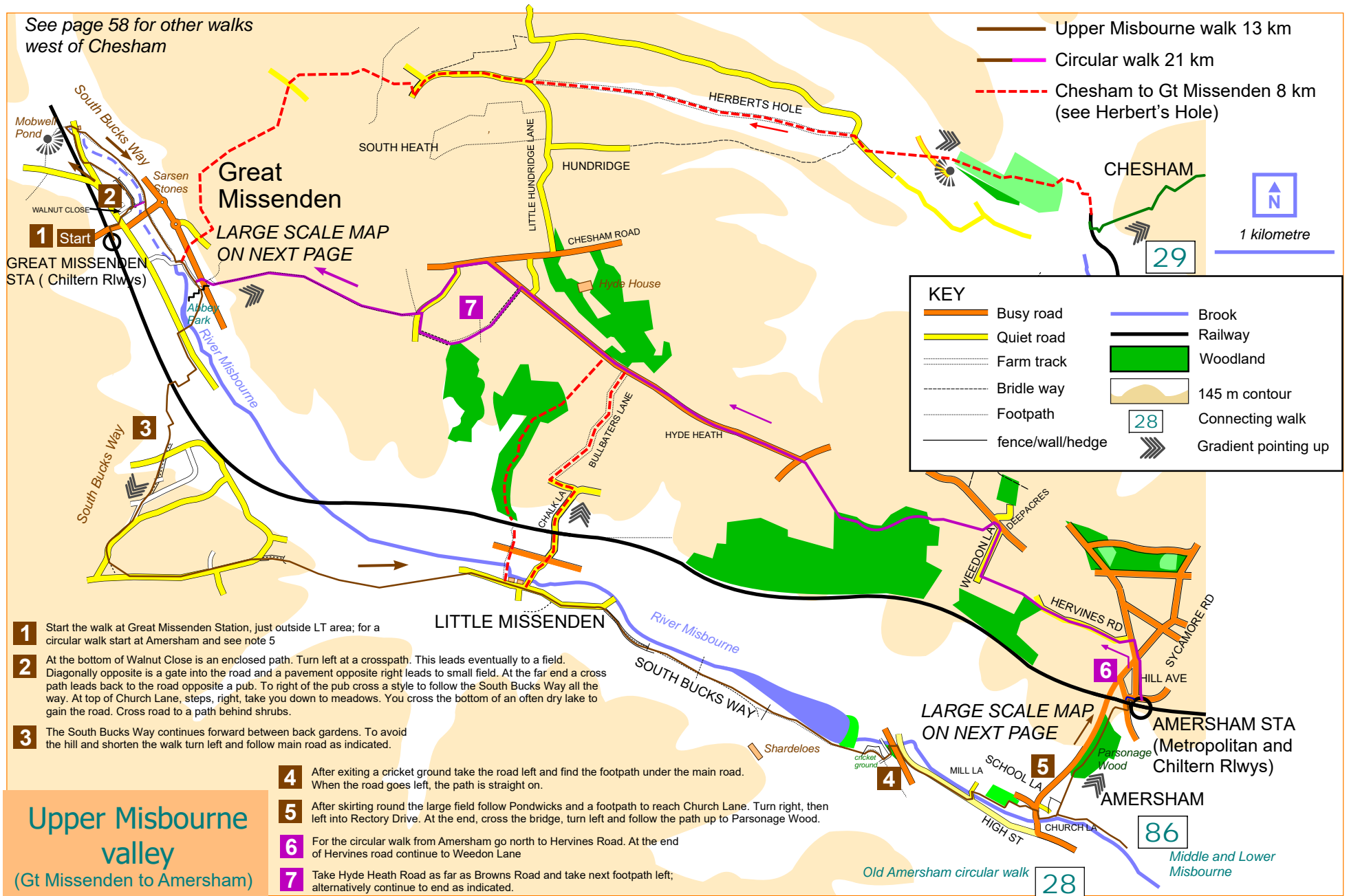


See page 58 for other walks west of Chesham



- Upper Misbourne walk 13 km
- Circular walk 21 km
- Chesham to Gt Missenden 8 km (see Herbert's Hole)

KEY	
— Busy road	— Brook
— Quiet road	— Railway
— Farm track	 Woodland
— Bridle way	— 145 m contour
— Footpath	28 Connecting walk
— fence/wall/hedge	➤➤➤ Gradient pointing up

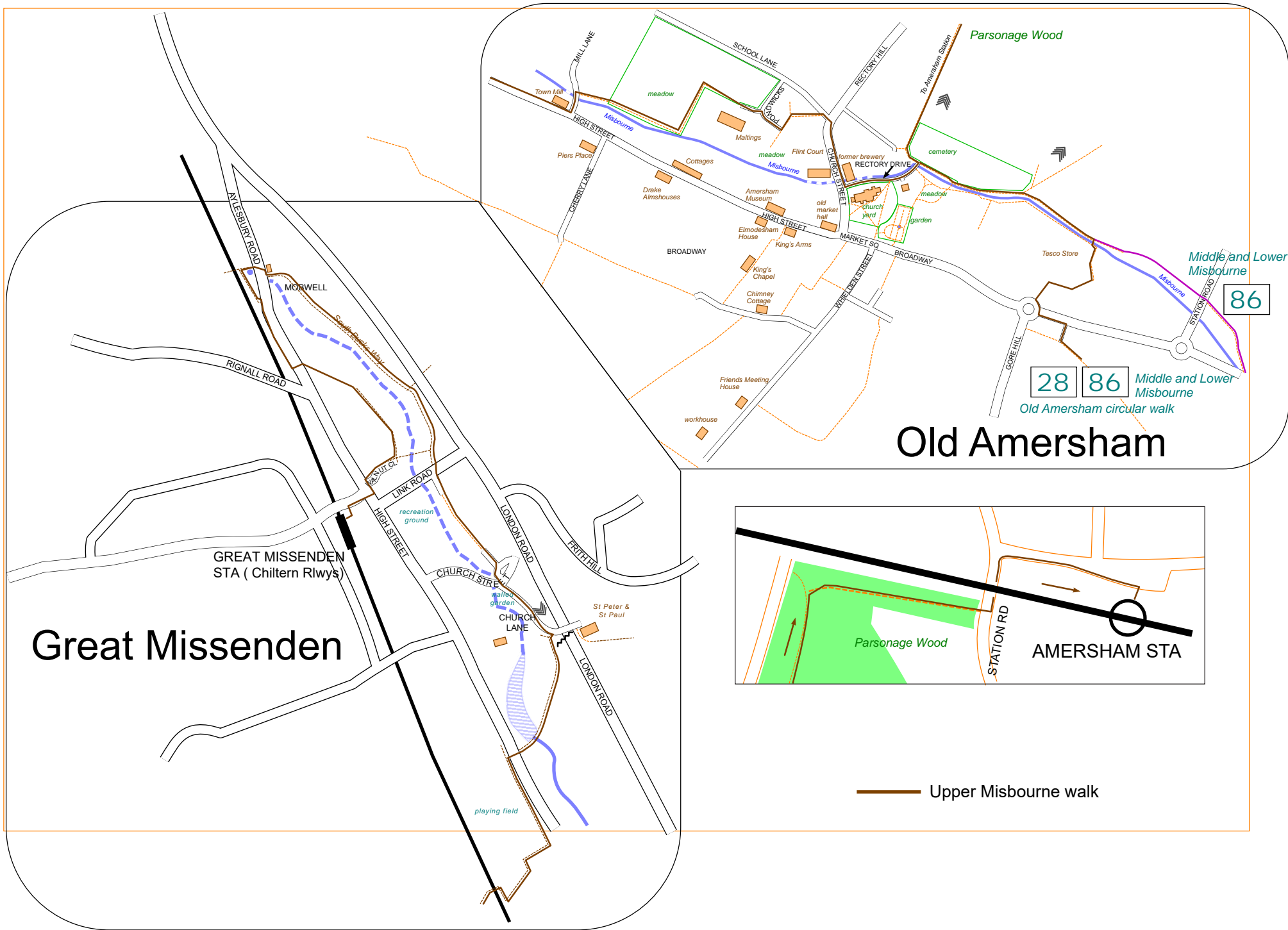
- 1** Start the walk at Great Missenden Station, just outside LT area; for a circular walk start at Amersham and see note 5
- 2** At the bottom of Walnut Close is an enclosed path. Turn left at a crosspath. This leads eventually to a field. Diagonally opposite is a gate into the road and a pavement opposite right leads to small field. At the far end a cross path leads back to the road opposite a pub. To right of the pub cross a stile to follow the South Bucks Way all the way. At top of Church Lane, steps, right, take you down to meadows. You cross the bottom of an often dry lake to gain the road. Cross road to a path behind shrubs.
- 3** The South Bucks Way continues forward between back gardens. To avoid the hill and shorten the walk turn left and follow main road as indicated.

- 4** After exiting a cricket ground take the road left and find the footpath under the main road. When the road goes left, the path is straight on.
- 5** After skirting round the large field follow Pondwicks and a footpath to reach Church Lane. Turn right, then left into Rectory Drive. At the end, cross the bridge, turn left and follow the path up to Parsonage Wood.
- 6** For the circular walk from Amersham go north to Hervines Road. At the end of Hervines road continue to Weedon Lane
- 7** Take Hyde Heath Road as far as Browns Road and take next footpath left; alternatively continue to end as indicated.

Upper Misbourne valley
(Gt Missenden to Amersham)

Old Amersham circular walk 28

Middle and Lower Misbourne



Great Missenden

Old Amersham

28 86 Middle and Lower Misbourne
Old Amersham circular walk

AMERSHAM STA

— Upper Misbourne walk

walk notes

Upper Misbourne Valley

We start at the source, where there is hardly any stream at all. Together with Map 86 we follow the length of the river, mainly along the South Bucks Way

The Misbourne

Misbourne is a chalk stream. Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat, home to a wide range of wildlife, including some of the UK's most threatened species.

The Misbourne is one of eight chalk streams that rise in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It flows for 17 miles (27km) from Mobwell Pond through the Missendens, Amersham, the Chalfonts and Denham to its confluence with the River Colne. Chalk streams are fed from water held within the underlying chalk rock and are characteristically shallow, clear and fast flowing. They have intermittently flowing upper reaches, known as *winterbournes* that flow after winter rains and dry up during summer. Unlike the Chess, do not expect a healthy flowing stream. The Misbourne is unusual in that along with its winterbourne, it also has an intermittently flowing middle section. A change in the underlying geology south of Amersham causes the river to become 'perched' above the water table and as a consequence, the river loses water through its porous river bed. Flow along this section is particularly vulnerable to drought, abstraction and to disturbance of the river bed. See also

http://www.bucksgeology.org.uk/pdf_files/Wal

[k5_Great_Missenden.pdf](#)

Great Missenden

Great Missenden lay on a major route between the Midlands and London. Several coaching inns, particularly the Red Lion and The George (which still exists), provided for travellers and their horses. The first railway line in the area was, however, routed alongside the Grand Union Canal to the east. Once the coaches stopped running, Great Missenden declined in importance and prosperity, becoming an agricultural village. Following the arrival of the Metropolitan Railway in 1892, Great Missenden became a commuter village for London with writers, entertainers and even Prime Ministers among the passengers. Great Missenden railway station is now on the Chiltern Railways line and offers fast services running into London Marylebone. Roald Dahl was a well-known resident and his museum is here. Nobody knows when the first church was built at Great Missenden. There appears to have been one on or near the site of the present church of St Peter and St Paul when the Abbey was founded in 1133. Of the earlier buildings nothing is known, the present one being largely from the 14th and 15th centuries with 19th century extensions and restorations. Watching over the approach to the church is the bold and strangely asymmetric tower. Sometime after the Reformation in the 16th century this tower was extended southwards, resulting in a wall nearly 14 feet thick, and a new belfry was built. Browne Willis states that

the tower was altered to accommodate five large bells formerly in the abbey at the foot of the hill. Today, there are eight large bells hung for full circle ringing and one very small 'Sanctus' bell set in a small window high up on the west face of the tower. Close inspection will reveal that much of the tower is made up from recycled material, including windows, probably from the demolished medieval structures of the abbey.

Missenden Abbey

William de Missenden founded Missenden Abbey in 1133. He endowed it generously with lands, woods and tithes to provide. Others benefactors followed and the Abbey became wealthy, with extensive properties around Missenden and as far afield as Huntingdonshire, Hampshire and the Suffolk coast. The Abbey was dissolved in 1538 and the chapel deliberately smashed. Elizabeth 1 gave it to her favourite, Robert Dudley. He sold it to William Fleetwood whose family lived there for 200 years, modifying the building and demolishing a substantial part of it. It is now part of Buckinghamshire New University.

Shardeloes

Shardeloes is a large Palladian style 18th century country house. A previous manor house on the site was demolished and the present building constructed between 1758 and 1766 for William Drake, the Member of Parliament for Amersham. The architect and builder was Stiff Leadbetter; designs for interior decorations were provided by Robert Adam

from 1761. Built of stuccoed brick, the mansion is nine bays long by seven bays deep. It was constructed with the piano nobile on the ground floor and a mezzanine above. The north facade has a large portico of Corinthian columns. The terminating windows of the piano nobile are pedimented and recessed into shallow niches, as are the end bays of the east front. The original plans of the house by Leadbetter show a design closer in appearance to Holkham Hall, with square end towers. Adam cancelled this idea, but embellished the front with the portico. The interior of the house has fine ornamental plaster work by Joseph Rose. The entrance hall by Adam has fluted Doric pilasters and massive doorcases in the north and south walls. The dining room has stucco panels and an oval panel in the ceiling. The library was designed by James Wyatt in a classical style and has painted panels by Biagio Rebecca. Humphry Repton was commissioned to lay out the grounds in the classical English landscape fashion, in the lee of the hill upon which the mansion stands. Repton dammed the River Misbourne to form the lake which we pass.

Hyde House

Hyde House is a Grade II listed early 18th-century country house. It had previously belonged to Woburn Abbey and was known as Chesham Woburn Manor. Hyde House was owned by the politician and barrister Robert Plumer Ward in the early 19th century. Ward retired to Hyde House in 1823 to write his novel *Tremaine*, or *The Man of*

Refinement. The writer and scholar Isaac D'Israeli rented the house during the autumn of 1825, and his son, Benjamin Disraeli, later claimed that he wrote his novel *Vivian Grey* at the house before his 21st birthday in December 1825. Pevsner describes Hyde House as having the "proportions of a late c17 or c18 house hidden behind the stucco and sashes of the early c19.

Old Amersham

Records date back to pre-Anglo-Saxon times, when Amersham was known as Agmodesham, and by the time that the Domesday Book was written around 1086 it had become known as Elmodesham. In 1200 Geoffrey, Earl of Essex obtained a charter for Amersham allowing him to hold a Friday market and a fair on 7 and 8 September.

William Drake of Shardeloes bought neighbouring Manor of Amersham in 1637. In 1662 he bought the Rectory. The Drakes remained Squires and Rectors of Amersham until the 20th century. They built the Almshouses in 1682 and prevented railways and canals from using the valley. Old Amersham has a wide variety of periods of architecture – houses of all shapes and sizes. There are more than 150 Listed Buildings and much of the town is a conservation area. This town, possibly more than any other small town in England, preserves in its streets the same general appearance that it had in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The exact age of most of the houses can't be confirmed, as many of them have been altered

and added to over the centuries. The oldest parts of nearly all the houses are the backs – the fronts having been modernised according to the fashion of the period. The earliest houses still standing are timber framed, with wattle and daub in the spaces. Local oak provided the main timbers. Flints were found in the chalk in this area and were split to face walls. The roofs were originally of thatch, but in the late 15th and early 16th centuries, brick and tile making were local industries. Tiles made at least 300 years ago are still on many roofs in Old Amersham and more recently slates have also been used.

The area to the East of the Market Hall is known as Market Square and until 1939 the fourth side of the square was formed by a double row of cottages down towards The Broadway. The local council issued a slum clearance order and these cottages were demolished in 1939.

Visit <http://amershamhistory.info/>

The Amersham Martyrs

The Amersham Martyrs were Lollards. Six men and one woman were barbarically burned to death at Amersham in 1506.

Sixty Lollards renounced their faith and were branded on the cheek with a hot iron, made to wear a symbol of a faggot, and on certain festival days had to parade with a faggot on their shoulder and a lighted torch in their hand. Despite her abjuration and branding Joan was still forced to light the fire that took her father's life. In 1521 there was a further purge.

The memorial to the martyrs was built in 1931.