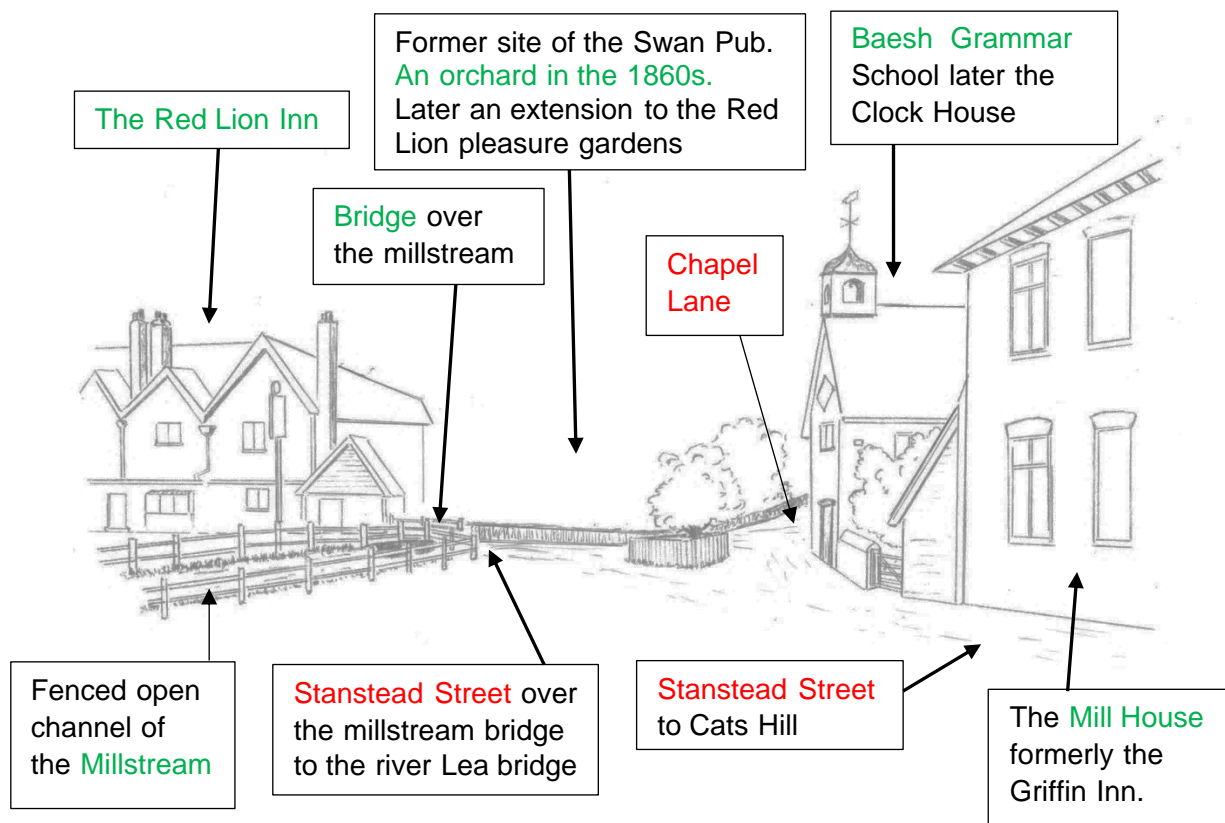


# 1864 PLANNING PERMISSSION FOR THE ROAD JUNCTION NEAR THE RED LION INN

BY  
STUART MOYE

This article looks at a planning application of 1864 to alter the road layout outside the Red Lion Inn and the associated changes and the reasons for them. The road alterations replaced the awkward sharp turn outside the Clock House with an easier but still sharp turn close to the Pied Bull. It also allowed for the millstream to be placed more safely behind protective railings on a low wall and diverted towards the relocated new mill. The old mill had suffered from reducing levels of water in the millstream and was operating below its previous level of effectiveness. The changes would slightly increase the power of the now limited water supply and supplement this with steam power. As the alterations involved the diversion of a main highway a request to the County Council for permission had to be submitted and approved before the work on the road commenced. This planning application is to be found in the Hertfordshire County Records for 1864. A retyped copy of the application is to be found at the end of this article with relevant information drawn from it in the body of the article.

## RED LION ROAD JUNCTION IN THE EARLY 1860s

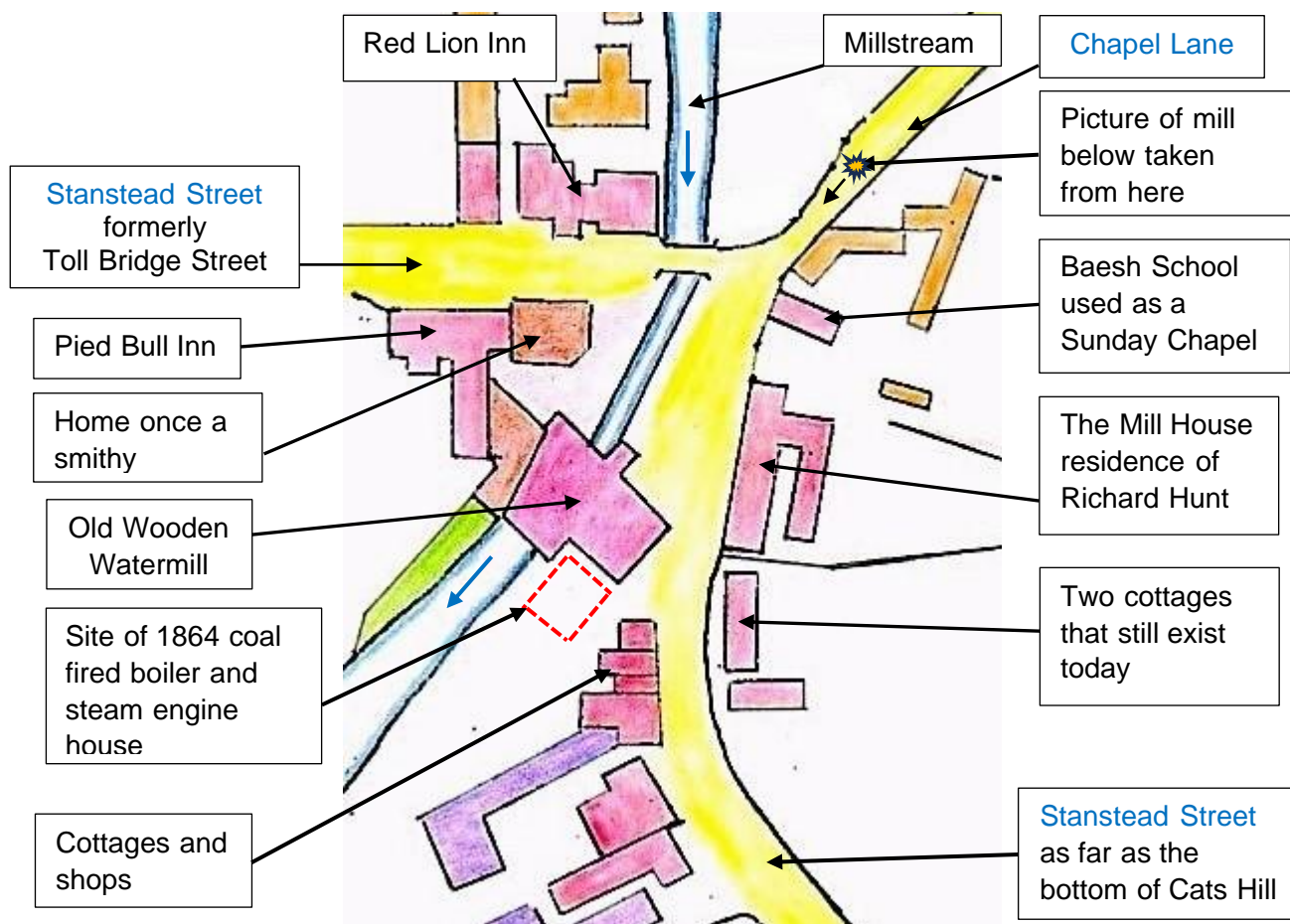


*The above sketch of the junction between Stanstead Street and Chapel Lane as it was in the early 1860s is based on a painting by Thomas Luppino. The undated painting has been dated by Luppino experts to 1823 with the updating to 1860 based on documentary evidence. The large wooden mill built across the millstream would have been behind the artist when he painted this view.*

The changes at this road junction were connected to the need for an increase in the capacity of the watermill. This was part of a many centuries long struggle to increase the supply of food to a growing London from the area of countryside surrounding it. In addition, the increasing extraction of water from the ground water and the River Lea meant the reduced water available was making it difficult to maintain the previous volumes of flour and ground animal feed produced. The first steps to increase the capacity of the mill involved the building of a coal fired brick-built boiler and steam engine house which powered the millstones in an addition to water power. Unfortunately, almost immediately the new boiler house came into use it caught fire when left unattended overnight. The fire took place on the night of 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> August 1864 and totally destroyed both the boiler house and the adjacent old wooden watermill.

The complete destruction of the watermill posed the miller Mr Richard Hunt with a considerable challenge. He was however by this time in his life a rich and resourceful business man and he set about turning the disaster into an opportunity. He set about planning a replacement brick-built watermill with supplementary steam power supplied by a gas fired boiler, made possible by the opening of a local gas works along Amwell Lane. In addition, he saw the opportunity to create an albeit small mill pond which would even out to some extent the flow of water at the mill wheel. As he lived at the Mill House across the road from the old mill, he was also able to incorporate a small mill pond, a private drive and some front garden lawn into his property. This extra land being acquired by enclosing parts of the former highway outside his home, released by diverting the main road around his expanded private property.

### THE ROAD JUNCTION IN THE EARLY TO MID 1860s

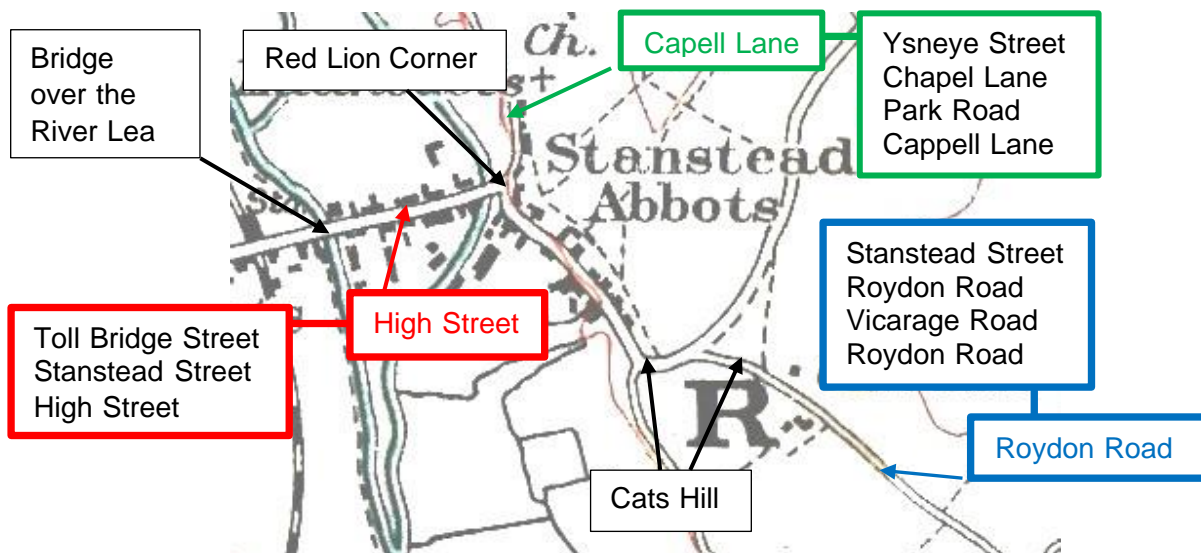


A rare mid-1864 image showing the old wooden mill and the short-lived chimney of the new boiler house. This view from Chapel Lane shows how the old wooden mill was built at right angles to the Mill Stream which passed beneath it just to the right of the white gable ended small hut sized building to the left. The railings to the bridge over the millstream can just be seen above the wooden fence to the right. It is noticeable that Chapel Lane was considerably narrower than the current road at this point. The one familiar structure in this 1864 view that has survived to the present day is the Clock House seen to the far left of the picture. This photograph must date to sometime between June and the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1864 when the catastrophic fire occurred.



Before proceeding to the mill and road diversion developments it is worth looking at the details of the changing names of the roads both before and after the 1860s

### Changing Road Names in Stanstead Abbots



The **High Street** today is the name given to the road between the bridge over the River Lea and the Red Lion Corner. Sometime after the River bridge changed its name from the Thele Toll Bridge to Stanstead Toll Bridge in the reign of Charles I, that section of road became known as Toll Bridge Street. It retained that name until the mid-1800s when it became part of Stanstead Street that had for a long time only referred to the road between the Red Lion Corner and the bottom of Cats Hill. This change indicated the growing importance of the road across the valley floor as more of the services provided by the village began to appear in the increasing number of buildings erected along this cross-valley road. By the 1890s the familiar name of High Street had replaced the name Stanstead Street and remains so today. This change coincided with the growth in pre-packaged goods and nationally recognised branded products leading to a multitude of shops we would recognise as making up a High Street. All this made possible by the ability of the railways to move goods all over the country at reasonable cost.

The section of road between the Red Lion Corner and the bottom of Cats Hill had long been the main street of the village referred to in official documents as **Stanstead Street**, including on some of the published maps of those days. In some cases, such roads were referred to as “Main Street” but within settlements in day-to-day use would have been referred to as the “Street.” It is interesting to note that the concept of the “Main Street” was taken to America by English emigrants and there it has remained in common usage. In the 1830s Stanstead Street had been renamed Roydon Road an indication that it had lost much of its importance as a trading street as businesses concentrated in the recently renamed High Street. For a short period of time between the end of the 1800s until the late 1920s it was known as Vicarage Road before reverting to Roydon Road. A name it still retains, being just a small part of the long road to Roydon. Cats Hill has retained its name in use despite always being part of Roydon Road.

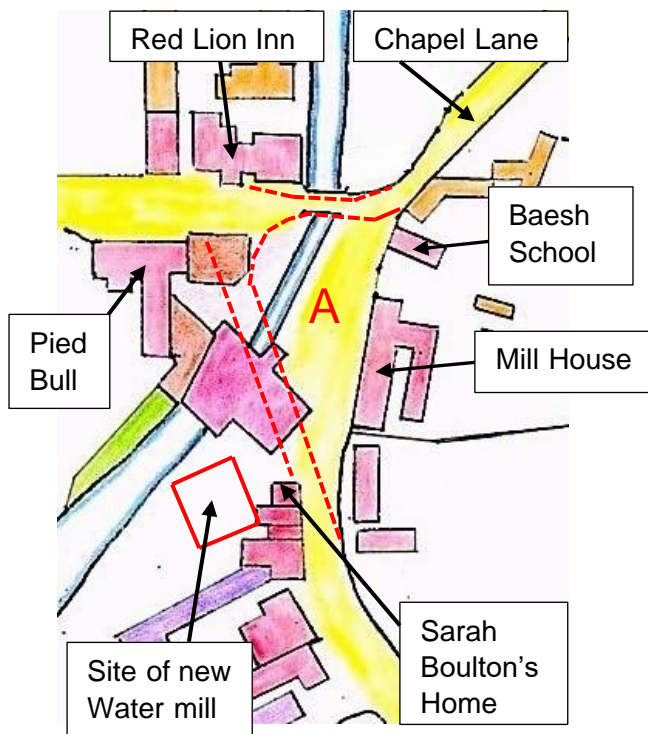
**Cappell Lane** had for many centuries been known as Easneye Street with many variations of spelling some beginning with a “Y.” In time it became known as Chapel Lane thought to be named after a chapel built in the late C13th, on the same spot where the Clock House now stands. About 1897 the name of Chapel Lane was changed to Park Road a direct result of the influence of Thomas Fowell Buxton then Lord of the Manor of Stanstead Abbots. This change was not welcomed by everyone and may explain why in the 1920s it was changed by the parish Council to Capell Lane, a somewhat more Latinised version of its previous Chapel Lane and remains so today



Not long after the disastrous fire of late August 1864 plans were drawn up and permission sought for a scheme to alter the road junction outside the Red Lion. The plan proposed altering the road layout to support the plans for a new mill building on a different site to the old wooden watermill. This involved a new watercourse to take water via a small pool to the re-sited watermill wheel.

The following extract from the planning application outlines the proposed new roads

*Application to be made to make and set out in lieu thereof the following new public highway in the said parish of Stanstead Abbots, that is to say: A new public carriage-road and highway, of the width of 25 feet, branching out of Stanstead Street aforesaid, and commencing at the north-east corner of the dwelling-house on the west side of the said street belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by Sarah Boulton, and extending thence in a north-westwardly direction over the Stanstead Mill Head Stream and the site of Stanstead Mills and property attached there to belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by the said Richard Hunt, and terminating on the south side of Stanstead Street, opposite the Red Lion Inn, such new road being in the centre thereof of the length of 46 yards or thereabouts. And also a new public carriage-road and highway of the width of 20 feet, branching out of Stanstead Street aforesaid, and commencing on the west side of the Stanstead Mill Head Stream, adjoining the Red Lion Inn aforesaid, and extending thence in a northward direction over the said stream and land or garden ground on the east side thereof, belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by the said Richard Hunt, and terminating in Chapel Lane aforesaid at the north-east corner of the said land or garden ground, such new road being in the centre thereof of the length of 21 yards or thereabouts.*

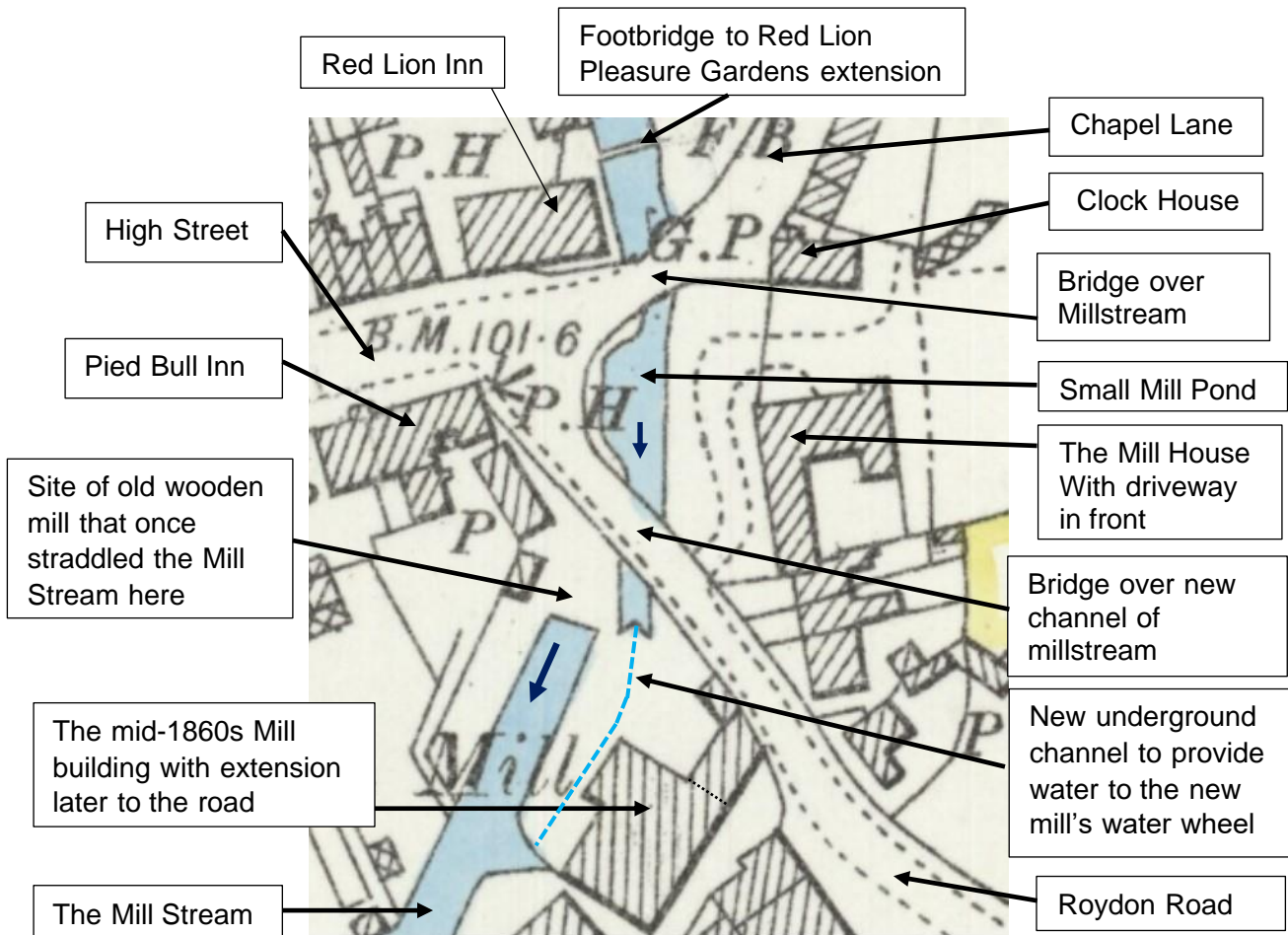


The positioning of the new roads is described in the extract from the planning application in the official style of writing of the 1860s. On the diagrammatic map to the left the new proposed roads are indicated by red dashed lines. Notice how the new road crosses over land once occupied by the fire destroyed mill and a house once a village blacksmith's shop next to the Pied Bull, that was demolished to make way for the new road. The large letter **A** indicates the land enclosed by the changes, taken from the Highway and placed behind walls becoming part of the front garden of the Mill House. The proposed site of the new brick-built mill is approximately indicated and required an additional channel and sluices to redirect the flow of the millstream to flow alongside the new mill.



*An early C20th view of the 1864 junction of roads outside the Red Lion seen to the left. To the right can be seen the low wall topped by railings that separated the land enclosed from the former Highway. The end wall of the Mill House is just visible among the trees. The railings of the bridge over the millstream can be seen to the right of the Clock House. It is interesting to note that the sharp corner in the road to the right had needed a barrier to protect pedestrians from traffic*

## 1890s MAP OF THE ROAD JUNCTION



*This 1905 postcard view gives a glimpse of the land enclosed from the highway showing on the left the Mill House, its drive, lawn and small pool. The bridge in the middle of the view takes water to the new mill beyond. Note the extension of the mill to the road and the chimney for the gas fired boilers plus the long "corridor in the sky" as the mill workers called it for loading and unloading barges.*

The plans implemented by Richard Hunt as shown above were a response to several pressures he faced in the 1860s which had prevented him maximising the income from his lease of the mill. The mill and associated land and buildings as well as his home in the mill house were all owned by the New River Company following an auction in 1836. Richard Hunt was in fact to move into Stanstead Hall in the High Street a more substantial home more befitting his grown status in 1875. Back in the 1860s he faced the following key difficulties; 1. The demand for flour and ground animal feed was rising beyond the capacity of the old wooden watermill. 2. The amount of water available to power the mill was diminishing. 3. The ability of the millstream to deliver more water if available was limited. 4. To take advantage of the demand for a greater output of flour required carefully considered investment.

### **1. Rising demand for Flour**

When the mill and millstream had been first built in the late 1270s it had been a response to growing demand for food as London's population grew. The long millstream had allowed a considerably greater head of water and thus power at the mill wheel than had been possible previously from a mill on the banks of the river Lea. The continued growth of London and thus demand for flour had over the next six centuries prompted enlargement of the mill and the deepening and widening of the millstream on several occasions. In the 1860s demand again was rising and therefore the possibility of enhanced profit. This required further investment to be made to increase flour production in any replacement mill.

### **2. Reduction in water at the water wheel.**

When the New River in 1620 applied for and was granted permission to take water directly from the River Lea at Chadwell, considerable local concern was raised about the reduction of water in the river for navigation and other uses. Repeated requests for greater volumes of water to be taken from the Lea between Hertford and Ware were to follow in order to provide for the growing demand for fresh drinking water in London. The need to provide sufficient water for both navigation and the watermills was managed by allowing millers access to water on some days of the week with navigation on the river Lea taking place on the other days. This excluded Sundays of course, as working on a Sunday was socially & religiously frowned upon. In the 1800s the New River was still needing to send even more water to London so started to build a series of steam powered pumping stations. These pumped water from deep underground up to the surface dramatically lowering the water table locally. This in time reduced further the amount of water reaching the river Lea both through the groundwater and from the major springs at Chadwell and Amwell. By 1860 this was beginning to have the effect of limiting the amount of water available for use by the local watermills on the Lea including the one at Stanstead.

### **3. The Limitations of the Millstream**

When first built in the reign of Edward I the millstream had been designed to meet the needs of the times with relatively low outputs of flour and ground animal feed by the standards of later centuries. As with all millstreams its construction had balanced the gradient of the channel against the need for as much water power that could be made available at the mill wheel. The steeper the slope of the millstream the more easily and quicker the water could move along the channel but at the cost of reducing the head of water at the wheel and thus lower the power available to work the millstones. Over the years the channel had been widened and deepened several times to allow a greater volume of water to reach the water wheel and thus deliver more power. However, by the 1860s the reduction in available water in the river Lea meant that the millstream was no longer able to provide as much water power at the mill wheel as before and no widening or deepening of the channel could now remedy that.

### **4. Richard Hunt's solutions to increase output from his mill.**

In some ways the calamitous fire of August 1864 allowed Richard Hunt to start again with a blank sheet of paper and build a completely new mill to the modern standards of the times. He firstly invested in a new brick-built watermill as cheap water power was still available to him. He then introduced steam power again but this time with a gas fired boiler. This had become possible as the St Margarets Gas and Coke Company began supplying gas from their new works not long after Richard Hunt had got the watermill back in full operation. He also provided a small mill pond in the form of a decorative front garden feature in the space that had been enclosed from the old highway. This provided a smoothing out of the flow of water to the mill wheel helping to capture a little extra energy from the water flow.



It was in the mid-1860s when Richard Hunt was reinstating his mill in Stanstead Abbots that the cowboy era in the wild west of America was just getting started. That was the time of outlaws and lawmen like Johnny Ringo and Marshall Wyatt Earp and many others who became figures of legend in the mid-west of America. It is unlikely at the time that Richard Hunt would have realised that the ending of lawlessness in mid-America would have serious consequences for his mill in Stanstead Abbots. By the 1870s settlers were beginning to move onto the wide-open expanses of the mid-west of America encouraged by cheap sometimes free land which soon saw the landscape transformed into an endless expanse of large rectangular fields. Along with the extensive rail network that was developed over time the mid-west became a producer of vast tonnages of grain which was easily exported to other parts of America and relevantly to the ports of the east coast. This grain was produced at scale so cheaply that it could be exported in bulk to the Port of London and still be less expensive than homegrown wheat. Importers turned to the same steam power that Richard Hunt had brought to Stanstead Mill some 15 to 20 years earlier. These new mills were large and based at the ports of entry of the American grain with the inexpensive flour produced transported easily around the country by rail. This change coincided with the rise of branded products pre-packaged for the domestic user. All part of the change in shops and the products sold in them along with the creation of the Victorian shopping High Streets. The impact on farming and milling was immense causing financial and employment difficulties in farming and the loss of many of the traditional wind and water mills. By the mid-1880s Stanstead Mill had ceased producing flour and had been reduced to just grinding animal feed for a limited local market. The main function of the mill building being for the storage of farm produce awaiting forward transport by barge down the Lea.

The changes made to the road junction outside however remained with the relatively small millpond in the front of the Mill House left as just a decorative garden feature. A couple of private small rowboats were kept on the pond to allow the occupants of the Mill House to venture upstream under the bridge carrying Chapel Lane / Park Road, then past the Red Lion and along the millstream towards the Amwell Magna Fishery. In addition, it was possible on high days and holidays to hire a rowing boat from the Red Lion and enjoy the pleasures of rowing upstream only along the millstream. With the advent of motorised transport, the road junction began to present difficulties for the larger vehicles and faster moving traffic. It meant that Richard Hunt's alterations were only to last some 70 years before they required further remodelling in 1934. This time the millstream was culverted under the road allowing the reduction of the sharpness of the corner next to the Pied Bull.



*This is a 1937 view of the revised road junction created in 1934 taken from the Mill building. A good proportion of the land enclosed behind the wall and railings in the 1860s was brought back into use as roadway and pavements. However, some land was still retained and appears behind the fence to the right of the picture. This unusual view gives an idea of the historic open triangle of land that existed here for centuries and evidence suggests it had been the site of the ancient Saxon market place in Stanstead.*

## MODERN VIEWS OF THE ROAD JUNCTION



*The above much more recent views are included so that the previous road junction can more easily be related to the current arrangements at the junction. The bottom left view is especially included to compare with the 1864 photograph at the bottom of page 2 above. The comparison shows how the position of the old wooden watermill relates to the modern buildings and how the new mill shown top right is located significantly further away from the road junction. The bottom right picture shows the back of the white painted houses now included as part of the Mill Race residential development. These houses in part were built on the footprint of the Griffin Inn later the Mill House which stood right on to the edge of the road to Roydon before the 1860s. The surface of that road now lies underneath the back gardens of these houses and for the most part behind the brick wall that divides the back gardens from the public footpath. It is today quite difficult to imagine the once open channel of the millstream crossing this area with just a two-rail wooden fence to prevent people falling in.*

It is interesting to note that historically Stanstead Abbots was influenced by the economic dominance of Ware in the local economy and the importance of London and its increasing requirement for more food and fresh water. The growth of Ware from 1100 onwards undoubtedly led to the closure of the market at Stanstead alluded to in the Domesday Book of 1086. The continuing growth of London had historically contributed to the growth of the malting and flour milling businesses in the village and would have influenced the decisions made in the 1860s by Richard Hunt when improving his watermill. Which of course led to the request for permission to change the road layout in order to alter the course of the millstream to direct water to the new watermill. The new mill then fell victim to changes thousands of miles away that led to significantly cheaper wheat grain imports from the USA. One wonders if Richard Hunt would have rebuilt his mill in 1864 had he known it would have less than 20 years effective life left as a flour mill. In more recent times London has continued to change the village causing a considerable growth in size as increased numbers of people have chosen to live in the village commuting daily to London by train. The road junction outside the Red Lion has continued to be adapted to changing levels of traffic benefitting from an attractive redesign when traffic reduced when the bypass opened in 1987.





## APPENDIX

### EXTRACT FROM THE 1864 HERTFORDSHIRE SESSION ROLES

#### **HERTS SESSION ROLLS 1864.**

[Re road works Stanstead Abbots at junction of Stanstead Street and Chapel Lane]

*Notice of an application to be made for an order to stop up, divert, and turn the following highways, or parts of highways, lying within the said parish, that is to say. Part of a certain public highway and carriage-road, called or known by the name of Stanstead Street, commencing at a point on the east side of the said street one yard or thereabouts south of the north-west corner of the forecourt or garden attached to the dwelling house belonging to Richard Hunt, and occupied by William Jordan, and extending thence in a northward direction towards Chapel Lane, then turning in a westward direction over the bridge across the Stanstead Mill Head Stream, and terminating in Stanstead Street aforesaid, at a point on the south side of the said street two yards or thereabouts west of the south-west corner of the said bridge, adjoining property attached to Stanstead Mills, belonging to the Governor and Company of the New River, brought from Chadwell and Amwell to London, and occupied by the said Richard Hunt, such part being in the centre thereof, of the length of fifty-three yards or thereabouts. And also part of a certain public highway and carriage road,*

*called or known by the name of Chapel Lane, commencing at the above-mentioned turning of Stanstead Street, across the Stanstead Mill Head Stream, and extending thence in a northward direction along Chapel Lane, and terminating in a point in the said lane at the north-west corner of the Schoolroom, a building on the east side of the said lane belonging to the Trustees of Sir Edward Baesh's Charity, such part being in the centre thereof of the length of 13 yards or thereabouts. The said parts of the highways are so connected together that they cannot be separately stopped or diverted without interfering one with the other.*

*Application to be made to make and set out in lieu thereof the following new public highway in the said parish of Stanstead Abbots, that is to say: A new public carriage-road and highway, of the width of 25 feet, branching out of Stanstead Street aforesaid, and commencing at the north-east corner of the dwelling-house on the west side of the said street belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by Sarah Boulton, and extending thence in a north-westwardly direction over the Stanstead Mill Head Stream and the site of Stanstead Mills and property attached there to belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by the said Richard Hunt, and terminating on the south side of Stanstead Street, opposite the Red Lion Inn, such new road being in the centre thereof of the length of 46 yards or thereabouts. And also a new public carriage-road and highway of the width of 20 feet, branching out of Stanstead Street aforesaid, and commencing on the west side of the Stanstead Mill Head Stream, adjoining the Red Lion Inn aforesaid, and extending thence in a northward direction over the said stream and land or garden ground on the east side thereof, belonging to the said Governor and Company of the New River, and occupied by the said Richard Hunt, and terminating in Chapel Lane aforesaid at the north-east corner of the said land or garden ground, such new road being in the centre thereof of the length of 21 yards or thereabouts. And that the certificate of two justices having viewed the said highways and parts of highways so proposed to be stopped up, diverted, and turned, and the said new roads proposed to be made and set out in lieu thereof, with a plan of the said highways and parts of highways and proposed new roads, will be lodged with the clerk of the peace on Saturday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> December next. John Bigg, Michael Woodhouse, surveyors.*

*[Dated 28<sup>th</sup> October].*

47a. *Plan relating to above diversions. [Dated 28<sup>th</sup> October]*

48. *Consent of Richard Hunt, of Stanstead Abbots, miller, occupier of lands through which certain new roads are intended to be diverted. [Dated 28<sup>th</sup> October. See No. 47].*

51. *Order for the diverting of the above roads in the parish of Stanstead, and certificate B that they will be more commodious to the public than the old ones. See Nos. 47, 48. [Dated 30<sup>th</sup> November].*

52. *Certificate of the posting of notices concerning the diversion of roads in the parish of Stanstead. [Dated 30<sup>th</sup> November. See Nos. 47, 48, 51].*

55. *Consent of the Governor and Company of the New River to the diversion of highways through their lands in the parish of Stanstead Abbott. [Dated 7<sup>th</sup> December].*