

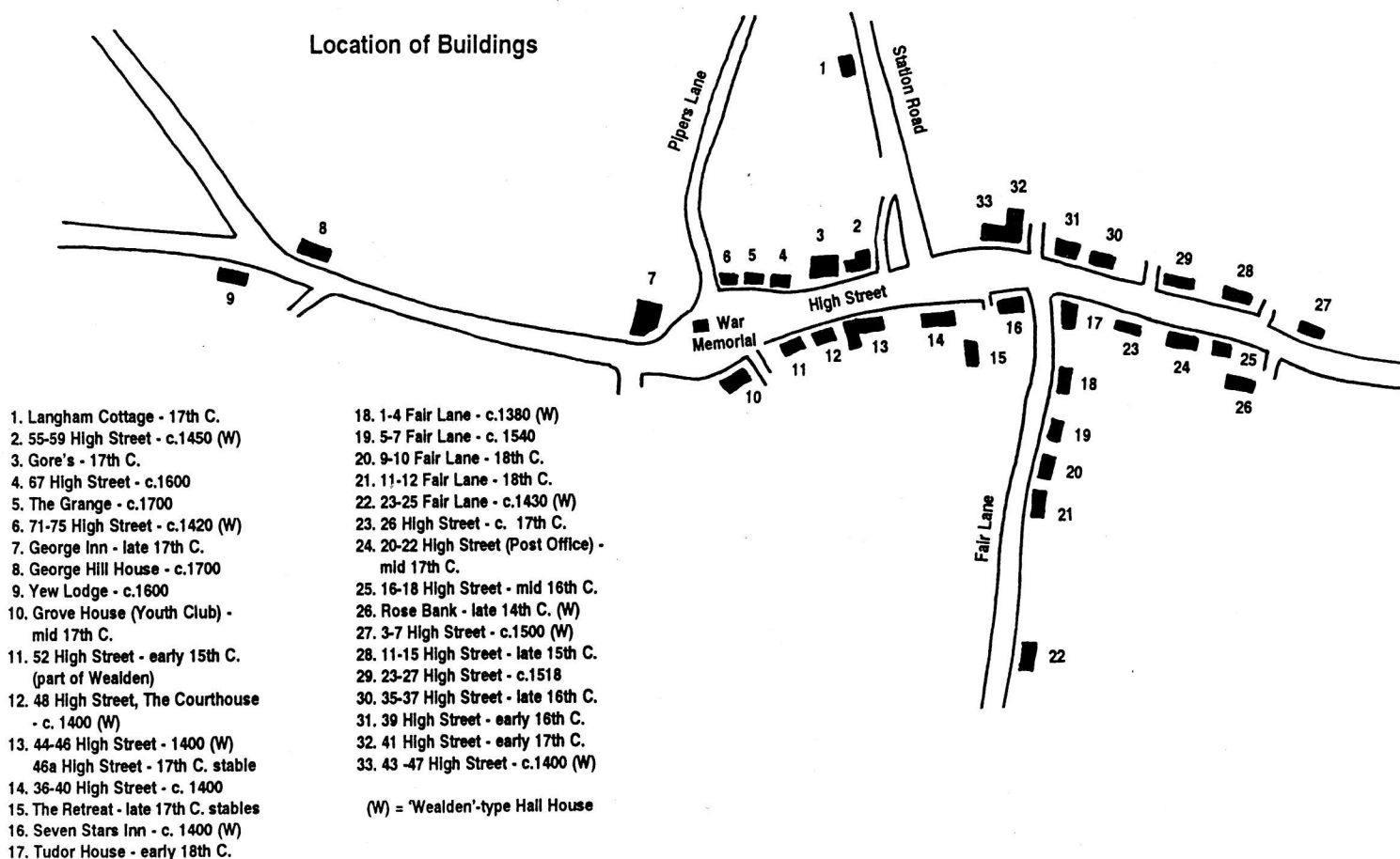
Robertsbridge and its Medieval origins

Historically, the Medieval period occupies the centuries between the departure of the Romans and the early years of the reign of King Henry VIII, from approximately 450 to 1530 AD. The second half of this period, the late Middle Ages, was a time of great change in England and Europe. Art and architecture were in renaissance, many of our churches, cathedrals and abbeys date from this period and many technological advances were made. Laws and systems of justice and social organisation underwent great changes and the beginnings of Parliamentary democracy were started. But, it was also a time of great political unrest, which was marked by civil wars and wars in Europe, caused mainly by the gradual severance of our ties with France. Disease and pestilence swept the country causing the death of large numbers of the population and the shortage of labour created demands for higher wages and hastened the end of the feudal system.

The earliest records we have of Robertsbridge are from the founding of the abbey in the 12th C., but Salehurst was in existence at the time of the Domesday survey and iron working had taken place in the area since Roman times. It seems likely therefore that some form of settlement existed quite early on. How much the village was affected by the great events taking place in the country during the Middle Ages, we do not know, but we do know, from the quality of the surviving buildings, that the 14th and 15th C. appear to have been a time of relative prosperity and it is during this time that the basic shape of the village evolved. Despite many additions and alterations over the intervening years, it is the shape we see now.

Nearly twenty timber-framed buildings survive from the medieval or just post-medieval period. Many were subdivided in the 18th and 19th C. to cope with an expanding population and in some cases, because of later alterations, it is difficult to appreciate at first sight that they were originally one building. Timber-framing continued as a method of construction well into the 18th C. and besides the medieval buildings there are another 15 which date from between 1600 and the early 1700s. The location of all the buildings is shown on the map below. Dates of construction are taken from "An Architectural History of Robertsbridge" by D. Martin and B. Mastin.

The chart overleaf relates the buildings with some of the events taking place in the surrounding area and in the wider world.



On Senlac Field, Battle	1066	Battle of Hastings, 14 th October
Battle Abbey church completed	1076	
	1077	Bayeaux Tapestry
A church was in existence at Salehurst	1086	Domesday survey
	1090	First mechanical clock (water powered!) appears in China
	1135	Civil war in England - Stephen against Matilda
	1167	Oxford University founded
Murderers seek asylum in Brede church	1170	Archbishop Thomas á Becket murdered in Canterbury Cathedral
Robertsbridge Cistercian Abbey founded - probably near the present war memorial	1176	
	1180	The longbow appears in Wales
	1189	Richard 1, The Lionheart becomes King
Abbot of Robertsbridge raises funds for ransom. Font in church said to be given by Richard in thanks	1193	Richard 1 captured and held to ransom in Germany whilst returning from the Crusades
	1198	Richard 1 killed in battle in France. John becomes king
	1209	Cambridge University founded
	1215	John forced to sign Magna Carta by rebellious Barons
Abbot of Robertsbridge granted a weekly market and annual fair - repealed 1 month later after complaints about commercial damage to surrounding markets	1224	
Robertsbridge re-granted a market	1253	
	1264	Battle of Lewes - Simon de Montford becomes effective king
	1265	Simon de Montford forms model Parliament - is killed in battle later in year
Grant or confirmation of market at Salehurst	1268	
Re-building of Salehurst church begins	1275	
Great storms batter Sussex coast - Old Winchelsea swept away	1287	
	1303	Spectacles invented
	1335	First mechanical clock in England appears at Winchester cathedral
	1337	Start of the 100 years War with France
Gateway at Battle Abbey started as a defensive measure against French	1338	
	1346	Battle of Crècy - cannon used by the English army for the first time

	1349	Black Death ravages England - one fifth of the population dies
Etchingam church started	1360	
	1380	
Between these dates the following surviving buildings appeared in Robertsbridge:	1381	Peasant's Revolt sparked by Poll Tax
	1385	Bodiam Castle started as defence against French raids
41 High Street (32) 71-75 High Street (6) 52 High Street (11) 48 High Street (12) 44-46 High Street (13) 36-40 High Street (14) Seven Stars Inn (16) Rose Bank (26) 1-4 Fair Lane (18) 23-25 Fair Lane (22)	1387	Geoffrey Chaucer publishes "The Canterbury Tales"
	1400	Metal screws appear in England
	1415	Battle of Agincourt - great victory for English archers Painting in oils begins
	1420	
	1431	Joan of Arc burned at the stake in Rouen
Herstmonceaux Castle built	1440	
	1450	Jack Cade, leader of the Kentish rebels, killed near Heathfield
	1460	Lace appears in Flanders and France
	1477	William Caxton sets up the first printing press in England
Between these dates the following surviving buildings appeared in Robertsbridge:	1480	Blast furnaces are introduced to the Sussex iron industry from France
3-7 High Street (27) 11-15 High Street (28) 55-59 High Street (2) Monk's House (Northbridge Street)	1485	Battle of Bosworth Field - Richard III killed, Henry Tudor becomes Henry VII
	1492	Columbus discovers the West Indies
	1497	John Cabot discovers North America
	1499	Vasco da Gama discovers route to the east via Cape of Good Hope
	1500	
	1500	
	1504	Leonardo da Vinci paints the Mona Lisa
	1509	Henry VIII becomes King
Between these dates the following surviving buildings appeared in Robertsbridge:	1536	Dissolution of the Monasteries begins
23-27 High Street (29) 35-37 High Street (30) 39 High Street (31) 67 High Street (4) 5-7 Fair Lane (19)	1538	Robertsbridge Abbey dissolved
	1553	Mary Tudor becomes Queen
	1555	Persecution of Protestants, many martyred in Sussex
	1558	Mary dies, Elizabeth I becomes Queen
	1585	Defeat of the Spanish Armada
	1600	