).. and 1953 (below).



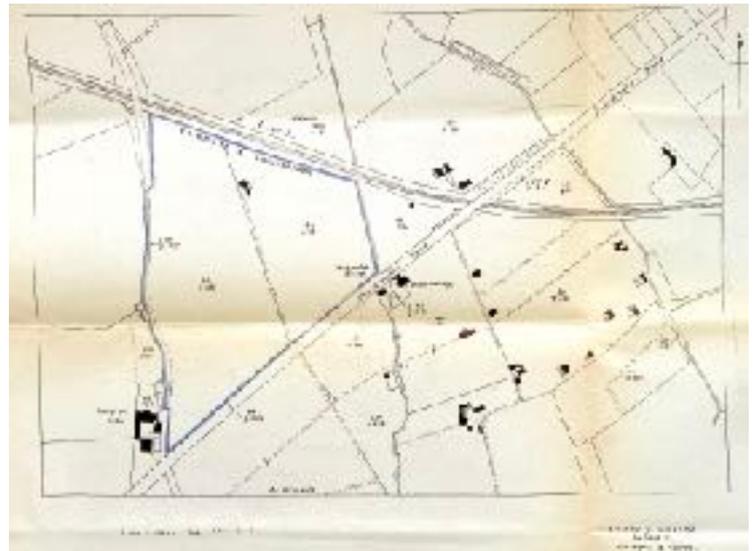
¹ [http://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/8/7/5887234/bulletin_no_1_pdf\(1\).pdf](http://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/8/7/5887234/bulletin_no_1_pdf(1).pdf)

² <https://wardenvineyard.org.uk/vineyard/warden-pear/>

by the “by divine permission Lord Bishop of Gloucester” to Messrs Hurst & Beamish of Birmingham. By 1957, Beamish the builder was selling plots complete with brand new bungalows, one in Hazelwood Close going to a local cabinet-maker for the princely sum of £445. This was the Woodlands estate comprising Woodlands Road, Hawkswood Road, St Michael’s Road and Abbots and Friars Close - some of the names reflecting its ecclesiastical roots.

This was followed by the adjacent Warden Hill estate with cathedral cities providing road names such as Salisbury Avenue, Durham Close, Canturbury Walk, Lincoln Avenue and more. The estate’s builders J A Pye gave their original stores and equipment site for the building of St Christopher’s CofE Church which was dedicated in 1961, not far from the new United Reformed Church (now administered by St. Andrew’s United Reformed Church). St Christopher’s contains ten very fine stained windows by Thomas Denny. Warden Hill Primary School opened in 1965.

New development in the 1990s extended the urban area to the long established boundary of Up Hatherley Way. The only small area beyond it is the new Brizen Young People’s Centre opened in 2009 and its accompanying recreation areas which have hosted many local events including consultation on this Neighbourhood Plan.



Mapping out and planning the Woodlands estate in the 1950s, the beginning of urban Warden Hill.



Once Bray’s End, and variously spelled Brazon or Brizon, Brizen field is now host to a modern youth centre used for community events like this Neighbourhood Plan’s consultation (left).



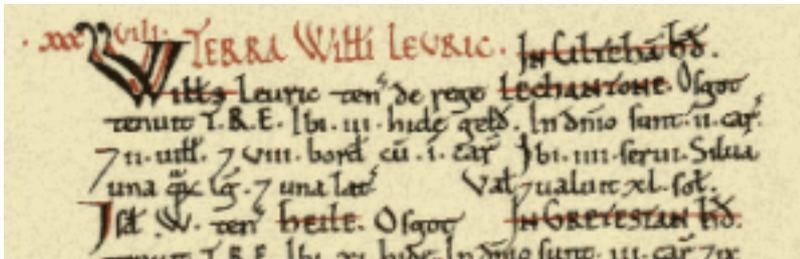
Leckhampton

Settlements on Leckhampton Hill date back 3000 years but the name Leckhampton is Anglo-Saxon - probably formed from the Anglo-Saxon words for market vegetables (*leek*), meadow (*hamm*) and enclosure or settlement (*tun*), reflecting the use made over the centuries of the rich local soil.

Leckhampton was part of the small realm of the Hwicce and then larger Mercia before Viking onslaughts shattered Mercia and the area was 'sheared' off into the Kingdom of Wessex's new county of Winchcombeshire. This was later absorbed by its neighbour Gloucestershire.



Leckhampton's history began 3000 years ago on the hill. The earthworks of the iron age camp now marked by a modern trig point (above).



'Lechantone' enters recorded history in Domesday, 1086

Following the Norman conquest, Domesday Book in 1086 records two manors in Leckhampton worth 70 shillings. The first historical

references we have to a church and priest in Leckhampton are in the 12th century and the earliest parts of St Peter's Church date from this era as does a nearby moated site with former fishponds which is now a scheduled monument.

The earliest parts of the manorial residence Leckhampton Court were built in the 1320s by Sir John Giffard. The interconnected families of Giffard, Norwood and Trye occupied the manor house until 1894 and are remembered in many local road names. Church Road - originally called Colum Street³ - and a number of local cottages and Collum End Farmhouse itself date back to the medieval village, perhaps to the late 16th century.



By the 17th century, Leckhampton Court was the grandest manor house in the area and Leckhampton parish stretched from the hill as far as Warden Hill, Westal and Merestones not far from its larger neighbour Cheltenham.

Leckhampton's population in 1676 was estimated at just 130 compared to Cheltenham's 1,670. Shadows of the traditional 'ridge and furrow' cultivation of the land are still visible on the open fields just below the hill on a sunny evening and many of

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³ http://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/8/7/5887234/bulletin_no_2_28-end.pdf

the ancient field boundaries survive in the are of the Leckhampton Fields around Kidnappers Lane. Leckhampton's only other industry was the

extraction of the hill's golden limestone for building, which had begun to give the hill its distinctly man-made profile.

The 18th century saw Cheltenham suddenly grow even more as it developed a new life as a spa resort. Little changed up in rustic Leckhampton, except for creeping enclosure of the common fields, until 1797 when the last of the Norwoods died without a direct heir and left the manor and Leckhampton Court to his cousin, Gloucester surgeon Charles Brandon Trye. The forward-looking Trye experimented with new cultivation techniques, formally opened up the hill's quarries to commercial exploitation and built what seems to have been Gloucestershire's first railway – a gravity-assisted tramway on the hill. By 1810 the tramway passed today's Scout hut and connected the hill's quarries to Cheltenham. The carving out of the railway 'incline' for the trams also isolated a distinctive pillar of rock which remains a Leckhampton icon to this day: the Devil's Chimney.



The 19th century saw new housing, a railway station and pleasure gardens as Leckhampton gradually connected to Cheltenham. The major new road in the direction of Bath - now called Leckhampton Road was completed by 1820 - forking off from the old Bath road just below the hill. The first local school in Hall Road opened in 1840. Another new toll road branched off towards Shurdington in 1822 from the Bath Road dividing Leckhampton from what would later become the Warden Hill part of the parish.



Not long before Pilley had just been a Saxon field name east of Leckhampton village but it would become a small hamlet popping up on maps in its own right and featuring one of the area's several new clay, brick, tile and pottery works. Victorian brick housing began to spread from Cheltenham's South Town around the new Bath Road and right up to Pilley.

In 1894 much of the historic parish to the north of the designated area for this plan was incorporated into the growing Cheltenham borough. In the same year, the old Leckhampton manorial estate was sold off and the hill itself fell into the ownership of one Henry Dale who rashly tried to enclose it

for his own commercial exploitation. A popular campaign ensued. The celebrated ringleaders were known as the 'Leckhampton Stalwarts' and had to suffer prosecution and hard labour before the commercial failure of Dale's lime kilns on the



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hill in 1925 allowed Cheltenham Borough Council to snap up the land for the bargain price of £6500. In 1929 the hill was declared open to the public again amidst general celebration. In 2000 the Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK) was formed to involve local people in the active conservation and management of the ecology, geology and archaeology of the land on the hill.

The rest of the 20th century saw continuing change. Collum End Farm's fields gave way to Collum End Rise and its surrounding roads in the 1960s and the local railway line closed as private car use increased. The 1990s saw the remainder of the ancient parish incorporated into Cheltenham Borough but also the campaign to defend the last remaining ancient fields and rights of way for future generations. Development on both sides of the borough boundary with Tewkesbury has now effectively encircled these fields with roads and housing but the borough council's Cheltenham Plan in 2020 finally declared 26 hectares of the fields protected Local Green Space. The plan allowed for more housing just south of the Shurdington Road and a brand new secondary school - Leckhampton High School - which opened its doors in Farm Lane in September 2022. Across Kidnappers Lane from the school more history is being made with Leckhampton's first development of carbon neutral houses reflecting growing awareness of the need to protect both our local and global environment.

