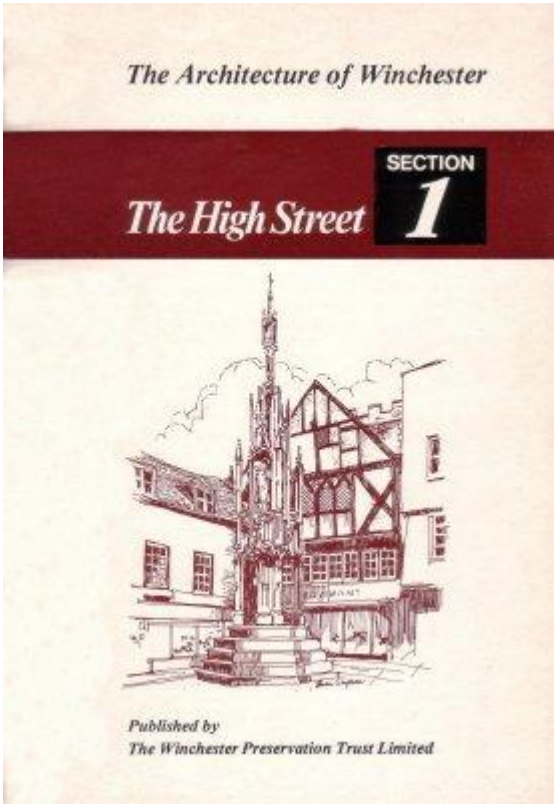
The High Street - Section 1



The High Street is a description of the architecture of part of the High Street in Winchester produced by the Trust in 1976.

Note : When this document was published there was obviously a plan to produce further descriptions of parts of the High Street. This led to this booklet being described as 'Section 1'. It covers the buildings on the south side of the High Street going west between Little Minster Street (west of the Buttercross) and Westgate

Published by The Winchester Preservation Trust to mark European Architectural Heritage Year.

Drawings

The elevations in this book were drawn by Keith Walker, a Winchester architect. He began the project in 1969 with two colleagues, who both dropped out at an early stage. Keith continued, therefore, on his own and produced an accurate drawing of each façade of this famous High Street.

He spent a lot of time sketching and measuring and was on several occasions questioned by the police, as to his motives. He also encountered occasional difficulties where he was refused access to some buildings, although most people were very helpful.

The result however is unique, a credit to Keith and a fine record of Winchester High Street in the early 1970’s.

High Street Section 1

Winchester's High Street

The High Street of the City of Winchester is one of the oldest roads in the world, formed on a natural line of communication between the western downs and a crossing of the River Itchen at the eastern end of the town. Stand at the western side of the Westgate's central arch, or on the top of St Giles' Hill; the street's importance as a thoroughfare becomes obvious, though its architectural values need to be studied at closer quarters. First and second floor High Street architecture is often superb, but at ground-floor level modern forms of advertising and plate glass

windows have not always improved the overall effect. It would be a sad day for Winchester and the nation if this High Street was to become just a mere counterpart of other streets in less fortunate cities, for this is a street which is much more than a thoroughfare. It is a link in the passage-way of time, it speaks of the continuity of civilization, of a city whose prosperity has rarely been displayed by a strident architectural form, a city whose citizens have had due regard for the domestic scale of the place, where change was once slow, and adaptations, refacing, repair and small improvement was much more common than demolition and wholesale redevelopment.

The recent paving of part of the street as a pedestrian precinct has been much discussed. The mediaeval Wintonian was supposed to 'pave' in front of his own property and to the middle of the road, but it was a difficult obligation to enforce. The Corporation of 1652, supporters of Cromwell, tried to get this done, and also collected money for paving, but there was trouble after the Restoration when it was found that some of the surfaces were made up with tomb-stones. When Charles II came to Winchester in August 1683, the inhabitants were required to hang out lights in front of their houses, sweep their part of the road, and repair it. By the time that the Paving Commission for Winchester was set up in 1770, the High Street was still virtually unsurfaced, and without real foot pavements, unlighted (except on special occasions) and the buildings were unnumbered. In official documents used for the collection of ancient rents (the Tarrages), eighteenth-century properties were still being described in terms of their owners at the end of the fourteenth century. The Paving Commissioners met for the first "time on 7 January 1771, and a month later (11 February) ordered that the High Street should be numbered". Soon they were thinking in only too familiar ways of how to get the traffic along more quickly, and trying to buy the Black Swan on the corner of Southgate Street in order to widen that turning. They succeeded, in part, and-went on to fill in the surface holes with gravel dug from Carew Gauntlett's field outside Southgate. Gauntlett was one of the Commissioners. Next, they paved the High Street carriage way with a good surface of flints. The work was done by a bricklayer, William Kernot, and two firms of stonemasons, Leversuch and Walklin. A footway for pedestrians was constructed on the north side of the street, and the entrances to the side streets were likewise 'paved', with flints. A major task attempted was the partial levelling of the hill leading to the County Hall, and there were problems of water drainage too, near Westgate. How to get rid of the rain water which poured down the High Street, flooding parts of the Pentice and the Cathedral churchyard had always been a Winchester problem, and it was not solved and then only partially, when the railway cutting was made in 1839-40. Paving Commissioners' work was expensive work, and had to be paid for by the inhabitants from local rates levied on each householder, and from tolls (from which the Judges and the Army were exempt) collected at the toll gates around the city. Much care was taken in 1785 to place the High Street lamps correctly, and bow windows could only be constructed with permission, since they were technically obstructions to free passage. On. 29 April 1791 the Commissioners started to make a footway through the Westgate, "at a cost not exceeding fifty pounds", and this was done on the Northern side, with the help of a public subscription totalling £57 9s. A few years later, a request from the Barrack Department. to 'stop up' Gar Street (now Trafalgar Street) was agreed on the grounds that "the stopping up ... will keep the City much more private from the Barracks", wishful thinking, for brawls between soldiers and civilians continued to be a feature of local life. The Commissioners in

fact tried to oblige everyone, and when James Kellow, a well-known stone mason, asked for the Town Pump outside of his house near the High Cross, to be moved, they agreed at once, and it was shifted to a place nearby occupied until recently by the Post Office letter box.

Apart from the Tarrages and the minute books of the Paving Commissioners there are other sources which make it easy to trace the descent of the High Street properties, indeed of property generally in central Winchester. The first detailed account of the High Street owners is in a manuscript commonly known as the Winchester Doomsday, two Surveys of the town made in 1110 and 1148. An important group of later mediaeval documents concern the transfer of real estate, properties of all kinds, sold or let by transactions recorded in the city court. These enrollments, with the Tarrages and the books of the Paving Commissioners, provide a well-known and comparatively easy method of tracing the descent of all kinds of buildings.

Rate books and directories carry on the story to the present day. The first real Directory was published in 1784 by a local bookseller, John Sadler, who went bankrupt shortly afterwards. Only those who paid were listed in this kind of book, so that it would be unwise to think that Sadler or any of his immediate successors represent the entire population. There were at least seven High Street grocers in his time.

Two of the great changes of recent years have not been architectural: Very little of Winchester High Street now belongs to the citizens and only a handful of people live in it. At the time of writing (March 1976) there are only a few electors living in a street which used to be crammed with Winchester families. Moreover, many of the centrally situated public houses, the hotels, and the churches which gave the High Street an evening life of its own have closed for ever. The bustle of daytime is deceptive and cannot hide the fact that perhaps the most urgent planning problem of the late 1970's is the need to keep the centre of Winchester alive.

The High Street is the spine of the old city centre and is joined throughout its length by side roads running north and south, small roads once paralleled by even narrower passages and lanes. Most of these useful pedestrian ways have disappeared, a process of change encouraged in" the sixteenth century when the Corporation allowed influential Wintonians to block them up by new building. Nevertheless, the High Street, with its side roads, still forms a street pattern of great antiquity, in some part Roman, in greater part Anglo-Saxon, owing its origin to the military needs of the garrison in the days of Alfred the Great and of his son Edward the Elder. It is this pattern which is displayed on the map drawn by William Godson in 1751, and which began to break up soon after, when Eastgate, Northgate and Southgate were demolished to make room for traffic. Godson's map is the first of its kind and needs to bestudied in conjunction with the splendid "East Prospect of Winchester" published by Nathaniel and Samuel Buck in 1736.

The great changes of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries occurred in the eastern end of the street. In c.1798 a central block of which had once belonged to St Mary's Abbey was pulled down by agreement between the then, owner, Thomas Weld and the Corporation. Henceforth this part of Winchester became known as the

Broadway. Eastgate, which had also been the responsibility of the same Abbey, had been occasionally patched up by the Corporation before its demolition in 1768. (Westgate only survived because part of it was used as a billiard room, and the lease had not run out.) The new city bridge over the Itchen was designed in 1813 by George Forder, Surveyor to the Dean and Chapter, and paid for by public subscription. Up to this time the mansion house known since the reign of Charles II by the names of its successive owners Masons, Pentons, and Mildmays, had been a great feature of the north-eastern side of the High Street. The aged Dowager Lady Mildmay had no real need of it, and in 1844 the house was demolished, and a new street constructed through its gardens, "High Street East", with shops on the corner; two public houses, the Mildmay Arms and the Lawn Tavern are remembrances of things past. The covering-in at various times of the Brooks which had run open down the street for centuries was another major change in the appearance of central Winchester.

High Street Section 1

45 - 49 High Street

This block of buildings runs from west of Little Minster Street to the east side of St Thomas Street and consists of 45 - 49 High Street. Below is a thumbnail of the architectural elevation of the complete block. Each building is then discussed. Clicking on the thumbnail will produce a larger image.



45 High Street

A chemist's shop has been established in this building since c.1851 by G. Gunner, formerly of St Thomas Street. Internal fittings came from an earlier apothecary's shop, perhaps painted by William Cave for George Earle (in No. 105 opposite). Gunner was succeeded by another chemist, R. Hunt from Alresford, but the shop had also been an ironmongers. Ironmongery and dispensing medicine often went together in Winchester. To the left is Little Minster Street.

46, 47 High Street

This was formerly one building, The White Hart, with a front in severe classical style put on to an older building in 1806, and probably the earliest use of London stock type brick in the High Street. The architect was George Moneypenney, who had just completed a new front for the County Gaol in Jewry Street. His client was John Bell, who came from the George in Southampton. The great main window, with central ionic column was a favourite place for the appearance of politicians, amongst them the first Duke of Wellington. This inn was closed down in 1857, a casualty at the end of the coaching era, and its ground floor soon divided into two shops. Its Assembly Room still lies behind the frontage and its stable block is now 18 Little Minster Street.

48 - 49 High Street

The Old Guildhall; Lloyds Bank
This a misnomer, for this is not the ancient meeting place of the Corporation, which was St John's House, but a building used since C.1349 as a Hall of Court where the Mayor of Winchester and the two Bailiffs heard cases in their Court of Record. Originally in mediaeval corner tenements and a group of cottages belonging to St John's Hospital, the building was substantially altered in Tudor and Stuart times, nearly pulled down, and then rebuilt and refaced in 1712-1713, by a Corporation Committee. A contemporary description of the 'new' building describes "its front supported by fine noble stone columns, of the Tuscan order . . . fifty three feet in length . . . with a tower containing the curfew bell". The statue of Queen Anne was presented by George Bridges, the clock by Lord William Paulett, the two Members of Parliament of the time. The original bracket by Paulett's 'dial' was replaced by a replica carved by the late Mr Edwin Laverty when the family drapers who occupied the building went into liquidation. The later façade was then extensively remodelled in 1915 by Thomas Stopher and it became a bank. The clock is said to have been the first of its kind in Southern England to have been illuminated by gas. There have been later alterations and its eastern extension (formerly 48, part of the White Hart), a conversion from a shop, is the work of the late Peter Sawyer FRIBA. The curfew is still rung, from the cupola, and the entire building is one of great importance in the High Street scene. After the reform of local government in 1835 it was used as the meeting place of the Corporation, and replaced in 1873 by the present Guildhall in the Broadway. Internally there is a well proportioned wooden staircase.

High Street Section 1

51 - 64(a) High Street

This block of buildings runs from the west side of St Thomas Street to the east side of Southgate Street and consists of 51 - 64(a) High Street. Below is a thumbnail of the architectural elevation of the complete block. Each building is then discussed. Clicking on the thumbnail will produce a larger image.



51, 52 High Street

51 (The Dolphin) and 52
The corner building is a Victorian inn of 1882, designed by Thomas Stopher, the younger who also rebuilt No. 52 in the same year. The Dolphin had been an ancient hostelry, distinctive as one of Winchester's few stone-built houses, and Stopher re-used its oak chimney piece in the house called Chilcombe Chine on Sleeper's Hill. On the St Thomas Street frontage, the classical columns carry the initials R.M. for Richard Moss, a wealthy brewer, Freeman of the city and M.P., whose firm then managed the Dolphin ; the Lamb and Flag are ancient heraldic insignia associated with St John's Hospital, the ground landlords of No. 51 and 52.

53, 54 High Street

For hundreds of years much of central Winchester has formed part of the endowment of St John's Hospital. 53 and 54 were rebuilt for the Hospital to the design of Mr W. Coles. the City Engineer, as plain Victorian architecture, replacing two ancient gable fronted houses; for 53, 54, 55 and 56 in 1838, before rebuilding, see Mudie's History of Hampshire, vol. I, p.75.

55, 56 High Street

This was two properties until about 1912, when both were purchased by Schomberg and Company, pulled down, and turned into a ‘cinematograph palace' in 1913. This was designed by Greenwood of Southampton, and for many years this was the High Street's only cinema, the Picture House. During the war of 1939-45 it was used as a shop by a departmental store from Southampton. Next to the building is Hammond's Passage.

57 High Street

Hampshire Chronicle
A very good façade, with the only bow windows at ground floor level left in the High Street: the first floor is severe, but embellished with well-tended window boxes, not always the right accompaniment to an old building, but forming here a most attractive feature of the High Street. The building has good original doors, central (shop) and west (private).
Nos. 57-58/59 and 60/61, are a most important group: observe how the rising steps of their roof lines follows the upwards 'flow' of the High Street.

58 High Street

Midland Bank
This building was designed by H. Carey Brown and rebuilt by him in c.1850 for Whitrow and Gadd. It was previously two separate shops. The present ground floor is modern, the bank having bought the premises in 1915.

60, 61 High Street

One of the best sets of bow windows left in the street, though the glazing bars have gone; probably dating from April 1792, and the work of the then owner, William Goater. He was a plumber and glazier, whose original ground floor shop had a series of arched ‘Gothick’ windows and a side door at the East end of the façade, marking perhaps the entry to St Nicolas' Lane incorporated in the site. A good modern shop front, by the Winchester architects, The Sawyer Partnership.

62 High Street

This building is early 19th century, with a stucco front, very good cornice on first floor, and glazing bars still in the elegant bow windows. One of the best looking small shops in Winchester. Formerly and for over fifty years this was a leading saddler and harness-maker's premises.

63 High Street

This building has one of the best fronts in the street, with tall, high windows, and one of the few surviving iron balustrades. (cf. No. 108). Note too, the iron frame from which used to swing a hanging sign.

64 High Street

The house was for many years the home of Miss B. Corfe, whose water colour views of Winchester are greatly appreciated, and now it is a small shop, with a roof that was recently carefully retiled. It is important for its restatement of Winchester's domestic scale after the Egyptian exhuberance of its westerly neighbour.

64(a) High Street

This building is still known as 'Hayward’s Corner’. It was built in 1838/9 as Trustees Savings Bank to a design by Owen Brown Carter (1806 - 1839), a pupil of William Garbett and teacher of G.E. Street. Only first and second floor remain to illustrate the effect his Egyptian travels had on his style. Shop front by Thomas Stopher, 1895. N.B. Carter’s Jewry Street Corn Exchange (now Library) which was built 1838. Next to the building is Southgate Street (formerly Gold Street).

High Street Section 1

65 - 73 High Street

This block of buildings runs from west of Southgate Street to the east side of Trafalgar Street and consists of 65 - 73 High Street. Below is a thumbnail of the architectural elevation of the complete block. Each building is then discussed. Clicking on the thumbnail will produce a larger image.



65, 66 High Street

'Black Swan Buildings'
This building is partly in Southgate Street, where it incorporates the site of St. Cleavers Church. A disappointing, nondescript elevation on an important corner site, replacing a nineteenth-century inn, pulled down in 1935. In that Black Swan, in 1892, Sherlock Holmes stayed during his adventure of "The Copper Beeches"; it was still "an inn of repute", replacing a much older hostelry of the same name. Today its only embellishment is the splendid carving, placed on the building in 1945 by public subscription. An ordinance of the city council in 1555 required that there should only be one inn in Southgate (then Gold) Street: hence perhaps the name - a rare bird. An early painted sign is in the bar of the Southgate Hotel, which took over the Black Swan's licence.

67, 68, 69 High Street

Williams and Glyn's Bank
Until recently this building was two shops with fronts by Thomas Stopher. In 1965 these were replaced by a new building which won a Civic Trust Award and with its white marble and mansard roof makes an unusual contribution to this part of the street: the architects were Cruickshank and Seward of Manchester.

70 High Street

In the 1860's this was Curwells, a tobacconist who kept the only public billiard table in Winchester. To go there for a game was considered very bold and extravagant. The front of the building was designed by Thomas Stopher younger.

71 High Street

A plain 'listed' building, with as unusual early nineteenth century square 'bow' window.

72 High Street

In mid-Victorian, time The Home Tavern; rebuilt before 1927 with a modern bow window.

72(a) High Street

A Victorian front of c.1892-3: for many years the home of a well known tobacconist, Jesse Bartlett. It is now closed, but until recently a confectioner's and tobacconist shop, with a proprietor well known for his excellent sketches and drawings of Winchester.

73 High Street

A good plain house and shop with interesting round bow windows (early nineteenth century) and for many years the home of the Cave family, William, senior d.1813, and William, junior d.1817. They were both artists employed by Winchester College, in the theatre in Jewry Street, the Roman Catholic Chapel of St Peter and best known for repainting of Trusty Servant (College) in 1809, and for wall paintings from this house now on display in the City Museum. No. 73 has been much altered in recent years; including an extension around Trafalgar Street 1973. As a unit in the Caves' time, typical 'Winchester' in its mixed ownership, Cave's freehold dwelling house with shop and stable leased from Dean and Chapter. Next is the entrance to Trafalgar Street (formerly Bar Street) followed by the space taken by a well established Holm Oak Tree.(Editor Note: the Holm Oak tree was subsequently taken down and replaced by a statue of a man on a horse by Elisabeth Frink).

High Street Section 1

74 - 78 High Street

This block of buildings runs from west of Trafalgar Street to Westgate and consists of 74 - 78 High Street. Below is a thumbnail of the architectural elevation of the complete block. Each building is then discussed with a thumbnail of the specific building. Clicking on any thumbnail will produce a larger image.



74 High Street

(Partly demolished)
This building was built in garden of No. 1 Trafalgar Street, St. Clement's (demolished) for Winchester lawyers Best and Scotney, later Sheraton, Pain and Browne, who are still in practice opposite in old Bank (No. 82). It used London stock type brick and was designed by Thomas Stopher the elder. He came to Winchester as County Surveyor in 1841 and his other buildings include the County Prison in Romsey Road, opened in 1849.

75 High Street

This building was built c.1820-21 as a private house and, like the other houses on the Western side, on open pasture land. It was probably, but not certainly, designed by Carey Browne. It was designed in good Regency architecture, stuccoed front, treble hung sash windows (unique in Winchester), three curious pilasters, architectural whimsies. The doorway has a three-centred arch and good fanlight. The Shop front was designed by the younger Stopher.

76 High Street

A plain house of the early nineteenth century, the first to be erected in the open pasture then on this side of the High Street. Birthplace of H. C. Browne's daughter, Louisa (b.1828, wife of Thomas Stopher, Junior). Converted into a photographic shop in 1912. The front is uninteresting. Next is a new pedestrian way through to the courtyard of the Crown Courts.

77 High Street

This is another Carey Browne house in his classic Victorian style, with a good stuccoed front, and pilasters, formerly mutilated by insertion of a photographer's showcase. Remarkable internal plaster decoration, always a sign of Carey Browne's work. The façade has been retained under Hampshire Count Council's scheme of renovation for offices.

78 High Street

(Demolished 1974) This was designed and built in 1847-8 by the Winchester architect Henry Carey Browne (d.1864), Thomas Stopher's father-in-law. South side is an interesting mixture of brick, flint and re-used stone; very carefully designed rusticated curved corner at the north west end. It is finished in Roman cement, good internal plasterwork. (Now replaced by new offices designed by Donald Insall FRIBA and Associates).

High Street Section 1

References

There has been no attempt in the past to identify High Street builders and architects, and these notes are a limited remedy of that deficiency. The only general architectural surveys, and they are very general, are to be found in Winchester Street Architecture by Thomas Dinham Atkinson, FRIBA (1934) and the perambulations of the city in Nicholas Pevsner's Hampshire volume of the Buildings of England series (1967). The present writer must acknowledge her indebtedness to all those public and private owners of High Street properties who have so generously allowed her to consult their deeds, and also to the late Alderman Thomas Stopher's notes on Winchester buildings, in the City Museum. Stopher, a famous local architect, possessed an unrivalled local knowledge, and his notes, although incomplete and unfinished are of great value. Mention too, must be made of the late Mr S. Ward Evans, an enthusiastic amateur archaeologist, whose booklet on the High Street published by the Hampshire Chronicle before 1939 (at 3d) is well worth reading as a general introduction.

Further reading on particular areas of the High Street:

A.W. Goodman	The Manor of Godbegot Warren and Son, 1923
Thomas Stopher	St John's Hospital Warren and Son, 1924
Thomas Stopher	MS notebook on Winchester Streets Winchester Library
Barbara Carpenter Turner	The Caves of Winchester (H.F.C. Proceedings XXII Pt 1, 1961)
Barbara Carpenter Turner	The Churches of Mediaeval Winchester Warren and Son, 1957
H. Round	The Winchester Domesday, in V.C.H. 1