



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

ASPENDEN



Location: 1 mile south of Buntingford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL3628.

Postcode: SG9 9PD. **County:** Hertfordshire. **District:** East Herts. **Access:** Indirect access from A10. **Buses:** Nearest routes pass through Buntingford, approx 1 mile from village.

Population: 222 in 2001, 242 in 2011, 240 in 2021.

The name of Aspenden first appears in records in 1212. It is the archetypal peaceful village backwater, lying just south of Buntingford along a single track road that is in effect a cul-de-sac. Alongside the road through the village is a dried-up stream bed and the properties on that side are reached by crossing small foot bridges.

There are houses of a wide variety of styles and periods, several from the 15th and 16th centuries. Some stand in their own grounds and are hidden from view. There is some thatch and pargetting to be seen.



At the entrance to the village is the well-kept village cricket ground, home to a flourishing club.

A little further on is the village pub, the Fox, pictured below. It was originally built as a private house in the 17th century.



The village is the birthplace of Seth Ward (1617-89), a mathematician, astronomer, bishop and one of the founding members of the Royal Society. In 1684 he erected and endowed the hospital nearby in Buntingford. Today the building serves as almshouses.

The first school of renowned historian and Whig politician Thomas Macaulay (1800-59) was in the parish.

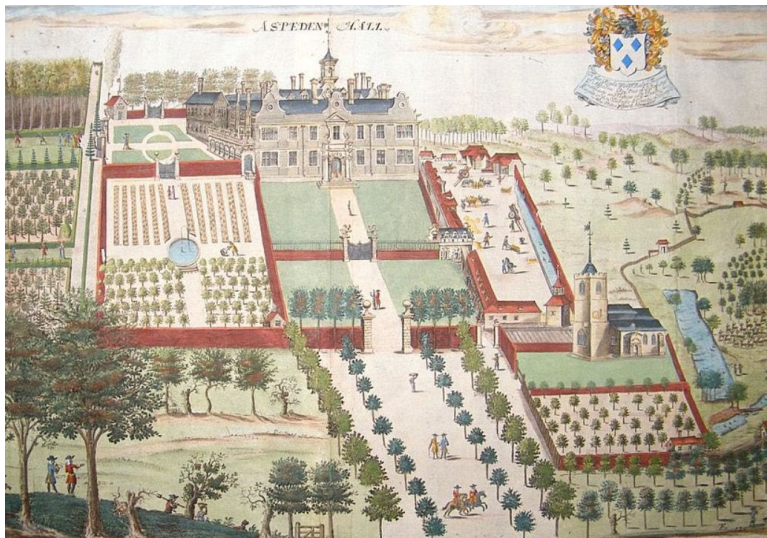
Following the road through the village one comes eventually to the church of St Mary's, the nave and chancel of which date to the 13th century but with many later additions. Among the monuments in the church is one of the brothers Ralph and William Freeman holding hands. The former, a prominent Parliamentarian of the 17th century, was the builder of the original Aspenden Hall (see below).



Next to the church is the entrance to Aspenden Hall. This is a substantial country house in the classical style which dates to 1856.

Its splendid external appearance is protected as a listed building, being an important landscape feature.

It replaced Ralph Freeman's Jacobean house which was the subject of a drawing published in 1700 and reproduced below by kind permission of www.albion-prints.com.



The impressive vista of the present house, which can be glimpsed from the churchyard, conceals the fact that in 1963 it was gutted and used for agricultural purposes, principally grain drying.

More recently, it was turned back into a private house

Hospitality:

The Fox – Expected to reopen in 2025

Circular Walk: Number 136: 5.2 miles between Westmill and Aspenden

Adjacent Hundred Parishes: Buntingford, Westmill.

Links:

Parish Council: <https://www.aspendenpc.org.uk/>

Hertfordshire Genealogy:

www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/places/places-a/aspenden/-aspenden-frame.htm

Seth Ward: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seth_Ward_%28bishop_of_Salisbury%29