

THE HISTORY OF HARDENHUIISH

The name of Hardenhuish is first recorded in documents from 854 AD, where charters refer to '*Heregeardinge Hiwisc*'. This is widely believed to refer to the family holding of Herejeard. The area itself though was clearly occupied before this date, as development of the land over the centuries has revealed prehistoric, Roman and Saxon evidence of settlement.

The evolution of the 'Hardenhuish' name has developed significantly since the 9th century and has included many different variations in spelling, from '*Hardenehus*' in the Domesday book to '*Herdenewiz*' in 1242 and '*Hardnyshe*' in 1316. The transfer in ownership of land continued right through the Middle Ages.

1707 saw the Hardenhuish estate purchased by the Colborne family, under whose ownership the layout of the area changed considerably during the rest of the 18th century.

The 1770s saw substantial change in particular. A new church was built in classical Georgian style according to the plans of the architect John Wood (the younger) who was renowned for his designs in Bath. The old parish church was demolished around 1778 and stood approximately 200 metres in front of the present Hardenhuish House. Stones from that church were used in the footings of the new church.

The church was relocated according to the wishes of Joseph Colborne, then owner of the Hardenhuish estate. The new location was thought to be infinitely more convenient and nearer the inhabitants of the parish. The original nave was built to seat around 50 people but in 1856 the church was enlarged to its present size of around 100, mainly thanks to the expense provided by the Clutterbuck family who owned the estate from 1822 until 1935.

On the east side of the church stands the Ricardo Monument, built over a vault that contains the coffins of nine members of the Ricardo family. David Ricardo was a famous economist and an MP, and his daughter Henrietta married into the Clutterbuck family a year before his death in 1823. Against the south wall of the church is a seat where the famous diarist Robert Francis Kilvert used to sit and admire the view across Chippenham. Inside the church, there is a memorial to Joseph Colborne and several other members of both the Colborne and the Clutterbuck families. Plaques also commemorate David Ricardo and Robert Francis Kilvert.

The old manor house was also completely redesigned in the late 18th century. It was sited further up the hill to offer outstanding views across the estate and create an impression to those who passed by. It was also built in the same classic Georgian style, similar to several other properties in the Bath and Wiltshire area. Further modifications to the House were made in the early 19th century, undertaken by Sir John Soane, an architect from London.

By 1819, the estate was described as follows: ‘Harnish House, which has lately undergone a complete repair, forms a handsome elevation in the centre of a park, containing about 200 acres of excellent pasture land, beautifully ornamented with timber, commanding rich and extensive views, in a fine sporting country’.

The house was also enlarged significantly whilst under the ownership of the Clutterbuck family through the building of a schoolroom and nursery, replacing the old dairy. Stables and a coach-house were also located at the back.

The Clutterbucks held the estate well into the 20th century until the grounds were purchased by Wiltshire County Council in 1935 to cater for the growing educational needs in the town. 1939 saw the move from the Cocklebury Road site to Hardenhuish as the new Chippenham Grammar School was opened, with the House forming an integral part and new buildings developed to the east of the site.

As numbers increased, it became clear that further expansion was required. A new secondary modern school for girls was opened in 1956 to the south of the church, whilst the boys’ equivalent was opened in 1959 further down the hill. While these were opened, more buildings were developed behind the House to add to the Grammar School.

1975 saw the final change in the education set-up in Chippenham as the three existing schools were merged into two comprehensives under the names Hardenhuish and Sheldon. Whilst the boys’ school became Sheldon, Hardenhuish took on both the grammar and girls’ school buildings, spanning right across the estate.

Development of the school has increased substantially in recent years, with the Sports Hall, T Centre and E Centre built around the turn of the millennium whilst the new C Centre and redevelopment of the Science block was completed in 2009, followed soon after by a comprehensive library refurbishment in 2012.