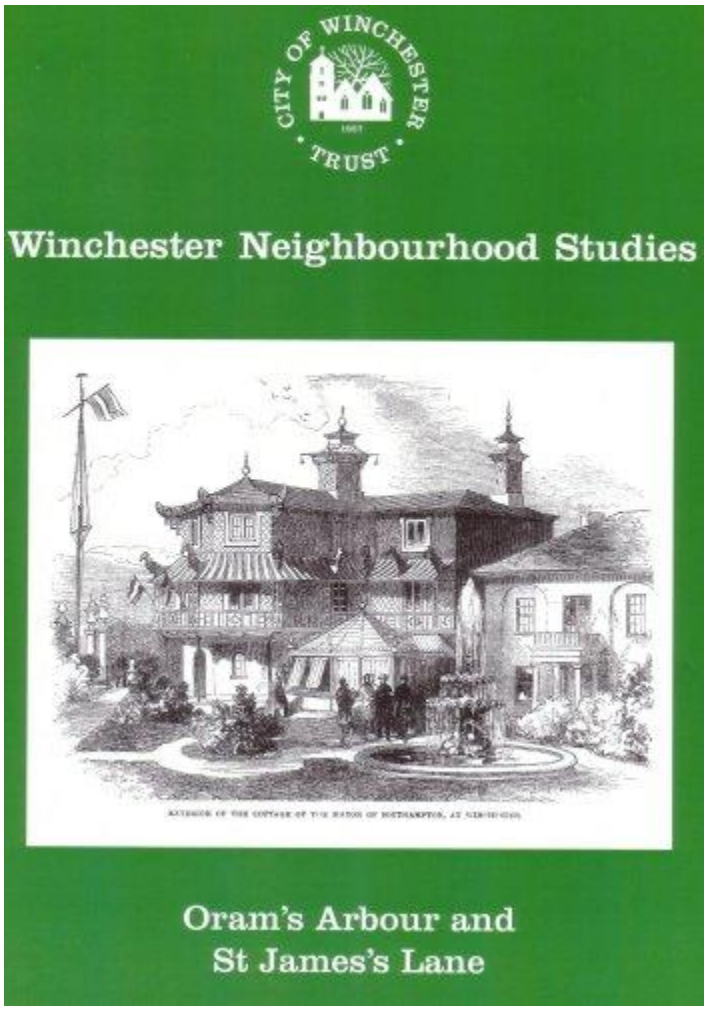
Neighbourhood Series - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

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This neighbourhood study is one of a short series, focusing on individual areas of Winchester. It is not intended to be a definitive guide to the area, but it is hoped that it will provide some useful background information concerning the history and character of the various parts of the city that make up the whole. The word "area" will be used to mean "neighbourhood" throughout the rest of the study. The picture is always changing, so we may produce updated versions in due course. Readers who have suggestions for amendments or additions are therefore welcome to write to the Trust so that their comments can be filed for future reference.

Prepared by Nick Bourne, DipArch For the City of Winchester Trust August 2005
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Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

1 The Origin of the Name of the Area



Clifton Terrace

The area as a whole does not have a generally recognised name. Oram's Arbour itself is central to the northern part of the area and St James's Lane and St James's Terrace are very distinctive features of the southern half; hence "Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane". The name "Oram's" originated after an Alexander Oram took a lease from the City Authorities on an "arbour" in 1698, also described in the lease as a "pasture" (land on which to graze animals). Chambers Dictionary refers to the Anglo-French word "herber", meaning grass, leading to confusion with the Latin word "arbor", meaning tree. We cannot be certain of this derivation of "arbour" but it did not, in this case, mean "a shady retreat enclosed mainly by trees or climbing plants". " Other older names include "Erdberi" and "Her bur". The land continued to be leased by the City for many years until it was fully opened for recreational use, but it seems the citizens had recreational rights on this land from much earlier times.

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2 Defined Limits of Study

The limits of the study have broadly been taken as those of the present conservation area west of the railway but extended westwards to the prison, which forms a clear limit. The busy Romsey Road cuts through the area and this suggests considering the area in two parts, a north and south area. However the area between St James's Lane and North View have such a similar housing mix that there seems no point in differentiation.

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3 History



Oram's Arbour

Prior to the plague in the 14th century the area was inhabited, with two parish churches, St Anastasius on the site of the present St Paul's, and St James's, in the present Catholic Cemetery. This last has been in almost continuous use since the Middle Ages. Following the plague, the area remained largely unpopulated until the railway was built in 1839; this stimulated development. The demand for officers' houses close to the barracks also contributed to the demand for housing.

Development started in 1836 with the Workhouse (later St Paul's Hospital and now redeveloped). In the 1840s, development quickened with mostly terraced and semi-detached houses, the finest being Clifton Terrace (1840-51) in cream brick with elaborate Bath stone dressings, by O. B. Carter. Development of some other terraces was even slower. Judging from the style, West End Terrace and St James's Terrace (begun in 1840) took some fifty or sixty years to complete

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4 Land Use

a Residential

Most of the area is in residential use. It is built on a saddle-back hill that slopes down from the west, steeply to the east and north, and less so to the south. The roads are a mixture of former country lanes (such as Clifton Road) and laid-out streets (West End Terrace) that has given rise to some interesting intersections (Step Terrace, Clifton Road, Clifton Hill), all adding to the picturesque informality that is so characteristic of the area. Although generally "middle class" in tone, cheaper housing is interspersed throughout the area, thus breaking up any dominant uniformity. It is noteworthy that some of the most imposing terraces and houses are closest to the railway, suggesting that those living here in the 1840s were much less concerned about the proximity of the railway than the 1890 Victorians who built very small houses near the railway. Night shunting in the Fulflood goods yards would have contributed to this.

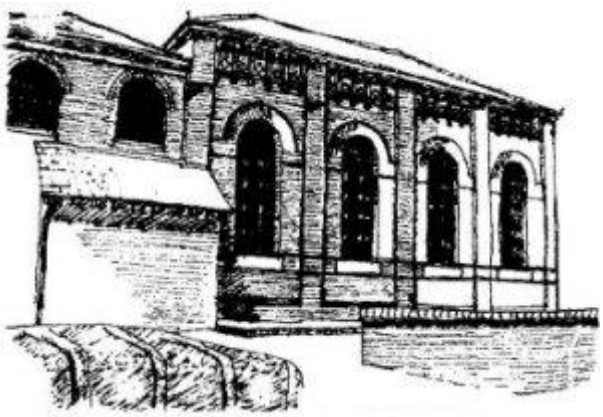
b Special Housing

There are two nurses' homes in the area. The one in St James's Lane, Marlfield, is attractively designed in neo-Georgian style with orange brick dressings and a contrasting darker brick for the plain walls. Another more modern nurses' home at

No. 45 Romsey Road had a secluded garden, laid mainly to lawn with a cedar tree, but this has recently become part of the garden of the next door property, the Pagoda House in St James's Lane. Sheltered flats form part of St George's, at the top of Mews Lane.

c Cemeteries

The Roman Catholic Cemetery in Romsey Road is a quiet and secluded place, not visible from the road as its ground is set at a higher level; its gate house is dated 1829. The West Hill Cemetery in St James's Lane also has a gate house and is more open to view, and parts of it are being returned to natural chalk dovvnland, to encourage the conservation of wild plants and insects. This use makes a permanent 'breathing space' in an increasingly built-up environment, and is now more accessible to the public.



Water Works

d Utility

The Water Works in Romsey Road, built after the company was formed in 1850, has a modest Victorian pumping station of later date, with staff cottages and a large concrete cistern built on the soldiers' graveyard immediately above the earlier site. Fortunately, the cistern is not intrusive, being shielded by the high brick wall fronting Romsey Road and by surrounding trees. It seems likely that in the future this site could be used for residential development.

e Amenity Land

The main open space in the area is Oram's Arbour. This mown grassland is a very important recreational area. From it one can enjoy wide views of the city, the horizon being visible even above the Alison Way development. The mature trees along the hospital boundary also help to frame the view out to the east. Some of the houses fronting the Arbour are quite distinguished and their protection is important. The cottages on the southwest corner make a pleasing group with trees. Another area in front of the Police Headquarters contains many fine trees, but this 'park' is dwarfed by the Police building, and is practically inaccessible. It is, however, at least another green space.

Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

5. Traffic and Car Parking

Although St James's Lane remains a 'rat run', recent traffic calming measures have improved matters. Thanks to the efforts of the City of Winchester Trust, this particular traffic-calming scheme is much more discreet than such schemes in other parts of the city and should serve as a model for other traffic schemes. Romsey Road cuts through the area and is a very busy main road. However, this is not too serious a problem, as neither side has shops and the Romsey Road has never developed as a nucleus for the area, unlike Stockbridge Road in Fulflood. The busy St Paul's Hill cuts off St Paul's Church from part of the area it is meant to serve. Parking is obviously a problem in the area, particularly for those without off-street space; fortunately some of the terraces have rear vehicular access.

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6 Significant positive features of the area



Rear of St James's Lane

a Oram's Arbour provides a pleasing recreational space where people can meet.

b The layout of Clifton Road followed, in part, the course of the medieval ditch on the north side of Oram's Arbour.

c The original Victorian development was built to a higher density than, for instance, Christchurch Road, although some of the house designs are of similar character.

d More modest terraces in red brick have been stepped - in pairs, with front-facing gables on the northern arm of Clifton Road, or singly, as in Step Terrace, to take up sloping ground.

e Identical and reversed designs are usually limited to two or four repeats. The fashion for rendering of façades has led to the application of Renaissance, Classical or Gothic details, often imitating stone and painted in pastel colours or white.

f Some rendered and brick-faced houses have flint-faced backs with brick bands and trimmings, leading to picturesque effects which take away the banality of so many backs of Victorian terraces.

g The provision of three mews (Middle Road, Crowder Terrace and Mews Lane) has allowed the building of unusual staff cottages and stables, some of which have been converted to dwellings.

h A few attractive cottage groups, such as that on the south-west corner of Oram's Arbour, and also two pairs of 5-storey semi-detached houses, each pair under one large gable on the corner of Clifton Hill and Clifton Road.



Corner of Clifton Hill & Clifton Road, the 'witch's hat houses

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Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

7 Important viewpoints and spaces

a The new development on the high ground of the former St. Paul's Hospital site (Alison Way) makes a good backcloth above Fulflood when viewed from the Stockbridge Road. In winter this appears as a silhouette of gables seen through a tracery of winter trees.



Looking up Step Terrace

b Looking up Step Terrace, the prison ventilation tower is on the street axis. This is also the case where St James's Lane turns north towards the prison entrance. In the event of the prison being re-sited, extensively modernized or re-developed, the ventilation tower should be retained as a valuable local feature and as a landmark to be seen from St Catherine's Hill and other places. The main front of the prison should also be kept as a fine façade. Looking down Step Terrace presents a restricted view of the hills to the east, which is not impinged upon by summer trees.

c Looking down Romsey Road, the clock-tower of Queen Elizabeth II Court is centrally placed. The trees to the left of this view give relief to the bleak overshadowing nature of the buildings and wall on the south side.

d The higher western edge of Oram's Arbour, along Clifton Road, has a panoramic view of the green slopes on the east side of Winchester including St Giles's and St Catherine's Hills. Queen Elizabeth II Court, with its delicate copper pinnacled clock-tower, can be seen in the foreground. The northern end of this view is interrupted by some trees and by the former St Paul's Hospital, now converted to residential use. Summer trees restrict this view considerably.



Looking down Mews Lane
from St George's

e From the top end of Mews Lane there are attractive cottages in the foreground, with Peninsula Barracks, the Cathedral tower and St Giles's Hill following in succession. Summer trees restrict this view.

f In Crowder Terrace there is a eucalyptus tree on the St James's Terrace side. Although only visible within the street, this tree is an important feature when viewed from north or south. It is well placed when viewed from the west down a side path.



Crowder Terrace

g The Clifton Road and Clifton Hill junction is a particularly attractive space with fine views out. To the west is a pleasing individual house in wood and render which is nicely framed by the trees. St Catherine's Hill is also to be seen, though this view is restricted by summer trees. The 5-storey 'witch's hat' semi-detached houses at the junction of Clifton Road and Clifton Hill add to the interest of the space.

There is a changing view when walking down St James's Lane from Sparkford Road. This gives a nice contrast between the cottage loaf of St Catherine's Hill and the spire of Christ Church. Similar views are possible from inside the cemetery for most of the year.

Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

8 Trees

This area has a great wealth of large mature trees. The main groupings are along Romsey Road, St James's Lane, Sparkford Road, West End Terrace, Oram's Arbour, St Paul's Church and the Police Headquarters. Such trees frame many of the views discussed elsewhere. Smaller ornamental trees have been used to great advantage in St James's Terrace and West End Terrace, where they make a valuable contribution to the street scene. The belt of large trees along the perimeter

of Oram's Arbour, particularly along the boundary with St Paul's Hospital, has some gaps, and the missing trees should be replaced. The ornamental trees in the front gardens of St James's Terrace add considerably to the charm of this delightful terrace. The trees at the bend at the top of St James' Lane make an attractive setting for Marlfield, the nurses home. There are a number of fine individual trees in the garden of the houses in St James's Lane and the horse chestnut trees in Romsey Road give verdure to compensate for the somewhat bleak appearance of the south side of this road. The Police Headquarters and adjoining land has some fine beech trees, one or two of which have been lost and these should now be replaced.

Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

9 Buildings

There are few recent buildings of note in the area. However, there are many distinguished earlier buildings, mainly dating from the 19th century, which include the following:



The Pagoda House

a The Pagoda House in St James's Lane is of particular interest. Built in 1849 for the Mayor of Southampton, this is a 3-storey half-octagon with corner brackets apparently supporting the roof, each consisting of six open squares. This conceit is intended to suggest a pagoda, although there is little that is authentically Oriental about the house. The second floor casement lights are divided into lozenges and squares belonging to the home-grown Cottage Ornée style, and at the rear plain double-hung sashes are employed. In the late 18th and 19th centuries this kind of building resulted from a reaction to the more restrained Georgian style, leading to more Oriental forms and to picturesque Gothic, Brighton Pavilion being a notable example of this. In 1851 Kossuth, the leader of the failed 1848 revolution for Hungarian independence, was a guest at the house and a contemporary picture shows it decked out with Hungarian flags. The house has benefited recently from a programme of sensitive and comprehensive restoration, for which Winchester should be very grateful.

b Marlfield, the nurses home in St James's Lane (see Land Use, paragraph 4b).

c The Water Works in Romsey Road (see Land Use, paragraph 4e).

d St Paul's Church (see *Neighbourhood Studies No.1, Fulltood paragraph 8c*).



St Mary's House, Clifton Road

e St Mary's House, Clifton Road: designed in the modem movement style and dating from the 1980s, this house has a long broad solid front balcony and dark-stained horizontally-proportioned windows. The roof is in traditional Welsh slate and the chimneys are in simple Victorian cottage style. The house is not only pleasing in itself, but sits happily with its Victorian neighbours, all conspicuously sited facing onto Oram's Arbour. In comparison with other newer properties in the area, St Mary's House demonstrates how new design can fit in, rather than jar, with its older neighbours.

f Nos. 3-4 Clifton Road: this is a pair of detached houses in yellow brick and flint, designed in high-quality cottage style with interesting fenestration.

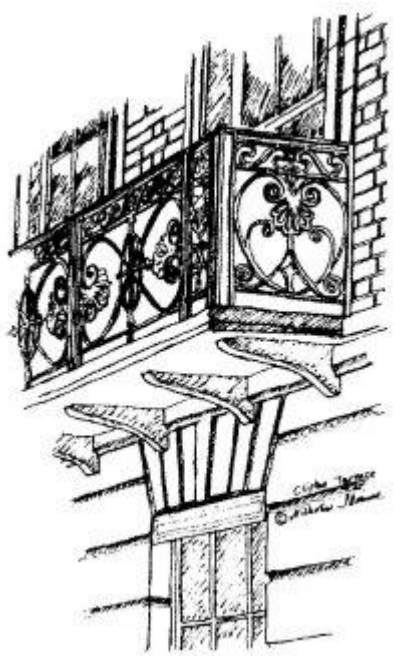
g Nos. 6-7 Clifton Road: these brick-built semi-detached houses are designed as an asymmetrical pair with the spandrel to a pointed arch filled with a pattern of yellow and blue brick. Some iron cresting salvaged from elsewhere has been used to good effect as a topping to the front garden walls of both houses.



Clifton Road

h Nos. 8-9 Clifton Road: these semi-detached houses are brick and render, designed in a light Classical style.Greenhill Terrace in brick and flint.

There are also some notable terraces in the area:



Clifton Terrace (1840-51) is the most formally grand and as its name implies probably owes more to Bristol than to London in its particularly distinguished design. The central part of the terrace is the original building, and in this part the two end houses project slightly, forming definite terminations to the terrace. This subtlety was lost when the terrace was subsequently extended to the north and south, with these later extensions being set back just behind the building line of the original end houses. The ground floor of the terrace is fully stone-faced with wide horizontal joints, and the first and second floors are stone-dressed with yellow (stone-coloured) brick infill for the plain surfaces. The dressings around the first floor windows to the later parts of the terrace are more elaborate with a full entablature supported on consoles, and all first floor (drawing room) windows have balconies with particularly fine decorative wrought iron balustrades. Some of the houses have been converted into maisonettes, and the roofs of these have suffered some alterations, with the removal of chimneys and the addition of modern-design rooflights. The exclusive use of self-coloured materials and large stone blocks and dressings add weight and give a solid dignity and sense of permanence and presence that prevents the terrace from being merely picturesque: it was built to a consistent design, with variation only in detail for changes in taste.

The older parts of West End Terrace, Nos. 19-22 and No. 1 Step Terrace (corner house), are rendered with channel jointing capped at the first floor with a string-course on which sit the first floor window dressings.



St James's Terrace

St James's Terrace, also rendered, is much more picturesque, with attractive iron balustrading to the balconies and charming front gardens with a wide variety of shrubs and ornamental trees. It is interesting to note that the varying pastel colours chosen for the façades of the individual houses add to the charm of this terrace. The houses at the southern end have sprouted roof extensions, some of which are not entirely desirable. As with Clifton Terrace, this terrace is now listed and protected to some degree from further developments of this kind.

Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

10 Recent, & Possible New Developments



St Paul's

a Of interest is the redevelopment to residential use of the St Paul's Hospital site (originally the workhouse) inside the original wall separating it from Oram's Arbour. The later buildings in the north and eastern part of the site have been demolished,

though the Lodge remains as part of the new dental surgery, and buildings for a new medical practice and chemist have also been built. The terrace of new gable-fronted houses has provided a distinctive serrated feature on the horizon when viewed from the north east, at Winnall. These gables also reflect the gable front of the adjacent Victorian terrace in Clifton Road. A new archway has been cut through the link to the Infirmary on the west, creating a brief experience of a seemingly \ historic urban landscape. The nurses' home has been retained, as have the laundry chimney and the infirmary (Edinburgh House) as two contrasting features, leaving this curiously but intriguingly proportioned structure intact when viewed from the Arbour.

b In Sparkford Road are a series of 3-storey blocks providing about 30 units of accommodation that has an initial impact of shock. The roof has wide projecting metal eaves with a deep fascia and disconcerting mono pitch, and the effect is uncomfortably heavy when viewed against the sky.

c Middle Road and Mews Lane still present opportunities for future development. In this event, care will need to be taken to ensure that the pleasing informality of these mews is not lost.



Mews Lane

d Towards the north end of West End Terrace a timber frame building in very poor structural condition has been replaced by a small house with gable and modern standard components in a diminutive neo-Georgian style, which is totally alien to the terrace. It is unfortunate that such an unsuitable design should have been permitted within the conservation area.

e The Prison, Romsey Road: There are no current proposals for the relocation of this institution, but those interested in penal reform would like to see substantial changes made to accommodation for prisoners that would involve changes to prison buildings throughout the country. Winchester Prison has a prominent hilltop site, and if it is ever vacated, strict control of any new development would be required. The Prison's ventilation tower is an important landmark in the city's skyline, and protection of this element, at the very least, would be desirable, if not essential.

f The Hampshire Police Headquarters, Romsey Road, built in 1966: This tower building projects well above the trees and skyline when viewed from many parts of Winchester and beyond, and presents a harsh outline in an otherwise attractive setting. Now needing work to make the original structure weatherproof, two schemes

are under consideration: to refurbish and clad the structure with glass to continue its present use, or to demolish it and build a high density residential development on the site. Many people would like the block demolished to prevent what they consider is a mistake being continued, while others are concerned that the density of development proposed would be detrimental to the local infrastructure, and therefore affect the character of this part of Winchester. The future of the site remains to be decided.

a The Water Works, Romsey Road, was recently the subject of a proposal to develop the site for residential use, and although this was not found acceptable it seems very probable that another similar application will be made in the near future.

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11 Conservation Area

A natural extension of this conservation area would be to the north, as was suggested in the Fulflood Neighbourhood Study, the first in the series. To the west an extension would include the Police Headquarters, which would give more complete protection for West End Terrace. It is a matter of surprise that the original hospital in Romsey Road, a notable Butterfield building, was not included in the present Conservation Area.



8 West End Terrace

Neighbourhood Studies - Oram's Arbour and St James's Lane

12 Conclusions

This is a particularly attractive part of Winchester. It has a high proportion of listed buildings and is not unduly threatened by disfigurement from permitted development or road schemes. The redevelopment of St Paul's Hospital, a potential threat, has been resolved satisfactorily. At present, the future of the Police Headquarters is uncertain, and anything that happens on this site will have a considerable bearing on the character of the neighbourhood as a whole. There is however no apparent imminent danger of development on the Prison site.

The area is well provided with trees; they have a positive effect, not only at the neighbourhood level, but also for the landscape of the whole city, and will need to be carefully managed and maintained. There is a wealth of views into and out of this area and the consequences of proposed development and tree planting need to be carefully considered, as a loss of outlook could occur in the most unlikely places. For an area built entirely in the 19th century it is remarkably picturesque and informal, and any new development in the area needs to complement this tradition, in both overall planning and detail.